

ABDALLAH BIN AL-HUSAYN: THE MAKING OF AN ARAB POLITICAL LEADER,  
1908-1921

Thesis submitted for the degree of Ph.D.

by

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## ABSTRACT

Abdallah bin al-Husayn: The Making of an Arab Political Leader,  
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This thesis examines the political career of Abdallah bin al-Husayn from 1908 until the creation of the Emirate of Transjordan in 1921. The central aim here is to explain how Abdallah was transformed from a Hijazi notable to a major force in the post-war politics of the Fertile Crescent and the founder of the Emirate of Transjordan. Abdallah's political career until 1921 is studied in the context of his family's evolving political ambitions and Anglo-Hashimite and Hashimite-Arab nationalist relations.

Abdallah's early political career illuminates the changing character of Arab political leadership in the Arab East between 1914 and 1921. This thesis examines the shaping of Abdallah's political ambitions, the strategies Abdallah, his family and partisans adopted to realize those ambitions and the obstacles Abdallah faced in trying to establish his authority and the legitimacy of his rule, first, in Iraq and, later, in Transjordan. Examining these issues in the context of Anglo-Hashimite and Hashimite-Arab nationalist relations makes it possible to assess Abdallah's contribution to the emergence of new forms of Arab political leadership in the post-war Fertile Crescent, particularly in Transjordan and Iraq, and to the development of Arab nationalism.

Chapters one to four analyze the shaping of Abdallah's political ambitions in the wider context of evolving Hashimite ambitions during World War I. Chapters five to eight treat two closely related subjects: Abdallah's failure to realize his ambition to rule post-war Iraq and his role in the creation of the Emirate of Transjordan.

The days, he said, were over when a man could set forth with a few followers to another country and place a crown on his head and proclaim himself King or Emir of it.

Lieutenant-Colonel C. E. Vickery, quoting a statement Abdallah made to him on 2 March 1920. 'Extracts from a Report dated 6 March 1920 by Lt.-Col. C. E. Vickery, British Agent at Jeddah',  
FO 371/5061/E2534

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## NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION

Arabic personal names, place names, religious terms, book and article titles are transliterated according to the system used in the *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*. Well known English spellings of place and personal names such as Mecca, Baghdad, Abdallah, Husayn and Faysal are used.

## NOTE ON ARCHIVAL SOURCES

Unless indicated otherwise, all archival material cited in this thesis comes from the Public Record Office, Kew. Crown-copyright material in the Public Record Office is cited by permission of Her Majesty's Stationery Office.

ABBREVIATIONS USED IN NOTES

ARBUR	Arab Bureau
BDOV	G. P. Gooch and H. Temperley (eds.), <i>British Documents on the Origins of the War 1898-1914</i> , Volume 10, Part 2 (London, 1938).
CAB	Cabinet (Office, Conclusions, Memoranda)
CCB	Civil Commissioner, Baghdad
CO	Colonial Office
DBFP	E. L. Woodward and R. Butler (eds.), <i>Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919-1939</i> , First Series, Volume 4 (London, 1952) or Volume 13 (London, 1963).
DMI	Director of Military Intelligence
EEF	Egyptian Expeditionary Force
FO	Foreign Office
GHQ	General Headquarters
GOC	General Officer Commanding
HC	High Commissioner
ICMEA	Inter-Departmental Committee on Middle Eastern Affairs
IO	India Office
ISA	Israel State Archives
MAE	Ministère des Affaires Etrangères
MAEN	Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, Nantes
MAEP	Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, Paris
PB	Political, Baghdad
PRO	Public Record Office
SHA	Service Historique de l'Armée, Vincennes
SSFA	Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs
SSI	Secretary of State for India
WO	War Office

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## Theoretical Preface

This theoretical preface has four aims. The first is to explain which issues in the study of politics are illuminated by Abdallah's political career until early 1921. The second is to explain my use of the terms political leadership, legitimacy, authority and state formation. The third is to explain why these issues are important in the context of Arab politics between 1908 and 1921, that is, at a time when one political order collapsed and another came into being. The fourth is to explain why the concrete historical experience of Abdallah's early political career is a suitable vehicle for a study of these issues.

The first part of this preface will explain my use of the terms political leadership, authority, and legitimacy, and will characterize the kind of political figure Abdallah was until World War I. Because of World War I, the Arab revolt and the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, Abdallah and his family had to find new bases of support to maintain and expand their political leadership. Knowing what kind of political figure Abdallah was before World War I will make it easier to understand how he tried to establish himself as a political leader after the war. In this context political leader means either the head of a semi-autonomous Ottoman province like the Hijaz or the head of one of the successor Arab states of the Ottoman Empire. The second part will explain why the Arab East during the period examined here is an appropriate setting for a study of political leadership, authority, legitimacy and state formation. Similarly the second part will give the reader a framework for understanding how Abdallah tried to establish himself as a political leader in the post-war Fertile Crescent, reconstitute and expand his authority after the war, and legitimize his rule outside the Hijaz. Finally, the second part will explain why Abdallah's early political career sheds light on the process of state formation in the Arab East.

Abdallah and his family fitted the pattern of traditional patrimonial leaders. Abdallah's early political career was

representative of some of the challenges that confronted traditional patrimonial leadership in the Arab East. Max Weber, who differentiated between patriarchal and patrimonial leadership, believed that patriarchal leadership was the basis of all traditional political systems, and was limited to family kinship groups. In a patriarchal system, members of the family stand in subordinate relation to the master of the household, who has no administrative or bureaucratic mechanisms to enforce his will. The relationship between the patriarchal leader and his family is entirely personal. The patrimonial leader governs with the help of an administrative structure that has spread throughout the particular society, state or empire that he rules. Governing in a patrimonial system is thus far more complex and specialized than in a patriarchal system. A network of bureaucrats mediates contact between the patrimonial ruler and his subjects.<sup>1</sup> However, the difference between patriarchal and patrimonial leadership is not as sharp as Weber supposed. James Bill and Carl Leiden see patrimonial leadership as an extension and expansion of patriarchalism, that is, of the ruler's household.<sup>2</sup> The relationship between the patrimonial leader and his subjects remains one of paternal authority and kinship dependence.

The patrimonial leader is the patriarch of the society he rules. Traditional patrimonial leaders like Abdallah and his father ruled the the Hijaz and later Transjordan as if these lands were an outgrowth of the ruler's household. A traditional patrimonial leader is approachable, accessible and encourages his subjects to discuss their problems with him personally and maintains the loyalty of his followers by setting aside time for them to see him. The regular stream of information received through sustained personal contact with his subjects reinforces the rule of a patrimonial leader.

Typically, a royal family stands at the centre of the patrimonial system and their income is inseparable from that of the entity they rule. In addition, the patrimonial leader frequently believes that his rule has divine sanction and that his authority deserves the automatic and complete obedience of his subjects. In the case of the Emir of

Mecca this meant that his family's rule of the Hijaz was sanctioned by their descent from the Prophet Muhammad and the approval of the Sultan-Caliph in Istanbul.

Patrimonial leaders like the Hashimites relied strongly upon their ability to control their subjects through regular and direct personal contact. In societies like the Hijaz and Transjordan, where families, tribes and clans were the basis of the social and political order, personal ties to the patrimonial leader and his family were the means to power and influence. Personal ties to the rulers, not well-established political institutions, are the basis of politics in patrimonial systems. Those who have the closest ties to the ruler and his family hold key positions in traditional patrimonial systems like that of the Hijaz and, later, in Transjordan. Ascriptive factors and the confidence of the ruler, not personal achievement, are the traditional paths to advancement. Through an intimate knowledge of the major figures in their domains, patrimonial leaders reinforce their rule by playing rival factions, tribes, clans and families off against one another. This system of divide and rule is necessary to prevent power from concentrating outside the royal family. Patrimonial leaders often use marriage to consolidate ties with their followers and absorb the opposition. (Ibn Saud was well known for using marriage to consolidate his rule.)<sup>23</sup>

Political leadership cannot exist without authority. Authority is the capacity of a leader to exercise his moral ascendancy over a group of followers, and implies a sense of the duty of obedience on the part of those subject to it. Obedience is defined here as submission to authority. Obedience may result from recognition of authority as worthy and admirable. Alternatively, it may stem from fear of violence, acceptance of the inevitable or the expectation of reward. The belief that a certain individual or institution is entitled to one's obedience is a prerequisite of authority. Although exercised by individuals, authority may reside in entities like a state or, in the case of traditional Arab societies like those in which Abdallah lived, in a ruling family who embodies the state. In traditional Arab societies like

the Hijaz, authority is far more personal than institutional in origin.<sup>4</sup> In the Hijaz where Abdallah spent most of the first thirty-nine years of his life, Hashimite authority had its origin in two sources, one personal, the other institutional: the person of the Emir of Mecca, and local and Ottoman veneration for the ancient institution of the Emirate of Mecca.

In trying to answer the question of why Arabs obey their leaders, Michael Hudson has identified several dimensions of traditional authority in the Arab world. Hudson's classification is a useful point of reference for understanding the nature of political authority in traditional Arab societies like the Hijaz and Transjordan. Hudson's dimensions illuminate how a traditional patrimonial figure like Abdallah understood the nature of authority on which political leadership in an Arab society depends.

The patriarchal dimension included the importance of kinship groups and derived largely from the traditional respect shown to fathers in Arab society. The strict obedience to the master of a household, which is a traditional feature of Arab social life, has influenced patterns of Arab political leadership which, in some ways, resemble stern fatherly rule. Patrimonial deference extends beyond the family to the subjects of a ruler who submit to him much in the same way as members of a household submit to a father's formal authority. In traditional Arab societies like the Hijaz and Transjordan of the early twentieth century, family ties determined who was to become a political leader and who not. Hudson believes that the multiplicity of kinship groups, religious groups, ethnic groups, tribes and clans in Arab societies all combine to create a pluralism that limits the absolutism of political leaders.

The consultative dimension is important in Arab tribal society, indicating a degree of communal consensus and participation in decision making. The traditional tribal chief cannot rule arbitrarily; he must consult other tribal elders and needs tribal consensus to rule. He leads by virtue of his personal qualities as recognized by the leaders of the main families. Although the eldest or strongest son of a tribal chief

is usually the leading candidate to succeed his father, he must secure the allegiance of the elders of the tribe whose oath of allegiance to him (*bay'a*) legitimizes his rule.

For Hudson the Islamic dimension 'consists of the moral precepts for right rule laid down in Islamic doctrine, with its authoritarian and egalitarian tendencies, and the historical practice of the Islamic dynasties.' However, in the case of Abdallah and his family, the Islamic dimension of their authority derived primarily from their descent from the Prophet Muhammad. The descent of the Hashimites, coupled with a centuries-old tradition of administering the Muslim holy sites and the support of the Ottoman Sultan, reinforced the ability of Abdallah and his family to compel the obedience of their followers in the Hijaz. Reverence for the family of the Prophet reinforced the deference that one finds in traditional Arab societies for the leading figures of tribes, clans, and influential families.<sup>5</sup>

Political legitimacy exists when a ruler's subjects accept the propriety of his right to rule them. Legitimation is the means by which political leaders convince others that they have a right to rule them. A political leader's rule is legitimate when his followers agree that they have a moral obligation to obey his commands and those of his government, and see those commands as consistent with their moral principles and conception of just rule. According to Weber, 'So far as it is not derived merely from fear or from motives of expediency, a willingness to submit to an order imposed by one man or a small group, always implies a belief in the legitimate authority (*Herrschaftsgewalt*) of the source imposing it. [. . . ]'<sup>6</sup> The authority on which political leadership depends is not possible without legitimacy. In cases where a ruler must use violence or the threat of violence as the sole means to compel obedience, legitimacy and thus authority are clearly lacking.

Weber's understanding of the bases of legitimacy and the 'basic *legitimations* of domination' are a helpful measure for trying to characterize Hashimite political leadership before World War I. Weber argued that legitimacy may be ascribed to a social order by virtue of (a) tradition, (b) affectual, especially emotional, faith (c) value-

rational faith (natural law) or (d) enactment of that which is considered legal.<sup>7</sup> The legitimacy of Hashimite rule in the Hijaz, including Abdallah's standing as a recognized political figure, derived primarily from the sanctity of tradition. The legitimacy of pre-war Hashimite rule had three bases: their descent from the Prophet Muhammad, centuries of ruling the Hijaz and the sanction of the Ottoman Sultan. The enactment of statutes as Weber understood the term played little or no part in legitimizing Hashimite rule. When Weber wrote about legal enactments he meant the promulgation of statutes in the western sense of constitutions and legal codes. His understanding of legal enactments apparently did not include Islamic law (*shari'a*), to which traditional Muslim leaders like Abdallah felt themselves bound. Because the legitimacy of his standing as a recognized political figure depended in part upon his adherence to Islamic law, legal enactments were in fact a basis of Abdallah's legitimacy, but not in the sense that Weber intended. Abdallah's legitimacy did not depend upon his commitment to a body of legal regulations which had been enacted in a recognized secular manner. Rather, adherence to the *shari'a* constituted the cultural legitimizing minimum requirement of social behaviour, including, of course, public political behaviour. However, political leadership in the Hijaz was far too personal in nature, and lacked a strong institutional foundation, for legitimacy to derive from legal enactments as Weber understood them.

Weber argued that there were three 'basic *legitimations* of domination': tradition, charisma and legality. Tradition legitimized Abdallah's pre-war political status. A mixture of tradition and charisma legitimized Abdallah's political leadership after the war when he was no longer subordinate to the authority of his father.

Weber defined traditional legitimation as 'the authority of the 'eternal yesterday', i.e. of the mores sanctified through the unimaginably ancient recognition and habitual orientation to conform. This is 'traditional' domination exercised by the patriarch and patrimonial prince of yore.' Weber may not have realized that such princes, like Abdallah and his family, existed in his own day. Nevertheless, his

reference to a 'patrimonial prince of yore' fits Abdallah very well. An ancient tradition of Hashimite rule of the Hijaz legitimized Abdallah's pre-war political status and, later, helped legitimize his rule of Transjordan.

Weber defined charismatic legitimation as 'the authority of the extraordinary and personal *gift of grace* (charisma), the absolutely personal devotion and personal confidence in revelation, heroism, or other qualities of individual leadership. This is 'charismatic' domination, as exercised by the prophet or--in the field of politics--by the elected war lord, the plebiscitarian ruler, the great demagogue, or the political party leader.' Until the end of World War I charisma did not legitimize Abdallah's standing as a political figure. Charisma is often the product of military or political success. The charismatic element of Abdallah's leadership emerged as a result of his success in the political and military spheres during and immediately after the war. Charisma did not enter into the question until Abdallah had proven his prowess as a military commander and diplomat, and until after the war when he stood on his own as a political leader who was no longer subordinate to the authority of his father or the Ottoman state. Abdallah's success as a military commander during the Arab revolt, including the part he played in overthrowing Ottoman rule, and the establishment of Transjordan in 1921 fostered the charismatic component of his political leadership.

Weber defined 'domination by virtue of 'legality'' as 'the belief in the validity of legal statute and functional 'competence' based on rationally created *rules*. In this case, obedience is expected in discharging statutory obligations. This is domination as exercised by the modern 'servant of the state' and by all those bearers of power who in this respect resemble him.'<sup>29</sup> As noted above, politics in the Hijaz were too personal in nature, and lacked a solid institutional basis, for legality in Weber's sense to have legitimized Abdallah's political leadership. Hudson has correctly noted that when legal norms and well-established structures, traditional or modern, are lacking, the personal characteristics of a leader are a crucial factor in legitimizing his



rule.<sup>23</sup>

Prior to World War I the Hashimites were traditional patrimonial Arab leaders. Their authority was more personal than institutional in nature, but did have an institutional component. The personal source of Hashimite authority was the Emir of Mecca himself; the institutional source was Hijazi and Ottoman veneration for the Emirate of Mecca. Pre-war Hashimite authority had three elements: patriarchial, consultative and Islamic. The moral bases of Hashimite authority were their descent from the Prophet, a long tradition of ruling the Hijaz and the approval of the Ottoman Sultan. The material bases of their authority were financial subventions from the Ottoman state and, to a lesser extent, from elsewhere in the Muslim world, income from the annual pilgrimage, Ottoman troops in the Hijaz and whatever forces the Emir of Mecca could raise on his own. Prior to the war Hashimite rule of the Hijaz had three bases of legitimacy. The first was tradition, that is, lineage, a history of ruling the Hijaz and support from the Sultan. The second was adherence to the *shari'a*. The third was the personal characteristics of the Emir and his family.

Pre-war Hashimite authority depended on the stability and continuity of the Ottoman order, which sustained the material and moral bases of patrimonial rule in the Hijaz. The centralizing policies of the Young Turk regime and the upheavals of World War I challenged the traditional political order in the Hijaz and convinced the Hashimites of the need to secede from the Ottoman Empire and assume leadership of the Arab national movement. Because of those challenges, the Hashimites had to seek new material and moral bases in order to maintain and expand their authority.

The Arab East between 1908 and 1921 is an appropriate setting for a study of political leadership, authority, legitimacy and state formation in a changing society. Until World War I the Ottoman Empire was the political framework in which the Hashimites and other Ottoman notables exercised political leadership. Prior to the war, the leadership, authority and legitimacy of these notables depended in large part upon the material and moral support they received from the

Ottoman state. The collapse of the Ottoman Empire meant that the Hashimites and others had to find new political frameworks in which to exercise political leadership, new sources of moral and material support, and new ways to reconstitute, maintain and legitimize their authority. Former Ottoman notables such as Abdallah had to reestablish their authority at a time when Great Britain and France replaced the Ottoman Empire as the dominant powers in the Middle East, and when the British, the French and the incipient Arab nationalist movement were introducing new ideas of political authority into the region.

To survive as political leaders Ottoman notables like the Hashimites had to reach an accommodation with Great Britain and/or France. One of the most important features of the period under study here is that Great Britain and France introduced new principles of legitimate political authority into the Arab East to which Abdallah and his family had to conform in order to survive the demise of the Ottoman Empire. After the beginning of the Arab revolt in June 1916, the very existence of a Hashimite regime in the Hijaz depended upon British support. The same applied later to the Emirate of Transjordan and to the Hashimite monarchy in Iraq. In 1920, the regime established in Syria by Abdallah's younger brother, Faysal, collapsed because he was unable to reach an accommodation with France. However, British and French ideas of legitimate political authority intermingled with their de facto interests in the Middle East. In British eyes a legitimate political leader, especially in Transjordan or Iraq, two lands which fell under British mandate, was one who could effectively command the obedience of his subjects, but who was also expected to uphold British interests in the Middle East. Rulers like Abdallah in Transjordan, his father in the Hijaz and his brother, Faysal, in Iraq, depended upon British financial and even military support for the survival of their regimes. For this reason, they had to conform to these various British notions of political authority.

British ideas of good government clashed with some of the well-established patterns of authority upon which traditional patrimonial leadership depended. In the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire it was

an accepted practice for patrimonial figures like Abdallah to cultivate their followers by dispensing largess. After the war British subsidies were the main form of income of the Hashimites in the Hijaz, Transjordan and Iraq. British constraints on how those subsidies were spent limited the ability of patrimonial leaders like Abdallah to dispense largess. This in turn made it more difficult for Abdallah to establish his rule in Transjordan, a land he had never ruled, and whose people he had not known until late 1920.

The British also introduced new notions of political authority. In traditional Arab societies authority is personal, not institutional, in nature. However, under British pressure, Abdallah and his family had to create at least the semblance of western-style bureaucratic institutions in the states they governed. This meant that traditional, personal patterns of political leadership had to function in new and unfamiliar institutional frameworks.

British domination challenged the patrimonial dimension of traditional Arab authority. In tribal societies a ruler cannot lead without securing the allegiance of the major families or tribal elders. This element of traditional authority was completely disregarded when Great Britain installed Abdallah in Transjordan. The British made no attempt to consult local leaders as to their views of the the desirability of creating a Hashimite regime in their land.

The Arab revolt and its ambitious goals forced Abdallah and his family to seek new legitimations of their leadership. Leading an insurrection against the Ottoman state, which had ruled the Arab East since the sixteenth century, made it difficult for the Hashimites to legitimize their continued rule on grounds of tradition. In the eyes of many Arabs and Muslims the Arab revolt called into question Husayn's legitimacy as a Muslim political leader. The legitimacy of his leadership derived from the sanctity of tradition, that is, from his descent, a long family history of ruling the Muslim holy places and the sanction of the Ottoman Sultan. The Arab revolt made it harder for Abdallah to assert a claim of legitimacy on religious grounds when he tried to seek leadership on his own. In alliance with the British

Abdallah and his family led an insurrection that contributed to the downfall of the world's last Muslim empire. The Hashimites played a part in making it possible for Christian powers to seize control of Muslim lands. Additionally, the very survival of the Hashimites depended upon support from the British, who now directly controlled most of the Fertile Crescent and indirectly controlled the Arabian peninsula. Because of the Arab revolt the Hashimites had to find new forms of legitimation to justify their rule and refute charges that they had betrayed Islam and were the stooges of Great Britain. To do this they presented themselves as the defenders of the Arabs and Islam against Turkish impiety and the leaders of the Arab national revival. Thus, to legitimize their continued rule of the Hijaz, and the extension of their rule to the Fertile Crescent, the Hashimites claimed that the cause of the Arab revolt and Arab nationalism was synonymous with the cause of Islam.

To refute charges that they had betrayed Islam, and to legitimize a new leadership role for themselves in the post-war Arab East, the Hashimites claimed that the aim of the Arab revolt was to establish an Arab empire embracing most of the Fertile Crescent and the Arabian peninsula. This new Arab empire would uphold the dignity of Islam and replace the Ottoman Empire as the defender of Islam in the world. For reasons that will be explained later, Husayn and Abdallah claimed that Great Britain had agreed to establish such an empire under Hashimite leadership. To legitimize their domination of this empire, the Hashimites relied upon claims that, as leaders of the Arab national revival and defenders of the Arabs against Turkish tyranny, they, and not the Ottomans, were the true defenders of Islam. They also relied upon the claim that they were the Arab leaders who had the greatest influence with Great Britain.

The period under study here is significant for a study of state formation. Ilya Harik's classification of traditional Arab states illuminates the process of state formation in the post-war Middle East. Harik defines the state as 'an established authority which enjoys jurisdiction over a core territory and people for an extended period of

time, stretching over at least several generations. The jurisdiction includes powers to implement the law, impose taxation, and demand military service, loyalty and allegiance to the established authority.' Relying on this definition, Harik has concluded that the origins of most Arab states predate the nineteenth century. Most of these proto-states were locally based, recognized as legitimate by their peoples, and had a core territory that remained unchanged for generations.

Harik has identified five kinds of traditional Arab states, which have differed in structure, power base, legitimacy and traditions. The first is the Imam-Chief system in which authority resides in a sanctified leader. There were two types of this kind of state: one, the dissenter communities and, two, the mainstream orthodox communities. Yemen (San'a), Oman and Cyrenaica (Libya) fit into the first category; the Hijaz and Morocco fit into the second. According to this theory, the Hashimite Kingdom of the Hijaz, which was established in June 1916, was an outgrowth of the proto-state Emirate of Mecca. The second type is the alliance system of chiefs and imams. Here authority resided in a 'tribal chief [who] supported and awarded a legitimate authority beyond the confines of his tribe by virtue of his identification and/or alliance with a prominent religious leader and his teachings.' Saudi Arabia exemplifies this kind of Arab state. The third type is the traditional secular system, where authority resides 'in a dynasty free from religious attributes.' Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen and Lebanon represent this type of Arab state. The fourth is the bureaucratic-military oligarchy. Here 'authority originates in urban-based garrison commanders, who in time develop an extensive bureaucratic apparatus.' This group includes Algeria, Tunisia, Tripolitania (Libya) and Egypt. Except for Egypt, authority in these states began with urban-based Ottoman officers, who exploited the decline of Ottoman power in order to seek autonomy from Istanbul. The legitimacy of these governments derived from their representation of the Ottoman Sultan. The fifth type is the colonially-created state system. These states were carved out of the Ottoman Empire to satisfy British and French interests, and lacked 'any credible

local base of authority upon which to erect new structures.' Iraq, Jordan, Syria, and Palestine represent this category. As Harik has noted, 'Colonialism left a serious impact on most Arab states, but in only the abovementioned cases can one maintain that the state system itself was created by the colonial powers.' Prior to World War I the Fertile Crescent was divided into Ottoman administrative units, none of which contained the seed of future Arab states. The frontiers of these units did not correspond to any of the present state boundaries in the area. Britain and France shaped the boundaries of the Arab lands they ruled, but only in the Fertile Crescent did they actually create those states.<sup>10</sup>

This thesis will show that Abdallah played a direct part in the establishment of two Arab states, the Hashimite Kingdom of the Hijaz and Transjordan, and an indirect part in the creation of modern Iraq. Prior to June 1916 the Emirate of Mecca existed as the nucleus of a state within the wider political framework of the Ottoman Empire. Relying on Harik's theory of Arab state formation, we can conclude that the Hashimite Kingdom of the Hijaz emerged from the proto-state Emirate of Mecca. Transjordan and Iraq, which Great Britain carved out of the former Ottoman Empire, did not emerge from the nuclei of Arab states ruled by the Hashimites or anyone else. The problems Abdallah confronted in establishing his authority in both lands will be explained below.

Before the Arab revolt Hashimite rule of the Hijaz depended upon four external and four internal bases of support. The external bases of support were the appointment of the ruling Emir by the Ottoman Sultan, Ottoman financial subsidies, Ottoman troops in the Hijaz and income from the annual pilgrimage. The internal bases of support were the descent of the Hashimites, a long and well-recognized tradition of ruling the Hijaz, whatever troops the Emir of Mecca could raise on his own, and the network of ties binding the fate of local notables and tribal leaders to that of the ruling Emir. The first three external supports disappeared when the Hijaz seceded from the Ottoman Empire. The war and the

detachment of the Hijaz from the Ottoman Empire restricted the flow of pilgrims to the Hijaz.

Because of the Arab revolt, Abdallah and his family faced the problem of reconstituting their authority in the Hijaz. The Hashimite Kingdom of the Hijaz was built on the foundation of a proto-state, the Emirate of Mecca. British financial and military support replaced similar support from the Ottomans. The new ways the Hashimites found to legitimize their rule have already been mentioned. Relying upon the internal bases of support greatly facilitated the task of reconstituting their authority after June 1916.

Reconstituting Hashimite authority in the Hijaz was relatively simple compared to the difficulty of establishing Hashimite authority in Iraq and Transjordan, two lands Abdallah had never visited, much less ruled.' During the war the Hashimites came to aspire to establish and rule an Arab empire embracing most of the Arabian peninsula and the Fertile Crescent. This thesis will explore at great length how and why they came to have that ambition. Abdallah's role in that empire was to be the ruler of Iraq. As we shall see, Abdallah's overriding ambition during and after the war was to rule Iraq.

Abdallah faced tremendous obstacles in fulfilling that ambition. He was a traditional patrimonial leader whose political standing in the Hijaz derived from kinship ties, and who had well-established personal ties to the tribes, clans and families of the Hijaz. He lacked the benefit of similar ties in Iraq. Iraqis had no reason to recognize the authority of a man who had never lived among them. None of Weber's four bases of legitimacy applied to Abdallah in Iraq. The same applies to Weber's three basic legitimations of domination. Tradition was the most important base of legitimacy and basic legitimation of Hashimite rule in the Hijaz. No tradition bound Abdallah to Iraq. The modern state of Iraq was a construct of British interests.

To establish himself in Iraq Abdallah had, first, to convince the British that it was in their interest to install him in Baghdad. His next task was to create an Iraqi constituency that would support his rule. The Hashimites and their followers had to convince the British

that Abdallah fitted their conception of a legitimate political leader. This meant convincing the British that Abdallah would loyally uphold British interests in Iraq and command the obedience of the Iraqi majority, particularly the Shiites. As we shall see, the Hashimites and their Iraqi partisans went to great lengths to convince the British that the Shiites of Iraq would recognize the legitimacy of Abdallah's rule. The Hashimites used the Iraqi officers who had joined the Arab revolt during the war, and others who later became part of Faysal's regime in Syria, as a means to convince the British that the people of Iraq would recognize Abdallah as their legitimate sovereign.

The British refused to install Abdallah in Iraq. However, much to Abdallah's displeasure and surprise they did install him in Transjordan in March 1921. Abdallah's prospects in Transjordan were no better than they were in Iraq and were in some respects worse. Abdallah, who had never ruled Transjordan, had no interest in ruling that land. He made no effort to convince the British with respect to Transjordan that he fit their notion of legitimate political authority or that the people of that land would recognize him as their legitimate sovereign. Hashimite rule of Transjordan between October 1918 and July 1920, when the country was part of Faysal's Syrian regime, was in fact very unpopular. When Abdallah reached Transjordan in late 1920, there was little sentiment for a revival of Hashimite rule. The British decision to establish Abdallah in Transjordan had nothing to do with whether or not the local people would accept him as their legitimate sovereign, but rather with his ability to maintain control by whatever means were necessary. Virtually all of the problems discussed in this preface of political leadership, legitimacy and authority were irrelevant to British strategic concerns in Transjordan. In the judgement of the His Majesty's Government, Abdallah's rule of Transjordan was acceptable because he had agreed to uphold British interests east of the Jordan, and because they believed that he could control the territory better than any other leader at the time. The British decision to install Abdallah in Transjordan had more to do with the needs of British policy in the Middle East than



it did with any consideration for the problems Abdallah faced in establishing himself as the legitimate ruler of Transjordan.

Before the war the Hashimites did not have to create the material and moral foundations of their authority. The Ottoman state supplied the material basis of Hashimite authority, including the political structures in which that authority could operate. The moral basis derived from the precepts for just rule in Islamic law, the historical practice of Islamic dynasties, the descent of the Hashimites, the sanctity of an ancient tradition that decreed that only descendants of the Prophet should administer the Muslim holy land and the imprimatur of the Ottoman Sultan.

As a consequence of the Arab revolt, the Hashimites had to find new moral and material bases for their authority, especially in the Fertile Crescent where they had never ruled. Great Britain replaced the Ottoman Empire as the provider of material support. Until June 1916 the Hashimites secured the material basis of their authority by presenting themselves as loyal subjects of the Ottoman state. Because of the Arab revolt they could no longer do that. The new challenge they faced was how to make themselves acceptable to the British so that Great Britain would supply the material foundation of their authority. They met this challenge by presenting themselves to the British as defenders of their interests in the Arab East.

However, the British could not supply the moral foundation of Hashimite authority. To supply the moral basis of their post-war authority, the Hashimites relied on Arab nationalism, and their leadership of the Arab national revival. Because of their commanding role in overthrowing what they argued was Turkish oppression of the Arabs, the Hashimites claimed that they were the most qualified of the Arabs to replace Ottoman rule in the Arab East. As descendants of the Prophet, who had defended the Arabs against Turkish impiety and tyrannical rule, the Hashimites presented themselves as best able to assume Arab leadership after World War I. The Hashimites used alleged Turkish impiety, as exemplified by Ottoman oppression of the Arabs, as

the means to establish the Islamic credentials of the Arab revolt and the legitimacy of post-war Hashimite rule of the Arab East.

The Arab revolt and the collapse of the Ottoman Empire meant that the Hashimites would have to exercise their authority in new and unfamiliar political structures that were dominated in varying degrees by Great Britain. Until World War I the Hashimites had always exercised their authority within the framework of an imam-chief proto-state, the Emirate of Mecca, which was part of the Ottoman Empire. After the war Husayn continued to exercise his authority in an imam-chief state, the Hashimite Kingdom of the Hijaz, the successor state of the Emirate of Mecca. Husayn's challenge was to learn how to exercise his authority in a nominally independent state whose viability depended upon British material support. Abdallah and his younger brother, Faysal, faced the double challenge of learning how to exercise their authority in lands the Hashimites had never ruled (Syria, Iraq and Transjordan) and in colonially-created states dominated by Great Britain. As the British-installed ruler of Transjordan, Abdallah had to learn how to exercise his authority within the confines of a British mandate.

The Arab revolt and World War I forced the Hashimites to find new legitimations of their authority. Tradition was the most important legitimation of Hashimite authority before the war. However, after the war Abdallah and his family realized that the traditional techniques of legitimizing their authority in the Hijaz would not be enough to secure the obedience of Syrians, Transjordanians and Iraqis. Arab nationalism thus became the most important legitimation of Abdallah's authority after the war. The wartime success of the Hashimites as military commanders and Arab nationalist leaders also became a legitimation of Abdallah's authority. This success added a charismatic element to the legitimation of his post-war authority.

This thesis examines the political career of Abdallah bin al-Husayn from 1908 until the establishment of the Emirate of Transjordan in early 1921. Abdallah's early political career will be the vehicle for a study of political leadership, authority, legitimacy and state formation in the Arab East. This thesis focuses on Abdallah's transformation from a pre-

war Hijazi and Ottoman notable to an Arab nationalist leader, a key figure in the post-war politics of the Fertile Crescent and the founder of the Emirate of Transjordan. As we shall see, that transformation illuminates the problems of political leadership, authority, legitimacy and state formation during a period when one political order collapsed and another arose to replace it.

#### NOTES

1. H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (eds.), *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (New York, 1958) pp. 296-97.
2. James A. Bill and Carl Leiden, *The Middle East. Politics and Power* (Boston, 1974) p. 104.
3. For a detailed discussion of patrimonial leadership in Arab Muslim societies, see Bill and Leiden, *Middle East*, chapter four.
4. Roberto Michels, 'Authority', Edwin R.A. Seligman and Alvin Thompson (eds.) *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, vol. 1 (New York, 1933, 1951 reprint) pp. 319-21.
5. Michael Hudson, *Arab Politics. The Search for Legitimacy* (New Haven and London, 1977) pp. 83-104.
6. This quotation from Weber appears in selections from his work which are published in David Held et al (eds.), *States and Societies* (New York and London, 1983) p. 114.
7. Held, *States*, pp. 114-15. Italics in original.
8. Gerth and Wright, *Weber*, pp. 77-79. Italics in original.
9. Hudson, *Arab Politics*, pp. 18-20.
10. Ilya Harik, 'The Origins of the Arab State System', Giacomo Luciani (ed.), *The Arab State* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, 1990) pp. 1-28.
11. After the pilgrimage of 1909 Abdallah briefly passed through Transjordan on his way to Damascus. As far as anyone knows, this initial contact left no discernible impression on him or the people of Transjordan.

## INTRODUCTION

This thesis examines the political career of Abdallah bin al-Husayn from 1908 until the creation of the Emirate of Transjordan in March 1921. The central aim of this thesis is to explain how Abdallah, the second son of Al-Husayn bin 'Alī, the Emir of Mecca and, later, King of the Hijaz, was transformed from a Hijazi notable to a major force in the post-war politics of the Fertile Crescent and the founder of the Emirate of Transjordan. Abdallah's political career until March 1921 will be studied in the context of his family's evolving political ambitions and Anglo-Hashimite and Hashimite-Arab nationalist relations. Abdallah's early political career will be the vehicle for a study of some aspects of the changing character of Arab political leadership during and immediately after World War I.

Abdallah's early political career will be examined from eight perspectives. First, how were his political ambitions formed, fostered and thwarted until March 1921? Second, what were the political structures he deemed appropriate for the realization of those ambitions? Third, what were the roles of Great Britain and Arab nationalism respectively in the making of Abdallah as an Arab political leader? Fourth, what were Abdallah's political ambitions prior to the creation of Transjordan? Fifth, what strategies did Abdallah, his family and his supporters adopt to realize those ambitions? Sixth, who were Abdallah's Iraqi and Syrian partisans and why did they support him? Seventh, what can the creation of the Emirate of Transjordan in 1921 teach us about state formation in the Fertile Crescent in the aftermath of World War I? Eighth, what were Abdallah's prospects in March 1921 for establishing his authority in Transjordan and for being recognized by the people of that land as their legitimate ruler?

The collapse of the Ottoman Empire during World War I necessitated the creation of new political entities and new forms of political leadership in the Hijaz and the Fertile Crescent. Abdallah's early political career and the creation of Transjordan illuminate the changing face of Arab political leadership and state formation in the Arab East

as a result of World War I. Abdallah's transformation from Ottoman notable to the founder of Transjordan offers an excellent opportunity to study the emergence of new forms of Arab political leadership, how Great Britain and Arab nationalism contributed to the making of that leadership, the shaping of Arab political expectations and state formation in the post-war Fertile Crescent.

Abdallah's association with the Arab nationalists of Iraq and Syria has much to teach us about the changing character of Arab political leadership during and after World War I. Abdallah's relationship with the nationalists of Iraq and Syria illuminates how he became involved in the politics of the Fertile Crescent, and how a relatively small circle of pro-Hashimite Arab nationalists, particularly Iraqis, came to the forefront of post-war Arab politics because of their service with the Hashimites during and after the Arab revolt.

The establishment of the Emirate of Transjordan in March 1921 was a noteworthy example of how a European power could create a new political entity in a territory where national boundaries had never been drawn and install a foreign-born ruler who had never lived in, much less governed, that land. Because Abdallah was not Transjordanian, he faced two problems when the Emirate of Transjordan was created. The first was how to establish his personal authority in a land where the British government, not the local people, had established him as ruler. The second was how to convince the people of Transjordan--who had no say in the creation of the Emirate of Transjordan--to accept him as their legitimate ruler. This thesis ends with the creation of Transjordan in late March 1921. The last chapter of this thesis will assess Abdallah's prospects in March 1921 of being widely recognized by the people of Transjordan as their legitimate sovereign.

One of the most important results of the First World War in the Middle East was the emergence of the Hashimite family and their followers as a major force in the political life of the Fertile Crescent. Before the war, Husayn and his sons were Ottoman notables whose sphere of action had been confined to the Hijaz and Istanbul. Until World War I they had never thought of themselves as the future rulers of an Arab

empire in the Fertile Crescent or any of the successor states of the Ottoman Empire. Their two overriding concerns before the war were to retain control of the Hijaz and to resist any attempt by the Ottoman government to limit the traditional autonomy of the Emirate of Mecca. During the war, Great Britain and a small circle of Arab nationalists in Syria encouraged the Hashimites to lead an Arab uprising against the Turks and assume the leadership of the Arab national movement. In return for leading an Arab insurrection, the British government pledged to recognize the independence of the Hijaz and, under limited and vague conditions, to recognize Arab independence in a portion of the Syrian interior. Husayn interpreted British pledges as a license for his family to establish and rule an Arab empire based in Mecca that embraced most of the Arabian peninsula and the Fertile Crescent. Husayn aimed to keep control of that empire within his family by establishing Abdallah, his second son, as the king of Iraq and Faysal, his third son, as the king of Syria.

Abdallah's ambition to rule Iraq emerged within the wider field of his family's evolving political ambitions. Abdallah's ambition in this regard, and the political expectations of the Arab nationalist supporters of the Hashimites, were shaped by Husayn's interpretation of the Husayn-McMahon correspondence. This thesis examines the intimate connection between Husayn's understanding of that correspondence and Abdallah's ambition to rule post-war Iraq. Considerable attention will be paid to the strategies that Abdallah, his family and partisans adopted in order to advance his cause in Iraq. The extent to which the Hashimites and their Iraqi partisans had any clear or definite plans for governing post-war Iraq will serve as a measure of the effectiveness of their strategies to realize Abdallah's ambitions in Iraq. One of the contentions of this thesis is that the rise and fall of Abdallah's ambition to rule post-war Iraq was the key to explaining many of the circumstances which led to the creation of the Emirate of Transjordan.

The first task of this thesis will be to examine Abdallah's role in Hashimite and Ottoman politics from 1908 to 1914 and to explain his family's political ambitions before World War I. Abdallah's evolving

role in Arab politics during and immediately after World War I cannot be understood without reference to the part he played in promoting his family's pre-war political ambitions. Abdallah's pre-war political role will be studied against the background of his family's conflict with the Ottoman government. That conflict will be explained as a struggle between the Hashimites, who strove to maintain and expand the traditional autonomy of the Hijaz, and the Young Turks, who hoped to bring the Hijaz under the direct control of the central government. This thesis will begin by examining Abdallah's central role in his family's relationship with the Ottoman government, their Arab rivals, the pre-war Arab political activists and Great Britain.

The second task will be to explain the origins of Abdallah's involvement in the post-war politics of the Fertile Crescent in the context of his family's evolving political ambitions. How Husayn and his sons came to aspire to establish and rule an Arab empire in the Fertile Crescent and Arabia will be explained as a consequence of their wartime relations with Great Britain and the Arab nationalists. We shall also examine why the Hashimites believed that such an empire would be necessary to protect their interests after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. Abdallah's ambition to rule post-war Iraq developed within the context of his father's ambition to expand his domain from the Hijaz to the Fertile Crescent. In order to understand the evolution of Hashimite ambitions, it will be necessary to examine at length Anglo-Hashimite negotiations during the war, particularly the Husayn-McMahon correspondence. That examination will isolate the factors which molded Abdallah's political expectations and emphasize how Husayn interpreted the Husayn-McMahon correspondence. Husayn's interpretation of that correspondence will, in turn, be related to the shaping of Abdallah's evolving role in Arab politics.

The third task will be to explain why Abdallah failed to realize his ambition to rule Iraq. Abdallah's first involvement in the politics of the Fertile Crescent was not, as is usually supposed, his role in the creation of Transjordan, but his unsuccessful efforts to establish a Hashimite monarchy in Iraq. Abdallah's Iraqi supporters, most of whom

were ex-Ottoman officers and officials, were his first Arab constituency outside the Hijaz. British and Iraqi attitudes towards the prospect of Abdallah's installation in Iraq will be examined in detail.

Little is known about Abdallah's role in the politics of the Fertile Crescent from the end of the war until July 1920. By discussing his role in Iraqi politics, this thesis will explain how Abdallah tried to gain a foothold in Iraq, and how his failure to do this played a part in the creation of Transjordan. A study of Iraqi and, to a lesser extent, Syrian politics from Abdallah's standpoint will shed new light on the political life of both lands from the end of the war until July 1920.

Particular attention will be paid to the strategies Abdallah, his family and Iraqi supporters adopted in order to realize his ambitions in Iraq. Abdallah and his supporters were well aware that the Hashimites, who had never visited much less ruled Iraq, would have great difficulty legitimizing their rule in a land which had a Shiite majority. This thesis will examine the strategies Abdallah, his family and some of his partisans adopted to convince the British that the Shiites of Iraq would accept Abdallah as their legitimate sovereign. Abdallah's strategies will be contrasted with those of his followers in order to determine the effectiveness of both in promoting their common aim of creating a Hashimite monarchy in independent Iraq. As we shall see, Abdallah's failure to achieve his aims in Iraq stemmed in large part from the inconsistent and contradictory strategies he and his Iraqi partisans adopted, disunity among those partisans, and the lack of a clear plan for governing Iraq once Abdallah and his followers had come to power.

Between 1908 and 1921 Abdallah adopted various strategies to promote his interests and those of his family. By focusing on those strategies it will be possible to discern patterns of behaviour that characterized his style of leadership and to identify some of the constraints that Great Britain placed on Arab political leadership during and after World War I. Those constraints will explain why some of Abdallah's strategies were more successful than others. The interplay of ambition, strategy and external constraints in Abdallah's early political career will be one of the major themes of this thesis.



From the end of World War I until July 1920 British official opinion was often sharply divided over the wisdom of establishing Abdallah in Iraq. As we shall see, the primary reason for Abdallah's failure to realize his ambitions in Iraq was the refusal of the British government to enthrone him in Baghdad. This thesis will closely examine the conflict between the British administration in Iraq and the India Office, who vehemently opposed Abdallah's candidature for an Iraqi throne, and the Foreign Office and the British authorities in Cairo, who took a more favourable view of Abdallah's capabilities.

The fourth task will be to discuss Abdallah's failure to realize his ambitions in the Hijaz and Syria. By late July 1920 Abdallah's prospects for advancement had collapsed not only in Iraq, but also in the Hijaz and in Syria. Beginning in early 1919 the politics of Abdallah's Iraqi throne became entangled with other aspects of Anglo-Hashimite relations, the Saudi-Hashimite rivalry and personal rivalries within the Hashimite family. Abdallah's failure in May 1919 to defeat Saudi forces at Turaba, Anglo-French rejection of Husayn's proposal to substitute Abdallah for Faysal in Syria and Abdallah's estrangement from his father and subsequent dismissal in June 1920 as foreign minister of the Hijaz will be related to the creation of the Emirate of Transjordan.

Explaining Abdallah's role in the establishment of the Emirate of Transjordan will be the fifth and final task of this thesis. That role will be studied against the background of Hashimite-Transjordanian relations during the Arab revolt and Faysal's reign in Syria, Abdallah's ambitions in Iraq and British policy towards Transjordan from July 1920 to March 1921. Chapter eight examines several issues related to the creation of Transjordan: the relationship between Abdallah's intervention in Transjordan and his ambitions in Iraq, British policy towards Transjordan after July 1920, Abdallah's relationship with the Syrian nationalists who fled from Syria after Faysal's downfall in late July 1920, the Transjordanian reaction to Abdallah's intervention in Transjordan, and the prospects that the people of Transjordan would recognize Abdallah as their legitimate sovereign.

By examining Hashimite-Transjordanian relations from July 1917, when the Arab revolt reached Transjordan, until the creation of the Emirate of Transjordan in March 1921, it will be possible to draw conclusions about Abdallah's prospects for establishing his authority in Transjordan and being recognized by its people as their legitimate ruler. Abdallah intervened in Transjordan in order to force the British government to establish him in Iraq. Chapter eight will explain why Abdallah's strategies to achieve that end were ineffective. After the overthrow of Faysal's Syrian regime, Syrian nationalists and some Transjordanians rallied to Abdallah when he intervened in Transjordan. Their motives for supporting Abdallah, and the effectiveness of their support in advancing his ambitions, will be assessed.

This thesis is not the first study of Abdallah's early career and related issues such as the Husayn-McMahon correspondence and British policy towards Iraq and Transjordan. Conceptually and thematically, however, this thesis differs from earlier studies in its approach to Abdallah's early political career. Other studies of Abdallah's role in Arab politics until 1921 have taken the form of narrative biography and political history based on an examination of primary published and unpublished sources. These studies have paid little, if any, attention to general issues in the study of politics such as legitimacy, state formation, the shaping of political expectations, or the structures considered necessary for the realization of those expectations. This thesis combines two methods of study by analyzing Abdallah's early political development in light of the theoretical issues discussed above and by its careful and thorough examination of primary source material.'

This thesis is the only study that examines Abdallah's early political career in the context of his family's political ambitions as they evolved during and immediately after World War I. Abdallah's involvement in the politics of the Fertile Crescent is explained here as one consequence of his father's interpretation of British wartime pledges to support Arab independence under Hashimite leadership. No other study of Abdallah's early political career has explained the connection between his emergence as a major force in the post-war

politics of the Fertile Crescent and British and Arab nationalist encouragement of Hashimite political ambitions during World War I. Because of that connection, this thesis will devote considerable attention to Anglo-Hashimite negotiations during World War I (particularly the Husayn-McMahon correspondence) concerning the future of the Fertile Crescent. This thesis will highlight the aspects of those negotiations that encouraged the Hashimites, especially Abdallah, to believe that Great Britain would support the extension of Hashimite rule to the Fertile Crescent. Abdallah's vital part in encouraging his family, first, to revolt against the Turks and, then, to expand their ambitions to include the Fertile Crescent will be emphasized.

The role of the Husayn-McMahon correspondence in the shaping of Abdallah as a political leader will be studied in chapters three and four. One aim of those chapters will be to show how the treatment of the Husayn-McMahon correspondence in this thesis differs from that in the writings of other scholars, particularly Elie Kedourie, A. L. Tibawi and Isaiah Friedman.

Abdallah's role in the post-war politics of Iraq has never been studied in depth. No one has examined his ties to the nationalists of Iraq before July 1920. The only study of Abdallah's role in Iraqi politics is found in a few pages of Mary C. Wilson's recent (1987) biography of Abdallah. Wilson argues that Abdallah's interest in Iraq (and, by implication, the Fertile Crescent in general) began only after the Wahhabis had routed his forces at Turaba in May 1919 and ended his prospects for advancement in the Hijaz.<sup>2</sup> Wilson does not probe the connection between the Hashimite interpretation of the Husayn-McMahon correspondence and the beginning of Abdallah's ambitions in the Fertile Crescent. For this reason, Wilson has misunderstood and misrepresented the origins of Abdallah's involvement in the post-war politics of Iraq and Transjordan.

This thesis will show that Abdallah's ambition to rule Iraq first came to light soon after the occupation of Baghdad in March 1917. As we shall see, that ambition had its origins in British and Arab nationalist encouragement of Hashimite ambitions during the war, and not

in Abdallah's defeat at Turaba in May 1919. The beginning of Abdallah's involvement in the politics of the Fertile Crescent will also be traced to Husayn's interpretation of the Husayn-McMahon correspondence and other British statements concerning the future of Arab independence in the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire.

In their studies of British policy towards Iraq, Briton Cooper Busch, Philip Ireland and Peter Sluglett devote some space to explaining why the British government considered enthroning Abdallah in Iraq after World War I. Their treatment of this subject is limited because Abdallah was not the primary focus of their research. Busch, Ireland and Sluglett pay far more attention to Abdallah's younger brother, Faysal, who founded the Hashimite monarchy in Iraq. Busch takes a greater interest in Abdallah's brief role in Iraqi politics than do Ireland and Sluglett. Busch's treatment of this subject is flawed, however, because his exclusive reliance upon British sources has limited his knowledge of Hashimite and Iraqi nationalist politics.<sup>3</sup>

This thesis examines the role of the India Office, the Government of India and the British administration in Iraq in the making of Abdallah's early political career. Busch, Ireland, Sluglett and Wilson have all referred to India's opposition to Abdallah's establishment in Iraq. They have not, however, specifically studied the crucial role of India in influencing Abdallah's evolving role in Arab politics between 1918 and 1921. This thesis contends that the shaping of Abdallah's early political career is incomprehensible without an understanding of why the India Office and the British administration in Baghdad opposed Abdallah's installation in Iraq.<sup>4</sup>

Abdallah's role in the creation of Transjordan offers an interesting opportunity for the study of legitimacy in Arab politics after World War I. Abdallah was not Transjordanian and, until March 1921, had never aspired to rule the tiny emirate that the British government created for him in Transjordan. Before late 1920 the people of Transjordan had no contact with him and no reason to regard him as the man most appropriate or qualified to rule them. For these reasons, the creation of the Emirate of Transjordan raises several questions

about the legitimacy of Abdallah's rule and of the entity created for him in Transjordan. The first is the extent to which the people of Transjordan saw Abdallah as their legitimate ruler and identified with the Emirate of Transjordan at the time of its creation. The second is the extent to which Abdallah identified with the interests of the people of Transjordan and the emirate created for him in their country. The third is whether or not the establishment of Transjordan fulfilled Abdallah's political ambitions.

Transjordan had been ruled by the Hashimites before the establishment of the emirate in March 1921. After Faysal's Northern Arab Army occupied 'Aqaba in July 1917 Transjordan fell progressively under British and Hashimite control. From October 1918 until July 1920 Transjordan was administered by Faysal's Syrian government. The Transjordanian reaction to Hashimite rule from July 1917 to July 1920 offers clues as to Abdallah's prospects of being widely recognized as the legitimate ruler of Transjordan. Additional clues can be found in the Transjordanian reaction to the collapse of Faysal's government and Abdallah's 'invasion' of Transjordan in late 1920 and early 1921.

This thesis is based as much as possible on primary sources. Students of Abdallah's early career are fortunate to have a rich array of British, French and Israeli archival sources, in addition to published primary sources in Arabic. The archival sources for this thesis come from the Public Record Office, Kew, the India Office Library in London, the French diplomatic and military archives in Paris and Nantes and the Israel State Archives in Jerusalem. The Public Record Office and the India Office Library are the richest archival sources for a study of Abdallah's early political career. Unfortunately, the archives of the Emirate of Transjordan are still closed. The archives of the Hashimite Kingdom of the Hijaz probably disappeared during the 1920s.<sup>5</sup> English translations of many documents written by Abdallah, Husayn and Faysal are found in the British archives. Abdallah's memoirs and the memoirs and chronicles of other Arab, mainly Iraqi, political figures supply much important information about Arab political developments which cannot be found in European archives. This is especially true for the nationalist

political societies of Syria and Iraq which usually operated in secret, and whose activities were only vaguely known to the British. Much use has also been made of the work of Arab historians such as Sulaymān Mūsā of Jordan and 'Alī Sultān of Syria who have had access to Jordanian and Syrian documents unavailable to foreign scholars.

This thesis is divided into two parts. Part one analyzes the development of Abdallah's political ambitions in the wider context of evolving Hashimite ambitions during World War I. Hashimite political ambitions and Husayn's relationship with the Ottoman government are the subject of chapter one. Chapter two examines the Anglo-Hashimite relationship from the eve of World War I until July 1915. The influence of the Husayn-McMahon correspondence and of the Arab nationalists of Syria on the making of Hashimite political ambitions is studied in chapter three. This chapter also explains the circumstances which led to the outbreak of the Arab revolt in June 1916. Chapter four examines Husayn's interpretation of the Husayn-McMahon correspondence and explains how that interpretation shaped Abdallah's political ambitions.

Part two focuses, first, on the rise and fall of Abdallah's ambition to become the king of Iraq and, then, on the creation of Transjordan. Chapters five to seven explain why Abdallah failed to become king of Iraq. Chapter five explains why, in late 1918 and early 1919, the British government considered and then rejected proposals from T. E. Lawrence and others to establish Abdallah as head of an Arab government in Iraq. Chapter six identifies Abdallah's Iraqi supporters and examines their role in promoting his ambitions in Iraq. Chapter seven explains why Abdallah's ambitions in Iraq collapsed between January and July 1920. British reconsideration of Abdallah for Iraq, the Iraqi Congress of March 1920 and the collapse of Abdallah's prospects for advancement in Syria and the Hijaz are the focus of this chapter. The establishment of the Emirate of Transjordan is the subject of chapter eight.

## NOTES

1. The most important studies in English of Abdallah's early career and the creation of Transjordan are Ma'an Abu Nowar, *The History of the Hashimite Kingdom of Jordan. Volume 1: The Creation and Development of Transjordan 1920-1929* (Oxford 1989) chapters 1-2; Uriel Dann, *Studies in the History of Transjordan, 1920-1949. The Making of a State* (Boulder and London, 1984) chapters 2-3; Walid Kazziha, 'The Political Evolution of Transjordan', *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 15, no. 2, May 1979, pp. 238-57; Aaron S. Klieman, *Foundations of British Policy in the Arab World: The Cairo Conference of 1921* (Baltimore, 1970) chapter 9; and Mary C. Wilson, *King Abdullah, Britain and the Making of Jordan* (Cambridge, 1987) chapters 2-4. These studies are based on a combination of British archival sources and primary material in Arabic.

Despite its title, Dann's instructive history of Transjordan is not a study of state formation. It is instead a collection of eight articles, each of which treats a separate aspect of Transjordanian history. Dann does not address theoretical issues such as state formation and legitimacy.

Abdallah's early career has also been treated in chapters one to three of Kamal S. Nimri, 'Abdullah bin al-Hussain: A Study in Arab Political Leadership' (unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 1977). Werner Ernst Goldner, 'The Role of Abdallah Ibn Husain, King of Jordan, in Arab Politics 1914-1951: A Critical Analysis of His Political Activities' (unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, Stanford University, 1954) was written before the declassification of the relevant British documents and has been superseded by later works.

The most valuable study in Arabic of Abdallah's early political career is found in chapters two to five of Munib al-Madi and Sulayman Musa, *Ta'rikh al-Urdunn fi'l-Qarn al-'Ishtiraki* (Amman, 1958). Madi and Musa have had access to local information that was unavailable to foreign scholars. This work cites or reproduces many documents that have been published nowhere else. Sulayman Musa's *Ta'sis al-Imara al-Urdunniyya 1921-1925. Dirasa Wathai'qiyya* (Amman, 1971) (pp. 9-129) is a collection of Arabic translations of British documents from the Public Record Office that also includes selections from Abdallah's published memoirs and the private papers of 'Auni 'Abd al-Hadi and Emir Zayd. This study has little to teach those who have examined the relevant British archival papers and the published works of Abdallah, 'Abd al-Hadi and Zayd.

'Ali Muhafaza's *Ta'rikh al-Urdunn al-Mu'asir. 'Abd al-Imara 1921-1946* (Amman, 1973) and *Al-'Alaqat al-Urdunniyya al-Bari'taniyya min Ta'sis al-Imara Hattā Ilghā' al-Mu'ahada* (Beirut, 1973) are superficial studies of little substance that are based entirely on well known published sources.

None of the studies mentioned in this note address questions of political expectations, legitimacy or state formation. All of the studies written in Arabic have a distinctly pro-Hashimite bias.

2. Wilson, *Abdullah*, pp. 37-38, 41-43.

3. See Briton Cooper Busch, *Britain, India and the Arabs, 1914-1921* (Berkeley, 1971), Philip W. Ireland, *Iraq: A Study in Political Development* (London, 1937) and Peter Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq 1914-1932* (London, 1976).

4. When used in this sense 'India' is a generic term referring to the India Office in London, the Government of India and the British administration in Iraq.

5. The Egyptian writer, Ḥāfiẓ Wahba, who was a senior adviser of Ibn Saud and the Saudi ambassador in London during the 1930s, has shed some light on the fate of the archives of the Hashimite Kingdom of the Hijaz. In late November 1924 Wahba visited the residence of Khālīd bin Lu'ay, the Emir of Mecca who had been appointed by Ibn Saud. Wahba discovered piles of neglected documents, which were the archives of the Hashimite Kingdom of the Hijaz. Those piles included many documents concerning the Arab revolt of World War I. Wahba included a few of those documents in his history of the Arabian peninsula from 1915 to 1934. It is not known what happened to the remainder of this archive. Wahba's reference to the neglected state of these documents suggests that they probably have not survived. To the best of my knowledge, Wahba is the only writer to cite material from the archives of the Hashimite Kingdom of the Hijaz. See the introduction of Ḥāfiẓ Wahba, *Jazīrat al-'Arab fī'l-Qarn al-'Ishrīn* (Cairo (?), 1935).

Sulayman Musa has explained the paucity of Arab documentation as the result of new regimes destroying the records of their predecessors and a widespread unawareness in the Arab world of the importance of preserving historical records. Sulaymān Mūsā, *Al-Ḥaraka al-'Arabiyya. Sīrat al-Marḥala al-Ūlā Lil-Nahḍa al-'Arabiyya al-Ḥadītha, 1908-1924* (Beirut, 1986), p. 8.



PART ONE

THE BEGINNING OF HASHIMITE AMBITIONS IN THE FERTILE CRESCENT

CHAPTER 1: ABDALLAH AND THE EVOLUTION OF HASHIMITE  
POLITICAL AMBITIONS, 1908-1914

Introduction

This chapter examines the role of Abdallah bin al-Husayn in Hashimite and Ottoman politics from 1908 to the eve of World War I. That role will be discussed in the context of his family's evolving political ambitions. Abdallah's part in his family's relations with the Ottoman government, Great Britain, their Arab rivals and the pre-war Arab political activists will be closely examined. Particular attention will be paid to the clash between Husayn's ambitions and Ottoman attempts to curtail the traditional autonomy of the Hijaz, and to the relationship between the Hashimites and the British authorities in Cairo. This chapter will explain how Abdallah played a prominent part in his father's conflict with Istanbul and in initiating his family's first contacts with Great Britain.

The underlying premise of this chapter is that the wartime evolution of Hashimite political ambitions and Abdallah's role as an Arab leader can only be understood against the background of Hashimite politics from 1908 to 1914. An examination of pre-war Hashimite ambitions, the strategies Husayn and Abdallah adopted to realize those ambitions and Abdallah's place in Hashimite and Ottoman politics is, therefore, a necessary starting point for a study of Abdallah's transformation from a Hijazi notable to a post-war Arab political leader whose field of action extended to the Fertile Crescent. This thesis contends that Abdallah's emergence as a major player in Arab politics resulted in large part from his family's conflict with the centralizing policies of the Young Turks. This chapter examines Abdallah's role in that conflict as a defender of the traditional rights of the Emirate of Mecca as he and his father conceived those rights. The purpose of focusing on Abdallah is to determine the kind of political leader he was before World War I and to explain the sources of his authority.

This chapter will focus on the evolution of Hashimite political ambitions between 1908 and 1914. Attention will be paid to Abdallah's

strategies for promoting and defending those ambitions, and to the extent to which his personal ambitions coincided with or diverged from those of his family. We shall also examine the political structures the Hashimites deemed necessary for the realization of their pre-war political ambitions. The conflict between Hashimite political ambitions and the restraints the Ottomans placed on the realization of those ambitions will be one of the major themes of this chapter.

This chapter will consider whether or not Abdallah was a pre-war adherent of Arabism, the progenitor of Arab nationalism as it evolved later in the twentieth century. This problem will be treated by examining the relationship between the Hashimites, particularly Abdallah, and the pre-war Arab political societies in the Ottoman Empire and Egypt. That relationship, or lack thereof, will help explain why Husayn and Abdallah dealt as they did with the Turks, their Arab rivals and Great Britain before World War I. Hashimite views of the pre-war Arab political societies shed some light on the early history of Arab nationalism.

Chapter one opens with a brief overview of the place of the Hashimites in Islamic history and the nature of Ottoman rule in the Hijaz before 1908. It then moves to a discussion of Abdallah's upbringing and youth in Istanbul, where he received his first education in politics.

#### The Hashimites and the Hijaz Until 1908

Traditionally descendants of the Prophet Muhammad have served as the guardians and administrators of the two holy cities of Mecca and Medina (the *ḥaramayn*). A descendant of the Prophet is known as a *sharīf*, plural *ashrāf* or *shurafā'*, meaning noble or exalted. The *ashrāf* trace their descent from Muḥammad through his daughter Fāṭima and his son-in-law 'Alī. Because Muhammad's sons died in infancy, the sharifian line is traced through his grandson Ḥasan. The Ḥasanid *ashrāf* took the name of their dynasty, *Hāshimī* (Hashimite), from Hāshim bin 'Abd Manāf, the Prophet's great-grandfather. The Hashimites ruled Mecca almost continuously from the tenth century A. D. until 1925. The Hashimite

chosen to serve as the guardian and administrator of the *ḥaramayn* held the official title of 'Sharif of Mecca and its Emir'.<sup>1</sup>

The north-western part of the Arabian peninsula known as *al-Hijāz* is the birthplace of Islam, home of the Prophet, site of God's revelations to him and location of the *ḥaramayn*. Ottoman control of the Hijaz began in 1517 when the Emir of Mecca submitted to the authority of Sultan Selīm I. From then until World War I the Hashimites served as the Emirs of Mecca on behalf of the Ottoman government. When the Emirs of Mecca submitted to Turkish rule, the Ottomans reconfirmed their status as rulers of the Hijaz. From the Ottomans, the Emirs of Mecca sought money, gifts, autonomy and protection from external threats. From the Emirs of Mecca, the Ottoman sultans sought recognition of their overlordship, mention of their names in Friday prayers and the safeguarding of the annual pilgrimage. Professions of loyalty from the Emir of Mecca not only reinforced Ottoman authority in the Hijaz but strengthened the Sultan's claim to be a legitimate Muslim ruler and heir to the Caliphate. After 1517 Ottoman sultans used the title *Khādīm al-Ḥaramayn* (servant of the two holy places) to emphasize their legitimacy and primacy as Muslim rulers. Beyond recognition of their authority, the pilgrimage and custody of the holy cities, the Ottomans showed little interest in the Hijaz before the nineteenth century.<sup>2</sup>

Until World War I the Ottoman government made few demands on the Hijaz, where conscription was not applied and taxation was minimal. Instead of paying taxes and providing troops, the Hijaz was the recipient of gifts and financial subventions from throughout the Ottoman Empire and, to a lesser extent, elsewhere in the Muslim world. This financial assistance proved indispensable to a land with few natural resources. Minimal taxation, no conscription, local autonomy and subsidies all combined to make the Hijaz 'the most privileged province in the empire.'<sup>3</sup>

In return for their recognition of the Sultan and non-interference in imperial affairs, the Emirs of Mecca were given a free hand in the administration of the Hijaz. Without strict guidelines from Istanbul, the Emirs enjoyed considerable autonomy. The Hashimites could appoint

any of their number to be Emir of Mecca and, then, usually, secure the Sultan's approval with ease. Before the nineteenth century the Ottomans intervened only to appoint or dismiss an Emir of Mecca in order to prevent hostilities among rival contenders for his position.

Ottoman rule in the Hijaz was based upon the Emir of Mecca and Sunni Turkish governors known as *vālīs*, (Arabic, *wālī*) appointed by Istanbul. The *vālī*'s task was to keep order in the holy cities, guarantee the safety of the pilgrimage and uphold the authority of the Sultan. Command of the Ottoman forces in the Hijaz was the basis of the *vālī*'s authority. A recommendation from the *vālī* to retain or depose an Emir was often decisive in determining that Emir's fate. The *vālī*'s authority was limited in judicial and financial matters, and did not extend beyond the towns where Ottoman troops were posted.

Military power in the Hijaz was divided between the Ottoman garrison and the bedouins. The Ottomans dominated the towns and some of the villages; the bedouins controlled the desert. The Ottoman government used payments in cash and goods, gifts and honours in order to prevent the bedouins from raiding the pilgrimage and interfering in local commerce. The Emir acted as an intermediary between the bedouins and the Ottoman government, which held him responsible for the activities of the tribes. His influence with the tribes was a tool to be used against an uncooperative *vālī*. Despite the inability of the Ottoman garrison effectively to confront the bedouins in the desert, the *vālī* and his troops were generally the dominant military force in the Hijaz: tribal rivalries, susceptibility to bribery and limited access to European military technology combined to limit the military effectiveness of the bedouins. However, until 1914 the bedouins were never brought entirely under the control of the *vālī* or the Emir.

Relations between the Emir and the *vālī* were often characterized by a struggle for local power. Although a strong *vālī* could circumscribe an Emir's freedom of action, the limited ability of Istanbul to support a *vālī* meant that, during the eighteenth and much of the nineteenth centuries, the local balance of power was usually tipped in the Emir's favour. At times during the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, the

Ottoman *valis* of Egypt, Syria, Yemen and Iraq exercised a loose supervision over the Hijaz. By the last quarter of the eighteenth century, the Emir of Mecca had emerged as the leading Red Sea power after the Mamluks of Egypt.

Tenuous as the Ottoman hold on the Hijaz usually was, Istanbul was not without means to coerce the Emirs of Mecca. Members of competing sharifian families were brought to Istanbul where their activities could be supervised at close range. In the capital they learned Ottoman customs, survived on gifts and pensions from the Sultan and formed a reserve in case he saw fit to depose the ruling Emir. After 1840, heirs to the Emirate were required to reside in Istanbul where they served on the Ottoman Council of State. Service in the central government allowed prospective Emirs to develop a knowledge of the Ottoman bureaucracy and gave the Ottomans an opportunity to assess their abilities.<sup>4</sup>

During the nineteenth century the traditional autonomy of the Hijaz began gradually to erode. The autonomy of the Emirate of Mecca was progressively undermined by the Wahhabi occupation of the Hijaz of 1803-13; Egyptian expansion in Arabia and Africa; the growing British presence in the Red Sea after 1839; attempts to reform the Ottoman Empire through centralization; and innovations in communications that allowed the Ottomans, the Egyptians and the British greater access to the Red Sea.

The Wahhabis of central Arabia occupied Ṭā'if and Mecca in 1803 and Medina in 1804. Being followers of the puritanical religious reformer, Muḥammad 'Abd al-Wahhāb, who had allied himself with the Āl Sa'ūd, the ruling family of Najd, the Wahhabis sought to 'purify' the Muslim Holy Land of religious laxity and corruption. Until the expulsion of the Wahhabis in 1813, Ottoman control of the Hijaz disappeared and the power of the ruling Emir of Mecca declined greatly.

On orders from Sultan Maḥmūd II, the forces of Muḥammad 'Alī, the viceroy of Egypt since 1805, invaded the Hijaz in 1811. By early 1813 the whole of the Hijaz had fallen under Muḥammad 'Alī's control; by 1819 Dar'iyya, the Wahhabi capital, had fallen to his son Ibrāhīm Pāshā.

From then until 1840 the Hijaz was controlled by Muḥammad ʿAlī who, though he ruled Egypt in the name of the Sultan, had in fact created a dynasty in Egypt independent of Turkey.

Muḥammad ʿAlī's policies towards the Emirs of Mecca had a far-reaching impact on the subsequent history of the Hijaz. From 1718 to 1827, the Emirs of Mecca came from the Dhawū Zayd clan of the Hashimite family. In 1827 Muḥammad ʿAlī appointed Muḥammad bin ʿAun of the rival Dhawū ʿAun as Emir of Mecca, the first of his line to hold that position. Of the ten Emirs who served between 1827 and 1916, eight, including Al-Husayn bin ʿAlī, great-grandson of Muḥammad bin ʿAun and leader of the Arab revolt of 1916-18, came from the Dhawū ʿAun. Muḥammad bin ʿAun initiated a tradition of close ties between the Muḥammad ʿAlī dynasty and the Dhawū ʿAun.<sup>6</sup> After 1827 the Dhawū Zayd were in power only briefly, during 1851-56 and 1880-82. The rivalry between these clans, which the Ottomans manipulated in order to maintain their authority in the Hijaz, was one of the most important features of Hijazi politics from 1840 to 1914.<sup>6</sup> Muḥammad bin ʿAun established a tradition of friendly relations between Britain and the Dhawū ʿAun that lasted until 1914. For their part, the British supported the Dhawū ʿAun in their rivalry with the Dhawū Zayd.<sup>7</sup>

The Ottoman restoration of 1840 revived the authority of the Emirs and the system of shared local power between the *vālī* and the Emir of Mecca. Although the Emirs were able to re-establish their authority, the Turks were unwilling to allow independent Hashimite rule to replace Egyptian domination. Competition for local power between the Emirs and *vālīs* was, therefore, the dominant feature of Hijazi politics from 1840 to 1914. After 1840 the Ottomans manipulated this rivalry in order to re-establish and maintain their authority in the Hijaz.

The Ottoman reform movement, which began during the reign of Sultan Selīm III (1792-1807), had less of an impact on the Hijaz than on the other Arabic speaking provinces of the empire. The sanctity of the Hijaz, popular veneration for the Emir of Mecca and the conservatism of the *ʿulamāʾ* were the main obstacles blocking the intrusion of European influence and Ottoman centralization.<sup>8</sup> Before the opening of the Suez

Canal and the building of the Hijaz railroad, slow transportation between Istanbul and the Hijaz was another obstacle. Those few reforms which did take root in the Hijaz were confined mostly to Mecca, Medina, Jidda and Ṭā'if. Except for the building of the Hijaz railroad (1900-08), the interior of the country and the bedouins were largely untouched by outside influences.<sup>9</sup>

Religion and poor communications were not the only impediments to secularization. European notions of nationality were unable to take hold in the Ottoman Hijaz because personal loyalties there were based in religion, tribe and family. While Sunni Islam and the Arabic language were common to almost all Hijazis, tribal rivalries and the mutual hostility of the bedouins and townspeople all tended towards disunity. The urban population was split between Hijazi Arabs and Muslims from all over the world who had settled in the Hijaz. Such impediments to the growth of national sentiment were not unique to the Hijaz and could be found elsewhere in the Middle East. What was unique was that these obstacles were reinforced by the sanctity of the Hijaz.

Sultan 'Abd ūl-Ḥamīd II (r. 1876-1908) saw European military superiority, overseas expansion and the diffusion of secular nationalism as the main threats to the Ottoman Empire. He regarded British control of Egypt, Aden and the eastern coasts of Arabia as a threat to Ottoman rule in the Hijaz, and took seriously false rumours that Great Britain intended to establish an Arab Caliphate in Arabia. 'Abd ūl-Ḥamīd relied upon appeals to panislamic unity and centralization to counter these threats.<sup>10</sup> The most important manifestation of panislamism and centralization for the Hijaz was the building of the Hijaz railroad, whose purpose was to bolster the military capacity of the Ottoman Empire, bring Syria south of Damascus and the Hijaz under the direct control of Istanbul and limit the autonomy of the Emir of Mecca. 'Abd ūl-Ḥamīd feared that the continued autonomy of the Hijaz would invite foreign, mainly British, interference in Ottoman affairs.<sup>11</sup>

Construction of the Hijaz railroad began in Damascus in 1900 and reached Medina eight years and 1302 kilometres later. Branches to Jidda and Mecca were proposed but never built. The Emirs of Mecca saw the



the railway as a threat to their traditional autonomy which would enable the Turks to rule the Hijaz without them. The bedouins feared a loss of revenues from selling camels and protecting pilgrims, and that the increased mobility of Ottoman forces would give the Turks military superiority in the desert. The bedouins and townspeople both saw the Hijaz railroad as the prelude to taxation and conscription. As the railway approached Medina, a bedouin insurrection broke out which lasted from January to July 1908, and was the largest outburst of violence in the Hijaz between 1840 and World War I.<sup>12</sup>

Early Political Education: Abdallah in Istanbul, 1893-1908

During the reign of Emir 'Aun al-Rafīq (1882-1905), Al-Ḥusayn bin 'Alī--the Emir's nephew and the grandson of Muḥammad bin 'Aun--was exiled to Istanbul at some time before February 1893. Husayn was no stranger to Istanbul, where he was born in 1853. Until 1861 his life was divided between Istanbul and Mecca. After the premature death of his father, Husayn returned to the Hijaz where his father's eldest brother, 'Abdallāh bin Muḥammad, had succeeded to the Emirate in 1858. Until 'Abdallāh bin Muḥammad's deposition in 1876, Husayn spent his formative years in his uncle's court in Mecca learning the ways and lore of the Hijazi tribes.<sup>13</sup>

The circumstances leading to Husayn's exile are obscure, but were apparently related to a dispute Husayn had with 'Aun al-Rafīq over the disposal of some family property and 'Aun al-Rafīq's mistreatment of other *ashrāf*. Husayn contested his uncle's authority by inciting the bedouins against him and sending a stream of complaints to Istanbul. In February 1893 Husayn's family followed him to Istanbul, where they lived for nearly sixteen years on a government pension in a home on the Bosphorous provided by the Sultan and under the constant surveillance of the Ottoman authorities.<sup>14</sup> Like other exiled *ashrāf*, Husayn served on the Sultan's Consultative Council.<sup>15</sup>

Husayn's second son, Abdallah, was born in Mecca in February 1882. His mother, 'Ābidiyya, who died when Abdallah was age four, was Husayn's first cousin and a *sharīfa*. After her death, Abdallah was raised by his paternal great-grandmother, Sāliha, and his great-aunt, Hayā, who were

both from the Banū Shihr, a tribe whose territory was located in the undemarcated frontier region between the Hijaz and ʿAsīr. Abdallah's earliest education consisted of the Quran, tribal lore and local history. From his father, Abdallah learned the Quran. From Ṣāliḥa and Hayā, he acquired a knowledge and love of tribal lore and Hijazi history. They taught Abdallah about Muhammad ʿAlī and the expulsion of the Wahhabis from the Hijaz, about his great-grandfather, Muḥammad bin ʿAun, and about the rivalry between the Dhawū ʿAun and the Dhawū Zayd. Abdallah's account of his childhood emphasizes that the Wahhabi threat to the Hijaz and his family's rivalry with the Dhawū Zayd were ingrained in him from his earliest days. Until February 1893, Abdallah's life was divided between Mecca and visits to the family summer home in Ṭāʿif.<sup>16</sup> During the fifteen years they spent in Istanbul, Abdallah and his brothers acquired a solid and traditional Ottoman education. They had private tutors who instructed them in Arabic, Turkish, military science, arithmetic and Islamic history. Husayn taught them Quran. European languages and history were not part of their education.<sup>17</sup>

The social life of Abdallah's family during the years they spent in Istanbul was confined to other *ashrāf*, exiled Meccan ʿulamāʾ and the Ottoman ruling class. During his exile, Husayn married his second wife, ʿĀdila Ḥanūm, the mother of his fourth son, Zayd, and three daughters. (ʿĀdila Ḥanūm was the grand-daughter of Mustafā Reshīd Pāshā, one of the major figures of the Ottoman reform movement and a foreign minister and Grand Vizier of Sultans Mehmed II and ʿAbd ūl-Mejīd.) In Istanbul Abdallah and Faysal, Husayn's third son, married daughters of their paternal uncle, Nāsir. ʿAlī, Husayn's eldest son, married a daughter of his great-uncle, ʿAbd al-Ilāh.<sup>18</sup>

The death in July 1905 of ʿAun al-Rafīq, who had no sons to succeed him, raised in acute form the problem of his successor. Husayn presented himself to the Sultan as a possible successor, but was passed over in favour of ʿAun al-Rafīq's nephew, ʿAlī bin ʿAbdallāh, who served as Emir of Mecca until the Young Turk uprising of 1908. ʿAlī Ḥaydar, the exiled head of the Dhawū Zayd and one of Husayn's rivals to succeed ʿAun al-Rafīq, claimed that ʿAlī may have secured his appointment by

bribing Ahmed Rātib Pāshā, the vālī of the Hijaz. Haydar noted that, if he had had the money, he, too, would have paid such a sum. He added that Husayn had promised to 'strive my hardest to overthrow 'Alī and destroy the power of Rātib Pāshā.'<sup>19</sup> The circumstances surrounding 'Alī's appointment are noteworthy because they illustrate the world of alliances and rivalries built on family ties, personal connections bought and sold and backdoor manoeuvring in which Abdallah received his first education in politics.

In July 1908 a revolt among junior officers of the Ottoman Third Army in Macedonia started a chain of events that compelled 'Abd ul-Ḥamīd to restore the constitution of 1876 and reopen the long prorogued Ottoman parliament. The driving force behind the July uprising, and the leading faction among the 'Young Turks', was the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP). Their aim in restoring the constitution was to limit the power of the Sultan. The CUP-dominated parliament opened in December 1908. 'Abd ul-Ḥamīd remained as Sultan until the failed counter-revolution of April 1909, after which he was deposed and replaced by his brother Mehmed V.<sup>20</sup>

Soon after the Young Turk uprising, the CUP removed Emir 'Alī and vālī Ahmed Rātib Pāshā because of their opposition to constitutional government.<sup>21</sup> The 'Aunī sharīf, 'Abd al-Ilāh succeeded 'Alī, but died in Istanbul before he could proceed to the Hijaz. The circumstances surrounding the appointment of 'Abd al-Ilāh's successor, Husayn, are unclear, but appear to have been one element in the power struggle between the CUP and 'Abd ul-Ḥamīd, which dominated Ottoman politics from July 1908 to April 1909. The CUP preferred 'Alī Haydar, who was then at odds with the Sultan and whose family had been out of power since 1882.<sup>22</sup>

Abdallah played a noteworthy role in securing his father's appointment. After the death of 'Abd al-Ilāh, Abdallah encouraged his father to present himself to 'Abd ul-Ḥamīd as the most suitable choice to be Emir of Mecca. After some convincing by Abdallah, Husayn agreed to come forward, and then wrote a letter to be delivered to the Sultan by means of Kāmil Pasha, the Grand Vizier. Abdallah personally

delivered Husayn's letter to Kāmil, who was surprised by the young *sharīf's* forward manner. Although Kamil expressed support for Husayn, Abdallah left the encounter doubting the Grand Vizier's sincerity. Abdallah then drafted a telegram in his father's name that requested Husayn's appointment as Emir of Mecca. Abdallah asked the Grand Vizier, the *Shaikh al-Islām* and the Royal Chamberlain each to send a copy of this telegram to the Sultan. Husayn was appointed Emir of Mecca on 1 November 1908, one day after Abdallah's three telegrams had been sent. Later that month Sir Gerald Lowther, the British ambassador in Istanbul, reported to London that Husayn had been appointed on the advice of Kamil Pasha.<sup>23</sup>

British observers who knew Abdallah in later years often noted his audacity, ambition and love of politics, three qualities which had already become evident by late 1908.<sup>24</sup> Abdallah's role in securing his father's appointment as Emir of Mecca revealed for the first time three other elements of his political style. First, Abdallah stood out as the most ambitious of Husayn's sons to promote his family's political fortunes. Second, he prevailed upon his father to overcome his reluctance to pursue what Husayn may have considered a risky course of action. Third, for the first of many times Abdallah acted as intermediary between Husayn and the central government.

British representatives in Istanbul and the Hijaz reacted favourably to Husayn's appointment. Husayn impressed Sir Gerald Lowther and J. H. Monahan, the British consul in Jidda, as pro-British and an honest administrator of the pilgrimage who would relieve pilgrims of much past extortion and harassment. No evidence suggests, however, that British influence played any part in clinching Husayn's appointment.<sup>25</sup>

Consolidating His Authority: Husayn, the Young Turks and His Arab Rivals, 1908-1911

Husayn began his tenure as Emir of Mecca at odds with the CUP, who had opposed his appointment and sought to restrict his authority. Husayn's *firmān* of investiture limited his authority to supervising the pilgrimage, mention of the Sultan's name in Friday prayers and cooperation with the *vālī* in managing the local administration. Before boarding the ship that took him to the Hijaz in late November 1908,

Husayn had a private audience with the 'Abd ül-Hamīd and Kāmil Pāshā, whose presence at his departure was a gesture of solidarity with a fellow enemy of the CUP. Kāmil handed Husayn a memorandum that assured him of the Sultan's support and promised that the old order in the Hijaz would be maintained despite changes in the capital.<sup>26</sup>

After 1908 Ottoman policy towards the Hijaz aimed to bring that province under the direct control of Istanbul by ending the tradition of dual government and subordinating the Emir of Mecca to the authority of the *vālī*. That policy was one part of a larger programme of modernizing the Ottoman Empire through centralized authority. Husayn, who regarded CUP tampering with the traditional order in the Hijaz as an affront to Islam, reacted in defence of his own interests, the interests of Hijazis whose livelihood depended upon him and of Islam.<sup>27</sup>

Soon after reaching the Hijaz in early December, Husayn was greeted in Jidda by a CUP delegation which welcomed him as the 'constitutional Emir' who would disregard the oppressive ways of his predecessors and act in accordance with the spirit of the new age and its constitution. Husayn answered them that the *sharī'a* and the traditions of the Prophet (*Sunna*) were the only constitution of the Hijaz, and that he would follow in the footsteps of his ancestors.<sup>28</sup>

Husayn refused to allow the CUP and the limited terms of his *firmān* of investiture to deter him from acting independently. From the start he tried to dominate the *vālī* and resisted any limits on his authority. Husayn was prepared to cooperate with the central government only if cooperation was consistent with his political ambitions. Husayn repeatedly meddled in the work of the *vālīs* and tried in various ways to force the dismissal or resignation of Ottoman officials unsympathetic to him.<sup>29</sup> To demonstrate a *vālī's* inability to keep order in the Hijaz, Husayn incited the bedouins to attack travellers, pilgrim caravans and the Hijaz railroad. He encouraged his protégés to petition Istanbul for the removal of unpopular *vālīs*.<sup>30</sup> Between 1908 and 1914 ten *vālīs* served in the Hijaz. The result of that rapid turnover was an ever-growing loss of Turkish prestige to the benefit of Husayn who quickly emerged as the dominant force in the Hijaz.<sup>31</sup>

The first CUP attempt to discredit Husayn occurred during the pilgrimage of December 1908-January 1909. At that time 'Abd al-Rahmān Pāshā al-Yūsuf, a Damascene notable and *Amīr al-Hajj* of the Syrian *mahmal*, refused to return to Syria by land after the pilgrimage claiming that the road between Mecca and Medina was unsafe for travel. Yusuf advised Husayn that the Syrian pilgrimage should return by sea from Jidda to 'Aqaba and then overland to Damascus. Abdallah was convinced that Yūsuf was acting on behalf of the CUP in order to discredit Husayn as unable to assure the safety of the pilgrimage.<sup>32</sup>

Husayn refused Yūsuf's request knowing that compliance would have been an admission of his inability to maintain the security of the pilgrimage, and might have ruined his credibility in the eyes of those tribes whose livelihood depended upon the annual passage of pilgrim caravans. In order to avoid handing the CUP a pretext to depose him, Husayn insisted that the Syrian *mahmal* return to Syria by land. Yūsuf refused to do this and travelled alone by sea to Egypt and from there to Syria. To conduct the Syrian *mahmal* from the Hijaz to Damascus, Husayn appointed Sharīf Nāṣir bin 'Alī to replace Yūsuf as *Amīr al-Hajj*; Abdallah served as Nāṣir's assistant.<sup>33</sup>

Abdallah's visit to Damascus in early 1909 was significant in three ways. First, it illustrated Husayn's reliance upon Abdallah to undertake diplomatic missions. Second, Abdallah and Nāṣir spent seven days in Damascus as guests of 'Atā' al-Bakrī, whose hospitality Abdallah praised warmly. The friendship then created realized its importance during World War I when the al-Bakrī family became one of the most important links between the Hashimites and the Arab nationalists in Syria. The role of those nationalists in the making of Hashimite political ambitions will be examined in a later chapter.<sup>34</sup> Third, on the way to Damascus Abdallah passed through Transjordan. Before late 1920, this was his first and only contact with the land he would govern from 1921 to 1951. How Transjordan impressed Abdallah in 1909 is unknown.

Abdallah's role in Hijazi politics before World War I was well illustrated in two disputes arising from CUP attempts in 1909 and 1910 to discredit and, possibly, depose Husayn. In both cases Abdallah acted

successfully as an intermediary between Istanbul and the Emirate of Mecca and as a defender of Hashimite interests against CUP attempts to undermine Husayn. The first dispute began in July 1910 when the new *vālī*, General Fu'ād Pāshā, told Husayn that a group in Mecca led by Sharīf Zayd bin Fawwāz, the *qā'imaqām* of the Emirate at Ṭā'if, was planning to attack Ottoman authorities the next Friday. Fu'ād demanded the arrest and trial of Zayd and his co-conspirators. Husayn and Abdallah regarded Fu'ād's charges as absurd and slanderous and understood that they were being accused of plotting to overthrow Ottoman rule in the Hijaz. To investigate Fu'ād's allegations, Husayn appointed a committee composed of the deputy *vālī*, the military commander in the Hijaz, the *qādī* of Mecca and Abdallah as representative of the Emirate of Mecca. Abdallah has written that the case against Zayd collapsed when the deputy *vālī* could offer no credible source for the government's allegations. The committee's final report was sent to Sa'id Pasha, the Grand Vizier, and Ra'ūf Pāshā, the Minister of the Interior, who concluded that Fu'ād's accusations were baseless. Fu'ād Pāshā and the military commander of the Hijaz were dismissed several days after the report had reached Istanbul.<sup>35</sup>

A second attempt to discredit Husayn took place after the 1910 parliamentary elections in Mecca. The CUP had delayed elections scheduled for 1909 suspecting that Husayn would engineer the election of his own candidates. When new elections were finally held in March 1910, Abdallah and Shaikh Ḥasan al-Shaibī were elected out of twenty-six candidates, two of whom represented the CUP. J. H. Monahan characterized Abdallah and Shaibī as 'young men of the Arab liberal party', that is, opponents of the CUP, whose victory over CUP candidates was said to have been the source of 'some little excitement' in Mecca.<sup>36</sup> After Abdallah and Shaibī arrived in Istanbul, Ahmed Ridā Bey, leader of the Chamber of Deputies, questioned the legitimacy of their election on the grounds that telegrams had been received from Mecca claiming that Abdallah had not reached the legal age for parliamentary service and that Shaibī was illiterate in both Arabic and Turkish. Abdallah wrote in his memoirs that opposition inside the Chamber to his and

Shaibī's exclusion enabled both men to take their seats.<sup>27</sup>

By mid-1910 Husayn had grown so confident of his standing in relation to the central government that he turned to the aggrandizement of his territories at the expense of his neighbours Ibn Saud, the Emir of Najd, and Al-Sayyid Muḥammad bin ʿAlī, the Idrīsī of ʿAsīr. In 1910 and 1911 Husayn tried to gain support for his territorial ambitions by posing as a loyal agent of the central government who was prepared to undertake campaigns on behalf of Istanbul against two distant and autonomous Ottoman vassals.

The undefined frontier between the Hijaz and Najd known as al-Qaṣīm, and the right to tax the ʿUtayba tribe which resided there, were the sources of conflict between Husayn and Ibn Saud. In July 1910 Husayn led a force of 4000 into al-Qaṣīm and captured Ibn Saud's brother, Saʿad, at Quwaʿiyya. In return for his brother's release, Ibn Saud agreed to acknowledge Ottoman--that is, Husayn's--sovereignty in al-Qaṣīm, to pay Husayn an annual tax for occupying that region and to collect taxes annually from the ʿUtayba, that would be paid to the Emirate of Mecca. Immediately after his brother's release, Ibn Saud disavowed his agreement with Husayn claiming that it had been made under duress.<sup>28</sup> The immediate result of this campaign was the temporary inflation of Husayn's standing vis-à-vis Ibn Saud. However, by antagonizing Ibn Saud, Husayn set in motion a conflict between himself and the Saudis that ended in 1925 with the Saudi occupation of the Hijaz.

During the al-Qaṣīm campaign, Istanbul dealt a severe blow to Husayn's authority by separating the *muḥāfaẓa* of Medina from the *vilayet* of the Hijaz. At the same time, Istanbul forced the resignation of the *valī* of the Hijaz, Kāmīl Pāshā, who had allowed his friend Husayn a free hand in ruling the Hijaz. Henceforth the Ministry of the Interior, and not Husayn's representative, would administer Medina. The timing of this change was almost certainly intended to coincide with Husayn's absence from the Hijaz. Abdallah served as the acting Emir of Mecca during the al-Qaṣīm campaign. He first learned about the separation of Medina from telegrams that he received from his father's deposed representative in



Medina, and *ashrāf* and tribal leaders who opposed the change, not from the Ottoman governor of Medina or Istanbul. Abdallah immediately cabled the Grand Vizier, Ibrāhīm Ḥaqqī Pāshā, asking for information about the responsibilities of the Emirate of Mecca in Medina, and if the boundaries of the Emirate still extended as far north as Madā'in Ṣāliḥ, a small town about half way between Medina and Tabuk. Abdallah also conferred with Kamil Pasha who had just resigned because the decision to separate Medina from the *vilayet* of the Hijaz had been taken without his knowledge.<sup>39</sup>

Two hours after meeting Kāmil Pāshā, Abdallah received a telegram from the Grand Vizier informing him that the Ministry of the Interior would administer Medina, but that Husayn would still be responsible for the pilgrimage as far north as Madā'in Ṣāliḥ. The Grand Vizier's telegram included an ominous reference to the part of the Hijaz railroad and telegraphic communications in facilitating the separation of Medina from the *vilayet* of the Hijaz. Husayn and his sons undoubtedly interpreted this reference as a threat that the Hijaz railroad would be extended to Mecca in order to eliminate the privileged status of the Emirate of Mecca and reduce its Emir to a figure of symbolic authority acting at the behest of the central government.<sup>40</sup>

Husayn refused to accept this limitation of his authority and worked to undermine the new regime in Medina. His strategy for regaining control of Medina was to engineer a crisis between Great Britain and the Ottoman Empire that could be resolved by the restoration of full Hashimite authority in Medina. In July 1912 Avalon Shipley, the British consul in Jidda, reported to Lowther that he had learned from the commandant of the gendarmerie in Jidda that Husayn's 'emissaries' had murdered three British Indian pilgrims not far from Mecca. News of this outrage reached Sir Edward Grey who asked Charles Marling, the British chargé d'affaires in Istanbul, to call the attention of the Ottoman foreign minister to these murders and to demand an end to 'the objectionable policy of the Sherif.' What happened next is not known. What is known is that Husayn failed to create a crisis between the

British and the Ottomans, and that Istanbul never restored his former authority in the *muhāfaza* of Medina.<sup>41</sup>

Although the Ottomans refused to assist Husayn's campaign against the Saudis, in 1911 and 1912 they solicited his assistance to suppress an uprising led by Al-Sayyid Muḥammad bin ʿAlī, the Idrīsī of ʿAsīr. The two Hashimite campaigns to suppress the Idrisi were Husayn's largest mobilization of resources for any purpose other than the pilgrimage before World War I. The massive effort invested in suppressing the Idrīsī indicated that he was the main Arab rival of the Hashimites before World War I. Both campaigns shed light on why Husayn relied upon Abdallah primarily for his diplomatic, not military, skills.

In 1905 Imām Yaḥyā of Yemen revolted against the Ottoman government. The turbulence in Yemen was aggravated in 1908 by the Idrīsī's uprising in ʿAsīr, a northern *sanjaq* of the *vilayet* of Yemen.<sup>42</sup> The Imām's revolt offered the Idrīsī an opportunity to assert his independence at the expense of the central government at a time when Ottoman troops were engaged elsewhere. The Idrīsī's aims were the independence of ʿAsīr under his rule, Islamic reform and, ultimately, the creation of an Arab Caliphate in Mecca in place of the supposedly corrupt Turco-Hashimite régime.

In November 1910 an ʿAsīrī force of 20,000 laid siege to Abḥā, the seat of Ottoman government in ʿAsīr, where six Turkish battalions were stationed. The Idrīsī successfully resisted Ottoman attempts to dislodge him by force from Abḥā. The Italian navy assisted the Idrīsī by bombarding Turkish garrisons along the ʿAsīrī coast. By assisting the Idrīsī, the Italians had hoped to extend their influence from Eritrea to southern Arabia.<sup>43</sup>

The year 1911 began with Abḥā still under siege. Turkish troops in the port cities of Luḥayya, Jayzān and al-Qunfudha were unable to advance and could not supply the garrison in Abḥā because the Idrīsī's forces controlled the roads leading to the interior of the country. Imām Yaḥyā's revolt, and events in Europe, precluded the despatch of additional Ottoman troops to ʿAsīr for several months.<sup>44</sup> General ʿIzzat Pāshā, the Ottoman commander-in-chief in Yemen, and Husayn met in Jidda

in February 1911 and agreed that a Hijazi force would join a campaign to suppress the Idrīsī. The Ottomans were said to have promised Husayn that he or one of his sons would become Emir of ʿAsīr if the Hashimites crushed the Idrīsī.<sup>45</sup>

Husayn saw the Idrīsī as a religious, military and territorial threat. The consolidation of the Idrīsī's regime, the enthusiasm of his followers and his ability to raise a large body of armed men alarmed Husayn, as did the Idrīsī's goal to capture Mecca and expel the ʿAunī *ashrāf*. In February 1911 the Idrīsī sent emissaries to the Hijaz proclaiming that he was the *Mahdī* and encouraging the *ashrāf* and others to swear allegiance to him.<sup>46</sup> Husayn and the Idrīsī both claimed to rule the undemarcated frontier between the Hijaz and ʿAsīr and the Zahrān and Ghāmid tribes who resided there.<sup>47</sup>

Husayn welcomed the Ottoman campaign to smash the Idrīsī as an opportunity to take control of ʿAsīr with Istanbul's blessing. The Ottoman government had two aims: first, to restore its authority in ʿAsīr, and, second, to weaken Husayn by overextending his limited resources and exhausting his forces. This strategy badly misfired: the Idrīsī was not decisively defeated and Husayn returned in triumph from ʿAsīr more determined than ever to dominate the Hijaz.

Sulaymān Shaffīq Kamālī Pāshā, the Ottoman *mutaşarrıf* of ʿAsīr, warned the government against any Hashimite involvement in ʿAsīr. During the pilgrimages of 1909 and 1910 Husayn ordered the arrest of pilgrims from the tribe of Rijāl al-Māʿ, who were the most powerful of the Tihāma tribes and loyal to the Idrīsī. To undermine Ottoman rule in ʿAsīr, Husayn told the arrested pilgrims that they had been detained on Sulaymān's orders, and that they and all other ʿAsīrīs were subjects of the Emir of Mecca. Because of incidents like this, Sulaymān warned Istanbul that Husayn's meddling would make it more difficult for the government to re-establish its authority in ʿAsīr.<sup>48</sup> Sulaymān's protests fell on deaf ears at a time when Ottoman rule was near collapse in Yemen and ʿAsīr. In late 1909 Maḥmūd Shevket, the Grand Vizier and Minister of War, told Sulaymān that 'the constitutional government had appointed Husayn Pāshā as Emir of Mecca and that the government is

compelled to conduct its negotiations with Yemen and 'Asīr by means of the Hijaz. You should, therefore, cooperate with him in effort and in deed.'<sup>49</sup>

Another opponent of a campaign to suppress the Idrīsī was Abdallah's personal friend, Khedive 'Abbās Hilmī. On his way to and from Istanbul Abdallah regularly visited the Khedive in Cairo. 'Abbās Hilmī, who favoured and, possibly, supported the Idrīsī, warned Abdallah against an 'Asīr expedition because of the extreme summer heat, the danger of disease and the opposition of 'Arab opinion' to Hashimite participation.<sup>50</sup>

Abdallah's account of this incident did not specify who that 'Arab opinion' was, although they were probably the pre-war Arab political activists in the Ottoman Empire and Egypt who called for autonomy and decentralization in the Arab provinces of the empire. A vague hint as to their identify is found in a letter dated 3 November 1915 from G. S. Symes, Sir Reginald Wingate's private secretary in the Sudan, to Colonel Gilbert Clayton, the Sudan Agent in Cairo. Symes noted that when Husayn was organizing his 'Asīr expedition 'he received numerous letters, most of which were anonymous, written by "Young Arabs" from Syria, Egypt and elsewhere, to the effect that, if he proceeded with the expedition against the Idrīsī, he would be serving the cause of the "Turkish tyrants" as opposed to that of Islam.'<sup>51</sup> Abdallah rejected Arab criticism of his father's expedition because chaos in southern Arabia might have tempted the Italians in Eritrea to occupy 'Asīr and Yemen.<sup>52</sup> Husayn's Arab critics mistakenly assumed that he was acting in the loyal interest of the state. He was, in fact, exploiting the turbulence in south Arabia in order to advance his own territorial ambitions, which thrived on the inability of the Ottomans to control their distant Arabian provinces.

Husayn and his forces left Mecca in mid-April 1911 and reached al-Qunfudha by land in early May. The first engagement between the Turco-Hijazi forces and the rebels took place a few days later at al-Qawz, a village about thirty kilometres south of al-Qunfudha. This battle was Abdallah's first experience in combat. Three regular Ottoman

battalions, and a Hijazi force of 200 cavalry and 1000 men on camelback commanded by Abdallah and Faysal, were ambushed and routed by 600 rebel fighters. The Hashimite forces panicked and fled; the Turkish forces suffered heavy losses, although Abdallah's claim that only 1700 of 7000 Ottoman regulars survived the battle seems greatly exaggerated. British sources reported that four officers and 100 men of the Hijazi force were killed and that many others died of thirst during the withdrawal to al-Qunfudha.<sup>53</sup> The rout was a personal humiliation for Abdallah and Faysal, about whom Sulaymān Pāshā wrote: 'Of the Sharīf's sons, Sharīf Abdallah Bey (now Emir of Transjordan) and Sharif Faysal Bey (now King of Iraq) witnessed this battle. Both displayed exemplary courage even though they did not leave the battle until after the rebels had torn off their clothes, after which they returned naked to al-Qunfudha.'<sup>54</sup>

Fifteen days after the first battle, the Hashimites repeated their assault on al-Qawz with three regular Ottoman battalions, 400 Hijazi cavalry and 1100 men on camelback. Sharif Zayd bin Fawwāz commanded the Hijazi force in which Abdallah and Faysal also held command positions. According to British sources, Abdallah commanded '400 Arab cavalry'. After a night march of six hours from al-Qunfudha and a nine hour battle, the Turco-Hijazi force took al-Qawz in late May 1911. Husayn joined his troops for the advance to Abhā, which was reached after a thirty-five to forty day march from al-Qunfudha. Once the Hashimites had reached Abhā, they united with the forces of Sulaymān Pāshā and together raised the siege on 16 July 1911. Victory was achieved, however, at a heavy price: 800 of the 5000 Ottoman regulars were said to have died of disease, mainly cholera.<sup>55</sup>

Husayn did not realize his aim to dominate 'Asir. His forces advanced from al-Qawz to Abha without taking control of the areas through which they had passed or guarding their line of retreat. As a result, the 'Asīrī rebels recaptured those areas once the Hashimite forces had resumed their advance. Those tribes which did submit to Husayn threw off their allegiance to him once his troops had withdrawn to the Hijaz. The Idrīsī himself fled in August 1911 from Ṣabyā to Jabal Fayfā in the south-eastern mountains of 'Asīr, where he remained

until the outbreak of the Turkish-Italian war.<sup>56</sup> Our sources make it difficult to disentangle Abdallah's specific role in this campaign from that of Faysal or the other Hijazi commanders. No evidence suggests, however, that he was any less inept than his father as a military planner or commander.

Abdallah has written that his family's conversion to Arab nationalism began with the first 'Asīr campaign, which he called the most important event before World War I to make Husayn abandon his loyalty to the Ottomans.<sup>57</sup> Abdallah claimed in his memoirs that Husayn began to lay the foundations of the Arab national revival (*usus al-nahḍa*) after his return from 'Asīr in July 1911.<sup>58</sup> Abdallah cited Turkish atrocities and conflict with Sulaymān Pāshā as the reasons why he and his father returned when they did from 'Asīr and began to reconsider their loyalty to the Ottoman Empire.<sup>59</sup>

Abdallah's account of the first 'Asīr campaign misrepresented his both family's conversion to Arab nationalism and why Husayn returned to Mecca when he did. Soon after returning to Mecca in July 1911, Husayn wrote to Sir Aḥmad Faḍl, the 'Abdalī Sultan of Lahij explaining why he did not attack the Idrīsī's headquarters at Ṣabyā and why he had just returned to the Hijaz. Husayn claimed that the situation in Abhā was his first concern. Although Husayn had wanted to attack Ṣabyā, he was unable to do so because the Turks had not prepared the necessary supplies for a Hashimite advance. After the fall of Abhā, Husayn returned quickly to the Hijaz because the approach of *Ramaḍān* and the pilgrimage required his presence at home. Husayn's letter said nothing about Turkish atrocities, waning loyalty to the Ottomans or Arab rights. Husayn even suggested that he and Sulayman had agreed on the need to attack Ṣabyā.<sup>60</sup> However disgusted Husayn may have been with Turkish atrocities or Sulaymān, he did not hesitate to send more troops to 'Asīr in October 1911 after the outbreak of the Italian-Turkish war.

Abdallah was not an Arab nationalist before World War I. His account of how and when the Hashimites first turned to Arab nationalism tells us more about Abdallah when his memoirs were published in 1945 than it does about the end of the first 'Asīr

expedition in July 1911. The brutality of the Young Turks was a regular theme of Arab historical writing after World War I that was used to justify Arab defection from the world's last Muslim empire. By claiming, in effect, that the Hashimites were the first to realize that Turkish brutality had made it impossible for the Arabs and Turks to continue living together in one state, Abdallah hoped to convince his readers of the legitimacy of his claim to Arab political leadership.

Although the Hashimites' first 'Asīr campaign failed to achieve its aims, Husayn returned in triumph to the Hijaz and asserted his independence of the Ottomans with greater vigour than ever. At home he turned immediately to settling old scores with local enemies and clashed with the *vālī*, Hāzīm Bey. Husayn complained to Istanbul that Hāzīm had tried to undermine his authority by claiming that the Ottoman *vālī* was the sole representative of the Sultan in the Hijaz, and by turning the Dhawū Zayd against his family. Hāzīm was transferred to Beirut soon after the Italians invaded Tripoli on 29 September 1911.<sup>61</sup> Hāzīm's removal was intended to secure Hashimite support during the Italian war and show that Istanbul would overlook Husayn's provocations when his services were needed.

After the outbreak of the Turco-Italian war in November 1911 the Idrīsī revolted again. His uprising had the support of the Italians in Eritrea who supplied him with arms and ammunition. By February 1912, the Italian navy had destroyed the Ottoman fleet in the Red Sea in order to prevent the Turks from sending troops to Libya.<sup>62</sup> By June of that year, the Idrisi had reoccupied all of 'Asīr, including al-Qawz, except for the Turkish garrisons of al-Līth, al-Qunfudha, Abhā and Luḥayya.<sup>63</sup> Husayn entered the conflict in October 1911 when the Ministry of War asked him to send a force to defend al-Qunfudha and unite with Ottoman regulars sent from Syria. Husayn agreed to send troops, whose mission would be to prevent the Idrīsī from occupying al-Qunfudha and then attacking the Hijaz. Once again the Ottomans were said to have offered the Hashimites control of 'Asīr if they defeated the Idrīsī.<sup>64</sup> Faysal commanded the Hijaz force sent to 'Asīr. In January 1912 his troops recaptured al-Qunfudha and then al-Qawz. Although hostilities between

Turkey and Italy ended in October 1912, Faysal remained in 'Asīr until at least March 1913 guarding the southern approaches to the Hijaz.<sup>65</sup> It is not known why Abdallah did not participate in the second 'Asīr campaign.

#### Renewed Conflict with the Young Turks, 1911-1914

Husayn's relations with the Ottoman authorities in the Hijaz were generally cordial between the summer of 1911 and February 1914. This was especially true in the case of Munīr Pāshā, the *vālī* and commander of the Ottoman forces in the Hijaz, who replaced Ḥāzīm Bey.<sup>66</sup> Until February 1914 Husayn established his mastery of the Hijaz by forcing the removal of Ottoman officials he disliked and through the forbearance of the Ottoman government during the Tripoli and Balkan wars when Istanbul needed his military support.<sup>67</sup>

Ottoman leniency towards Husayn quickly disappeared after the end of the Balkan wars in August 1913. Beginning in February 1914 Istanbul made a concerted effort to end the traditional autonomy of the Hijaz by subordinating Husayn's authority to that of the local *vālī*. Istanbul relied upon the Hijaz railroad and the *vilayet* administration law of March 1913 to bring the Hijaz under the direct control of the central government. This law gave *vālīs* complete control of the police and the gendarmerie in their provinces. In times of crisis *vālīs* could declare a state of emergency and summon the assistance of land and naval forces from outside their province.<sup>68</sup> Munīr Pāshā was replaced by Wahīb Bey, who arrived in February 1914 with one artillery and seven infantry battalions. Wahīb had instructions to apply the *vilayet* administration law, to extend the Hijaz railroad from Medina to Mecca and to introduce taxation and conscription.<sup>69</sup>

Husayn and Abdallah correctly understood that Wahīb's appointment was the beginning of an official campaign to end the system of dual government in the Hijaz.<sup>70</sup> By early 1914 they should have had no doubt that Istanbul was prepared to use force to bring traditionally autonomous provinces of the empire under the control of the central government. Wahīb's arrival followed a series of Ottoman military expeditions sent to suppress uprisings in the Arab provinces of the



empire. The Hashimites had already participated in a campaign to suppress the Idrīsī and knew that Ottoman troops had attempted to suppress the insurrection of Imām Yaḥyā. Between August and October 1910 the Ottomans sent thirty-five infantry and three artillery battalions to Jebel Druze to disarm the Syrian Druze and introduce a census and conscription.<sup>71</sup> Ottoman troops brutally suppressed an uprising in Transjordan that began in al-Karak in November 1910. The people of al-Karak revolted against plans to introduce conscription, confiscation of arms, a census, land registration and the cessation of subsidies to the Majālīs, the leading clan of the district.<sup>72</sup>

Conflict between Husayn and the new vāḥīf began almost immediately after Wahīb's arrival. Husayn refused to obey orders that his personal guard turn over their weapons to the Turkish uniformed police and that he refrain from punishing the bedouins. Armed clashes between Husayn's guard and Ottoman soldiers led to several deaths. At Husayn's instigation, the bedouins around Mecca, who bitterly opposed any extension of the Hijaz railroad, rebelled and called for Wahīb's dismissal; shops were closed in Jidda and Mecca in protest against the policies of the new vāḥīf.<sup>73</sup> Sa'īd Pasha, the Grand Vizier, diffused the crisis by assuring Husayn in early February 1914 that the traditional rights of the Emirate of Mecca would not be touched and that the Hijaz railroad would not be extended.<sup>74</sup>

The settlement did not last long. Husayn distrusted Sa'īd's assurance and began again to incite the bedouins. Violence erupted on a large scale when the bedouins cut the telephone and telegraph lines connecting Mecca and Jidda. By early March 1914 bedouins were plundering shops outside the main gate of Mecca and committing robberies inside the city itself. As a warning to local supporters of the CUP, Husayn arranged the murder of an Afghan resident of Mecca who had criticized him in public and was a CUP sympathizer. The head of the CUP in Mecca was killed and hacked to pieces in March 1914 when he visited some of the Hijazi tribes and tried to convince them to accept an extension of the Hijaz railroad.<sup>75</sup>

Wahīb responded to these disturbances by asking for troop reinforcements and approaching Husayn for a settlement. Four infantry battalions were sent from Damascus to protect the construction of the railway to Mecca. When Wahīb approached Husayn in March 1914 with a request to pacify the bedouins, he agreed to Husayn's proposal to send a joint telegram to the Porte that explained the current situation in the Hijaz. Sa'īd's reply arrived on 16 March 1914 and stated, first, that the government had abandoned its project to extend the Hijaz railroad, second, that the Hijaz would remain free of conscription and, third, that the court of justice in Jidda would deal only with the cases of foreigners. The last two concessions were intended to calm Husayn's fear that extending the railway was a prelude to conscription, and that the expansion of the Ottoman court system in the Hijaz would undermine the judicial system of the Emirate of Mecca. According to Abdurrahman, the acting British consul in Jidda, news of the Grand Vizier's telegram quickly ended the crisis and was perceived locally as an important victory for Husayn.<sup>76</sup>

Abdallah was in Cairo visiting the Khedive when the crisis began in the Hijaz. Soon after reaching Cairo in early February 1914, Abdallah received telegrams from his brother 'Alī and the Grand Vizier urging him to proceed at once to Istanbul to discuss the crisis between Husayn and the government.<sup>77</sup> In Istanbul, Abdallah learned from the Sultan, the Grand Vizier, Enver Pasha, the Minister of War, and Ṭal'at Pāshā, the Minister of the Interior, that the state had no intention of deposing his father, but insisted upon the extension of the railway from Medina to Mecca, from Jidda to Mecca and from Yanbu' to Medina. In return for accepting these extensions, Ṭal'at offered Husayn one third of the Hijaz railroad's income for his own use, a lifetime appointment as Emir of Mecca, a promise that his sons would succeed him as Emir of Mecca, command of the forces guarding the railway and 250,000 Turkish pounds to spend on the bedouins. Ṭal'at told Abdallah point-blank that Husayn would be deposed if he refused this offer. Abdallah was then asked to leave on the first available ship in order to present these conditions to his father.<sup>78</sup>

Abdallah returned quickly to the Hijaz. In April 1914 Abdallah and Husayn met in Ṭā'if to discuss Ṭal'at's offer. Husayn rejected his offer and tried to forestall his deposition by sending Abdallah to Istanbul to negotiate a compromise on the railway issue with the Grand Vizier. Abdallah arrived in Istanbul one day after the assassination at Sarajevo and suggested to the Grand Vizier that the railway should not be completed until a commission of inquiry composed of Husayn, the *Shaikh al-Islām* and one Ottoman minister had studied the issue first. According to Abdallah's memoirs, our only source for these events, Sa'īd Pāshā replied, 'After this there is nothing else to say.' A day or two later Abdallah met Ṭal'at Pāshā, who told him that the railway question had to be delayed because of the outbreak of war in Europe. Abdallah was asked to return immediately to the Hijaz to begin raising volunteers in case the Ottomans entered the war. The outbreak of World War I had thus saved Husayn from a violent confrontation with Istanbul and his possible deposition by force. The Hijaz railroad was never extended from Medina to Mecca or Jidda.<sup>79</sup>

#### Abdallah, Kitchener and Storrs: First Contacts

Between the spring of 1912 and April 1914 Abdallah met three times with British officials in Cairo. Abdallah's interlocutors during those meetings were Lord Kitchener, the British consul-general in Egypt, and Ronald Storrs, Kitchener's oriental secretary. Abdallah met Kitchener and Storrs in order to discuss recent events in the Hijaz and to seek British support for his family in their conflict with the central government. Their meetings paved the way for the Anglo-Hashimite alliance of World War I. After Wahīb's arrival in the Hijaz, Abdallah and Husayn calculated that they would be deposed without outside support, and that the Ottomans would be reluctant to remove an Emir favoured by the British. Abdallah's pre-war contacts with Kitchener and Storrs were one result of the long tradition of friendship between the Muhammad 'Alī dynasty and the Dhawū 'Aun. Abdallah's account of these meetings indicates that 'Abbās Hilmī was instrumental in bring the two sides together.

Abdallah, Kitchener and Storrs first met in the spring of 1912 when Abdallah, who was then returning to Mecca from the Ottoman parliament, visited the Khedive in Cairo.<sup>80</sup> Abdallah was reluctant to meet Kitchener and Storrs, who paid him an unannounced and unofficial visit at 'Abbās Hilmī's palace. Abdallah feared that Istanbul would interpret such a meeting as disloyalty to the Ottoman Empire. Abdallah agreed to meet them at the urging of the Khedive, who introduced him to Kitchener as the power behind his father. Kitchener expressed his satisfaction with the arrangements Husayn had made for the safety and comfort of the pilgrims. Kitchener asked Abdallah to thank Husayn and convey the hope of the British government that the present situation would continue. Kitchener noted the intention of the Turks to make basic changes in the administration of the Arab provinces, and asked Abdallah if the government planned to replace his father. Abdallah was reluctant to answer Kitchener's questions, but replied that the Sultan had the right to remove his father, who would resist deposition if resistance was in the best interest of the Hijaz. Abdallah asked if Great Britain would assist his father if he resisted. Kitchener answered that a long tradition of friendship with Turkey prevented his country from interfering in internal Ottoman affairs. To this Abdallah replied, 'How much remarkable power you have to settle matters as you wish! Will the Lord permit me to ask him about Kuwait when the Viceroy of India intervened in Turkish affairs at the request of the qā'imaqām of Kuwait, Mubārak al-Ṣabāh. Was not Kuwait one part of the Ottoman lands?'. Kitchener told Abdallah that he would report their meeting to his government. Both men then parted on cordial terms.<sup>81</sup>

Kitchener's interest in the pilgrimage, the holy sites and Husayn's conflict with the central government must have impressed Abdallah with the magnitude of British interests in the Hijaz. Abdallah, who did not accept Kitchener's claim that Great Britain could not interfere in internal Ottoman affairs, was probably left with the impression that the British might support his father if Istanbul tried to depose him. Kitchener probably concluded that Great Britain had a potential ally in



Abdallah and Husayn. At very least, the friendly tone of this meeting paved the way for later contacts.

Abdallah's second meeting with Kitchener took place on 5 February 1914 during Husayn's crisis with Wahīb Bey. Speaking on behalf of his father, Abdallah asked Kitchener to inform Sir Edward Grey that the advent of Wahīb Bey had caused a major crisis in the Hijaz. Kitchener's report to Grey left the clear impression that the the conflict between Husayn and Wahīb concerned the administration of the holy places and the pilgrimage. In fact, the crisis had nothing to do with either. Neither Abdallah's account of the crisis nor British reports from the Hijaz mentioned the pilgrimage or the holy sites. The reason for this omission was simple: the previous pilgrimage had taken place in early November 1913, that is, several months before Wahīb's arrival; the next was not held until October 1914.

Abdallah's emphasis on the pilgrimage reflected the experience of his first meeting with Kitchener, who had made it clear the pilgrimage and the holy places were Great Britain's main interest in the Hijaz. In order, therefore, to gain British support for his father, Abdallah deliberately misrepresented the conflict with Wahīb Bey as a threat to the pilgrimage. Neither Kitchener, nor Storrs, nor Grey noticed that Abdallah had misled them.

Kitchener's report to Grey mentioned that Abdallah had asked if the British would intervene to prevent the Turks from deposing his father who 'had always done his best to assist Indian Moslem pilgrims amongst whom he had many friends.' Abdallah hoped that Great Britain would not allow the Turks to send reinforcements by sea to the Hijaz. He told Kitchener that war would follow any attempt to remove his father. Abdallah wished his remarks 'to be kept very secret and on no account to be known in Constantinople'; he also asked whether Grey 'would send his father some message.' Kitchener offered no encouragement and told Abdallah that Grey was also unlikely to do so. Grey sent no message to Husayn.<sup>82</sup>

Although Kitchener refused to intervene in the crisis in the Hijaz, Abdallah did not leave Egypt without an encouraging sign of British

interest in his father's cause. Ronald Storrs saw Abdallah after his meeting with Kitchener and told him, 'You should know that if His Excellency the Sharif defends his rights in the Hijaz, the British Government, who has no right to interfere in the internal affairs of a friendly state, will never be content with any actions Turkey would take to disrupt the present peace in the land of the pilgrimage.' Storrs's message exceeded the terms of what Kitchener had told Abdallah, but accurately reflected Kitchener's concern for the safety of pilgrims from the British Empire and the holy places. Abdallah understood that Storrs wanted him to convey that message to Husayn. Abdallah asked Storrs to send a letter to Husayn via the British consulate in Jidda. The contents of that letter and Husayn's reaction to it are unknown.<sup>33</sup>

Abdallah's last pre-war meetings with the British authorities in Cairo took place on 18-19 April 1914, when he met twice with Storrs. Abdallah and Kitchener did not meet. On 18 April Abdallah described his recent talks in Istanbul concerning Wahīb Bey, and noted his disappointment with Ottoman determination to extend the Hijaz railroad to Mecca. Because of that disappointment, Storrs reported that:

. . . the Sherif Abdulla was instructed by his father to approach His Britannic Majesty's Agency in Cairo with a view to obtaining with the British Government an agreement similar to that existing between the Amir of Afghanistan and the Government of India, in order to maintain the status quo in the Arabian peninsula and to do away with the danger of wanton Turkish aggression.

(In 1880 the Emir of Kabul, 'Abd al-Rahmān Khān, conceded exclusive control of his foreign affairs to British India. In return, the British pledged to refrain from interfering in the Emir's internal affairs and offered him an annual subsidy to be spent on his troops and the defence of the north-west frontier.) Abdallah asked Storrs for six or twelve machine-guns to defend the Hijaz against a Turkish attack. The next day Storrs informed Abdallah that Britain had refused his father's request for a British protectorate and would not interfere in any way in the administration of the holy places or the government of the Hijaz.<sup>34</sup>

The disappointment of his meetings with Storrs did not discourage Abdallah from trying to find other ways to gain British support. According to T. E. Lawrence, before the war Abdallah concocted a scheme

of 'peaceful insurrection' designed to attract great power support for his father. Lawrence described that plan as follows:

The pre-war plan of Sherif Abdulla to secure the independence of the Hejaz (as a preliminary to the formation of an Arab State) was to lay sudden hands on the Pilgrims at Mecca during the great feast. He estimated that the foreign governments concerned (England, France, Italy and Holland) would have brought pressure on the Porte to secure their release. When the Porte's efforts had failed they would have had to approach the Sherif direct, and would have found him anxious to do all in his power to meet their wishes, in exchange for a promise of immunity from Turkey in the future. This action was fixed (provisionally) for 1915, but was quashed by the war.<sup>85</sup>

This scheme is the first recorded reference to a tactic that was characteristic of Abdallah's political style during his early political career. Abdallah aimed to make himself indispensable to the British by manufacturing a crisis detrimental to British interests that only he could resolve. After the British had asked Abdallah to defuse the crisis, he would then show himself ready to satisfy British demands in the hope that they would support his ambitions and include him in their plans. The similarity of this scheme to the crisis Husayn attempted to create in 1910 by arranging the murder of three Indian pilgrims suggests that Abdallah learned the art of the calculated crisis and the *fait accompli* from his father.

#### Was Abdallah an Arab Nationalist Before World War I?

Before World War I Abdallah showed little interest in the Arab political societies in the Ottoman Empire and Egypt. Most of those societies advocated Arab autonomy within the Ottoman Empire, not Arab secession. The following discussion will differentiate between 'Arab political activists' who advocated Arab autonomy and 'Arab nationalists' who called for secession and independence.<sup>86</sup>

Abdallah has written that his awareness of Arab discontent with the CUP began during his visit to Damascus following the pilgrimage of 1909.<sup>87</sup> In 1911, however, he ignored warnings from 'Abbās Hilmī that Arab opinion opposed Hashimite participation in a campaign to crush the Idrīsī. Abdallah's claim that his conversion to Arab nationalism began after the first 'Asīr campaign has already been dismissed as erroneous.

Abdallah's awareness of Arab discontent did not stir him to join any of the pre-war Arab political societies in the Ottoman Empire. There is no evidence that he stood out in the Ottoman parliament as a defender of Arab rights, although he had many opportunities to do so.<sup>88</sup> We know that Arab representatives in the Ottoman parliament and government bureaucracy played a significant part in three of the pre-war Arab societies, *al-Ikhā' al-'Uthmānī al-'Arabī* (Ottoman Arab Fraternity), *al-Qaḥṭāniyya* (The Qahtan Society) and *al-Muntada al-Adabī* (the Literary Club).<sup>89</sup>

Although Abdallah took no known interest in the activities of the Arab political activists in parliament, those activists tried to convince Husayn to assume leadership of their movement. On 13 February 1911 Sayyid Ṭālib, the representative for Basra, sent a letter to Husayn which included a petition from thirty-five Arab parliamentarians who swore allegiance to him if he revolted to throw off the tyranny of the CUP which was crushing the Arabs.<sup>90</sup> In 1911 Rashīd Ridā sent emissaries to the Arabian peninsula to intrigue against the Turks, and to gather support for his program to unite the emirs of Arabia.<sup>91</sup>

In his memoirs Abdallah showed great pride in his family's pre-eminent role in Muslim history and in the Arab national revival, which, in his view, the Hashimites were entitled to lead by virtue of their descent.<sup>92</sup> It is puzzling, therefore, to find no reference in Abdallah's memoirs to Ṭālib's letter, the petition of his fellow Arab parliamentarians or Ridā's emissaries. The only explanation for this omission is the marginality of the Arab activists to Hashimite concerns in 1911. There is no evidence that Husayn responded to the Arab parliamentarians or that he paid any attention to Ridā's emissaries.

Chapter seven of the memoirs of Sulaymān Fayḍī, who represented Basra in the Ottoman parliament and was the right-hand man of Sayyid Ṭālib, sheds additional light on Hashimite attitudes towards the pre-war Arab activists. While representing Basra, Fayḍī was a close associate of the Arab activists in parliament and the Arab activists studying in the Ottoman War College, who often visited him in his home. Fayḍī also knew and admired Faysal, the parliamentary representative for Jidda.



Fayḍī did not describe Faysal or Abdallah as Arab political activists or mention them as associated in any way with the Arab political societies in Istanbul. Had Faysal and Abdallah distinguished themselves as defenders of Arab rights, it seems likely that Fayḍī would have mentioned this in his memoirs. We can conclude, therefore, that neither brother had an interest of any consequence in the pre-war Arab political activism.<sup>33</sup>

Muḥammad Sharīf al-Fārūqī claimed in December 1915 that Abdallah had joined Rashīd Riḍā's Society of the Arab Union during one of his visits to Cairo in 1914, and favoured Riḍā's program for uniting the emirs of the Arab peninsula under Husayn's leadership. (Fārūqī was an Arab nationalist from Mosul about whom more will be said later.) Abdallah memoirs do not mention this society or Husayn's interest in Riḍā's schemes to unite the Arabian peninsula. Riḍā's writings say nothing about the Hashimites showing any interest in his society. It is unlikely that Riḍā would have remained silent if the Emir of Mecca had endorsed his plans for Arab unity.<sup>34</sup>

### Conclusion

From 1908 until World War I Hashimite political ambitions were limited strictly to the Arabian peninsula. Before the war the Hashimites had no interest in extending their domain to the Fertile Crescent. The principal pre-war ambition of the Hashimites was to preserve and extend the traditional autonomy of the Emirate of Mecca. Husayn aimed to establish his family as the dominant political force in western and central Arabia. This could only be done through his complete domination of the Hijaz and its *vālī*. Two of his other aims were to keep his Zayḍī rivals out of power and to ensure that his sons succeeded him as Emir of Mecca. He was equally intent upon territorial expansion at the expense of the Idrīsī and Ibn Saud.

The Hashimites did not intend to overthrow Ottoman rule in the Hijaz or elsewhere in Arabia. Their aim was to create an autonomous Hashimite emirate which would embrace the Hijaz, Najd, 'Asīr and, probably, the rest of the Arabian peninsula. The Emirate of Mecca was to be the core of an empire or confederation within the Ottoman Empire

that the Hashimites would rule on behalf of Istanbul. As far as we know, Husayn had no clear plan for organizing and governing such an entity. Husayn's failure to subdue the Idrīsī and Ibn Saud deprived him of the opportunity to extend his rule beyond the Hijaz.

Self-aggrandizement and the need to safeguard the traditional autonomy of the Hijaz were not the only reasons why the Hashimites sought to dominate their Arabian rivals. The Hashimites took part in two Ottoman campaigns to suppress the Idrīsī in order to prevent him from attacking the Hijaz and to eliminate a religious challenge to their right to rule the Hijaz. Husayn wanted to dominate Ibn Saud, first, because his influence among the tribes residing in the undemarcated frontier region between the Hijaz and Najd challenged the territorial integrity of the Hijaz, and, second, because Husayn dreaded the Wahhabis who, for religious reasons, rejected his right to rule the *haramayn*.

The Hashimites were unable to realize their pre-war political ambitions in Arabia. The determination of the Ottoman government to end the long tradition of dual government in the Hijaz and bring that distant province under the direct control of Istanbul was main impediment to the fulfillment of Hashimite ambitions. The Ottomans prevented Husayn from reducing the *vālī* to a powerless symbol of the central government. Beginning in early 1914 Istanbul was prepared to use force, if necessary, to bring the Hijaz under the complete control of the *vālī*. By mid-1914 Husayn and Abdallah had grown so desperate in their conflict with the Ottomans that, in order to save themselves from deposition or worse, they were prepared to concede the external sovereignty of the Hijaz to Great Britain.

Husayn's strategy was to cooperate with the Ottomans as long as cooperation served his interests. When Ottoman policy clashed with his ambitions, Husayn worked to defeat that policy either by forcing the removal of Ottoman officials who challenged him or by exploiting Ottoman preoccupations elsewhere in the empire to bolster his standing in the Hijaz. The Hashimites thrived on the weakness of the Ottomans state and its inability to control its distant Arabian provinces.

Husayn's strategy changed after the advent of Wahīb Bey in early 1914. Husayn concluded that without British support the Hashimites would be unable to prevent their deposition or stop the Ottomans from bringing the Hijaz under the direct control of Istanbul. Husayn assumed that Istanbul would be reluctant to depose a British client. This strategy failed because of British unwillingness to intervene in the internal affairs of the Ottoman Empire.

Before World War I Abdallah's personal ambitions did not diverge from those of his family. Abdallah was a dynastic political leader whose primary function was that of a diplomatic intermediary between his father on the one hand, and the Ottomans and the British on the other. Until World War I Abdallah was, in effect, Husayn's foreign minister. By 1908 Husayn had already recognized Abdallah's political acumen, audacity and willingness to act aggressively to defend Hashimite interests. As Husayn's informal foreign minister, Abdallah laid the foundations for the Anglo-Hashimite alliance of World War I. Although Abdallah commanded troops during the first 'Asīr campaign, he showed little aptitude as a military commander. By 1914 it had become clear that Abdallah's primary vocation would be that of a politician and a diplomat, not a soldier.

Abdallah's authority and legitimacy as a political leader derived from three sources: his lineage, his father who entrusted him with important diplomatic missions and the Ottoman Sultan who allowed Husayn and his sons to rule the Hijaz.

Like his father and brothers, Abdallah was not an Arab nationalist before World War I. Abdallah was not influenced by the pre-war Arab political societies and had no significant interest in their activities. His willingness to accept British protection was intended to strengthen his family's hand vis-à-vis the central government and to protect the traditional autonomy of the Hijaz. His conflict with the Ottoman government had nothing to do with a campaign for Arab rights or the rights of the Arabs as a nation. Like other peoples with strong traditions of local autonomy, Husayn and his sons resisted the encroachment of central power.

## Notes

1. Van Arendonk, 'Sharīf', *Encyclopedia of Islam*, first edition (EI), vol. 4 (London, 1934) pp. 324-29; B. Lewis, 'Al-Ḥaramayn', *Encyclopedia of Islam*, second edition (EI<sup>2</sup>), vol. 3 (London, 1971) pp. 175-76; G. Rentz, 'Hāshimids', EI<sup>2</sup>, vol. 3, pp. 262-63; W. Montgomery Watt, 'Hāshim bin 'Abd Manāf', EI<sup>2</sup>, vol. 3, p. 260; A. J. Wensinck, 'Mecca', EI, vol. 3 (London, 1936) pp. 442-48.

2. Gerald de Gaury, *The Rulers of Mecca* (London, 1951) chapters seven to eleven; William Ochsenwald, *Religion, Society and the State in Arabia. The Hijaz Under Ottoman Control, 1840-1908* (Columbus, Ohio, 1984) pp. 3-9.

3. On the pre-war Hijazi economy, see Ochsenwald, *Arabia*, pp. 20, 98, 169-178 (p. 169 quoted) and Saleh Muhammad Al-Amr, *The Hijaz Under Ottoman Rule 1869-1914: The Ottoman Vali, the Sharif of Mecca and the Growth of British Influence* (Riyadh, 1978) pp. 19-38, 42, 77-82.

4. de Gaury, *Rulers*, chapters seven to eleven; Ochsenwald, *Arabia*, pp. 4-9, 32-36; Butrus Abu-Manneh, 'Sultan Abdūlhamid II and the Sharifs of Mecca (1880-1900)', *Asian and African Studies*, vol. 9, no. 1, 1973, pp. 1-21.

5. On the Wahhabis, Muḥammad 'Alī and the Hijaz, see de Gaury, *Rulers*, chapters eleven to fourteen; Abd el-Hamid El-Batrik, 'Turkish and Egyptian Rule in Arabia, 1810-1914', unpublished Ph. D. thesis, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 1947, pp. 145-82; Henry Dodwell, *The Founder of Modern Egypt. A Study of Muhammad Ali* (Cambridge, 1931) pp. 41-50. The Dhawū 'Aun were also known as the 'Abādila.

6. Turning the 'Auns and Zayds against one another was a conspicuous feature of Sultan 'Abd ūl-Ḥamīd's policy towards the Hijaz. Abu-Manneh, 'Abdūlhamid', pp. 6-10.

7. On British partiality for the Dhawū 'Aun, see James Zohrab to Lord Salisbury secret 17 Mar. 1880 FO 78/3131. Zohrab was the British consul in Jidda.

8. Abu-Manneh, 'Abdūlhamid', p. 14.

9. Ochsenwald, *Arabia*, pp. 14-15, 167-69.

10. Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* (London, 1961) pp. 334-37; Stanford and Ezel K. Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*, vol. 2 (Cambridge, 1977) pp. 259-63; Abu-Manneh, 'Abdūlhamid', p. 6.

11. William Ochsenwald, *The Hijaz Railroad* (Charlottesville, 1980) pp. 1-23; Ochsenwald, *Arabia*, p. 186.

12. Ochsenwald, *Railroad*, pp. 27-53, 117-47; William Ochsenwald, 'Opposition to Political Centralization in South Jordan and the Hijaz, 1900-1914', *The Muslim World*, vol. 58, no. 4, Oct. 1973, pp. 297-306; Z. H. Zaidi, 'Hidjāz Railway', EI<sup>2</sup>, vol. 3, pp. 364-65.

13. Baker, *Husayn*, pp. 6-11.

14. On the long reign of 'Aun al-Rafīq, see Ochsenwald, *Arabia*, pp. 185-219 and Abu-Manneh, 'Abdūlhamid', pp. 12-21. Cecil G. Wood (Jidda) to SSFA (Salisbury) 21 June 1892 and W. S. Richards (Jidda) to Sir Francis Clare Ford (Istanbul) 16 Dec. 1892, both FO 78/4427; Richards to SSFA (Rosebery) 28 Jan. 1893 FO 78/4493; Richards to Ford 24 Feb. 1893 FO 195/1805. 'Abdallāh bin al-Ḥusayn, *Mudhakkirātī* (Jerusalem, 1945)

pp. 17-18. Randall Baker, *King Husain and the Kingdom of the Hijaz* (London, 1979) pp. 9-10.

15. Abdallah, *Mudhakkirātī*, pp. 23-26. 'Alī Ḥaydar's description of the life of an exiled *sharif* during this period is instructive. Haydar was head of the Dhawū Zayd and Husayn's chief competitor for the Emirate in 1905 and 1908. George Stitt, *A Prince of Arabia. The Emir Shereef Ali Haider* (London, 1948) pp. 83-85.

16. Abdallah, *Mudhakkirātī*, pp. 9-20.

17. *ibid.*, pp. 18, 24.

18. *ibid.*, pp. 15, 17-18, 25-26; Wilson, *Abdullah*, p. 14.

19. Stitt, *Haider*, pp. 92-95 (p. 94 quoted); de Gaury, *Mecca*, pp. 260-61; Ochsenwald, *Arabia*, p. 214.

20. On the events of July 1908-April 1909, see Feroz Ahmad, *The Young Turks* (Oxford, 1969) pp. 1-46 and Victor R. Swanson, 'The Military Rising in Istanbul, 1909', *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 5, no. 4, 1970, pp. 171-84.

21. Elie Kedourie, 'The Impact of the Young Turk Revolution on the Arabic-Speaking Provinces of the Ottoman Empire', *Arabic Political Memoirs and Other Studies* (London, 1974) pp. 136, 145.

22. Abdallah, *Mudhakkirātī*, pp. 18-19 and Ochsenwald, *Arabia*, pp. 216-17. After the July uprising, Husayn wrote to Sir Gerald Lowther, the British ambassador in Istanbul, thanking Great Britain for supporting the Ottoman constitutional movement, and to Hijazi notables encouraging them 'to cherish friendly sentiments' towards England.' Lowther to Grey Confidential 24 Nov. 1908 FO 371/561/41700.

23. Abdallah, *Mudhakkirātī*, pp. 19-20; Stitt, *Haider*, pp. 103-4; Lowther to Grey confidential 24 Nov. 1908 FO 371/561/41700.

24. See, for example, T. E. Lawrence's description of Abdallah in *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* (London, 1938; reprint of 1983) pp. 50, 67-68, 73-74.

25. Lowther to Grey confidential 24 Nov. 1908 FO 371/561/41700; Monahan to Lowther 5 Dec. 1908 FO 195/2286/114 Jed. and Monahan to Lowther confidential 12 Mar. 1909 FO 195/2320/25 Jed..

26. Abdallah, *Mudhakkirātī*, pp. 27-28; Al-Amr, *Hijaz*, pp. 134-35.

27. C. E. Dawn, *From Ottomanism to Arabism. Essays on the Origins of Arab Nationalism* (Urbana, 1973) pp. 1-53 and Ahmad, *Young Turks*, p. 156.

28. Abdallah, *Mudhakkirātī*, pp. 34-35.

29. Ḥāzim Bey, who served in the Hijaz from April to November 1911, was one example of a *vālī* whose transfer to another post (Beirut) resulted from his difficult relationship with Husayn. Monahan to Lowther 18 Apr. 1911 FO 195/2376/77 Jed. and Monahan to Lowther 4 Nov. 1911 FO 195/2376/182 Jed.

30. On Husayn's incitement of the bedouins, see Richardson to Lowther 6 Oct. 1909 FO 371/767/42587.

31. See Monahan's comments on the impact of the frequent transfer of *valis* on Husayn's standing in relation to the central government in Monahan to Lowther 4 Nov. 1911 FO 195/2376/182 Jed. Al-Amr, *Hijaz*, pp. 253-54.

32. Abdallah, *Mudhakkirātī*, p. 40. On 'Abd al-Rahmān al-Yūsuf, see Philip S. Khouri, *Urban Notables and Arab Nationalism. The Politics of Damascus 1860-1920* (Cambridge, 1983) pp. 39-40, 48-49, 57, 62-63, 65.

33. Abdallah, *Mudhakkirātī*, pp. 40-44; Devey to Lowther 3 Apr. 1909 FO 371/767/15583. Nasir bin 'Ali was the brother of Sharif Shahhad whom Husayn had appointed Emir of Medina. On Nasir bin 'Ali, see Sulaymān Mūsā, *Ṣuwwar min al-Buṭūla* (Amman, 1968) pp. 9-34.

34. Abdallah, *Mudhakkirātī*, p. 42; Devey to Lowther 27 Feb. 1909 FO 371/767/9854.

35. Abdallah, *Mudhakkirātī*, pp. 44-47; 'Turkey. Annual Report 1909', in Lowther to Grey 31 Jan. 1910 FO 371/1002/4235.

36. Monahan to Lowther 23 Mar. 1910 FO 195/2350/23 Jed. (quoted); Monahan to Lowther confidential 12 Mar. 1909 FO 371/767/13685; Abdallah, *Mudhakkirātī*, pp. 52-53. The family of Ḥasan al-Shaibī were the traditional keepers of the keys of the Ka'ba.

37. In his report on the Meccan elections of 1910, Monahan noted that Shaibī knew little Turkish and was said to have been 'somewhat uneducated'. Abdallah claimed that Shabibi's knowledge of Arabic was excellent. Monahan to Lowther 23 Mar. 1910 FO 195/2350/23 Jed. and Abdallah, *Mudhakkirātī*, pp. 52-53.

38. On Hashimite-Saudi relations in 1910, see Abdurrahman to Lowther 5 Aug. 1910 FO 195/2350/97 Jed.; Abdurrahman to Lowther 17 Sept. 1910 FO 195/2350/111 Jed.; Abdurrahman to Lowther 11 Oct. 1910 FO 195/2350/118 Jed.; Shakespeare to Cox 6 Nov. 1910 FO 371/1243/1903; Abdallah, *Mudhakkirātī*, p. 47; Gary Troeller, *The Birth of Saudi Arabia: Britain and the Rise of the House of Sa'ud* (London, 1976) pp. 37-39; Al-Amr, *Hijaz*, p. 165; Baker, *Husayn*, pp. 24-26.

39. Abdallah, *Mudhakkirātī*, pp. 47-48; Wilson, *Abdullah*, p. 21. On Kamil Pasha, see Monahan to Lowther 18 Apr. 1911 FO 195/2376/77 Jed..

40. Abdallah, *Mudhakkirātī*, p. 48.

41. Shipley to Lowther 19 July 1912; Shipley to Lowther confidential Jidda 29 July 1912; Grey to Marling 15 Aug. 1912; Grey to Marling 3 Sept. 1912 (quoted) all in IO L/P&S/11/81 P3252.

42. For an overview of the establishment of the Idrīsī's régime in 'Asīr until 1911, see Fārūq 'Uthmān Abāzah, *Al-Hukm al-'Uthmānī fī'l-Yaman 1872-1918* (Cairo, 1975) pp. 197-214.

43. 'Memorandum Respecting Rebellion in Asir' Cairo, 27 June 1912 in Cheetham to Grey 28 July 1912 FO 371/1364/32964; 'The Yemen. 1910' secret undated and unsigned in FO 882/10/ID/11/1; John Baldry, 'The Turkish-Italian War in the Yemen, 1911-12', *Arabian Studies*, vol. 3, 1976, pp. 54-55; Abāzah, *Yaman*, pp. 207-13 and Muḥammad bin Ahmad 'Isā al-'Uqailī, *Al-Mikhār al-Sulaymānī au al-Janūb al-'Arabī fī Ta'rīkh*, vol. 2 (Cairo, 1960 ?) pp. 91-97.

44. 'Memorandum Respecting Rebellion in Asir', 27 June 1912 FO 371/1364/32964.

45. Rashīd Ridā, 'Al-Fitna fī'l-Yaman', *Al-Manār*, vol. 14, part 2, 1911, p. 158; Marling to Grey 4 July 1911 FO 371/1246/26746; Monahan to Lowther 8 Mar. 1911 FO 195/2376 50 Jed.; Sulaymān Shafīq Kamālī Pāshā, 'Bilād al-'Arab fī Mudhakkirāt Sulaymān Shafīq Kamālī Pāshā', *Al-'Arab*, year 6, part 5, Jan. 1972, pp. 352-55 and year 6, part 10, June 1972, p. 771; Tawfīq Al-Barū, *Al-'Arab wa'l-Turk fī'l-'Ahd al-Dustūr al-'Uthmānī 1908-1914* (Cairo, 1960) p. 247.

46. 'Memorandum Respecting Rebellion in Asir', 27 June 1912 FO 371/1364/32964; Sulaymān, 'Bilād', *Al-ʿArab*, year 6, part 2, Oct. 1971, pp. 92-97; Abāzah, *Yaman*, p. 203.

47. Monahan to Lowther 18 June 1910 FO 371/1006/24859; Abdur Rahman (acting consul) to Lowther 14 July 1910 FO 371/1006/28563; 'Report in Arabic from Seyyid Muhammad-ibn-Ali-ibn-Idris to Suleiman Pasha, Mutesarrif and Commandant of Asir' (English translation) attached to Lowther to Grey 20 July 1910 FO 371/1006/26784. On the Ghāmid and the Zahrān, see Kinahan Cornwallis, *Asir Before World War I* (Cambridge, 1976; reprint of the June 1916 internal publication of the Arab Bureau) pp. 25, 44-47; Sulaymān, 'Bilād', *Al-ʿArab*, year 6, part 2, Oct. 1971, pp. 93-94; and Sharaf bin ʿAbd al-Muhsin al-Barakātī, *Al-Rihla al-Yamaniyya* (Beirut, 1384/1964; second edition of Cairo, 1330/1912) p. 10.

48. The Idrīsī to Imām Yahyā 16 Rabīʿ al-Awwal 1330/5 March 1912, *Al-Manār*, vol. 16, part 4, 1913, pp. 300-303; Sulaymān, 'Bilād', *Al-ʿArab*, year 7, part 2, September 1972, pp. 112-20 and year 5, part 11, July 1971, p. 1005. On the Rijāl al-Māʿ, see Robin Bidwell (ed.), *Arabian Personalities of the Early Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, 1986; reprint of the Arab Bureau internal publication, 1917) pp. 198-201.

49. Sulaymān, 'Bilād', *Al-ʿArab*, year 6, part 2, Oct. 1971, p. 73.

50. Abdallah, *Mudhakkirātī*, pp. 58-59.

51. Symes to Clayton secret 3 Nov. 1915 FO 141/461/1198. Rashid Rida, who believed that Husayn was acting for the benefit of the state, was not one of the 'Young Arabs' mentioned in Symes's letter. See Riḍā, 'Al-Fitna fī'l-Yaman', *Al-Manār*, vol. 14, part 2, 1911, pp. 158-59. In 1909 Rashīd Riḍā took a positive view of Husayn and praised him warmly for his work as a reformer who strove to bring peace and security to the Hijaz. See Rashīd Riḍā, 'Al-Sharīf Amir Makka al-Mukarrama wa'l-Is̄lāh', *Al-Manār*, vol. 12, part 4, 19 May 1909, p. 320.

52. Abdallah, *Mudhakkirātī*, p. 59.

53. Abdallah, *Mudhakkirātī*, pp. 58-61 and 'Memorandum Respecting Rebellion in Asir', 27 June 1912 FO 371/1364/32964.

54. Sulaymān, 'Bilād', *Al-ʿArab*, year 6, part 5, Jan. 1972, pp. 356-57 (p. 357 quoted).

55. Abdallah, *Mudhakkirātī*, pp. 62-66; Sulaymān, 'Bilād', *Al-ʿArab*, year 6, part 5, Jan. 1972, p. 358. 'Memorandum Respecting Rebellion in Asir', 27 June 1912 FO 371/1364/32964; 'Quarterly Report on the Affairs of Arabia for the Quarter Ending September 30, 1911' FO 371/1246/41662; 'Turkey. Annual Report, 1911' in Lowther to Grey 31 Jan. 1912 FO 371/1491/4965.

56. Sulaymān, 'Bilād', *Al-ʿArab*, year 6, part 5, Jan. 1972, pp. 358-59 and year 6, part 6, Feb. 1972, p. 416; Abāzah, *Yaman*, pp. 316-17 and Barakātī, *Rihla*, p. 105.

57. Abdallah, *Mudhakkirātī*, p. 58.

58. *ibid.*, p. 67.

59. *ibid.*, p. 66.

60. Sulaymān, 'Bilād', *Al-ʿArab*, year 6, part 5, Jan. 1972, pp. 355-57 and Husayn to Sir Ahmad Fadl undated but attached to Husayn to Fadl 21 Aug. 1911 IO R/20/A/1524/96/4.

61. *ibid.* (first quote); Abdallah, *Mudhakkirātī*, pp. 67-70 (pp. 68-69 quoted); Monahan to Lowther 4 Nov. 1911 FO 195/2376/182 Jed.

62. George A. Richardson (British vice-consul, Hudayda and Kamarān) to Lowther 22 June 1912 FO 195/2395 no. 3780 and Baldry, 'War in Yemen', pp. 55-65. On the Idrīsī's relations with the Ottomans and Italians during the war in Libya, see Abāzah, *Yaman*, pp. 300-31.

63. Abdur Rahman to Lowther 16 Oct. 1911 FO 195/2376 176 Jed.; Richardson to Lowther 9 Jan. 1912 FO 195/2376 180 Jed.; Monahan to Lowther 9 Jan. 1912 FO 195/2395 no. 370; Monahan to Lowther 29 Jan. 1912 FO 195/2395 no. 643; Monahan to Lowther 18 Feb. 1912 FO 195/2395 no. 1022; Monahan to Lowther 4 Mar. 1912 FO 195/2395 no. 1276; Unsigned (British embassy, Rome) to Grey 7 Mar. 1912 FO 195/2395 no. 1087; Richardson to Lowther 8 July 1912 FO 371/1364/37127; Barakātī, *Rihla*, pp. 109-10 and 'Uqailī, *Janūb*, p. 103.

64. Shevket to Sulaymān undated but November 1911 in Sulaymān, 'Bilād', *Al-'Arab*, year 7, part 1, August 1972, p. 55 and year 7, part 2, Sept. 1972, pp. 118-20; Faysal to Sulaymān 17 May 1912, Sulaymān, 'Bilād', year 7, part 7, Feb. 1973, pp. 527-29; 'Memorandum Respecting Rebellion in Asir', 27 June 1912 FO 371/1364/32964 and Abāzah, *Yaman*, p. 309.

65. Barakātī, *Rihla*, pp. 109-11; Sulaymān, 'Bilād', *Al-'Arab*, year 5, part 5, May 1972, pp. 857-58; year 7, part 7, Feb. 1973, pp. 527-29; year 7, part 8, Mar. 1973, pp. 612-15; Richardson to Lowther 25 Mar. 1913 IO R/20/A/1524 file 96/4; Col. R. A. Wauchope, 'The Turkish Campaign in Asir 1911-1912', in GOC, Aden to Chief of the General Staff Headquarters, Simla Aden 25 Mar. 1916, IO R/20/A/1529 file no. 96/9; 'Uqailī, *Janūb*, p. 104; Baldry, 'War in Yemen', p. 62.

66. Abdallah, *Mudhakkirātī*, p. 77.

67. On Husayn's ability to take advantage of a series of ineffectual valīs in order to eliminate all challenges to his authority, see Monahan to Lowther 7 Mar. 1912 FO 371/1487/13624.

68. For a detailed description of the provincial administration law of 26 March 1913 see Lowther to Grey 12 Apr. 1913 FO 371/1801/17400 and Barū, 'Arab, pp. 479-88. I was unable to find a copy of this law.

69. Mallet to Grey 23 Mar. 1914 FO 371/2130/12919; Amīn Sa'īd, *Al-Thawra al-'Arabiyya al-Kubrā*, vol. 1, *Al-Nidāl Bayna al-'Arab wa'l-Turk* (Cairo, no date) p. 125-26.

70. Abdallah, *Mudhakkirātī*, p. 71.

71. On the Druze uprising, see G.P. Devey's letters to Lowther from 22 Aug. to 8 Nov. 1910 FO 618/3 and 'Alī Sultān, *Ta'rīkh Sūriya, 1908-1918* (Damascus, 1987) pp. 111-16.

72. On the al-Karak disturbances, see 'Auda al-Qasūs, *Mudhakkirāt 'Auda al-Qasūs. Wathā'iq wa Waqā'it min Ta'rīkh Sharq al-Urdunn Khilāl Sab'īn 'Ām* (unpublished, undated and found in the University of Jordan Library, Amman) pp. 56-81; Devey's letters to Marling (Istanbul) 23 Nov.-27 Dec. 1910 FO 618/3 and Devey to Marling 3 Jan. 1911 and 11 Jan. 1911 FO 195/2370; Mādī and Mūsā, *Urdunn*, pp. 18-26; Sultān, *Sūriya*, pp. 116-19.

73. Devey, 'Memorandum on Hejaz Affairs', 20 Mar. 1914 in Mallet to Grey 17 Apr. 1914 FO 371/2130/18245; Abdurrahman (acting British consul, Jidda) to Mallet 11 Mar. 1914 and Abdurrahman to Mallet 19 Mar. 1914 both FO 371/2130/15057; Kitchener to Grey 21 Mar. 1914 FO 371/2130/12652; Sa'īd, *Thawra*, p. 126.



74. Abdallah, *Mudhakkirātī*, p. 80 and Kitchener to Grey 7 14 Feb. 1914 FO 371/2130/6795; Sa'īd, *Thawra*, p. 126.

75. Abdallah, *Mudhakkirātī*, pp. 79-80; Kitchener to Grey 21 Mar. 1914 FO 371/2130/12652; Devey, 'Memorandum on Hejaz Affairs', 20 Mar. 1914 FO 371/2130/18245 and Abdurrahman to Mallet 11 Mar. 1914 FO 371/2130/15057.

76. Abdurrahman to Mallet 19 Mar. 1914 FO 371/2130/15057; Mallet to Grey 23 Mar. 1914 FO 371/2130/12919; Mallet to Grey 2 Apr. 1914 FO 371/2130/14623; Abdallah, *Mudhakkirātī*, p. 80.

77. Abdallah, *Mudhakkirātī*, pp. 78-79.

78. *ibid.*, pp. 82-83, 87-90; Ronald Storrs, 'Note', 19 Apr. 1914 FO 371/1973/87396.

79. Abdallah, *Mudhakkirātī*, pp. 90-93 (p. 92 quoted).

80. There is disagreement about the date of this meeting. Abdallah told George Antonius in 1936 that he met Kitchener for the first time in the spring of 1912. The chronicler Amīn Sa'īd has written that they met in 1913. Abdallah's account in his memoirs does not mention a date. No record of this meeting is found in British official sources. Spring 1912 is the preferred date if only because it is taken from a statement made by Abdallah himself. See 'Emir Abdullah's account of his conversations with Lord Kitchener, transmitted with notes by Mr. G. Antonius', *BDOW*, pp. 831-32; Sa'īd, *Thawra*, p. 125; Abdallah, *Mudhakkirātī*, pp. 71-73.

81. *ibid.*, p. 73 quoted. My interpretation of Abdallah's pre-war meetings with Kitchener and Storrs owe much to Dawn, *Ottomanism*, pp. 54-68.

82. Kitchener to Grey secret 6 Feb. 1914 (quoted) and Kitchener to Grey confidential 4 Apr. 1914, *BDOW*, pp. 827, 830-31; 'Emir Abdullah's account of his conversations with Lord Kitchener, transmitted with notes by Mr. G. Antonius', *BDOW*, pp. 831-32. Ramaḍān of 1914 fell between 24 August and 24 September.

83. Abdallah, *Mudhakkirātī*, pp. 80-81 (quoted) and Sa'īd, *Thawra*, p. 126. Storr's conversation with Abdallah is not mentioned in British archival sources. Storrs also gave Abdallah a letter from Kitchener to deliver to the British ambassador in Istanbul. Abdallah was asked to pass Kitchener's letter to G. H. Fitzmaurice, the chief dragoman of the British embassy, who was assigned to meet Abdallah in Izmir. Kitchener's letter asked the ambassador to put his private yacht at Abdallah's disposal if he wished to use it. Abdallah delivered the letter to Fitzmaurice, but never made use of the ambassador's yacht.

84. Storrs, 'Note', 19 Apr. 1914 FO 371/1973/87396 (quoted); Kitchener to Sir William Tyrell 26 Apr. 1914, *BDOW*, p. 831; 'Emir Abdullah's account of his conversations with Lord Kitchener, transmitted with notes by Mr. G. Antonius', *BDOW*, pp. 831-32; Ronald Storrs, *Orientalisms* (London, 1945) pp. 122-23. There is no record of these conversations in Abdallah's memoirs.

85. T. E. Lawrence to C. E. Wilson 26 Apr. 1917 FO 686/6 Part 2 and Lawrence, *Seven Pillars*, p. 74.

86. On the Arab political societies in the Ottoman Empire after 1908, see by Eliezer Tauber, 'The Entry of Officers into Arab Politics', *Sqiroṭ*, no. 102, Feb. 1988, The Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies, pp. 1-39 (In Hebrew) and 'Rashid Riḍā As Pan-

Arabist Before World War I', *The Muslim World*, vol. 79, no. 2, Apr. 1989, pp. 102-112 and Dawn, *Ottomanism*, pp. 148-79.

87. Abdallah, *Mudhakkirātī*, pp. 43-44.

88. Monahan to Lowther 7 Mar. 1912 FO 371/1487/13624 and 'Memorandum on the Position of the Grand Sheriff of Mecca' in Sir Louis Mallet to Grey 18 Mar. 1914 in *BDOW*, pp. 828-29.

89. Tauber, 'Officers', pp. 26-27, 39.

90. Sulaymān Faydī, *Mudhakkirāt Sulaymān Faydī. Fi Ghamrat al-Nidāl* (Beirut, 1974) pp. 90-91; Unsigned but Asad Dāghir, *Ahad A'dā' al-Jam'iyāt al-'Arabiyya* (Cairo, 1916) p. 78; K. T. Khairallah, *Le Problème du Levant. Les Régions Arabes Libérées. Syrie-Liban-Irak* (Paris, 1919) pp. 31-33; Mrs. Stewart Erskine, *King Faysal of Iraq* (London, 1933) pp. 40-41. On Sayyid Talib, see Eliezer Tauber, 'Sayyid Talib and the Young Turks in Basra', *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 25, no. 1, Jan. 1989, pp. 3-22.

91. Tauber, 'Ridā', pp. 102-112.

92. Abdallah's views of his family's role in the Arab national revival are analyzed in Israel Gershoni, 'The Arab Nation, The Hashimite Dynasty and Greater Syria in the Writings of Abdallah', Part 1, *HaMizrah HeHadash*, vol. 25, pp. 1-26 (In Hebrew).

93. Faydī, *Nidāl*, pp. 138-64.

94. Rashīd Ridā, 'Al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya', *Al-Manār*, vol. 24, part 6, 1923, pp. 607-8; Rashīd Ridā, 'Alāqatunā biSāhib Najd wa Sababuhā', *Al-Manār*, vol. 28, part 1, 1927, pp. 4-6; Sa'īd, *Thawra*, pp. 49-50; Faruqi to Husayn 27 Muḥarram 1334/5 December 1915 in Muḥammad Ṭāhir Al-'Umarī, *Muqaddarāt al-'Irāq al-Siyāsiyya*, vol. 1 (Baghdad, 1925) pp. 218-224; Tauber, 'Ridā', pp. 109-10; 'Emir Abdallah's Account of His Conversations with Lord Kitchener, Transmitted with Notes by Mr. G. Antonius', 1 May 1936, *BDOW*, pp. 831-32.

## CHAPTER 2: GREAT BRITAIN AND THE MAKING OF ABDALLAH'S POLITICAL AMBITIONS, AUGUST 1914-JULY 1915

### Introduction

Chapter two will examine the role of Great Britain in shaping Hashimite political ambitions, especially those of Abdallah, from August 1914 to July 1915. Specifically, this chapter will consider how and why the British authorities in Cairo encouraged the Hashimites during this period to revolt against the Turks and ally themselves with Great Britain. As a result of British encouragement during the early months of the war, the Hashimites began to think of themselves as political leaders whose domain and influence could, with British support, extend far beyond the Hijaz to include not only the Arabian peninsula but also the Fertile Crescent. Abdallah's transformation from Hijazi notable to Arab nationalist leader with political ambitions in the Fertile Crescent, which began during this short but crucial period, will be explained as one result of that encouragement. It is assumed, therefore, that Abdallah's emergence as an Arab political leader with ambitions to play a major role in fashioning the post-war Fertile Crescent cannot be understood without reference to British policy towards the Arabs in general and his family in particular.

The following will explain how the British in Cairo encouraged Husayn to revolt with vague yet highly provocative assurances that Great Britain would support Arab independence under his leadership and the creation of an Arab Caliphate at Mecca. Although British assurances were intended mainly to influence Husayn, they also played an important part in the evolution of Abdallah's political ambitions and in his role as an Arab political leader. As the intermediary between his father and the British in Cairo, Abdallah was the most directly affected of Husayn's sons by British assurances to support the Hashimites in a new role as Arab national, as opposed to Hijazi, leaders.

This chapter will examine several aspects of Great Britain's Arab policy from August 1914 to July 1915. The first is the relationship between Great Britain and the Hashimites. During this period the British authorities in Cairo issued a series of statements to Abdallah

encouraging his family to break with the Turks. The contribution of those statements to the shaping of Hashimite political expectations will be analyzed and related to Abdallah's evolving role in Arab politics. Second, this chapter will explain the strategic motives of Lord Kitchener and his subordinates in encouraging the Hashimites to break with the Ottomans and lead a British-backed Arab insurrection. Those motives become comprehensible once we understand the influence of the political aspirations of Khedive 'Abbās Ḥilmī, the Syrians in Cairo and British ideas about the future of the Caliphate on the Arab policy of the British authorities in Cairo, most notably Lord Kitchener. Third, we shall explain why the India Office and the Government of India opposed Cairo's policy of encouraging the Hashimites with vague promises of Arab independence and an Arab Caliphate. Fourth, this chapter will examine British war aims in the Middle East in 1915, as they related to the making of Hashimite political ambitions.

This chapter will begin with a brief discussion of Lord Kitchener's views on the future of the Ottoman Empire and the Arabs. His thinking on both subjects was a major influence on British policy towards the Hashimites, and largely explains why, beginning in October 1914, he and his subordinates were prepared to discuss the future of the Arabs and the Caliphate with Abdallah.

#### Kitchener and the Arabs on the Eve of World War I

Kitchener's views on the possibility of war with Turkey and Ottoman partition began to take shape as early as 1902 in response to growing German influence in the Ottoman Empire. Before leaving Great Britain in 1902 to become commander-in-chief in India, Kitchener had been warned that German policy made war between England and Germany a possibility in Asia as well as in Europe. In India, Kitchener closely followed the growth of German influence in Turkey, which he considered a threat to British interests in Egypt, Afghanistan and India. Kitchener believed that Germany aspired to rule India. For that reason, he regarded Germany's part in the construction of the Baghdad railroad as a threat to British interests in India. Kitchener also believed that the extent of British influence in the Ottoman Empire directly affected

British interests in Egypt and India. He argued, therefore, that Great Britain should respond to the Baghdad railroad by supporting Turkey and helping her reorganize her armed forces.<sup>1</sup>

When Kitchener passed through Istanbul in late 1910, the extent of German influence there alarmed him into believing that war might eventually result from an Anglo-German clash in the Ottoman Empire.<sup>2</sup> Before becoming consul-general in Egypt, Kitchener had 'long cherished [the ideal of founding an independent Arab State in Arabia and Syria.]<sup>3</sup> By mid-1912 he had conceived the vision of a British-controlled empire in the Middle East based in Egypt as the successor of the Ottoman Empire. Kitchener hoped for the annexation of Egypt to the British Empire during his tenure as consul-general. Following annexation, Egypt would have home rule like that in other dominions of the British Empire. After the fall of the Ottoman Empire, Egypt would then become the centre of a new Muslim empire, with the Khedive replacing the Sultan as the head of Islam. Kitchener foresaw the annexation of Syria, Palestine, Arabia and Yemen to Egypt, which would become the protecting power of the Hijaz.

Kitchener believed that Great Britain would benefit enormously from controlling this new empire in the Middle East. He assumed that British protection of Mecca and Medina would reconcile the Muslims of the British Empire to British rule and enable Great Britain to guide the destiny of the entire Muslim world. The critical role of the Emir of Mecca in the legitimation of British rule is clearly implied in Kitchener's thinking, as is the division between the Khedive as the political head and the Emir of Mecca as the spiritual head, or Caliph, of Islam. However, because he considered amicable relations between Great Britain and the Ottoman Empire essential to maintaining calm in Egypt, Kitchener stopped short of advocating Ottoman partition. Kitchener's grand vision was intended primarily as a rough blueprint for British policy in the event of war and Ottoman collapse, not as a prescription to abandon Great Britain's traditional support for Ottoman independence.<sup>4</sup>

How did Kitchener arrive at such ideas? The European misconception of the Caliph as the supreme religious authority of Islam

was one influence. His knowledge of Arabic and wide experience of Palestine, the Sudan and Egypt may have predisposed him to favour Arabs over Turks. Elie Kedourie has suggested that the aspiration of 'Abbās Ḥilmī to establish an Egyptian empire in the Levant and Arabia, including an Arab Caliphate at Mecca controlled by an Egyptian Sultanate, had an important influence on Kitchener's thinking.<sup>5</sup>

'Abbās Ḥilmī's interest in the Caliphate and the creation of an Egyptian empire apparently began in 1895 when he met Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī during a visit to Istanbul. Afghānī suggested that Ḥilmī assert his independence of 'Abd ūl-Ḥamīd by assuming the leadership of Egypt and Arabia. From then until 1897, 'Abbās intrigued against the Sultan through his contacts with Young Turkish exiles in Cairo, and by spreading propaganda in the Hijaz in favour of an Arab Caliphate. Ḥilmī hoped that his propaganda would compel the Sultan to take greater notice of him and his economic interests in the Ottoman Empire. In about 1898, 'Abd al-Rahmān al-Kawākibī of Aleppo settled in Cairo and soon became an agent of 'Abbās's anti-Hamidian propaganda. In 1899 Kawākibī published, at the apparent instigation of the Khedive, *Umm al-Qurā*, which presented itself as the minutes of a secret society in Mecca. *Umm al-Qurā* glorified the Arabs, stressed their superiority over the Turks and called for the restoration of the Caliphate to the Arabs. Kawākibī was the first Arab writer to call for Arab independence from the Ottomans and the creation of a *spiritual* Arab Caliphate in Mecca.<sup>6</sup>

Rashīd Riḍā (1865-1935), a Syrian exile who settled in Cairo in 1898, may, too, have propagandized on behalf of 'Abbās Ḥilmī. Riḍā probably came to the Khedive's attention as an opponent of 'Abd ūl-Ḥamīd and for advocating the restoration of the Caliphate to the Arabs in order to regenerate Islam. Riḍā arrived in Cairo penniless, which probably made him receptive to offers from the Khedive. Kawākibī's *Umm al-Qurā* did not come to public attention when it was first published in 1899, but became widely known when it was serialized in Riḍā's journal, *Al-Manār*, between April 1902 and February 1903. It is possible, but not certain, that the Khedive may have encouraged and paid for the second publication of *Umm al-Qurā*.

Riḍā spent 1909 and 1910 in Istanbul trying to establish a religious school whose graduates would defend Islam against missionaries and other detractors. At the same time, Riḍā and the Ottoman government discussed ways to eliminate tension between Arabs and Turks. Frustrated and bitter that the Young Turks had wanted to use his school for their own propaganda, Riḍā returned to Cairo in October 1910 as an opponent of the CUP. By March 1912 he had established the Society of Propaganda and Guidance and its school, the House of Propaganda and Guidance. Riḍā's school was financed by the Khedive, the Egyptian *Awqāf* bureau and wealthy Arabs. The House of Propaganda and Guidance was established to teach Muslims from all over the world how to propagandize for Islam.

Riḍā also established the Society of the Arab Association. This secret society aimed to promote unity among the chieftains of the Arabian peninsula and to unite the Arab political societies of the Ottoman Empire against the CUP. One of the supporters of this society was Shaikh 'Alī Yūsuf, the editor and owner of *Al-Mu'ayyad* and a partisan of the Khedive. The British had information that Riḍā's society had propagandized against the Turks in the Hijaz, Najd and Yemen. In his contacts with Ibn Saud, the Idrīsī, Imām Yaḥyā, the Shaikh of Kuwait, Ibn al-Ṣabāḥ, the ruler of Mukhammara, Shaikh Khaz'al, and the Emir of Muscat, Riḍā stressed the necessity of Arab unity and the establishment of an independent Arab state. It is not known if the Khedive supported or financed this society. That possibility cannot, however, be excluded. The second publication of *Umm al-Qurā*, the Khedive's support of Riḍā's school and public society, his earlier support for Kawākibī and Yūsuf's role in Riḍā's secret society all strongly suggest that Riḍā may have acted on behalf of 'Abbās Hilmī.'

After the Libyan and Balkan wars, the establishment of a British-controlled version of 'Abbās's Egyptian empire captured Kitchener's imagination as a way for Great Britain to profit from the approaching end of the Ottoman Empire. Kitchener believed that such an empire would prevent France, Russia or Germany from threatening British lines of communication with India, and that British protection of the Hijaz would silence doubts in India and elsewhere about the

compatibility of British rule with Islam.<sup>23</sup>

As a consequence of Ottoman setbacks in Libya and the Balkans, the Arabs emerged as the most prominent and numerous non-Turkish people of the empire. As the Arabs assumed greater prominence, Kitchener and his subordinates began to take closer note of their developing political aspirations and discontent with Turkish rule.<sup>24</sup> In January 1913 Kitchener claimed to be 'much struck' by the views of unnamed 'influential people' in Cairo who believed that, as a result of Ottoman collapse, 'the Arab race will in the near future be compelled to sever its ties with Turkish Mohammedans and take an independent line of its own.'<sup>25</sup>

An interesting problem is the extent to which the propaganda of the Khedive, Kawākibī and Rashīd Ridā influenced the Hashimites. Abdallah, who knew the Khedive well and may have had contact with Rida, was probably the most exposed of his family to ideas of an Arab Caliphate and Arab unity. In his memoirs, however, Abdallah gave no indication that he or his family had been influenced by the ambitions and propaganda of 'Abbās Ḥilmī and Rashīd Ridā. Ridā's writings say nothing about a Hashimite response to his propaganda in the Hijaz. It would seem, therefore, that Ḥilmī's propaganda in favour of an Arab Caliphate influenced British officials in Cairo far more than it did the Hashimites. We shall now see that the Hashimites took no interest in Arab independence and the Caliphate until Kitchener and Storrs suggested that Great Britain would support both under Husayn's leadership.

#### The Encouragement of Hashimite Ambitions, August 1914-July 1915

After the outbreak of war in August 1914, Arab attitudes towards Great Britain became a matter of crucial importance to British officials in Cairo and Khartoum. If Turkey allied herself with Germany, would the Arabs defend the Ottoman Empire or break with the Turks and assist the British? What could Great Britain expect from the Arabs of the Arabian peninsula? How could the British explain to their many Muslim subjects that war against the Ottoman Empire was not war against Islam? To understand how these questions were answered, the following will examine the strategic background of Great Britain's wartime



alliance with the Hashimites and how British officials in Cairo and Khartoum seized the occasion of the war to promote a policy intended to increase British power in the Middle East.

From the start of the war British policy towards Arabia had two main objectives: the first was to keep the Suez Canal open and protected; the second was to blunt an Ottoman *jihād* designed to turn the Muslim world against the Allies in general, and to delegitimize British authority among Muslims of the British Empire in particular. A third objective was to remove the Turks from the Hijaz because the Hijaz railroad gave Germany access to the Red Sea. The British feared that a Turkish invasion through Sinai would close the Suez Canal and trigger widespread disturbances in Egypt and the Sudan. The military situation in France meant that few British troops could be spared for the defence of Egypt. On 11 November 1914 the *Shaykh al-Islām* in Istanbul issued a *fatwa* declaring it the obligation of all Muslims to rise up against Great Britain, France and Russia. Three days later the Sultan declared holy war against the British and their allies.

To counter these dangers to the security of Egypt, General Sir John Maxwell, the commander-in-chief in Egypt, declared martial law on 1 November. All ties between Egypt and the Ottoman Empire were severed on 18 December, when Egypt was declared a British protectorate. A day later, 'Abbās Hilmī was deposed and replaced by his uncle Ḥusayn Kāmīl, who took the title Sultan instead of Khedive. 'Abbās Hilmī, who had long been dissatisfied with British rule, had been in Istanbul since the outbreak of the war, where the Ottomans persuaded him to endorse a declaration calling upon Egyptians to revolt against British rule. In early February 1915 the British defeated a Turkish assault on the Suez Canal.

The British sought an alliance with the Emir of Mecca in order to nullify the impact of the Ottoman *jihād*, drive the Turks out of the Hijaz and refute charges that Great Britain was at war with Islam. As a descendant of the Prophet and the guardian of the *ḥaramayn*, Husayn was an attractive ally. The British authorities in Cairo and Khartoum contemplated a Hashimite-led Arab insurrection as a way to split the

Arabs from the Turks at a time when Turkish pressure on the Russians in Transcaucasia and the Dardanelles campaign made it necessary to divert Ottoman troops from battle with the Allies. An Arab revolt in the Hijaz was believed to have the potential to create such a diversion, to cause large-scale desertions of Arab officers and men from the Ottoman army, and to deny Germany access to the Hijaz railroad and the Red Sea.<sup>11</sup>

The prospect of a pro- or anti-Turkish Arab movement in Arabia was raised in an anonymous memorandum dated 6 September 1914 that was prepared by the Intelligence Department of the War Office in Cairo. This memorandum noted that Ibn Saud, Imām Yahyā and Husayn were striving for Arab unity and uniting to expel the Turks from Arabia, and that the Khedive had sent them money and emissaries in order to secure the Caliphate once the Turks had been overthrown. The reference to Arab unity in the peninsula was a reflection of Abdallah's remarks to Kitchener in April 1914--and of Cairo's limited grasp of Arab politics. The hostility dividing Husayn, Ibn Saud, the Idrīsī and Imām Yahyā was no secret and should have alerted Cairo to the unlikelihood of Arab unity in the Arabian peninsula. The reference to 'Abbās Hilmī was a sign of his influence on British officials in Cairo.<sup>12</sup>

Storrs passed this memorandum to Kitchener and encouraged him to contact the Hashimites in order to gain the loyalty of the peninsular Arabs to Great Britain's cause. Sir Edward Grey approved a request from Kitchener to approach the Hashimites.<sup>13</sup> On 5 October 1914 Storrs sent an emissary to the Hijaz with a letter for Abdallah. Storrs wanted to know if the Hashimites would fight for or against Great Britain during a war with the Ottoman Empire.<sup>14</sup> Abdallah's response was friendly but cautious. Abdallah noted Husayn's desire for 'closer union' with Great Britain, British protection of the Hijaz from foreign aggression and a promise that the British would not interfere in the internal affairs of Arabia. Abdallah added, 'Stretch out a hand to us and we will never aid these oppressors.'<sup>15</sup>

Abdallah's response indicated that Husayn's political ambitions in October 1914 had changed little since Abdallah's last visit to Cairo in April of that year. Husayn's ambitions were still limited to the Arabian

peninsula and a request for British protection against his Turkish and Arab rivale.

On 31 October Kitchener suggested, and Grey approved, the following response to Abdallah's letter:

If the Arab nation assist England in this war that has been forced upon us by Turkey England will guarantee that no internal intervention takes place in Arabia and will give the Arabs every assistance against external foreign aggression. It may be that an Arab of true race will assume the Caliphate at Mecca or Medina and so good may come by the help of God out of all the evil which is now occurring.<sup>16</sup>

Kitchener's references to 'the Arab nation', 'the Arabs' and 'an Arab of true race' assuming the Caliphate clearly suggested that the Hashimites could expect far more from an alliance with Great Britain than protection from their peninsular rivals or the Turks. Husayn could reasonably have concluded from the reference to the Caliphate and the Arab nation that the British regarded him, not as one Arabian potentate among others, but as a leader who, with the support of the British Empire, could rule domains far wider than the Hijaz, 'Asīr and Najd.

Kitchener's message was not, however, sent in its original form to Abdallah. Without authorization, Storrs rewrote it in language grander and more sweeping than that of Kitchener's original. Because of its crucial role in the transformation of Hashimite political ambitions, Storrs's remarkable letter to Abdallah of 1 November 1914 deserves quotation at length.

The Turkish Government have against the will of the Sultan and through German pressure committed acts of war by invading without provocation the frontiers of Egypt with armed bands followed by Turkish soldiers which are now massed at Akaba to invade Egypt, so that the cause of the Arabs [underlined in original] which is the cause of freedom has also become the cause of Great Britain. If the Amir (titles) and Arabs in general assist Great Britain in this conflict that has been forced upon us by Turkey, Great Britain will promise not to intervene in any manner whatsoever in things religious or otherwise. Moreover, recognizing and respecting the sacred and unique office of the Amir Hosayn (titles) Great Britain will guarantee the independence, rights and privileges of the Sherifate against all external foreign aggression, in particular that of the Ottomans. Till now we have defended and befriended Islam in the person of the Turks: henceforth it shall be in that of the noble Arab. It may be that an Arab of true race will assume

the Khalifate at Mecca or Medina, and so good may come by the help of God out of all the evil which is now occurring. It would be well if Your Highness could convey to your followers and devotees, who are found throughout the world, in every country, the good tidings of the Freedom of the Arabs, and the rising of the sun over Arabia.<sup>17</sup>

Kitchener and, especially, Storrs apparently believed that such grandiose language was needed in order to attract Husayn. 'The cause of the Arabs', 'Arabs in general', 'the independence, rights and privileges of the Sherifate', 'the noble Arab', 'the Khalifate', 'followers and devotees . . . found throughout the world, in every country', 'Freedom of the Arabs, and the rising of the sun over Arabia'--such language coming from Kitchener's representative could only have inflated the self-importance of Husayn and Abdallah. Husayn and Abdallah could easily have interpreted this letter to mean that the British would support the independence of the Hijaz and Husayn as Caliph and head of an Arab movement in return for undefined Hashimite support for Great Britain's war effort against the Ottoman Empire. The association of the Emir of Mecca with the Caliphate clearly implied that Great Britain regarded Husayn as the pre-eminent Arab leader, and as a Muslim dignitary potentially as influential as the Ottoman Sultan.

Abdallah's reply was favourable but more cautious than the highly charged language of Storrs's unauthorized letter. Although Abdallah took Storrs's letter seriously and called it a 'basis for action and a reference for the present and the future', the Hashimites were still unwilling to break with the Turks, but waited for an excuse to do so.<sup>18</sup>

The work of tempting the Hashimites continued in several declarations which the British distributed in the Hijaz between December 1914 and May 1915. The common theme of these declarations was British support for Arab independence once the Turks had been expelled from Arabia and other Arab provinces. Their message was unmistakable: with British support Husayn as Caliph could rule an independent Arab empire consisting of Arabia, Palestine, Syria and Iraq. The first was dated 3 December 1914 and addressed 'to the natives of Arabia, Palestine, Syria and Mesopotamia'. This declaration promised that if the Turks were expelled, 'Great Britain and her allies will recognize your

perfect independence and will moreover guarantee to defend you, if the Turks or others wished to transgress against you.' Great Britain promised to help the Arabs 'establish an Empire for the Khalifate to administer your vast territories.' The Caliphate was described as a 'right of the Koreish the tribe of the Great Prophet of Islam', that is, the Emir of Mecca.<sup>19</sup>

Immediate strategic and security concerns do not, however, fully account for British encouragement of Hashimite ambitions. Kedourie has explained that British officials in Cairo and Khartoum hoped to seize the occasion of the war, 'which were it to succeed, would great increase Great Britain's power and influence in the middle east, would indeed make it the arbiter of the destinies of Islam in the world.'<sup>20</sup>

By mid-November 1914 Kitchener had concluded that Great Britain should recognize the Emir of Mecca as Caliph and guarantee the holy places from foreign aggression, if the Arabs rebelled against the Turks. British-protected Syria would then be organized as an Arab state under an Arab Caliph at Mecca. In Kitchener's view, the new Caliphate would be economically unviable without Syria. Kitchener foresaw no role for France in Syria.<sup>21</sup>

Storrs dreamed of a vast British empire in the Middle East composed of the Sudan, Egypt and all the Arab lands from Aden to Alexandretta. Syria, from which France would be excluded, would form part of an Egyptian Sultanate while the Emir of Mecca would assume the Caliphate. Storrs foresaw the new Caliph as 'a hereditary spiritual Pope with no temporal power' whose revenues would come from annual subsidies and the pilgrimage. The Arabian peninsula would remain independent--'a sort of Afghanistan'--and conduct its foreign relations through Great Britain.<sup>22</sup>

When Kitchener left Egypt in December 1914 to become secretary of state for war, his domination of Cairo's Arab policy continued through his successor as high commissioner, Sir Henry McMahon, and Ronald Storrs, General Sir John Maxwell, and Colonel Gilbert F. Clayton. McMahon was appointed by Kitchener and knew that he would be accountable to his predecessor in all important matters of Arab policy.

As general officer commanding, Maxwell was, of course, directly responsible to Kitchener. As Maxwell's appointed head of military intelligence since October 1914, Clayton had a profound influence on British policy towards the Arabs. With the benefit of Kitchener's support, McMahon, Storrs, Maxwell and Clayton became a powerful lobby for an Arab policy based on the Emir of Mecca.<sup>23</sup>

The thinking of British officials in Cairo at the outset of the war was spelled out in an anonymous intelligence report dated 13 August 1914. This report revealed how much the Khedive and Syrian exiles in Cairo had influenced British thinking about the future of the Caliphate and the Arabs. 'Abbās Hilmī was dismissed as a future Caliph because he lacked the military and family qualifications of the Ottoman sultans. The author of this document believed that Husayn would be the popular choice of the 'Mohammedan near east' for Caliph because men of considerable influence are working to this end in Egypt.' The influential men who supposedly spoke for the 'Mohammedan near east' were three Syrians living in Cairo, Rashīd Ridā, Rafīq and Ḥaqqī al-'Azm and an Egyptian of Circassian origin, 'Azīz 'Alī al-Miṣrī.<sup>24</sup> Ridā had repeatedly approached the British Agency since the beginning of the war. During his meetings with British officials Ridā called upon Great Britain to support the transfer of the Caliphate from the Ottoman sultans to the Emir of Mecca and the independence of the Arabs with British assistance. Ridā objected, however, to British annexation of Arab territory.<sup>25</sup>

Another Syrian who approached British intelligence in Cairo was Dr. Fāris al-Nimr, founder of the well known pro-British newspaper *al-Muqaṭṭam*. In January 1915 Nimr told British military intelligence that the Syrians in Egypt and Syria advocated the union of both countries with the Khedive as the Sultan of Syria. They wanted Egypt and Syria to become British protectorates while remaining autonomous with their own governments and courts. Nimr believed that Basra and Baghdad would eventually unite with Syria and Egypt. Nimr, who was Greek Orthodox, told the British that the centre of Islam was shifting

towards Mecca and that a British protectorate 'over the bulk of the Arab world is quite compatible with the integrity of the Holy Cities.'<sup>26</sup>

In early August 1914 'Azīz 'Alī al-Miṣrī approached British military intelligence in Cairo with a plan to lead an Arab revolt against the Turks. Miṣrī will be mentioned frequently in this thesis because of his pre-war Arab activism and his role in the Arab revolt of 1916-1918. Miṣrī was born in Cairo in 1879 or 1880. He studied in the *Harbiyeh* from 1898 to 1901 and graduated from the Ottoman Staff College in 1904 with the rank of captain. From 1904 until his expulsion from the Ottoman Empire in April 1914 he had a distinguished career as an officer in the Ottoman Army. Misri was one of the earliest Arab political activists. In October 1913 he established *Jam'īyat al-'Ahd*, a secret Arab political society composed mostly of Arab officers residing in Istanbul. *Al-'Ahd* strove 'for the autonomy of the Arab lands, provided that they will be united with the Istanbul government as Hungary is united with Austria.' He was expelled from Istanbul in April 1914 for supposedly embezzling state funds during the Libyan war of 1911. In reality, however, Enver Pāshā, the Ottoman minister of war, wanted to settle a personal score with a rival who had outshone him during the war in Libya and was said to have great influence among the Arabs.<sup>27</sup>

Miṣrī told British intelligence that a central committee in Baghdad had authorized him to learn about Great Britain's attitude towards their propaganda for an independent Arab state in the Fertile Crescent under British protection. Miṣrī advocated Arab independence south of a line running from Alexandretta to Mosul and then to the Persian frontier. He described his movement as secular and independent of panislamism and the Caliphate. Unlike the Syrians in Cairo, Miṣrī did not look to the Emir of Mecca to head an Arab national movement or to assume the Caliphate. The Foreign Office brusquely rejected these proposals by instructing Sir Milne Cheetham of the British Agency in Cairo as follows: 'It is very desirable that you should again impress strongly on El Mazri the need for him to keep quiet and to leave the Arabs

alone.<sup>128</sup> Schemes of Arab insurrection could not be contemplated until the Ottomans had entered the war on the side of Germany.

The thinking of Kitchener and his subordinates in Cairo on the future of the Hashimites had the support of General Sir Reginald Wingate, the governor-general of the Sudan and sirdar of the Egyptian Army, and his staff. Kedourie has written that Arab nationalism and a union of Arab states under Husayn as spiritual Caliph were more closely tied in Wingate's thinking than in that of Kitchener or Storrs. Before the war Wingate supported Ottoman independence and territorial integrity. After Turkey entered the war on the side of Germany, Wingate concluded that Great Britain should support Husayn as Caliph and leader of an Arab union. Two reasons account for Wingate's change of mind. The first was widespread Muslim hostility in Egypt and Sudan towards Great Britain after the start of the war. The second was Wingate's fear that Muslim hostility would undermine the internal stability of Egypt and Sudan and endanger future British military campaigns. Like his colleagues in Cairo, Wingate hoped that an alliance with Husayn would divide Ottoman ranks and refute charges of British hostility towards Islam. Wingate was concerned that unless Great Britain reached an accommodation with Husayn, the Arabs would fight for Turkey. Implicit in these views was an exaggerated faith in the influence of the Emir of Mecca as an Arab and Muslim leader. Wingate wanted to exploit the opportunity of the war in order to create a British-controlled empire in the Middle East that would consist of several Arab states under the nominal suzerainty of a spiritual Arab Caliph. Pan-arabism was to be encouraged in order to counter Ottoman pan-islamism. In Wingate's judgement pan-arabism, unlike Ottoman sponsored pan-islamism, was less of a threat to British interests because it was a national, and not a religious, movement. Like Kitchener, Wingate hoped that control of an Arab empire and the Caliphate would enable Great Britain to guide the destiny of the Muslim world.<sup>29</sup>

The influence of Arab political activists on the thinking of the British in Khartoum is evident from a memorandum written in February 1915 by Captain G. S. Symes, Wingate's private secretary. Symes's



memorandum purported to explain the views of 'Pan-Arabs' and other Arab Muslims on the Caliphate and Arab independence. Symes's knowledge of pan-Arab aspirations was drawn from an unnamed 'prominent member of the "Young Arab" party, a man of considerable education and a professed Anglo-phil who writes on the assumption that the present Ottoman Khalifate will shortly be overthrown.' The designation 'Young Arab' may refer to the secret political society *Jam'iyat al-Fatāḥ al-'Arabiyya* (The Young Arab Society), although this is not certain. Symes and Wingate believed that their unnamed informant spoke authoritatively for an undefined group of Arab activists who supposedly represented the political aspirations of the Arabs of the Ottoman Empire.

Symes wrote that the two most vital questions for Muslims were the Caliphate and Arab independence. The pan-Arabs aspired to establish an Arab empire under an Arab Caliph in the person of the Emir of Mecca. Despite the difficulty of realizing that ideal, which could not be attained without British support, the pan-Arabs clung 'to the conception of an Arab Khalifate as the only means of ensuring the temporal and spiritual power of Islam. . .' Symes learned from his informant that, after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, 'the Arab nation will emerge as the true and lawful Standard-bearer of Islamic culture and the supporter of the prestige and status of the individual Moslem before the Christian and non-Moslem world.' The scope of pan-Arab territorial ambitions was 'an area bounded on the north by Kurdistan, on the west by the Mediterranean, on the south by the Red and Arabian seas, and on the east by the Persian Gulf.' The reference here to the Emir of Mecca and an Arab Caliphate suggests that Symes's informant was associated with the Syrians in Cairo, and not with 'Azīz 'Alī al-Miṣrī.

Symes was clearly impressed by the pan-Arab political program. He favoured the establishment of a British-protected independent Arab state under an Arab Caliph, but did not specify the territorial dimensions of that state. However, Symes cautioned against the direct involvement of a Christian power in the creation of an Arab Caliphate. He suggested that once the Turks had been defeated, the holy places and lines of communication between the Hijaz and the Mediterranean Sea should remain

under independent Muslim control. Symes recommended that, for the time being, Britain should renounce any claim to economic control of the Euphrates valley in return for a guarantee of a 'most favoured nation' status and Arab recognition of a British occupation of Basra. Symes warned that a statement of British aims in Syria would be premature. He recommended that in any future political settlement the Allied powers should guarantee 'a right of access from the western terminus of the Hedjaz Railway to the Mediterranean' and facilities for an 'all Moslem railway route from Mecca to a sea-port under Moslem Arab control.'<sup>30</sup>

Another influence on Wingate and Symes was the Sudanese religious dignitary, Sir Sayyid 'Alī al-Mīrghanī. In May 1915 Wingate sent Grey a translated memorandum from Mīrghanī, who proposed that an Arab Caliphate based in Arabia should consist of the Hijaz, Iraq, Syria 'and other places.' In November of that year Mīrghanī wrote to Husayn encouraging him to assume the Caliphate that was stolen from the Arabs. Wingate called these proposals 'utopian' but argued that Great Britain should be sympathetic to 'Moslem aspirations' because 'when the psychological moment comes, all Moslem eyes will be turned to Great Britain to whom they look for support in this--perhaps the supreme crisis in their religious & national existence.'<sup>31</sup>

Grey responded to Mīrghanī's letter by asking McMahon and Wingate to circulate a statement in Arabia that had already been circulated in Egypt and the Sudan. Grey asked McMahon to inform Wingate that he could let it be known that Great Britain would support the independence of Arabia and its holy sites and the creation of an Arab Caliphate only if Muslims themselves so desired. Grey noted that it was premature to determine how much territory would be included in independent Arabia. He emphasized that Great Britain would respect any Muslim decision concerning the Caliphate.<sup>32</sup>

By April 1915 the Foreign Office had conceded the independence of the Hijaz, which would form the nucleus of an Arab state of undetermined boundaries. Grey was prepared to support an Arab Caliphate if Muslims wanted an Arab Caliph, but objected to British interference in Muslim religious affairs.

Grey's cautious approach to the Caliphate was not echoed in the statements and declarations that Kitchener and Storrs had made to Husayn. Those messages should have left little doubt in Husayn's mind that the British actively supported him for the Caliphate and the leadership of the Arab nation. Without having fired a shot or allied themselves with the British, the Hashimites found that Great Britain had recognized the independence of the Hijaz. The Hashimites could legitimately have concluded that British plans for them far exceeded the narrow confines of the Hijaz. The gap between Grey's caution and what the Hashimites could understand from the statements of British officials in Cairo and Khartoum was a sign of the confusion that characterized Great Britain's Arab policy during the first months of the war.

Another sign of that confusion was that Storrs, Wingate, Clayton and McMahon did not expect the Hashimites to take British rhetoric too seriously or literally or that their rhetoric would have significant results. In an undated note to McMahon from early or mid-1915 Storrs wrote:

The expression "Arab Empire", "Kingdom", "Government", "Possessions" etc. is used throughout the Sherifial correspondence, on both sides, in a general and indefinite sense: & is variously rendered by the words Hukuma (Government), Mamlaka (Possessions) & Daula (Power, Dynasty, Kingdom). Neither from these terms, nor from any phrase employed by H.M.G. throughout the negotiations, is it possible to elaborate any theory as to the precise nature of this vaguely adumbrated body.<sup>33</sup>

McMahon informed Grey on 14 May 1915 that 'The term "independent sovereign state" has been interpreted in a generic sense because the idea of an Arabia united under one ruler recognized as supreme is as yet inconceivable to the Arab mind.'<sup>34</sup> In December 1918 Wingate explained to Lord Hardinge of the Foreign Office that his wartime encouragement of the Hashimites had been little more than an opportunist ploy to gain Arab support for Great Britain's war effort.<sup>35</sup>

During the early months of the war Cairo and Khartoum misjudged Husayn as an Arab and Muslim leader. As later events would show, 'the idea of an Arabia united under one ruler recognized as supreme' was indeed conceivable to the Hashimites who understood British declarations

to them as support for precisely such an ambition. The cynical and naive assumption that British declarations would not be taken seriously, or would have no effect, was a colossal error of judgement whose consequences would complicate and embitter Anglo-Arab relations in the years to come.

During the early months of the war Kitchener, Wingate and their subordinates failed to realize that Arab unity would not be possible because Husayn would exploit British declarations in order to subjugate his Arabian rivals. They did not understand that the Wahhabis, the Zaydis or the Idrīsī would never acknowledge their rival as Caliph or leader of an Arab empire. No one paused to consider how the Shiites of Lebanon and Iraq, heterodox Muslims, or the Christians and Jews of the Fertile Crescent would react to the prospect of falling under the domination of the Emir of Mecca. The British authorities in Cairo and Khartoum misunderstood that the Emir of Mecca could not be transformed into a spiritual Caliph shorn of all temporal power--in essence an Islamic Pope--because no such institution existed in Islam. Husayn was misjudged because those officials had a limited grasp of Arabian politics, the complex religious and ethnic character of the Fertile Crescent and the role of the Hashimites and the Caliphate in Muslim history.

Such ignorance had important consequences for the shaping of Abdallah's political ambitions. British statements concerning the future of the Arabs and the Caliphate encouraged his family to believe that Great Britain would support them as the founders of an Arab empire embracing Arabia and the Fertile Crescent. Abdallah's involvement in the politics of the Fertile Crescent began with those statements, which encouraged him to see himself as an Arab leader whose influence could soon extend far beyond the Hijaz.

#### Opposition to Encouraging the Hashimites

One of the most important influences on Abdallah's early political career was the opposition of the India Office, the Government of India and the British administration in Iraq to British encouragement of Hashimite involvement in the post-war Fertile Crescent. From the

earliest days of the war the India Office and the Government of India opposed British sponsorship of Husayn or any discussion of the Caliphate with him. Part two of this thesis will explain how and why the British administration in Iraq, which was subordinate to the India Office, prevented Abdallah from establishing a Hashimite monarchy in Iraq.

By mid-October 1914 the India Office and the Government of India had begun to argue that Great Britain should remain neutral in all Muslim religious matters and that the fate of the Caliphate should be left to Muslims only. Interference in this controversial religious question was opposed because, in the words of Sir Thomas Holderness, the under secretary of state for India, 'there is nothing that could make us more unpopular with them [the Arabs] and the Mohammedan world generally than an attempt on our part to meddle with the pretence of a new Kaliph.'<sup>35</sup> By January 1915 the India Office had already concluded that bolstering Husayn at the expense of his Arab rivals would undermine the political balance in the Arabian peninsula and, possibly, lead to war.<sup>37</sup> On 5 January 1915 Holderness criticized the Foreign Office for misunderstanding the Caliphate as a Muslim papacy without temporal power. Holderness noted that without temporal power the Caliphate would be no more than 'an empty claim'. Holderness concluded, therefore, that Husayn could not make good his title to the Caliphate without having political sovereignty over Arabia, which would be unacceptable to the other Arabian leaders.<sup>38</sup>

The India Office recommended leaving the Arabs to manage their own affairs as much as possible, and advised that Great Britain should 'avoid an adventurous policy in the interior of Arabia.' Husayn was to be encouraged by all means short of British military intervention to oust the Turks from the Hijaz. The India Office considered material assistance to Husayn incompatible with British obligations to other Arabian rulers. The India Office was prepared to recognize the independence of the Hijaz if Ibn Saud, the Idrīsī and other Arabian agreed first to recognize Husayn as the ruler of the Hijaz only.<sup>39</sup>

Unlike British officials in Cairo and Khatoum, the India Office and the Government of India were unimpressed by the Arab political activists and their views on Arab autonomy, independence and the Caliphate. They disbelieved and derided Arab activists such as 'Azīz 'Alī al-Miṣrī who claimed to represent powerful secret organizations inside the Ottoman Empire capable of starting a large-scale pro-British insurrection. As we shall see, the opposition of the India Office and the Government of India to the Arab political societies had an important influence on Abdallah's political development, particularly after World War I.

During an interview with Clayton on 26 October 1914, 'Azīz 'Alī al-Miṣrī proposed to lead a British-backed Arab revolt in Iraq. Miṣrī claimed that 15,000 Arabs in the Ottoman army in Iraq would be the core of the army he proposed to command. Miṣrī added that discontent was rife among Arab troops in Iraq who awaited the opportunity to break with the Turks. Clayton's initial reaction was that Great Britain could not support an Arab insurrection as long as Turkey remained neutral, and that Miṣrī's plan was too vague and poorly conceived to merit British support.<sup>40</sup>

Two weeks after the Ottomans had entered the war, Cheetham sent Grey a report of Clayton's recent interview with 'Azīz 'Alī al-Miṣrī. Cheetham described Miṣrī as 'an important factor, especially in districts of Iraq and amongst Arab officers in [the] Turkish army, but one who is prevented by lack of means from prosecuting his schemes.' The next day Grey informed Cheetham that 'the Arab movement should be encouraged in every way possible', and that 'Aziz Bey might be sent [to Iraq] to organize with a sum of 2,000 l.' The draft version of this telegram included a handwritten note in Grey's red ink that read, 'I have drawn this up with Lord Kitchener.'<sup>41</sup>

Miṣrī's proposals were sent to the India Office where Lord Hardinge and Lord Crewe, the secretary of state for India, rejected any action on his scheme. Crewe thought it inadvisable 'to complicate the present and future political situation by the introduction of any factors from the outside.' Hardinge considered the plan unlikely to materialize because of the 'quality of the leaders and because [the] tribes and Sheikhs

concerned are too backward to pay attention to "Young Arab" propaganda.' Hardinge added that much depended upon the attitude of Ibn Saud and that Great Britain should finance any revolt that developed spontaneously under his leadership. For the time being, however, the situation in Iraq was too uncertain to warrant any action.<sup>42</sup> Because the India Office opposed Miṣrī's schemes, the Foreign Office asked Cheetham to refrain from encouraging him. The British authorities in Cairo took no further action on Miṣrī's proposals.<sup>43</sup>

#### The Hashimites in British War Aims in the Middle East

In April 1915 British prime minister Herbert Asquith appointed an interdepartmental committee headed by Sir Maurice de Bunsen to study 'British Desiderata in Turkey in Asia'. The results of that study were to be the basis for negotiating the future of the Ottoman Empire with the allies of Great Britain. The committee included representatives of the Foreign Office, India Office, War Office, Board of Trade, the Committee of Imperial Defence and Sir Mark Sykes, who was appointed at Kitchener's request and served as his personal representative on the committee. The de Bunsen submitted its final report on 30 June 1915.<sup>44</sup>

The committee considered plans to fulfill nine British war aims in the Middle East, only three of which were relevant to the subject of this thesis. The third war aim was the fulfillment of British obligations to Arabian potentates and 'generally the maintenance of the assurances given to the Sharif of Mecca and the Arabs'. The sixth called for the preservation of Great Britain's strategic position in the Persian Gulf and the Levant. The seventh called for a guarantee that 'Arabia and the Muslim Holy Places would remain under independent Muslim rule'. The committee assumed that fulfillment of the seventh aim would satisfactorily solve the Caliphate question without antagonizing Muslim opinion in India.

To satisfy these war aims, the de Bunsen committee considered four plans for the future of the Ottoman Empire: a. partition; b. zones of influence for the European powers in a theoretically independent Ottoman Empire; c. maintenance of Ottoman independence minus several territorial excisions; d. maintenance of an independent but

decentralized federal Ottoman Empire minus several territorial excisions. The first plan called for limiting Turkish independence to a kingdom in Anatolia; the rest of the Ottoman Empire would then be partitioned among the European powers. The second plan called for the creation of zones of influence for the various European powers. The third plan called for maintenance of the status quo with the exception of several territorial adjustments. The fourth plan called for continued Ottoman independence on a decentralized and federal basis.

Three features were common to all four plans: first, that Istanbul and the straits would fall under Russian control; second, that Arabia would be independent; third, that the *vilayet* of Basra would fall under direct British control. Kitchener's influence can be discerned in the decision in favour of Arabian independence. In a memorandum dated 16 March 1915, which was attached to the final report of the committee, Kitchener argued for British annexation of Alexandretta and the establishment of an independent Arab state in Arabia under British influence 'bounded in the north by the valley of the Tigris and the Euphrates and, containing in it the chief Mohammedan Holy Places, Mecca, Medina, and Kerbala.' The committee recommended the following boundaries for independent Arabia:

a line starting from Akaba, at the head of the Gulf of Akaba, running thence to Maan, on the Hedjaz Railway, thence eastwards in a northerly curve to the limits of Koweit, would correspond roughly to a fair division between Arabia proper and those Arabs who belong to the districts of Damascus and Mesopotamia.

The committee concluded that Great Britain would benefit if the Ottomans recognized the independence of the *qaḍā'* of Kuwait and the *sanjaq* of Najd; withdrew all their troops from Arabia; guaranteed the administrative autonomy of the Shiite shrines of Karbala and Najaf; and granted administrative autonomy to all Arabian chieftains under Turkish sovereignty.

Russian control of the straits and Istanbul meant that a new capital had to be found for the Ottoman Empire. During the eighth meeting of the committee, Sykes proposed Damascus as the new Ottoman capital and seat of the Caliphate. The creation of an Arab Caliphate



was clearly implied in Sykes's proposal, which had been made with Kitchener's knowledge and approval. The committee approved this suggestion and proposed the creation of a zone with Damascus as its centre that would be located between the British and French zones of influence.

Of these four plans, the de Bunsen committee favoured maintaining the Ottoman Empire on a decentralized and federal basis. Division of the Ottoman Empire into zones of European influence was recommended as a second choice. Partition was rejected because of the friction it would create among the Allies, for whom unity and cooperation were essential to winning the war.

The Cabinet did not approve the final report of the de Bunsen committee. The preference for partitioning the Ottoman Empire was too widespread among Cabinet ministers and other British officials concerned with the Middle East for the de Bunsen recommendations to be implemented. Those recommendations were, however, an important statement of British attitudes towards the Hashimites during the first half of 1915. Like the Foreign Office, the India Office and the British authorities in Cairo and Khartoum, the de Bunsen committee supported the independence of Arabia and the Muslim holy places. By June 1915 it had become universally accepted among British officials that Great Britain would recognize the independence of the Hijaz under Hashimite rule. The de Bunsen committee had also approved Kitchener's idea that the Caliphate should be transferred to an Arab city.

In July 1915 Kitchener sent Sykes to the Middle East to learn how British officials there would react to the recommendations of the de Bunsen committee. The reactions of McMahon and Maxwell indicated how the British authorities in Cairo viewed the future political role of the Hashimites on the eve of the Husayn-McMahon correspondence. McMahon favoured Ottoman partition and rejected preserving the Ottoman Empire minus Basra and Istanbul or dividing it into zones of European influence. McMahon wanted Great Britain to control Palestine and Damascus in order to keep the French away from independent Arabia and Egypt. McMahon 'considered it of great importance that the seat of the

Caliphate should not remain in Ottoman territory', and that the authority of the Emir of Mecca should be confined to independent Arabia. Husayn was envisaged, therefore, as a spiritual Caliph whose independence and temporal authority would be limited to the Hijaz.<sup>45</sup>

Like the de Bunsen committee, Maxwell preferred decentralization, the transfer of the Caliphate to the Emir of Mecca and the establishment of an Ottoman federation which included Damascus. Palestine (including Damascus) and Iraq would be 'located as provinces under the nominal suzerainty of the Sherif of Mecca but under our protection, the Sherif receiving a fixed annual tribute from both regions. Under this arrangement the Sherif might be induced to appoint the Sultan of Egypt as his representative in Ayalet 5 [Palestine, Transjordan and Damascus] and appoint an hereditary governor for Ayalet 4 [Iraq].'<sup>46</sup>

In March 1917 Abdallah proposed that Husayn's sons should rule Syria (Raysal) and Iraq (Abdallah) on behalf of their father. Abdallah's involvement in the affairs of the Fertile Crescent can be traced in part to this proposal, which is found in embryonic form in Maxwell's reaction to the recommendations of de Bunsen committee. As far as we know, Maxwell was the first British official to propose that representatives of the Emir of Mecca should govern British-protected states in the Fertile Crescent. Maxwell's remarks to Sykes clearly suggest that the idea of a British-protected Hashimite empire in Arabia and the Fertile Crescent, which included Husayn's representatives as the governors of Iraq and Syria, had, by mid-1915, already taken root in the thinking of some British officials in Cairo.<sup>47</sup>

Despite their differences over the de Bunsen committee recommendations, McMahon and Maxwell agreed on several crucial points. They agreed, first, that the Caliphate should be transferred from the Ottomans to the Emir of Mecca; second, that the temporal authority of the Caliph should be limited to the Hijaz; third, that his spiritual authority should extend to Palestine, Syria and Iraq, over which he would be nominal suzerain; and, fourth, that Palestine, Syria and Iraq would

fall under British protection. McMahon had not yet concluded that Husayn's representatives should govern the Fertile Crescent.

During his visit to Cairo Sykes discussed the future of the Arabs with Ḥusayn Kāmīl, the Sultan of Egypt, Rashīd Ridā and Muḥyi'l-Dīn al-Kurdī, leader of the Kurdish students quarter of Al-Azhar. Sykes's conversations with them revealed further influences on the thinking of McMahon and his colleagues about the Hashimites. Kāmīl told Sykes that Syria should be ruled by Egypt and that the Emir of Mecca should assume the Caliphate and confirm the Sultan of Egypt in his present status. Kurdī hoped that the Ottomans would be reduced to 'the position of simple Amirs of Anatolia', and that Iraq and Damascus would become sultanates like Egypt under the nominal suzerainty of the Emir of Mecca and the protection of European powers. Ridā argued that the collapse of the Ottoman Empire would necessitate the establishment of another Muslim empire to maintain the prestige of Islam. Ridā hoped that the Emir of Mecca 'would rule over Arabia and all the country South of the line Ma'arash-Diarbekir-Zakhu-Rowanduz, that each Arabian chief should rule his own domain, and that Syria and Irak should be under constitutional governments.' Rida rejected any foreign control of these territories because 'the Arabs were more intelligent than Turks' and 'could easily manage their own affairs.'

Sykes wanted to exclude the French from Syria. To do this he hoped that Great Britain would support the Hashimites in a bid for leadership in the post-war Fertile Crescent. Sykes believed that many future difficulties in the Middle East could be avoided if France renounced her rights in Syria in favour of Great Britain. In return for this concession, Sykes thought that France should receive territorial compensation elsewhere in the world and have the right of 'certain branches of industrial enterprise and railways in Syria.' Syria, Palestine and Iraq 'could then be under the government of the Sultan of Egypt and the spiritual dominion of the Sherif of Mecca. Worked as one unit these three regions are united by language and financially self supporting.'<sup>45</sup>

The similarity between the views of Kāmil, Riḍā, Kurdī, the ambitions ʿAbbās Ḥilmī and the policy recommendations of British officials in Cairo is unmistakable. That similarity reinforces the impression that ʿAbbās Ḥilmī and the Syrian exiles in Cairo had a profound influence on British thinking about the future political role of the Hashimites. The idea of creating a British-controlled Hashimite empire in the Fertile Crescent was inspired by what Kitchener and his subordinates had heard from Ḥilmī, Kāmil and Riḍā. Some of the origins of Abdallah's involvement in the politics of the Fertile Crescent can be found in that influence.

### Conclusion

Abdallah's political ambitions and his role as a political leader began their radical transformation during the period from August 1914 to July 1915. That transformation began when the British authorities in Cairo encouraged Hashimite political expectations with a series of provocative statements about the future of the Caliphate and the Arabs. Those statements encouraged the Hashimites to believe that the British Empire would support the extension of their dominion to the Fertile Crescent. There can be little doubt that the British declarations discussed in this chapter captured the imagination of Husayn and his sons, whose appetite for territorial expansion had become apparent well before World War I. The following chapters will explain the dramatic impact of these declarations on the political ambitions of Abdallah and his family. Abdallah's standing as a political leader was enhanced during the period discussed in this chapter because the British turned to him as the most suitable intermediary between the Hijaz and Great Britain.

A series of British statements made to the Hashimites concerning the Caliphate and the future of the Arabs encouraged Abdallah and his family to pursue a new and much-expanded role in Arab affairs after the demise of the Ottoman Empire. From the outbreak of the war until July 1915 Kitchener and his subordinates encouraged the Hashimites to believe that, if they rebelled against the Ottomans, Great Britain would recognize the independence of the Hijaz and Husayn as Caliph and head of

an Arab national movement. These statements strongly suggested that Husayn's Arab Caliphate would be an Arab empire consisting of Arabia, Palestine, Syria and Iraq. Abdallah responded cautiously to the messages he received from Ronald Storrs. The Hashimites were entitled to conclude from these and other British statements that the British government considered them the pre-eminent leaders of the Arabs, and that Great Britain might support the extension of their rule to the Fertile Crescent.

Abdallah's involvement in the affairs of the Fertile Crescent began during the period studied in this chapter. Until late 1914 Abdallah and his family had never thought of themselves as the potential rulers of the Fertile Crescent or the leaders of an Arab nation. The suggestion that the British would support them as leaders of a British-protected empire in the Fertile Crescent certainly transformed the political expectations of Abdallah and his family and the conception they had of their role as Arab political leaders.

Before the war Abdallah and his family showed no interest in the political schemes of 'Abbās Ḥilmī, Rashīd Ridā or the Arab activists in the Ottoman Empire. The Hashimites were uninterested in the Caliphate, Arab independence and unity or the creation of an Arab empire separate from the Ottoman Empire. However, political aspirations that seemed like pipe-dreams when proposed by the Arab political activists, Ḥilmī or Ridā were taken more seriously when proposed by Lord Kitchener. The pre-war aspirations and propoganda of Ḥilmī, Ridā and the Arab activists left Husayn cold, but deeply impressed the thinking of British officials in Cairo about the role of the Hashimites in shaping a new political order in Arabia and the Fertile Crescent. The Khedive and the Syrians in Cairo influenced Hashimite political ambitions indirectly through Kitchener and his subordinates. We can conclude, therefore, that, until July 1915, the British in Cairo had a far greater impact on the shaping of Abdallah as political leader than did the Khedive or the Arab activists in Cairo. The next chapter will examine how the Arab nationalist societies in the Ottoman Empire influenced Hashimite political ambitions.

By July 1915 Abdallah's stature as a political leader had grown in three arenas: the Hijaz, the Ottoman Empire and internationally. During the first year of the war Abdallah acted as Husayn's diplomatic envoy to the central government in Istanbul and the British in Cairo. The experience and enhanced political stature Abdallah gained as Husayn's diplomatic emissary helped pave the way for his later involvement in the post-war politics of the Fertile Crescent. Serving as Husayn's informal foreign minister increased Abdallah's standing as a Hijazi leader. Abdallah's negotiations with the central government in 1914 added to his credibility as an Ottoman political leader. Kitchener and Storrs introduced Abdallah to the international political arena. After meeting Abdallah, Kitchener and Storrs concluded that he had the necessary political skills to act as an intermediary between Great Britain and Husayn. British recognition of those skills strengthened Abdallah in his role as the informal foreign minister of the Hijaz.

The period studied in this chapter witnessed the first appearance of three elements of British policy that would have a far-reaching impact on the shaping of Abdallah as an Arab political leader. The first was British statements to the Hashimites that appeared to encourage them to assume a new role in Arab affairs on behalf of Great Britain. The second was the belief of British officials in Cairo that the Hashimites would not or should not take the rhetoric of British statements too literally or seriously. The third was the opposition of the India Office and the Government of India to British sponsorship of the Hashimites and involvement in the future of the Caliphate.

Until July 1915 only the first of these three elements of British policy was known to the Hashimites. Only later did they become aware of the contradictions between the first element on the one hand and the second and third on the other. The impact of that contradiction on the making of Abdallah as a political leader will preoccupy much of the rest of this thesis.

## Notes

1. Sir George Arthur, *Life of Lord Kitchener*, vol. 2 (London, 1920) pp. 281-82.
2. *ibid.*, p. 306, Kitchener to Lady Salisbury Cairo 6 Dec. 1906.
3. Arthur, *Kitchener*, vol. 3 (London, 1920), p. 153.
4. This remarkable vision is described in an anonymous article entitled, 'Lord Kitchener in Egypt', *Fortnightly Review*, Volume 91, March 1912, pp. 507-24. The style and language of this article suggests that its author was probably Kitchener's biographer, Sir George Arthur.
5. Elie Kedourie, *In the Anglo-Arab Labyrinth. The Husayn-McMahon Correspondence and Its Interpretations 1914-1939* (London, 1976) pp. 10-13.
6. Elie Kedourie, 'The Politics of Political Literature. Kawakibi, Azoury and Jung', *Arabic Political Memoirs and Other Studies* (London, 1974) pp. 107-11 and Sylvia G. Haim (ed.) *Arab Nationalism. An Anthology* (London, 1976). Also see 'Abd al-Rahmān al-Kawākibī, *Umm al-Qurā* (Beirut, 1972).
- Sylvia G. Haim has shown that the ideas in *Umm al-Qurā* were derived mostly from Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, *The Future of Islam* (London, 1882). Blunt called for the transfer of the Caliphate from the Turks to its rightful owners, the tribe of the Prophet, the Quraysh. Blunt's Arab Caliph, who was synonymous with the Emir of Mecca, was to be the spiritual head of Islam, whose temporal power would be limited to the Hijaz, the spiritual center of the Muslim world. Like many Europeans, Blunt wrongly distinguished between the spiritual and temporal authority of the Caliph, whom he regarded as a sort of Muslim Pope. Sylvia G. Haim, 'Blunt and al-Kawākibī', *Oriente Moderna*, vol. 35, 1955, pp. 132-44.
7. The section on Riḍā and 'Abbās Hilmī is based on my analysis of information taken from Tauber, 'Rashīd Riḍā', pp. 102-12. For Riḍā's views on Arab-Turkish relations before the war see, Ḥusayn Dināwī, *Al-Sayyid Rashīd Riḍā. Fikruhu wa Niḍāluhu al-Siyāsī* (Tripoli, 1984) pp. 182-200.
8. Kitchener to Grey private letter 3 Nov. 1913, *BDOW*, vol. 9, part 2 (London, 1934) p. 88.
9. In May 1912 Kitchener reportedly told Jules Albert Defrance, the French ambassador in Egypt, 'ici, même on commence à être inquiet et nerveux: il y a du malaise en même temps des espoirs latents chez les arabes.' See, Cambon (Berlin) to Poincaré très confidentiel 9 May 1912 in Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, *Documents Diplomatiques Français (1871-1914)*, 3<sup>e</sup> Série (1911-1914), vol. 2, p. 445, note one.
10. Kitchener to Grey secret 25 Jan. 1913 in CID, 'International Status of Egypt When Great Britain is at War' secret CAB 4/5/177-B.
11. Cyril Falls and George Macmunn, *History of the Great War, Military Operations, Egypt & Palestine*, vol. 1 (London, 1928) pp. 7-52 and 205-24.
12. 'Appreciation of Situation in Arabia', 6 Sept. 1914, FO 371/2140/51344. Kedourie has suggested that Clayton was the author of this document. Kedourie, *Labyrinth*, p. 14.
13. Grey to Cheetham secret telegram 24 Sept. 1914 FO 371/2139/44923.

14. The contents of Storrs's letter to Abdallah are unknown but can be reconstructed from Cheetham to Grey 13 Dec. 1914 FO 371/1973/87396.

15. Cheetham to FO 31 Oct. 1914 FO 371/2139/65589.

16. Grey to Cheetham 31 Oct. 1914 FO 371/2139/65589.

17. Storrs to Abdallah 1 Nov. 1914 FO 371/1973/87396.

18. Abdallah to Storrs 30 Nov. 1914, FO 371/1973/87396.

19. 'An Official Proclamation from the Government of Great Britain to the Natives of Arabia and the Arab Provinces', 3 Dec. 1914; 'To the People of Arabia', distributed by plane and ship 30 Mar. 1915; 'Proclamation to the People of Arabia', 27 May 1915 all FO 141/710/3156.

20. Elie Kedourie, 'Cairo and Khartoum on the Arab Question, 1915-1918', *The Chatham House Version and Other Middle-Eastern Studies* (New York, 1970), p. 17.

21. Kitchener to Grey 11 Nov. 1914 FO 800/102 (The Sir Edward Grey Papers).

22. Storrs letter of 22 Feb. 1915, from the Storrs Papers, Pembroke College, Cambridge, Box 11/3, quoted in Kedourie, *Labyrinth*, p. 33; also see p. 33-4.

23. On Kitchener's relationship with McMahon, Maxwell, Clayton, see Kedourie, *Labyrinth*, pp. 34-42.

24. 'Intelligence News. Egypt and the Arabian Caliphate' 13 Aug. 1914 FO 882/15/PNA/14/1.

25. 'Résumé of a Memorandum of Sheikh Muhammad Rashid Riza', 12 Feb. 1915 FO 882/2/AP/15/2.

26. For a summary of Nimr's views, see WO 157/689. This secret memorandum is unsigned and undated. Internal evidence indicates that it was written in January 1915.

27. Tauber, 'Officers', pp. 1-39; Majid Khadduri, 'Aziz 'Ali Misri and the Arab Nationalist Movement', in A. Hourani (ed.), *Middle Eastern Affairs*, no. 4, *St. Antony's Papers*, no. 17 (London, 1965) pp. 140-63. For the political program of *al-'Ahd*, see Muhammad Mahdī al-Baṣīr, *Ta'rikh al-Qadiya al-'Irāqiyya* (Baghdad, 1924) pp. 33-34 (quoted).

28. Cheetham to Grey Cairo 9 Aug. 1914; FO to Cheetham 11 Aug. 1914 (quoted) both FO 371/1968/37584; and Captain R. E. M. Russell, Intelligence Department, Cairo, 'Précis of Conversation with Abd El Aziz El Masri on 16th August' FO 371/2140/46261.

29. On Wingate, see Kedourie, *Labyrinth*, pp. 42-46 and Kedourie, 'Cairo and Khartoum', pp. 13-32, 395-99.

30. G. S. Symes, 'A Further Note on British Policy in Arabia and its Relation to British Moslem Politics', secret, Khartoum, 15 Feb. 1915 in Wingate to Grey, 27 Feb. 1915, FO 800/48.

31. Mirghani to Grey secret 6 May 1915 in Wingate to Grey, private 15 May 1915 and Grey minute 13 June 1915 FO 371/2486/77713 and Mirghani to Husayn, 17 Nov. 1915, Wingate Papers (Durham University) File 135/6 quoted in Kedourie, *Labyrinth*, pp. 42-3. On Mirghani's views also see 'Memorandum by Sidi Ali Morghani', 12 Aug. 1915 in FO 141/461/1198/1.

32. See Grey's minute of 13 June 1915 attached to Wingate to Grey Private 15 May 1915 and Crowe to Under SSI 19 June 1915 FO 371/2486/77713. The public statement to which Grey referred was based on Grey to McMahon confidential 14 Apr. 1915 FO 371/2486/63383.



33. Storrs note for McMahon, undated but early-mid-1915, FO 141/461/1198/1. *Mamlaka* means kingdom not possessions. Possessions should be translated as *imtilākāt* or *mumtalakāt*.

34. McMahon to Grey 14 May 1915 FO 141/461/1198/1.

35. Wingate to Hardinge 28 Dec. 1918 in the Hardinge Papers (University Library, Cambridge University) vol. 39, quoted in Kedourie, *Labyrinth*, pp. 46-47.

36. Holderness to SSFA 19 Oct. 1914 FO 371/2140/61238; SSI (Lord Crewe) to the Viceroy (Lord Hardinge) 12 Nov. 1914 private and Harding to Crewe private 29 Nov. 1914 (quoted) FO 800/98.

37. Holderness to Under SSFA very confidential 6 Jan. 1915 FO 371/2479/2154.

38. Holderness minute 5 Jan. 1915 L/P&S/10/532 p. 53/15, quoted in Kedourie, *Labyrinth*, p. 31.

39. Holderness to Under SSFA secret 24 June 1915 FO 371/2486/84355.

40. Clayton to Cheetham 30 Oct. 1914 in Cheetham to Grey 15 Nov. 1914 FO 371/2140/77088. Cheetham claimed that the force Misri planned to raise would eventually total 40-50,000 men. Cheetham to Grey 13 Nov. 1914 FO 371/2140/70884 and P. P. Graves, 'Notes on Conversation with Aziz Ali Bey El Masri' 6 Dec. 1914 FO 371/2140/87395.

41. Grey to Cheetham 14 Nov. 1914 FO 371/2140/70884; Cheetham to FO 16 Nov. 1914 FO 371/2140/71771.

42. SSI to Viceroy 27 Nov. 1914 FO 371/2140/78329; Viceroy to IO 8 Dec. 1914 and Holderness to Under SSFA 11 Dec. 1914 FO 371/2140/81700. Typical of 'India's' attitude towards Miṣrī and other 'Young Arabs' was Sir Arthur Hirtzel's remark: 'The Egyptian pan-Arabs do not seem to be much more than dreamers or agitators, and in any case are not the men to found a new state.' Hirtzel, 'The Future Settlement of Eastern Turkey in Asia and Arabia', 14 Mar. 1915 CAB 42/2/8.

43. FO to Cheetham 18 Dec. 1914 FO 371/2140/81700.

44. 'British Desiderata in Turkey in Asia. Report, Proceedings and Appendices of A Committee Appointed by the Prime Minister, 1915' in CAB 27/1. Also see Aaron S. Klieman, 'Britain's War Aims in the Middle East in 1915', *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 3, no. 3, 1968, pp. 237-51 and Kedourie, *Labyrinth*, pp. 58-62.

Since the beginning of the war Sykes had advised Kitchener through his private secretary, Colonel O. A. G. Fitzgerald. Through Fitzgerald, Sykes kept Kitchener informed of the de Bunsen committee deliberations. Each night Sykes met Fitzgerald to report on the deliberations of that day and to receive instructions regarding points Kitchener wanted raised. Elie Kedourie, 'Sir Mark Sykes and Palestine 1915-16', *Arabic Political Memoirs*, pp. 236-42.

45. Sykes to Maj.-Gen. C. E. Calwell (WO) 12 July 1915 FO 371/2476/106764.

46. Sykes to Calwell secret no. 12 14 July 1915 FO 371/2490/108253.

47. Abdallah's views in this regard will be discussed in greater detail in chapters three and four and in part two.

48. Sykes to Calwell secret no. 14 14 July 1915 FO 371/2490/108253.

### CHAPTER 3: THE HUSAYN-McMAHON CORRESPONDENCE, ARAB NATIONALISM AND THE MAKING OF ABDALLAH'S POLITICAL AMBITIONS, JULY 1915-JUNE 1916

#### Introduction

This chapter will explain how the Husayn-McMahon correspondence and Hashimite dealings with the Arab nationalist societies of Syria contributed to the emergence of the Hashimite family, particularly Abdallah, as a new force in the political life of the Fertile Crescent. Once again we shall explain how Hashimite political ambitions were shaped by British declarations to Husayn and Abdallah. The previous two chapters noted that, until 1915, Hashimite political ambitions had been unaffected by the Arab political societies in the Ottoman Empire and Egypt. This chapter, which covers the period from July 1915 until the start of the Arab revolt in June 1916, will examine the beginning of the Hashimite relationship with those societies, and how that relationship shaped Abdallah's political ambitions.

This chapter will highlight how Abdallah actively promoted a new role for his family in Arab politics as paramount leaders of the Arab nation. His actions in that regard will be explained in terms of his contribution to the Husayn-McMahon correspondence and his crucial role in encouraging his father and brothers to break with the Ottomans, seek alliance with Great Britain and assume the leadership of the Arabs.

Two assumptions underlie this chapter and chapter four. The first is that Abdallah's role in Arab politics developed in the context of his family's evolving political ambitions. The second is that the emergence of Abdallah's political ambitions in the Fertile Crescent cannot be understood without reference to Husayn's interpretation of the Husayn-McMahon correspondence and his family's relationship with the Arab nationalists of Syria and Iraq who encouraged them to lead the Arab national movement. We shall see how that interpretation enabled Abdallah to claim that his family's ambition to create an Arab empire in the Fertile Crescent and Arabia had the support of both Great Britain and the Arab majority in the Arabian peninsula and the Fertile Crescent.

Chapters three and four of this thesis are not the first study of the Husayn-McMahon correspondence and other British attempts until the

end of World War I to explain Great Britain's Arab policy to the Hashimites. These controversial questions have been studied in numerous works based on British and Arab primary sources. The most important of these studies are: Elie Kedourie, *In the Anglo-Arab Labyrinth. The McMahon Husayn Correspondence and its Interpretations* (Cambridge, 1976) and 'Cairo Khartoum on the Arab Question, 1915-1918' in *The Chatham House Version and Other Middle Eastern Studies* (New York, 1970) pp. 13-32 and 395-99; two books by A. L. Tibawi, *A Modern History of Syria including Lebanon and Palestine* (London, 1969) and *Anglo-Arab Relations and the Question of Palestine, 1914-1921* (London, 1971); Isaiah Friedman, 'The McMahon-Hussein Correspondence and the Question of Palestine', *Journal of Contemporary History*, volume 5, number 2, 1970, pp. 83-122 and Arnold Toynbee's response to Friedman in 'The McMahon-Hussein Correspondence: Comments and a Reply', *Journal of Contemporary History*, volume 5, number 4, 1970, pp. 185-201 (Toynbee's article was followed by a brief response by Friedman). An amplified version of Friedman's article in *The Journal of Contemporary History* is found in Isaiah Friedman, *The Question of Palestine, 1914-1918. British-Jewish-Arab-Relations* (New York, 1973). The only detailed study in Arabic is found in Sulaymān Mūsā, *Al-Ḥaraka al-ʿArabiyya. Sīrat al-Marḥala al-ʿUlā Lil-Nahda al-ʿArabiyya al-Ḥadītha, 1908-1924* (Beirut, 1986) An important commentary on much of this research is found in chapter four of C. Ernest Dawn, *From Ottomanism to Arabism. Essays on the Origins of Arab Nationalism* (Urbana, 1973).

Although all of these studies have considered Hashimite motivations and policy, their primary aim has been to unravel the complexities of British policy. Each of the scholars mentioned above has closely examined the compatibility of the Husayn-McMahon correspondence with the Sykes-Picot agreement and the Balfour Declaration. All of them have studied the importance of the Husayn-McMahon correspondence for the future of Palestine. These scholars have invested considerable effort in trying to clarify the meaning of Sir Henry McMahon's letter to Husayn of 24 October 1915. The problem of British good faith and honour in negotiating with Husayn has also been a major concern.

Elie Kedourie has written that 'In order fully to understand the meaning of these documents [the Husayn-McMahon correspondence] which are at once deliberately vague and unwittingly obscure, and to account for the remarkably divergent interpretations to which they have given rise, we must see them as belonging to two different histories: that of Anglo-Sharifian negotiations during 1914-16, and that of the Palestine dispute which began with the British conquest of Palestine and the Balfour Declaration.'" This chapter and the next will show that the Husayn-McMahon correspondence also belongs to a third history: the making of Abdallah's political ambitions in the Fertile Crescent.

This study of the Husayn-McMahon correspondence, and later attempts by British officials to explain British policy to the Hashimites, differs in several respects from earlier studies of these subjects. None of the previous studies has attempted in an overt way to assess the impact of the Husayn-McMahon correspondence and later British declarations on the shaping of Abdallah's political ambitions. None has examined the link between Abdallah's political evolution and his father's interpretation of the Husayn-McMahon correspondence. Chapters three and four of this thesis will demonstrate that the beginning of Abdallah's involvement in the politics of the Fertile Crescent can only be understood in light of that interpretation.

Although this thesis differs in several respects from earlier studies of the Husayn-McMahon correspondence, it has been influenced by the work of others. This is particularly true in the case of Elie Kedourie's, *In the Anglo-Arab Labyrinth*, which is the most systematic and thoroughly researched study of the Husayn-McMahon correspondence.

#### The Husayn-McMahon Correspondence

Contact between the Hashimites and the British in Cairo was resumed on 14 July 1915 when Abdallah sent Ronald Storrs the first letter of what has come to be known as the Husayn-McMahon correspondence.<sup>2</sup> Husayn presented himself in this letter as the spokesman of the 'Arab nation' and offered several conditions for an Anglo-Arab alliance. All of Husayn's conditions clearly implied that he should become Caliph and head of an Arab state in Arabia and the Fertile Crescent.<sup>3</sup> The first condition called upon

England to acknowledge the independence of the Arab countries, bounded on the north by Mersina and Adana up to the 37° of latitude, on which degree fall Birijik, Urfa, Mardin, Midiat, Jezirat (Ibn 'Umar), Amadia, up to the border of Persia; on the east by the borders of Persia up to the Gulf of Basra; on the south by the Indian Ocean with the exception of the position of Aden to remain as it is; on the west by the Red Sea, the Mediterranean Sea up to Mersina.

The second condition called upon 'England to approve of the proclamation of an Arab Khalifate of Islam.' In return for this, Husayn would 'acknowledge that England shall have the preference in all economic enterprises in the Arab countries whenever conditions of enterprise are otherwise equal.' Husayn called for a mutual defence alliance between Great Britain and the Arabs. England was asked 'to acknowledge the abolition of foreign privileges in the Arab countries, and to assist the Government of the Sherif in an International Convention for confirming such abolition.' The letter ended with an ultimatum that was intended to impress the British with the strength and determination of the Arab nation Husayn supposedly led: the British had thirty days to answer this letter, otherwise 'the whole of the Arab nation' would 'reserve to themselves complete freedom of action.'

How are we to account for the bold demands of this letter? Chapter two noted three influences on Hashimite ambitions between August 1914 and July 1915: Kitchener's note of 31 October 1914 that was rewritten and amplified by Storrs, British declarations distributed in the Hijaz between December 1914 and May 1915 and Mīrghani's letter of 15 May 1915. It will be recalled that Abdallah responded cautiously to Kitchener's letter of 1 November 1914 and not at all to Mīrghani or the declarations scattered in the Hijaz. Several explanations can be given for why Husayn abandoned his earlier caution in order to advance such grandiose territorial claims.

Husayn's letter of 14 July 1915, which was written in Abdallah's handwriting, reflected the grand scope of Abdallah's ambition and his penchant for hustling foreign powers with threats of a crisis that could only be resolved by meeting his demands.<sup>4</sup> As Husayn's private secretary, Abdallah was intimately involved in the drafting of Husayn's letters to McMahon.<sup>5</sup> The grandiose language of Kitchener's letters and

the British declarations distributed in the Hijaz gave Abdallah an opening to make such sweeping demands.

Abdallah was the most anxious of his family for a British-supported revolt against the Turks. In July 1915 G. S. Symes learned from a Hijazi notable visiting Khartoum that Abdallah's ambition was to overthrow Turkish rule in the Hijaz with British help, 'as a preliminary to his larger schemes', and to secure the Caliphate. Husayn was in general agreement with Abdallah, but was reluctant to rebel or to assume the Caliphate.<sup>6</sup> In December 1916 Faysal told T. E. Lawrence that the idea of a British-supported revolt against the Turks originated with Abdallah. Faysal, who believed that the Turks were too strong to be overthrown, advised Husayn to reject Abdallah's proposals.<sup>7</sup>

The Arab nationalist societies in the Ottoman Empire were a second possible source of Husayn's territorial demands. Hashimite interest in the Arab political societies began in early 1915 when a representative of *Jam'iyat al-'Arabiyya al-Fatāt* in Damascus asked Husayn to lead an Arab insurrection in the Ottoman army in Syria. *Al-Fatāt* was founded in 1909 as a reaction to Young Turkish hostility towards the Arabs and had its central branch in Damascus and other branches in Beirut and Aleppo. Most of its members were Syrian civilians. The Syrian scholar, 'Alī Sulṭān, has written that *al-Fatāt* had sixty members before World War I. Eliezer Tauber has placed its membership at thirty-six only. During the first year of the war, *al-Fatāt* became the first Arab political society to call for Arab secession from the Ottoman Empire, the establishment of an Arab empire under Hashimite leadership and an Arab Caliphate.<sup>8</sup>

*Jam'iyat al-'Ahd* (The Covenant Society) was a secret political society founded in Istanbul in October 1913 by 'Azīz 'Alī al-Miṣrī, Major Salīm al-Jazā'irī of Damascus and Lieutenant Nūrī al-Sa'īd of Baghdad. Despite the membership of a few civilians, *al-'Ahd* consisted almost entirely of Arab, mostly Iraqi, officers in the Ottoman army. In late 1914 and early 1915, Iraqi officers established branches of *al-'Ahd* in Aleppo, Mosul, Baghdad and Basra. The original political program of *al-'Ahd* called for the creation of a Turco-Arab federation with its capital in Istanbul based on the model of the Austro-Hungarian empire.

The Caliphate would remain in Ottoman hands.<sup>9</sup> According to Eliezer Tauber, *al-ʿAhd* had fifty-three active members on the eve of the war, forty-two of whom were officers.<sup>10</sup>

In January 1915, the Damascus branches of *al-Fatāt* and *al-ʿAhd* approached the Hashimites through Fawzī al-Bakrī, who had been assigned by the Ottoman government to Husayn's service as a bodyguard. (It will be recalled that the al-Bakrī family had been friends of the Hashimites since the pilgrimage of 1909.) Bakri delivered a message to Husayn, which asked him to lead a revolt for Arab independence, and to receive a delegation in Mecca that would discuss future cooperation between the Hashimites and the nationalist conspirators in Damascus.

*Al-Fatāt* and *al-ʿAhd* in Damascus conspired to start a revolt among Arab troops in Syria that would coincide with a British landing at Alexandretta. Yāsīn al-Hāshimī and ʿAlī Ridā al-Rikābī were the two leaders of this conspiracy. (Hāshimī of Baghdad was the chief of staff of the twelfth army corps and the former leader of *al-ʿAhd* in Baghdad; Rikābī, who had recently been retired from the Ottoman army, was the mayor of Damascus.) After Hashimi had united *al-Fatāt* and *al-ʿAhd* in late 1914 or early 1915, both societies agreed to cooperate in instigating a Hashimite-led revolt in Syria. Soon thereafter, *al-Fatāt* and *al-ʿAhd* merged in Aleppo.<sup>11</sup>

In early February 1915, a retainer of Emir ʿAlī accidentally discovered a secret correspondence between Wahīb Bey and Istanbul, which discussed plans to depose Husayn and end the traditional autonomy of the Hijaz. Husayn responded to this alarming discovery by sending Faysal to Istanbul to discuss these letters with the Grand Vizier, and, if possible, to restore amicable relations between Mecca and the central government. Faysal also had instructions to contact the Arab nationalists in Syria.<sup>12</sup>

Beginning in late March 1915, Faysal spent four weeks in Damascus as a guest in the home of ʿAtāʾ al-Bakrī, where he met secretly with representatives of *al-Fatāt* and *al-ʿAhd*. Hāshimī told Faysal that the Ottoman army in Syria was overwhelmingly Arab and that three of its divisions were ready to revolt. However, until conditions favoured a

drive for Arab secession, the Damascus conspirators wanted to strengthen their ties with Husayn and, if necessary, to seek British assistance. Faysal declined an offer to lead the Arab movement saying that he had been sent to Syria only to study local political conditions. He agreed, however, to join *al-Fatāt* as a gesture of solidarity with the Damascus nationalists. After meeting Faysal, *al-Fatāt* and *al-‘Ahd* sent emissaries to meet Husayn in Mecca. Yūsuf Ḥaydar and Shaikh Kāmil al-Qaṣṣāb of *al-Fatāt* reviewed the situation in Syria with Husayn; Ḥaidar was said to have inducted Husayn's eldest son, ‘Alī, into *al-Fatāt*. First Lieutenant ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd of *al-‘Ahd* presented Husayn with a list of Arab officers who had sworn allegiance to him.<sup>13</sup>

During a three-week visit to Istanbul, Faysal complained to the Sultān, the Grand Vizier, Tal‘at and Enver about Wahīb Bey, the hostility of the CUP in the Hijaz towards his family and about Jamāl Pāshā, commander of the Ottoman fourth army in Syria who had recently ordered the arrest of several Arab nationalists. Faysal explained that his father would support the Ottoman *jihād* and send troops to participate in a second Suez Canal campaign only if Istanbul recognized the traditional autonomy of the Hijaz and the hereditary right of his family to rule the Emirate of Mecca. Faysal was told that all of his demands would be met if Husayn supported the Ottoman *jihād*. As a gesture of goodwill, Istanbul transferred Wahīb from the Hijaz and replaced him with General Ghalib Pasha, who had orders to appease Husayn. Faysal agreed to send Hijazi volunteers to Syria and to cooperate with Jamāl Pasha, who would command a second attack on the Suez Canal.

When Faysal returned to Damascus the nationalist conspirators appealed to him again to lead an Arab revolt in Syria. They claimed that their conspiracy now had the support of the Ruwalla tribes and several leading *shaikhs* of the Syrian Druze. Faysal agreed to ask Husayn to present the nationalists' conditions for an Anglo-Arab alliance to the British authorities in Cairo. The Damascus conspirators, who had heard from Faysal about Abdallah's contacts with Kitchener, aimed to exploit Hashimite influence in Cairo in order to gain British



support for an uprising in Syria. Faysal returned to Mecca on 20 June 1915.<sup>14</sup>

In 1938 George Antonius published what he claimed was an English translation of the nationalists' conditions for an agreement with Great Britain. The terms of the Damascus Protocol, as Antonius called that document, are almost identical to the territorial demands outlined in Husayn's letter to McMahon of 14 July 1915. Although Antonius's account of the Damascus Protocol is highly romanticized and exaggerated for dramatic effect, its essentials can be confirmed from other sources. When Mrs. Stewart Erskine, an Englishwoman with an interest in Arab affairs, interviewed Faysal in the early 1930s, she was told in rather less dramatic language about the 'Manifesto' addressed to Husayn by the Damascus nationalists which formed the basis of Husayn's letter of 14 July 1915 to McMahon.<sup>15</sup>

The Hashimite family held a conference in Ṭā'if immediately after Faysal's return. The purpose of this conference was to decide how the Hashimites should respond to Faysal's talks in Damascus and Istanbul. They decided that Husayn would resume contact with the British in Cairo in order to negotiate the terms of an Anglo-Hashimite alliance and a Hashimite-led Arab uprising. It was decided that Faysal would return to Damascus to meet again with the nationalist conspirators. Abdallah's task would be to raise troops from the tribes around Ṭā'if; 'Alī would do the same with the tribes near Medina.<sup>16</sup>

By July 1915 territorial schemes like that in Husayn's letter to McMahon had become well known to the British and the Hashimites. The British had already heard similar proposals from Rashīd Riḍā, 'Azīz 'Alī al-Miṣrī, Sayyid 'Alī al-Mīrghānī, 'Izzat Pasha al-'Ābid, Najīb 'Azūrī and an unnamed 'Young Arab' known to Symes in Khartoum. Storrs noted 'a curiously exact resemblance' between Husayn's letter of 14 July 1915 and Riḍā's frequently expressed views concerning Arab frontiers.<sup>17</sup> It will be recalled that Riḍā propagandized in Arabia in 1912 and that, in early 1914, Abdallah may have joined his Society of the Arab Union. Riḍā's contacts with *al-Fatāḥ* suggest another way in which his ideas may have circulated between Egypt, Syria and the Hijaz. After the outbreak of the

war, *al-Fatāt* sent Kāmil al-Qaṣṣāb to Cairo to confer with the Syrian exiles. It is possible that when they met in Mecca in the spring of 1915, Qaṣṣāb and Husayn discussed Ridā's contacts with *al-Fatāt*.<sup>18</sup>

We can reasonably conclude that territorial schemes like that of Rashīd Ridā were known in the Hijaz. However, only the prospect of British support for Husayn in a new role as leader of the Arabs, Caliph and founder of an Arab empire, and the expectation of a massive Arab uprising in the Ottoman army in Syria, spurred Husayn and Abdallah to address McMahon as they did in their letter of 14 July 1915. The presentation of such demands certainly suited Abdallah's inclination for grand gestures and provocative *démarches* designed to stampede the British into conceding his demands. The Damascus conspirators had successfully convinced the Hashimites that they represented a powerful conspiracy of Arab elements in the Ottoman army. The confluence of these factors during the first half of 1915 led Husayn to abandon much of his earlier caution about seeking an alliance with Great Britain and leading an anti-Ottoman uprising.

McMahon's letter to Husayn of 30 August 1915 reconfirmed the terms of Kitchener's letter of 1 November 1914 and expressed Great Britain's 'desire for the independence of Arabia and its inhabitants, together with our approval of the Arab Khalifate when it should be proclaimed. We declare once more that His Majesty's Government would welcome the resumption of the Khalifate by an Arab of true race.' The Arabic version of McMahon's letter conveyed in much stronger language than the English original Great Britain's interest in Husayn's assumption of the Caliphate. The phrase 'an Arab of true race' appeared in Arabic as 'a true Arab born of the blessed stock of the Prophet.' British recognition of Arabian independence and support for Husayn's assumption of the Caliphate were considerable achievements for an Arab leader who had not yet broken with the Turks. Husayn was well entitled at this point to conclude that the British had recognized him as the pre-eminent Arab leader. McMahon, however, avoided raising the subject of Arab frontiers. He did this by telling Husayn that it would be 'premature' to negotiate his territorial scheme during 'the heat of the war.'<sup>19</sup>

Husayn's response of 9 September stressed the importance of recognizing his territorial demands, but allowed for further negotiations. Husayn emphasized two points: first, that frontiers, not the Caliphate, were the main Arab demand; and second, that he spoke on behalf of the Arabs who were united in their support for the territorial scheme that was presented to Great Britain in his letter of 14 July 1915. Husayn's only reference to the Caliphate was 'May God have mercy on the Khalifate and comfort Moslems in it'.

Until November 1915 the British were reluctant to discuss Arab frontiers with Husayn or seriously consider sponsoring a Hashimite-led Arab uprising. Two developments between September and November 1915 led the British to reassess their position. The first was the deteriorating military situation at the Dardanelles, where the British and the French had been unable to force the straits and march on Istanbul. The second was the appearance in Cairo of Lieutenant Muḥammad Sharīf al-Fārūqī, an Iraqi officer from Mosul who had deserted from the Ottoman army at Gallipoli. In the autumn of 1915, McMahon was under intense pressure from the Foreign Office and General Sir Ian Hamilton, the commander of the Anglo-French expeditionary force at the Dardanelles, to split the Arabs from the Turks. At that time, many of the Ottoman troops at Gallipoli were Arab; in Mesopotamia, the Ottoman army was almost entirely Arab. McMahon was under pressure to offer the Arabs an assurance of future assistance from Great Britain that would ensure their defection from the Turks.<sup>20</sup>

Fārūqī commanded an infantry unit at Gallipoli before deserting on 20 August 1915. Fārūqī told his British interrogators at Gallipoli about his ties to 'Azīz 'Alī al-Miṣrī and his membership in *al-'Ahd*, which had been in contact with the Emir of Mecca and planned to instigate an Arab uprising in the Ottoman army in Syria. Fārūqī was then sent to Cairo for further questioning.<sup>21</sup> British military intelligence in Cairo interviewed Fārūqī several times between 3 September and 11 October 1915.<sup>22</sup>

Fārūqī described himself as a member of *al-'Ahd* who had played a part in uniting *al-Fatāt* and *al-'Ahd* in Aleppo. After the merger, *al-*

'Abd learned that *al-Fatāt* 'had already paid allegiance to the Sherif of Mecca as Khalifa and renounced allegiance to "Rashad" the Sultan of Turkey.' Faruqi told General Gilbert Clayton that *al-'Abd* had also sent an emissary to Husayn to pay him allegiance. The revelation that Fārūqī knew about Husayn's contacts with Great Britain impressed Clayton with Fārūqī's importance and the strength of the Arab movement Husayn claimed to represent. Fārūqī characterized 'the Arab party' as 'a power which cannot be disregarded, 90% of the Arab officers in the Turkish Army and a part of the Kurd officers are members of our Society.' As a result of their alliance with *al-Fatāt*, the Arab officers had the support of 'the [Syrian] natives and nomads and all sects. . .' The Turks and Germans, who were well aware of the great power of 'the Young Arab Party', had not dared to suppress *al-'Abd*, the military arm of *al-Fatāt*. Fārūqī's version of Husayn's contacts with the British appeared to reflect a Hashimite interpretation of British declarations to Husayn and Abdallah. According to Fārūqī

the English were willing to give the Sherif the necessary arms and ammunition for the attainment of his object. The English have given their consent to the Sherif establishing an Arab empire, but the limits of his Empire were not defined. It was mentioned that the dominions of the Sherif shall include "the Sherif and those who follow him." When this phrase reached Damascus it was suggested that the northern line of [sic] limit of the Sherif's Empire should be "Mersina-DiARBekir" line.

Fārūqī added that in June or July 1915 representatives of *al-Fatāt* (the reference was probably to Kāmil al-Qaṣṣāb and Lt. 'Abd al-Ḥamīd) were sent to Jidda with instructions to tell Husayn that once Great Britain had agreed to Arab territorial demands all other aspects of an Anglo-Arab agreement would be open to negotiation.

Faruqi's political program called for the creation of an Arab Caliphate in Arabia, Syria, Palestine and Iraq with the Emir of Mecca as Caliph and suzerain. The independence of the Arabian peninsula only was rejected as unacceptable. The proposed Arab empire would be a decentralized federation in which each country would have its own government. Although ruled by the Caliph, the new empire would be Arab,

not Muslim, because 'Christian Arabs, Druzes and Neseiria will have the same rights as Moslems, but the Jews will be governed by a special law.'

Three messages underlay Fārūqī's depiction of the 'Arab party': first, that a massive uprising of Arab troops in the Ottoman army supported by all sections of Syrian opinion would take place if Great Britain supported the political demands of the Arab nationalist conspirators and their leader, the Emir of Mecca; second, that if Great Britain rejected their demands, the Arabs would fight for Turkey and Germany, who were prepared to grant nationalist demands 'in full'; third, that an Arab insurrection would split Ottoman ranks and reverse Great Britain's military collapse at the Dardanelles. Fārūqī tried to hustle the British into immediate action by claiming that the Arab party, who could no longer remain neutral, needed a favourable British reply within a few weeks.

The demands of the Arab party included two reservations that should have raised doubts in Cairo about Fārūqī's reliability and the capabilities of the secret society he claimed to represent. Clayton was told that if all the territorial demands of the nationalists could not be met, 'we want as much as we can get.' At the end of his interview with Clayton, Fārūqī claimed that he was 'not authorized to discuss with you officially our political programme. . .'. Fārūqī offered, however, to answer any questions 'you might wish to make re the agreement and if necessary make modifications in its articles including the Mersina-Diarbekir line; modifications which I promise to try my utmost to convince most of them to go by my agreement.'<sup>23</sup>

Clayton, Maxwell and McMahon concluded from Fārūqī's statements that the security of Egypt and the fate of the war in the Middle East depended upon a British alliance with Husayn and his Arab nationalist followers. They were convinced that failure to reach an immediate agreement with Husayn would have dire consequences for British campaigns in Syria and Mesopotamia. All three feared that if Germany and Turkey gained control of the Arab movement, the hitherto ineffective Ottoman *jihād* would unite all Islam against Great Britain. For these reasons they pleaded with Grey and Kitchener to act immediately on

Fārūqī's recommendations and begin negotiating Arab frontiers with Husayn, the spokesman for the Arab majority.<sup>24</sup>

No British official in Cairo subjected Fārūqī's assertions to critical analysis or considered the implications of his two reservations. Clayton's memorandum to Grey of 11 October 1915 noted that Fārūqī's claims 'together with the experience of the past year, during which there have been considerable opportunities of studying the Pan-Arab movement, lead to the conviction that the proposals now put forward are of very grave and urgent importance.'<sup>25</sup> Clayton's knowledge of the 'Pan-Arab movement' came from four sources in addition to Fārūqī: 'Azīz 'Alī al-Miṣrī, the Syrian exiles in Cairo, the Hashimites and British military intelligence summaries regarding Syria. Since early December 1914 the secret intelligence summaries of the War Office in Cairo concerning Syria had regularly reported growing Syrian discontent with Ottoman rule, disaffection among and desertion of Arab troops in the Ottoman army and sympathy for Great Britain in Syria. However, none of what could be learned from those intelligence summaries, or Arab sources other than Fārūqī, confirmed that a secret society including ninety per cent of the Arab officers in the Ottoman army was allied with Husayn and poised to overthrow Ottoman rule in Syria.<sup>26</sup>

In their zeal not to lose a unique opportunity to drive a wedge between the Arabs and the Turks, the British in Cairo negotiated the scope of Arab independence with Fārūqī. During those negotiations Fārūqī posed as the spokesman of the 'Arab Party' and the Emir of Mecca, a man he had never met or communicated with in any way. McMahon wrote to Grey on 18 October 1915 that the 'Arab Party' would accept a settlement on the following basis:

England accepts the principle of independent Arabia under British guidance and control within limits propounded by the Sherif of Mecca, in so far as England is free to act without detriment to the interests of her present Allies (this refers to French in regard to whom see remarks on modification of North-West limit of Arabia) . . . In regard to North-Western boundaries proposed by Sherif of Mecca, Faroki thinks Arabs would accept modification leaving in Arabia purely Arab districts of Aleppo, Damascus, Hama and Homs whose occupation by the French they would oppose by force of arms. He also accepts the fact that British interests necessitate special measures of British control in Basrah vilayet . . . If we consider

letter of Sherif of Mecca in light of Faroki's views I do not think either Sherif or Arab party are likely to regard any less wide assurances acceptable.

The most striking feature of this letter is McMahon's use of the word 'districts'. It is unknown why McMahon used this word. The observations of Clayton and Maxwell on the demands of the 'Arab Party' as explained by Fārūqī indicated that four Syrian towns were meant by McMahon's use of 'districts'. In other words, McMahon, Clayton and Maxwell were under the impression that the 'Arab Party' would accept Damascus, Homs, Hama and Aleppo as the core of an independent Arab state in Syria.<sup>27</sup> After reading the reports of McMahon, Maxwell and Clayton on their talks with Fārūqī, Grey concluded 'that all that is necessary to get the Arabs is to promise definitely the four towns of Damascus, Aleppo, Homs and Hama.'<sup>28</sup>

On 20 October Grey instructed McMahon that his answer to Husayn's letter of 9 September 1915 should not give the impression that Great Britain intended to undermine French interests in Syria. McMahon's proposals for the Arabian peninsula, the holy places and north-western boundaries were approved. McMahon was also instructed to include the *vilayets* of Baghdad and Basra in Great Britain's sphere of control. Grey stressed the urgency of giving assurances that would get the Arabs on Great Britain's side as fast as possible. Grey left McMahon 'discretion in the matter as it is urgent and there is not time to discuss an exact formula.' Grey concluded: 'The simplest plan would be to give an assurance of Arab independence saying that we will proceed at once to discuss boundaries if they will send representatives for that purpose, but if something more precise than this is required you can give it.'<sup>29</sup>

McMahon's letter of 24 October 1915 to Husayn--the most famous and controversial letter of the Husayn-McMahon correspondence--communicated 'on behalf' of the British government a detailed statement regarding Arab boundaries. The most important part of that letter read as follows:

The two districts of Mersina and Alexandretta and portions of Syria lying to the west of the districts of Damascus, Homs, Hama

and Aleppo cannot be said to be purely Arab, and should be excluded from the limits demanded.

With the above modification, and without prejudice to our existing treaties with Arab chiefs, we accept those limits.

As for those regions lying within those frontiers wherein Great Britain is free to act without detriment to the interests of her ally, France, I am empowered in the name of the Government of Great Britain to give the following assurances and make the following reply to your letter:--

(1) Subject to the above modifications, Great Britain is prepared to recognise and support the independence of the Arabs in all the regions within the limits demanded by the Sherif of Mecca.

(2) Great Britain will guarantee the Holy Places against all external aggression and will recognise their inviolability.

(3) When the situation admits, Great Britain will give to the Arabs her advice and will assist them to establish what may appear to be the most suitable forms of government in those various territories.

(4) On the other hand, it is understood that the Arabs have decided to seek the advice and guidance of Great Britain only, and that such European advisers and officials as may be required for the formation of a sound form of administration will be British.

(5) With regard to the *vilayets* of Bagdad and Basra, the Arabs will recognise that the established position and interests of Great Britain necessitate special administrative arrangements in order to secure these territories from foreign aggression, to promote the welfare of the local populations and to safeguard our mutual economic interests.

For the purposes of this thesis, the most important feature of McMahon's letter was its recognition that any political settlement in Fertile Crescent and Arabia had to be negotiated with Husayn, the supposed leader of the Arab nation. The mere fact that Great Britain had chosen to negotiate the future of Arab independence in the Fertile Crescent with Husayn must surely have left the Hashimites with the impression that the British had recognized their right to intervene in the political affairs of that region. Husayn and his sons legitimately could have concluded from this letter that Great Britain now supported their ambition to extend their dominion to the Fertile Crescent.

On most points the meaning of McMahon's letter was clear. The independence of the Hijaz was recognized in the clause concerning the holy places. Great Britain's position in the Persian Gulf and southern Arabia was ensured by the condition that British recognition of Arab independence would be 'without prejudice to our existing treaties with



Arab chiefs.' Section five clearly suggested that the *vilayets* of Basra and Baghdad would become a British protectorate. The undertaking to assist the Arabs 'to establish what may appear to be the most suitable forms of government in the various territories' did not commit Great Britain to support the creation of one Arab government in the independent Arab territories or to Husayn's rule over any one or all of those territories.

The most obscure passage in McMahon's letter was the reservation that:

The two districts of Mersina and Alexandretta and portions of Syria lying to the west of the districts of Damascus, Homs, Hama and Aleppo cannot be said to be purely Arab, and should be excluded from the limits demanded.

The word 'districts' and its translation into Arabic have been the source of much confusion and controversy. 'Districts' was translated as *wilāyāt* (singular, *wilāya*) in the Arabic letter sent to Husayn. The most common meaning of *wilāya* is the Ottoman administrative division, the *vilayet*. If, however, *wilaya* meant the Ottoman administrative division *vilayet*, the reference to 'the districts of Damascus, Homs, Hama and Aleppo' made no sense because the town of Aleppo was the capital of the *vilayet* of Aleppo. Damascus, Homs and Hama towns were not *vilayets*. Damascus was the capital of the *sanjaq* of Damascus, which was a subdivision of the *vilayet* of Syria. Homs and Hama were two towns in the *sanjaq* of Hama, which was also a subdivision of the *vilayet* of Syria. The statement in the English original concerning Iraq refers clearly to the *vilayets* of Baghdad and Basra. That reference indicates that the author of this letter distinguished between the Ottoman administrative division, *vilayet*, and 'districts'. The problem is, what was meant by 'district'? The only way to make sense of this bizarre passage is to assume that 'the districts of Damascus, Homs, Hama and Aleppo' referred not to Ottoman *vilayets*, but to four cities and their surrounding areas.

Elie Kedourie has pointed out that *wilāya* in spoken Arabic can mean 'town'. It was in this sense that 'districts' was translated as *wilāya*. *Wilāya* appears, therefore, to have been used in two inconsistent

ways in McMahon's letter. In the passage concerning 'the districts of Damascus, Homs, Hama and Aleppo', *wilāya* was used in its colloquial sense to mean 'towns' or 'cities'. In the passage concerning 'the *vilayets* of Bagdad and Basra', *wilāya* was used in its standard literary sense to signify two Ottoman administrative divisions. Confusing as this inconsistent use of *wilāya* was, it should have been clear to Husayn that cities, not Ottoman *vilayets*, were intended by the reference to Damascus, Homs, Hama and Aleppo simply because Damascus, Homs and Hama were not *vilayets*.<sup>30</sup>

Another odd feature of this passage was its reference to the area west of the four towns as not being 'purely Arab', which implied that the areas to the east were 'purely Arab'. Even though the population of Aleppo was a mixture of Arabs and Turks, it made no sense to call the Arabic speaking and predominantly Muslim population living west of those cities less Arab than those in the east. The use of these four cities as a frontier is meaningless because the northern and southern limits of that frontier were not specified.

McMahon wrote to Grey on 26 October in order to explain the meaning of his recent letter to Husayn. McMahon foresaw Damascus, Homs, Hama, Aleppo and their environs as the nucleus of an independent Arab state in Syria. However, because French interests in Syria took precedence over Arab territorial demands, British recognition of that Arab state would be subject to French approval. McMahon hoped that France could be convinced to agree to the creation of this four-city state in Syria, possibly in return for compensation elsewhere in the world. The areas excluded from 'purely Arab territory', where Arab independence could not be recognized, were Mersina, Alexandretta and those districts on the northern coasts of Syria where I understand that French interests have been recognized.<sup>31</sup>

McMahon's letter of 24 October 1915 was shown to Fārūqī, 'Azīz 'Alī al-Miṣrī and perhaps other Arabs in Cairo soon after it had been sent to Husayn. Clayton wrote to Sir William Tyrell of the Foreign Office on 30 October 1915 that Fārūqī and Miṣrī had agreed to the terms of McMahon's letter and were considering 'the best way to take immediate

action against the Turks.' McMahon reported to Grey on 7 November 1915 that Fārūqī and other 'Arab representatives' in Cairo understood that British recognition of Arab independence in Damascus, Homs, Hama and Aleppo was subject to French approval. McMahon added, however, that the Arabs did not welcome French influence in those four cities and were prepared 'to fight for those territories if necessary.' McMahon claimed that 'the Arabs' had suggested that the British should broker a Franco-Arab agreement concerning the boundaries of Arab independence.<sup>32</sup>

On 21 October--one day after Grey had authorized McMahon to offer assurances to Husayn--Grey asked the French government to send a representative to London to negotiate the frontiers of Syria. Grey informed McMahon on 6 November that a 'French expert' was expected in London the following week to discuss 'possible boundaries of an independent Arab state.' Grey proposed to concentrate on obtaining French consent 'to [the] inclusion of Damascus, Hama, Homs and Aleppo in Arab boundaries.' On 9 November the Army Council and the India Office were asked to appoint representatives for the coming Anglo-French conference, which would consider 'the peculiar interests of France in the four towns of Damascus, Homs, Hama and Aleppo.' The 'French expert' to whom Grey referred was François Georges-Picot. The Anglo-French negotiations began on 23 November and led to the so-called Sykes-Picot agreement, which the British and French governments ratified in May 1916. Sir Mark Sykes joined the negotiations in late December 1915.<sup>33</sup>

The Sykes-Picot agreement 'recognized an independent Arab state or a Confederation of Arab States... under the suzerainty of an Arab Chief' in two areas designated as A and B. The northern area, A, would be the French sphere of influence; the southern area, B, would be the British sphere of influence. In their respective spheres of influence Great Britain and France would 'have a right of priority of enterprises and local loans' and would supply advisers at the request of the Arab state or confederation. The area south of B would have full independence. In the blue area, which included the Syrian littoral west of the line Damascus-Homs-Hama-Aleppo and north of Sidon, France would have the right 'to establish such direct or indirect administration or control as

they may desire or as they deem may fit to establish after agreement with the Arab State or Confederation of Arab States.' Great Britain would have the same rights in the red area, which included Baghdad and Basra, as well as the mediterranean ports of Haifa and Acre. Palestine north of Gaza and west of the Jordan river, but excluding Haifa and Acre, was designated as the brown area where an international administration would be established. The form of that administration would be decided by Great Britain, France, Russia, 'the other Allies' and 'representatives of the Sharif of Mecca.'<sup>34</sup>

The compatibility of the Sykes-Picot agreement and McMahon's letter of 24 October 1915 has been the subject of much controversy. A full discussion of that problem, especially with respect to Palestine, is beyond the scope of this thesis. It should be noted, however, that both were compatible in their essentials. The blue, red and brown areas corresponded to the regions excluded from Arab independence in McMahon's letter. The confederation of Arab states in areas A and B of the Sykes-Picot agreement was consistent with the intent of McMahon's letter of 24 October 1915. As we have seen, McMahon, Clayton and Maxwell were under the impression that Fārūqī had agreed that Arab independence in Damascus, Homs, Hama and Aleppo--the minimum territorial demand of the 'Arab Party'--would be subject to French approval. The Sykes-Picot negotiations were intended to settle the problem of French recognition of Arab independence. The result of those negotiations was the provision that 'an independent Arab State or Confederation of Arab States' would be divided between well defined British and French zones of influence.

The Sykes-Picot agreement was consistent with the substance, if not the implied spirit, of McMahon's letter of 24 October 1915. The fact that the Sykes-Picot agreement was negotiated secretly without consulting Arab leaders was inconsistent with the idea of Arab independence, which was clearly implied in McMahon's letter.

The Government of India and the India Office complained to the Foreign Office that McMahon's letter of 24 October 1915 had ignored Indian interests in Basra and Baghdad. Lord Crewe, the viceroy of India,

and Austen Chamberlain, the secretary of state for India, complained to the Foreign Office in early November 1915 that they should have been consulted before any pledges concerning Iraq had been given to Husayn. Crewe and Chamberlain recommended that Basra should be annexed to the British Empire and that Baghdad should become a British protectorate.<sup>35</sup> Holderness of the India Office doubted that Fārūqī's testimony was sufficient to conclude 'that there is a large and solid party, that can be detached from the Turks, which is worth detaching.'<sup>36</sup> As far as Chamberlain was concerned, the 'Grand Shareef is a nonentity without power to carry out his proposals, that Arabs are without unity and with no possibility of uniting and I disbelieve in reality and efficacy of suggested Arab revolt in [the Ottoman] Army and elsewhere.'<sup>37</sup>

McMahon's letter of 24 October 1915 was so ambiguous that Husayn and Abdallah could easily (and later did) interpret it in a way that was consistent with their own ambitions. The ambiguity of that letter, combined with the provocative language of all previous British declarations and the mighty claims of the Damascus conspirators, were such as to encourage the Hashimites to conclude that Great Britain and a powerful body of Arab nationalists in the Ottoman army were prepared to actively support the creation of a Hashimite-led Arab empire far larger than the Hijaz and four cities in the interior of Syria.

By late October 1915 a huge gap had developed between how Grey and McMahon understood British commitments to support Arab independence and how the Hashimites *could* have understood McMahon's letter of 24 October 1915 and all previous British declarations. That gap goes to the heart of what encouraged Abdallah to assume a new leadership role in Arab affairs that would carry him and his family to the forefront of any post-war settlement in the Fertile Crescent.

In his letter to McMahon of 5 November 1915, Husayn renounced his demand that the *vilayets* of Mersina and Adana should be included in the Arab kingdom. Husayn insisted, however, that the *vilayets* of Aleppo and Beirut, including their coastal regions, could not be excluded. He rejected the strange notion that Aleppo and Beirut were not 'purely Arab' and said nothing about French interests in Syria. Husayn insisted

further that the *vilayets* of Baghdad and Basra must be included in the Arab kingdom. They could, however, remain under temporary British administration 'against a suitable sum paid as compensation to the Arab Kingdom for the period of occupation, in order to meet the expenses which every new kingdom is bound to support.' Husayn, who had never had any connection to Iraq and had not yet fired a shot at the Turks, was, in effect, asking Great Britain to pay *him* compensation for the occupation of Iraqi territories that British troops had wrested from the Turks! The paragraph of Husayn's letter concerning Iraq included a statement which implied that Husayn would respect British treaties with the shaikhs of the Persian Gulf.<sup>28</sup>

Although Husayn continued to present himself as the spokesman of the Arabs, he was reluctant to move against the Turks. Husayn feared that he would be blamed for dividing Islam, and that the 'Arab nation' would be left alone to face Germany and Turkey if the British and their allies lost the war or made peace on terms unfavourable to the Arabs. He wrote that the Arabs would act only once they knew that Great Britain would support and defend their interests in a peace settlement with Germany. Husayn's reluctance to break with the Turks in November 1915 probably reflected his anxiety about Great Britain's deteriorating military situation at the Dardanelles.

Before McMahon answered Husayn on 14 December 1915, three important developments took place which illuminated the role of British strategic concerns and the Arab nationalists in the shaping of Hashimite political ambitions. The first development was the request that McMahon sent to the Foreign Office from the Dardanelles in mid-November 1915 for a British landing at Alexandretta. McMahon doubted that the Arabs would rally to the British side without a landing at Alexandretta that would restore British prestige in the east after a withdrawal from Gallipoli.<sup>29</sup> Since September 1915 McMahon had feared that the Turks would exploit a suspension of military operations at the Dardanelles in order to reinforce their army in Syria and renew the threat of an invasion of Egypt. Through his contacts with Husayn and Fārūqī, McMahon had become convinced that Egypt might be in grave danger of

Turkish attack if Great Britain could not count on the support of the Hashimites and their Arab partisans. Given the strategic importance that McMahon attached to an alliance with Husayn, it is no wonder that the political ambitions of the Hashimites, including Abdallah, were profoundly and rapidly transformed by their dealings with the British authorities in Cairo.

The second development was the meetings Sir Mark Sykes held in Cairo with Fārūqī in mid-November 1915. Fārūqī made three points in his talks with Sykes: first, that the aim of the 'Arab Party' was to establish an independent Arab state under Husayn's suzerainty in all of the Fertile Crescent except for Basra, which would remain under British control; second, that French rights in Syria and Palestine and British rights in Iraq north of Basra and in the Jazīra would be limited to 'a monopoly of all concessionary enterprise'; and third, that an Arab revolt would not take place without a prior British landing at Alexandretta. Sykes, like McMahon, assumed that the Arabs would not revolt unless a landing at Alexandretta had restored Arab confidence in Great Britain.<sup>40</sup> Neither Sykes nor McMahon understood that the Arab movement had little, if any, military value if it needed the backing of a British landing to be effective. The British in Cairo had, after all, rushed to reach an agreement with Husayn and Fārūqī on the assumption that an Arab uprising would relieve pressure on British forces at the Dardanelles, in Iraq and Egypt. Neither Sykes nor McMahon grasped the implications of this new demand for Fārūqī's personal credibility or the credibility of his earlier claims about the strategic and military potential of the Arab movement.

Sykes, on one side, and McMahon, Clayton and Maxwell, on the other, heard very different versions of Arab demands from Fārūqī. As far as we know, no one in Cairo called attention to the negative implications of this discrepancy for Fārūqī's credibility. As we have seen, McMahon, Clayton and Maxwell concluded from their negotiations with Fārūqī that Damascus, Homs, Hama and Aleppo were the minimum demand of the Arab party, that the future of Iraq north of Basra would be negotiated with the Arabs and that a massive Arab uprising would take place in the

Ottoman army in return for a British commitment to support Arab independence. McMahon's letter of 24 October 1915 was drafted on the basis of that understanding. McMahon and Clayton were, moreover, under the impression that Fārūqī and 'Azīz 'Alī al-Miṣrī had approved McMahon's letter of 24 October 1915.

The third development was the letter of introduction Fārūqī sent to Husayn on 6 December 1915. Here Fārūqī claimed to have told the British the following about McMahon's letter of 24 October:

I answered them in a personal capacity according to what I already knew and to conversations between myself, Yāsīn Bey [al-Hāshimī] and several brothers that it would be impossible to concede one foot of ground in Syria, and that I did not know that the area west of the Damascus-Aleppo line was not an Arab land as they claim. I told them that this must be recognized, that a treaty of alliance must be concluded, that peace could only be established with Your Excellency's participation, that all states in agreement with America recognize this independence which includes Syria and Iraq and that they should provide us with money and arms. Only then will it be possible to recognize English economic interests in Iraq, French interests in Syria and the employment of their inspectors. This discussion was held with the authorities here. I also discussed this subject with one of their representatives, who specializes on behalf of their state in the Arab question, named Sir Mark Sykes. This personal discussion took place many times and I believe they were convinced of this and understood that we are of greater benefit to them than they are to us and that their interest in this is greater than ours.<sup>41</sup>

This version of Fārūqī's negotiations with the British also differs markedly from that of Clayton, McMahon and Maxwell. No evidence has come to light that would suggest that Clayton, McMahon and Maxwell deliberately conspired to mislead Grey and Kitchener by misrepresenting their negotiations with Fārūqī. It appears instead that Fārūqī tried to ingratiate himself with the British and Husayn by telling each side exactly what it wanted to hear about an Arab settlement. Fārūqī's misrepresentation of British intentions encouraged Husayn to believe that Great Britain supported his new-found ambition to rule Syria and Iraq, and that his territorial demands, which had the full support of the nationalists in Syria, had not been compromised in negotiations with the British.



The passage from Fārūqī's letter which has just been quoted accurately captured something of the atmosphere in Cairo in late 1915. McMahon and his colleagues had become so convinced of the supreme importance of alliance with Husayn and the 'Arab Party' that Fārūqī was not too far from the truth when he wrote 'that we are of greater benefit to them than they are to us and that their interest in this is greater than ours'.

McMahon's letter to Husayn of 14 December 1915 avoided commitments concerning the *vilayets* of Beirut, Aleppo and Baghdad by postponing consideration of their future until an unspecified later date. McMahon vaguely explained that French interests in Aleppo and Beirut would 'require special consideration and [that] a further communication will be addressed to you in due course.' McMahon wrote nothing about Basra or compensation for Great Britain's occupation of Iraq. He thanked Husayn for excluding Mersina and Adana from the area of Arab independence, and for understanding that Great Britain would be unable to repudiate her treaties with other Arab chiefs. Husayn was encouraged to do everything possible to rally the Arabs to the British side because the fulfillment of British commitments would depend upon Arab support for the Allied cause. Husayn was assured that Great Britain would not conclude any peace which did not include freedom of the Arabs from German and Turkish domination. As a sign of British goodwill, McMahon sent £20,000 with Husayn's messenger.

Husayn's messenger also delivered a verbal message from McMahon hinting that Great Britain would consider paying financial compensation for her occupation of Iraq.<sup>42</sup> A few days before sending his letter of 14 December 1915, McMahon learned from Grey that Great Britain would not preclude consideration of financial compensation or a 'perpetual lease' for Baghdad. Any compensation would, however, depend 'on [the] extent and success of Arab cooperation.'<sup>43</sup> McMahon's verbal message was intended, therefore, to encourage Husayn to believe that Great Britain had recognized his right to a say in the future of Iraq. McMahon explained to the Foreign Office on 30 November 1915 that Husayn and his Arab partisans would not act without a statement from Great Britain

concerning the future of Baghdad and Basra that acknowledged in theory that Iraq would be part of the independent Arab kingdom.<sup>44</sup>

In his reply of 1 January 1916 Husayn did not budge from his earlier territorial demands. His only reference to Iraq was that the British government would determine the amount of compensation for the occupation of Baghdad and Basra. As for Beirut and Aleppo, Husayn rejected 'any derogation that gives France or any other power, a span of land in those regions.' Husayn referred to Fārūqī and noted that 'we are but transmitters and executants of such decisions and desires in the position they (our people) have pressed upon us.' Fārūqī's letter of 14 December 1915, in addition to McMahon's evasion of territorial negotiations, his verbal message and a gift of £20,000, had all apparently strengthened Husayn's conviction that he was the leader of the Arabs and should persist in his territorial ambitions.

McMahon's response of 25 January 1916 was the last letter of the correspondence to discuss territorial issues. Once again McMahon's language was deliberately vague in order not to commit his government to any future course of action. The status of Baghdad was to be considered after Turkey had been defeated. McMahon said nothing about Beirut and Aleppo, but praised Husayn's desire not to undermine Anglo-French unity during the war. McMahon's vague language did nothing to disabuse Husayn of his intransigence regarding Baghdad, Aleppo and Beirut. McMahon again strongly suggested that Great Britain regarded Husayn as the pre-eminent leader of the Arabs.

The territorial aspect of the Husayn-McMahon correspondence ended inconclusively. McMahon's letters of 24 October and 14 December 1915 and 25 January 1916 offered no definite territorial commitments and conveyed the impression that an attempt had been made to secure Husayn's support without committing Great Britain to any concrete scheme of Arab independence. Husayn had rejected the exclusion of the *vilayets* of Aleppo, Beirut, Baghdad and Basra from the area of Arab independence and refused to recognize French rights in Syria. The inconclusive character and obscure language of this correspondence left the door open

for Husayn to assert that Great Britain had approved his interpretation of McMahon's letters.

Husayn's interpretation of those letters started to become clear in early February 1916 when the British authorities in Cairo received (intercepted?) a letter that Husayn had sent to Mīrghanī in late December 1915. In that letter, Husayn adhered to his territorial demands and was unprepared to negotiate the future of Syria with France. He confidently asserted that the British were anxious to establish an Arab kingdom in accordance with his territorial demands. Husayn foresaw himself as the future Caliph and the choice of the Arabs for Caliph. For the time being, however, he preferred to wait before publicly proclaiming his alliance with Great Britain.<sup>45</sup>

Husayn wrote to McMahon on 18 February 1916 that the latter's letter of 25 January 'and its contents filled us with the utmost pleasure and satisfaction at the understanding and the intimacy desired'. Husayn asked for '£50,000 in gold for the monthly pay of the troops' and large quantities of food and arms including 5,000 rifles and ammunition that would be stored at Port Sudan until the 'beginning of the Movement'. Husayn noted that this money was needed at once and would be collected by one of his agents from the British governor of Port Sudan. McMahon interpreted this letter to mean that negotiations with Husayn had ended and that the time for military action had arrived.<sup>46</sup>

The Hijazi messenger who delivered Husayn's letter also delivered a verbal message from Abdallah who asked McMahon for £3000 'for myself and for my scheme.' Abdallah planned to spend part of that money on bedouin fighting forces; the remainder would be spent on 'a powerful Islamic Committee from the Arab countries to offer his father the Khalifate.' The Hijazi messenger returned to Mecca with £3000 for Abdallah and the last letter of the Husayn-McMahon correspondence.<sup>47</sup> McMahon's subsidy of £3000 must have impressed Abdallah as one more indication that the British were indeed serious about the creation of an Arab Caliphate which, for him and his father, was synonymous with a Hashimite empire in Arabia and the Fertile Crescent.

Husayn's letter to McMahon of 18 February 1916 revealed that an Arab revolt in Syria was unlikely to materialize. After a recent visit to Damascus, Faysal explained to his father that the Arab forces upon which the revolt would be based were no longer in Syria. In the meantime, Faysal was awaiting the arrival of forces from Aleppo and south of Mosul, whose total he estimated at not less than 100,000. If the majority of those troops were Arab, Faysal intended to begin the revolt with them. If the majority were Turks or others, Faysal planned to 'observe their advance to the Canal, and when they begin to fight, his movements upon them will be different to what they expect.' Husayn reported that his son 'Alī had recently been sent to Medina 'with sufficient forces to strengthen his brother (who is) in Syria', and to occupy the Hijaz railway line. Husayn called 'Alī's actions 'the beginning of the principal movement', and ended his letter by listing the money, arms, food and other supplies he needed from McMahon.

Faysal's revelation about the removal of Arab troops from Syria should have dashed British hopes for a massive uprising in the Ottoman army and called into question all of the assumptions McMahon and his colleagues had about the influence of Husayn and the Arab movement he supposedly led. Instead of calling for a re-evaluation of British policy towards the Hashimites, McMahon wrote to Husayn on 10 March 1916 thanking him for the 'active measures' he proposed to take. McMahon added that Husayn's request for financial, military and other support had been approved.

Faysal returned to Syria in January 1916 following a request from the Turks that he should bring Hijazi volunteers for a second Suez Canal expedition. Faysal had instructions from Husayn to contact the Arab nationalist conspirators and to draw up plans for an Arab revolt. What Faysal learned in January 1916 about the prospects for an Arab revolt in Syria was completely different from what Yāsīn al-Hāshimī and his colleagues had told him a year earlier or from what the British in Cairo and his father had learned from Faruqi. Faysal learned that the six Arab divisions upon which the revolt would be based had all been transferred to Galicia to help the Germans and Austrians block a Russian

offensive coming from the Carpathian mountains. Turkish divisions from Anatolia had replaced the 23rd, 25th and 27th divisions based in Damascus and the 33rd, 35th and 37th divisions based in Mosul. Faysal and the Arab nationalists he met in Damascus concluded that an Arab insurrection would have to begin in the Hijaz, not in Syria.<sup>48</sup>

In late February 1916 Enver, Jamāl and Faysal inspected the Ottoman garrison in Medina and the Hijazi volunteer force being raised for a second Suez expedition. Nasīb al-Bakrī of Damascus, who was part of their entourage, wrote to Husayn from Medina on 9 March 1916 about Arab political demands and the state of the Arab conspiracy in Syria. Nasīb's letter insisted that the Arab societies still existed and were ready to revolt despite the transfer of Arab troops to Galicia. Nasīb tried to put a brave face on the situation in Syria, but could not disguise the obvious fact that the Arab movement was in disarray and that its plans for an insurrection had collapsed. Nasīb ended his letter by noting that he and 'Alī had discussed the necessity of a British landing on the Syrian coast at least one or two months before the start of the planned revolt.<sup>49</sup>

A week after receiving Nasīb's letter, Husayn wrote to the Grand Vizier, Sa'īd Halīm, and Enver Pasha stating four conditions for Arab participation in the war, including the despatch of Hijazi tribal forces to fight in Palestine and Iraq. Husayn's first condition was the announcement of a general amnesty for the Arab political prisoners in Syria. The second was the establishment of a decentralized régime in Syria and Iraq. The third was the preservation of the traditional autonomy of the Emirate of Mecca. The fourth was that rule of the Emirate of Mecca would remain the hereditary right of Husayn's family.<sup>50</sup>

It is remarkable to find Husayn--an appointee and vassal of the Ottoman Sultan--making such demands from Istanbul, especially after learning that plans for an Arab uprising in Syria had collapsed. Husayn's four conditions and the insolent way in which they were presented to Istanbul were a telling indication of the profound transformation of Hashimite political ambitions since the beginning of the war. Husayn could address Istanbul as the spokesman of the Arabs

because of his conviction that Great Britain would support his ambition to establish a Hashimite-ruled Arab kingdom in Arabia and the Fertile Crescent. Husayn's conditions for Arab participation in the war indicated that British policy had succeeded in driving a wedge between Husayn and the Turks without committing Great Britain to any concrete scheme of Arab independence.

Husayn had grown so confident of British support with or without a Syrian uprising that he had no fear of writing to McMahon on 29 March and 18 April 1916 that all hope for an Arab revolt in Syria had collapsed. On 18 April Husayn wrote that a Syrian uprising could take place only after the British had landed troops in Syria and occupied the railway connecting that country with Anatolia. The presence of eight Turkish divisions in Syria had made it necessary to start the revolt in the Hijaz. According to Husayn, the first act of a Hijazi uprising would be to occupy the railway leading to Medina. Once that had been done, Husayn's forces would then march on Syria. Encouraged by that advance, the Syrians would then rise on their own.<sup>51</sup>

A short and blunt telegram from the Grand Vizier told Husayn that he had no right to state Arab conditions for participation in the war; that the 'criminals' in Syria would receive their just reward; that he would not see Faysal again if the promised Hijazi troops were not sent to Syria; and that Husayn himself would suffer the consequences of not sending troops. Although Husayn and Abdallah understood this telegram as threat to their personal safety, they refused to back down. Husayn's reply stood by his terms for Arab participation in the war and dismissed the threat to Faysal as a bluff. Sa'īd Ḥalīm tried to defuse the crisis by telling Husayn that Jamāl Pāshā would discuss the problem of political prisoners with Faysal once the Hijazi volunteers had been sent to Syria. Husayn thanked Sa'īd for his reply and asked for Faysal's return to Medina because the Hijazi troops there refused to leave for Syria if Faysal did not command them. Sa'īd approved this request and asked Husayn to recall 'Alī from Medina. (Sa'īd complained that 'Alī had been in conflict with the governor of Medina.) Husayn informed Istanbul that 'Alī would return to Mecca once Faysal had

reached Medina.<sup>52</sup>

When Faysal left Damascus on 16 May, he was accompanied by a delegation of Arabs and Turks including Nasīb al-Bakrī and Āṣif Bey, the judicial adviser of the Ottoman army. At some point between Damascus and Medina Faysal asked Nasīb to return to Damascus where he would wait for a telegram indicating that the uprising in the Hijaz would start in three days. Once Nasīb had received that telegram, he was to flee immediately to the Hijaz.<sup>53</sup>

After returning to the Hijaz, Faysal received 18,000 rifles and 20,000 gold Turkish pounds from Fakhrī Pāshā, the recently-appointed commander and governor of Medina. (In order, no doubt, to forestall trouble in Hijaz, Fakhrī had been sent to Medina with 3500 troops to reinforce the garrison there.<sup>54</sup>) Faysal and Fakhrī agreed that 'Alī would return to Mecca and that Faysal himself would remain in Medina to command the Hijazi volunteers. However, when 'Alī returned to Mecca on 1 June 1916, he was accompanied by Faysal who had promised Fakhrī that he would soon return to Medina. The next day Faysal and 'Alī wrote to Fakhrī informing him that, in accordance with orders from their father, they would not return to Medina because Ottoman policy had made cooperation with the government impossible. A few days later, Jamāl received two letters, one from Husayn and the other from Faysal. Husayn also wrote to Sa'īd Ḥalīm. Husayn and Faysal explained that Hijazi volunteers would not be sent to Syria or the Suez Canal because the government had not complied with Husayn's conditions for Arab participation in the war. For that reason, Husayn had decided to cut relations with the Ottoman government. The Arab revolt was declared in Mecca on 10 June 1916.<sup>55</sup>

Four factors influenced Husayn's decision to break with the Ottomans. First, the Ottomans had refused to maintain the traditional autonomy of the Hijaz or to recognize the hereditary right of his family to rule the Emirate of Mecca. Second, the Ottomans had rejected Husayn's claim to speak on behalf of the Arabs. Third, the dispatch of 3500 Ottoman troops to Medina doubtless convinced Husayn that the Ottomans were not bluffing when they threatened his personal safety. Fourth,

Husayn had concluded from his correspondence with McMahon that he had more to gain from an alliance with Great Britain than he did from continued loyalty to the Ottomans.

Husayn's decision to break with the Turks was based largely on a misunderstanding of the Husayn-McMahon correspondence. British commitments to support Arab independence were summarized in an anonymous memorandum entitled 'The Arab Question', which McMahon sent to Grey on 19 April 1916. That memorandum explained Cairo's understanding of the Husayn-McMahon correspondence until Husayn's letter of 1 January 1916--the last letter of the series to deal with Arab frontiers. McMahon's cover letter to Grey stated clearly that Great Britain had made no definite commitments to the Arabs. The anonymous memorandum noted that the British government had not agreed to 'do more than approve an Arab Caliphate, if set up by the Arabs themselves'; 'to recognize Arab independence in Syria, West of the line Aleppo, Hama, Homs, Damascus, or in any other portion of the Arab area in which we are not free to act without detriment to the interests of our Ally, France'; to recognize any Arab leader as supreme over the others; to set any limits to the British occupation of Iraq or limit that occupation to Basra; or to abolish the extraterritorial privileges of foreigners.

Great Britain had agreed

to recognize the independence of those portions of Arab speaking area in which we are free to act without detriment to the interests of France. Subject to these undefined reservations the area of Arab independence was said to be bounded n. by about 37°, East by the Persian frontier, South by the Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean, West by the Red Sea and Mediterranean up to about Lat. 33° and beyond by an indefinite line drawn inland west of Damascus, Homs, Hama and Aleppo; all that lies between this last line and the Mediterranean being in any case, reserved absolutely for future arrangement with the French and the Arabs.

Aden was excepted from the area of Arab independence. The *vilayets* of Basra and Baghdad were 'to be leased to and administered by us, and in other part, subject to our control in some degree and manner: We are to hold any part of Irak, not by Imperial right, but under concession from the Arabs.'



Although Husayn had always written as spokesman of 'the Arab Nation', he was not as far as the British in Cairo knew 'supported by any organization nearly general enough to secure throughout, or indeed in the larger part of the Arab area, the automatic acceptance of terms agreed to by him. No such organization exists at the back of any Arab whatever.' The British were right, however, to deal with Husayn because 'his house is the most enlightened of actual Arab ruling houses and commands the greatest resources of various kinds; and that alone of Arab Princes, he enjoys spiritual consideration in some degree or other, throughout the world of Islam.' Because Husayn did not represent all the Arabs, it would be necessary for the British government to open negotiations with other Arab leaders. The anonymous memorandum concluded by expressing satisfaction with Husayn's contribution to the British war effort. Because of Husayn, Great Britain had during 'a most critical year of the war. . . secured the benevolent neutrality of a very powerful Moslem influence', who 'had caused serious embarrassments to our enemy and deferred or defeated the realization of large plans for arraying Moslem hostility against us, which might have rendered our position in the East far less favourable than it is today.'<sup>55</sup>

The assertion that Great Britain had agreed to approve the creation of an Arab Caliphate only if established by the Arabs themselves was inconsistent with McMahon's letter of 30 August 1915. That letter stated that Great Britain 'would welcome the assumption of the Khalifate by an Arab of true race.' The description of Arab frontiers in this memorandum was characteristically vague. It is not clear if use of the word 'line' instead of 'districts' was careless verbal inexactitude or an indication that the independent Arab state would extend beyond four towns and their surrounding areas. McMahon had never agreed in writing to lease the *vilayets* of Baghdad Basra or written that Great Britain administered those territories 'under concession from the Arabs.' It is curious to read that Husayn was no longer regarded as the one Arab leader who could deliver the loyalty of all the Arabs to Great Britain. Clayton, Maxwell and McMahon had earlier concluded the exact opposite from their talks with Fārūqī. This new view of Husayn probably

reflected a more modest assessment of his capabilities following the revelation that an uprising in Syria would not be possible.<sup>57</sup>

British policy towards the Hashimites on the eve of the Arab revolt had three aims: to make no definite commitments concerning the frontiers of an independent Arab state, to delay divulging the Sykes-Picot agreement to Husayn and to divert Husayn's attention from Syria by encouraging him to start an Arab uprising in the Hijaz.

In April and May 1916 McMahon and his subordinates agreed that the Sykes-Picot agreement should not be revealed to Husayn, even though they believed that that agreement was compatible with the assurances in McMahon's letters. They feared that Husayn would not rebel if he concluded that British policy in Syria clashed with his interpretation of the Husayn-McMahon correspondence.<sup>58</sup> According to David G. Hogarth, a naval intelligence officer posted to Cairo, Husayn had budged neither from his territorial demands nor from his hostility to French penetration of Syria, but appeared willing to take military action without requiring prior British recognition of his territorial demands. Hogarth failed to understand that, as far as Husayn was concerned, the British government had already agreed to support his territorial demands.<sup>59</sup> McMahon, Clayton and Wyndham Deedes, an official of British military intelligence in Cairo, all advised waiting until future conditions made it possible to reveal the Sykes-Picot agreement without causing a permanent breach between Great Britain and Husayn.<sup>60</sup> On 6 May 1916 Grey approved McMahon's recommendation not to divulge the Sykes-Picot agreement to Husayn.<sup>61</sup>

In late May 1916 McMahon refused Husayn's request for a British landing on the Syrian coast. At the same time McMahon asked Husayn to recall Faysal from Syria and confine his military operations to the Hijaz.<sup>62</sup>

#### Conclusion

Five influences account for the profound transformation of Hashimite political ambitions between January 1915 and June 1916. The first was the accidental discovery in early 1915 that the Ottomans were considering Husayn's deposition and ending the traditional autonomy of

the Hijaz. The second was *al-Fatāḥ* and *al-ʿAhd* in Damascus who asked the Hashimites to lead an Arab national uprising in Syria and the Hijaz that would topple Ottoman rule and establish an independent Arab state in Arabia and the Fertile Crescent. The third was Fārūqī whose letter to Husayn of 6 December 1915 claimed that Great Britain supported Arab territorial demands in Syria and Iraq, and that those demands had not been compromised in his negotiations with the British authorities in Cairo. The fourth was Abdallah who actively encouraged his reluctant father and brothers to break with Istanbul and seek alliance with Great Britain. Abdallah was the most anxious of his family to see the Hashimites transformed from Hijazi leaders to the founders of an Arab empire extending to the Fertile Crescent. Abdallah took a greater interest in Husayn's assumption of the Caliphate than did Husayn himself. As Husayn's private secretary and the author of the first letter of the Husayn-McMahon correspondence, Abdallah was at least partially responsible for his father's determination not to substantially modify his territorial demands or renounce his claim to Arab leadership. The fifth influence was Husayn's interpretation of the Husayn-McMahon correspondence. No evidence suggests that Abdallah dissented in any way from that interpretation.

The Arab nationalists in Damascus offered the Hashimites military support and, more importantly, legitimacy for a new leadership role in Arab politics. Husayn, Faysal and Abdallah concluded that an alliance with *al-Fatāḥ* and *al-ʿAhd* would legitimize their part in creating and controlling a new political order in the post-war Fertile Crescent, an area with which they had had virtually no connection before World War I. Because of their ignorance of political trends in Syria and Iraq, the Hashimites, like the British, vastly overestimated the power and influence of the Arab conspirators in Damascus. Although it soon became apparent to the Hashimites that an Arab insurrection in Syria would not materialize, the Arab societies offered the Hashimites a foothold--their first--in Syria and Iraq.

Throughout his correspondence with McMahon Husayn presented himself as the spokesman and leader of all the Arabs--a claim that

McMahon never disputed in any of his letters to Husayn. Instead of challenging Husayn's claim to Arab leadership, the British negotiated the future of Arabia and the Fertile Crescent with him. The mere fact that the British had chosen to negotiate the future of most of the Arab East with Husayn enabled him to claim that Great Britain had recognized him as the paramount Arab leader and his right to share in determining the post-war future of the Fertile Crescent. Husayn was able to persist in his highly exaggerated interpretation of British commitments to support Arab independence because neither the British authorities in Cairo nor Kitchener nor the Foreign Office thought it prudent to explain British policy to him in clear and unambiguous terms. Only the India Office and the Government of India questioned Husayn's value as an ally. Kitchener's subordinates in Cairo and the Foreign Office were reluctant to alienate a potential ally whose support was seen as crucial to winning the war in the Middle East and refuting charges that Great Britain was at war with Islam.

Husayn addressed the British not only as the spokesman of the Arabs but also as the Emir of Mecca and head of a dynasty. As a dynastic head, Husayn's claim to Arab leadership included a similar claim for his four sons who were his political successors and partners in administering the Emirate of Mecca. When Husayn asserted that the British government had recognized a role for him in Syria and Iraq, he asserted, in effect, that Great Britain also had recognized a political role for his sons in those lands. The British in Cairo and the Foreign Office showed no awareness of a connection between Husayn's growing political ambitions and those of his sons. Before June 1916 they did not foresee that giving Husayn a say in the future of the Fertile Crescent would unleash Abdallah and his brothers to meddle in the affairs of Syria and Iraq. Abdallah, who encouraged his father to widen the field of his political ambitions to include the Fertile Crescent, undoubtedly understood that Husayn's claim to be the pre-eminent Arab leader included a new role for him in Arab affairs. Husayn's interpretation of the Husayn-McMahon correspondence, and his relations

with the Damascus nationalists, encouraged Abdallah to view the post-war Fertile Crescent as a legitimate outlet for his personal advancement.

Abdallah pursued a three-part strategy to promote a new role for his family in Arab affairs. The first element of that strategy was to encourage his father and brothers to break with the Turks, ally themselves with Great Britain and assume the leadership of the Arabs of the Ottoman Empire. The second was to issue ultimatums to the British. The ultimatum at the end of Husayn's letter of 14 July 1915 was characteristic of Abdallah's style of trying to create crisis that could only be resolved by quickly meeting his demands. The third was to use the Arab revolt as a prelude to the establishment of an Arab Caliphate with his father as Caliph. For Abdallah the Caliphate was synonymous with his father's Arab kingship.

Until June 1916 it had not yet become clear where Abdallah would fit into the Arab empire his father aspired to establish. It is certain, however, that Abdallah planned to ride his father's coattails to a position of Arab leadership that would make him a decisive force in any post-war settlement in the Middle East.

Husayn's strategy for realizing his ambitions was to ignore the vague reservations in McMahon's letters concerning the limits of Arab independence. The extent to which Abdallah encouraged this strategy is unclear but was probably substantial. Husayn exploited the obscurity of some of those reservations, and the inconclusive character of the Husayn-McMahon correspondence as a whole, in order to assert an interpretation of British pledges that was consistent with his own ambitions. McMahon did nothing to disabuse Husayn of his misunderstanding of that correspondence. As we shall see in the next chapter, Husayn regarded British silence in this regard as a sign that the British government agreed with his interpretation of the Husayn-McMahon correspondence. The vagueness of McMahon's letters, combined with the financial and material assistance Husayn received from the British, encouraged the Hashimites to persist in the belief that Great Britain stood firmly behind their political ambitions in the Fertile Crescent.

## NOTES

1. Elie Kedourie, *In the Anglo-Arab Labyrinth. The McMahon-Husayn Correspondence and Its Interpretations* (Cambridge, 1976) p. 4.
2. The Husayn-McMahon correspondence has been published in 'Correspondence between Sir Henry McMahon, G. C. M. G., K. C. I. E., C. S. I., His Majesty's High Commissioner at Cairo and the Sherif Husain of Mecca, July 1915-March 1916, Miscellaneous No. 3, 1939, Cmd. 5957'. The first eight letters have also been published in Antonius, *Awakening*, pp. 413-27. Unless otherwise indicated, the text of the White Paper will be cited.
3. Abdallah's cover letter to Storrs was not published in the White Paper but appears in Antonius, *Awakening*, p. 413.
4. Kedourie, *Labyrinth*, pp. 65-67 and Mūsā, *Haraka*, p. 203.
5. On Abdallah's role in the correspondence as Husayn's private secretary, see Abdallah to Sir Harold MacMichael (the high commissioner for Palestine) 25 July 1938, *Al-Ahrām*, 7 Aug. 1938, quoted in Mūsā, *Haraka*, pp. 258-59.
6. Secret memorandum of G. S. Symes, 19 July 1915 FO 882/12/KH/15/3.
7. T. E. Lawrence, 'Genesis of the Hejaz Revolt', *Arab Bulletin*, no. 36, 26 Dec. 1916, FO 882/25.
8. Sulṭān, *Sūriya*, pp. 30-34 and Eliezer Tauber, 'The Role of Lieutenant Muḥammad Sharīf Al-Fārūqī--New Light on Anglo-Arab Relations During the First World War', *Asian and African Studies*, vol. 24, no. 1, Mar. 1990, p. 28.
9. On *al-ʿAhd*, see Tahsīn al-ʿAskarī, *Mudhakkirātī ʿAn al-Thawra al-ʿArabiyya al-Kubrā wa'l-Thawra al-ʿIrāqiyya*, part 1 (Najaf, 1938) pp. 37-44; Baṣīr, *Qadiya*, pp. 32-36 (quoted); Ibrāhīm al-Rāwī, *Min al-Thawra al-ʿArabiyya al-Kubrā Ilā al-ʿIrāq al-Ḥadīth: Dhikrayāt* (Beirut, 1969) pp. 22-24, 52-53; Tauber, 'Officers', pp. 12-23; ʿAbd al-Razzaq Ahmad al-Nuṣairī, *Nūrī al-Saʿīd wa Dawruhu fī'l-Siyāsa al-ʿIrāqiyya Ḥattā ʿĀm 1932* (Baghdad, 1988) pp. 34-35; and Sultan, *Suriya*, pp. 34-38.
10. Tauber, 'Fārūqī', pp. 26-28.
11. 'Report by Captain Lawrence' 8 Jan. 1917 FO 882/6/HRG/17/3; Fāʿiz al-Ghuṣain, *Mudhakkirātī ʿAn al-Thawra al-ʿArabiyya al-Kubrā* (Damascus, 1956) pp. 202-204; McMahon to Grey confidential 12 Oct. 1915 including Clayton's secret memorandum of 11 Oct. 1915 FO 371/2486/157740; Muḥammad Sharīf al-Fārūqī to Husayn 27 Muḥarram 1334/6 December 1915, ʿUmarī, *Muqaddarāt*, vol. 1, pp. 281-24; Antonius, *Awakening*, p. 149.
12. Amīn Saʿīd, *Al-Thawra al-ʿArabiyya al-Kubrā*, vol. 1 (Cairo, no date) pp. 105-106; Sulṭān, *Sūriya*, pp. 421-25; Mrs. Stewart Erskine, *King Faisal of Iraq--An Authorized and Authentic Study* (London, 1933) pp. 39-40.
13. Ghuṣain, *Mudhakkirātī*, pp. 38-39; Fārūqī to Husayn 6 Dec. 1915, ʿUmarī, *Muqaddarāt*, vol. 1, pp. 218-24; Saʿīd, *Thawra*, pp. 107-108; 'Report by Captain Lawrence', 8 Jan. 1917 FO 882/6/HRG/17/3; Erskine, *Faisal*, pp. 40-42; Antonius, *Awakening*, pp. 152-56; Sulṭān, *Sūriya*, pp. 425-26.
14. Saʿīd, *Thawra*, pp. 106-10; Ghuṣain, *Mudhakkirātī*, p. 203-205; Fārūqī to Husayn 6 Dec. 1915 in ʿUmarī, *Muqaddarāt*, vol. 1, pp. 218-24

and Antonius, *Awakening*, p. 157. Sa'īd's dating of these events is inaccurate.

15. Antonius, *Awakening*, pp. 156-59; Erskine, *Faisal*, pp. 43-45. Also see Ahmad Qadrī, *Mudhakkirātī 'An al-Thawra al-'Arabiyya al-Kubrā* (Damascus, 1956) pp. 46-47 and Sultān, *Sūriya*, p. 429. Antonius claims that Faysal let him inspect the Arabic original of the Damascus Protocol.

16. Amīn Sa'īd, *Asrar al-Thawra al-'Arabiyya al-Kubrā wa Ma'sāt al-Sharīf Husayn* (Beirut, 1960) p. 57.

17. Storrs note, secret 19 Aug. 1915 FO 371/2486/125293.

18. Ghusain, *Mudhakkirātī*, pp. 212-13.

In January 1915 'Izzat Pasha al-'Ābid, the Syrian former first secretary of Sultan 'Abd ūl-Hamid, met George Clerk of the Foreign Office and proposed the creation of an Arab Caliphate at Mecca. On the advice of the India Office, the Foreign Office decided not to act on 'Izzat's proposal. See minutes of Clerk and Nicolson 1 Jan 1915, Ralph Paget (for Grey) to Under SSI very confidential 4 Jan, 1915, all in FO 371/2479/1286; Holderness to Under SSFA very confidential 6 Jan. 1915, FO to McMahon 12 Jan. 1915, both FO 371/2479/2154. On 'Azurī, see Elie Kedourie, 'The Politics of Political Literature. Kawakibi, Azury and Jung', *Arabic Political Memoirs*, pp. 107-23.

19. Antonius, *Awakening*, p. 416; Kedourie, *Labyrinth*, pp. 67-71. The phrase 'a true Arab born of the blessed stock of the Prophet' appears in the translation in Antonius.

20. 'Conference Held at Commander-in-Chief's Residence, Ismailia at 12 Noon Tuesday, 12th September 1916 to discuss the Hedjaz Question' secret FO 882/4/MRG/16/46.

21. Sir Ian Hamilton to Secretary, WO 25 Aug. 1915 in D. D. Cubbit (WO) to Under SSFO 8 Sept. 1915 FO 371/2490/128226; Faruqi to Husayn 6 Dec. 1915, 'Umarī, *Muqaddarāt*, vol. 1, pp. 218-24 and Tauber, 'Fārūqī', pp. 17-20.

On Fārūqī's personal history, also see Fārūqī to Husayn, 6 Dec. 1915, 'Umarī, *Muqaddarāt*, vol. 1, pp. 219-24; 'Askarī, *Mudhakkirātī*, p. 40; Faydī, *Nidāl*, pp. 122-25; Najdat Fathī Safwat (ed.), *Mudhakkirāt Ja'far al-'Askarī* (London, 1988) p. 102 and Tauber, 'Fārūqī', pp. 17-18.

22. 'Report of Director of Intelligence, Cairo on Arab Plots against the Ottoman Empire in Arabia, Syria and Mesopotamia', undated, in WO to Grey 27 Sept. 1915 FO 371/2490/139665; Naum Shoucair, 'Notes on Captain "X" and his Statement' and 'Statement of Captain "X"' both 12 Sept. 1915 FO 141/732/62. All of these statements are summarized in Clayton's secret memorandum to Grey of 11 Oct. 1915 FO 371/2486/157740.

23. Clayton memorandum 11 Oct. 1915 FO 371/2486/157740. Isalah Friedman has investigated the archives of the German foreign ministry in order to determine if the Germans and the Young Turks were, as Fārūqī claimed, prepared to grant the demands of the Arab party 'in full'. Friedman found no evidence of such an offer. The wartime reports of German consul-generals in Damascus indicated that the Arab nationalists had little influence in Syria and that the Ottoman government and its cause were quite popular. See Friedman, *Palestine*, pp. 69-71.

24. *ibid*; GOC, Egypt to Kitchener 12 Oct. 1915 FO 371/2486/150309 and GOC, Egypt to Kitchener 16 Oct. 1915 FO

371/2486/152729; McMahon to FO 18 Oct. 1915 FO 371/2486/152901; McMahon to FO personal 18 Oct. 1915 FO 371/2486/153045.

25. Clayton's secret memorandum 11 Oct. 1915 FO 371/2486/15570.

26. See 'Secret Report on Tripoli Syria' by Christophe Catzefflis (formerly the British vice consul at Tripoli, now at Alexandria) 12 Dec. 1914 and unsigned, 'Secret Report on the Movements of Turkish Troops', 4 Jan. 1915 WO 157/689; the secret 'Intelligence Summaries' of S. F. Newcombe of the Military Intelligence Office, War Office, Cairo for 8, 21, 24 May 1915 WO 157/691; the secret intelligence summary of T. E. Lawrence, Intelligence Office, War Office, Cairo, 3 June 1915 and Newcombe's intelligence summaries for 24 and 30 June WO 157/692; the intelligence summaries of Lawrence for 2, 4 July and Newcombe for 1, 12, 25, 27, 29 July and 8, 9 Aug. 1915 WO 157/693; the intelligence summaries of Newcombe 8, 9, 19, 30 Aug. 1915 WO 157/694; the intelligence summaries of Lt.-Col. A. C. Parker 4, 8, 9, 11, 30 Sept. 1915 and Lawrence 7 Sept. 1915 and 'Egypt Command Intelligence Summary for the Period 8th-14th September, 1915' WO 157/695; 'Egypt Command Intelligence Summaries for the Periods 28th September to 5th October and 6th October to 12th October 1915' WO 157/696.

27. Clayton memorandum, 11 Oct. 1915 FO 371/2486/157740. Maxwell to Kitchener Secret 16 Oct. 1915 FO 371/2486/152729. McMahon to Grey Personal 18 Oct. 1915 FO 371/2486/153045 (quoted) and Kedourie, *Labyrinth*, pp. 93-94.

28. Grey to Kitchener 4 Nov. 1915 FO 800/102.

29. Grey to McMahon 20 Oct. 1915 FO 371/2486/155203.

30. Ronald Storrs and his assistant, Husayn Rūhī, an Arabic-speaking Persian Bahā'ī, translated McMahon's letter into Arabic. See Kedourie, *Labyrinth*, pp. 99-102. A. L. Tibawi was the first to call attention to Storrs's incompetence in Arabic. Tibawi, *Syria*, p. 220.

31. McMahon to FO 26 Oct. 1915 FO 371/2486/163832.

32. Clayton to Tyrell 30 Oct. 1915 FO 882/2/AP/15/6; McMahon to Grey 7 Nov. 1915 FO 371/2486/166819.

33. On the origins of the Sykes-Picot agreement, see Grey to McMahon 6 Nov. 1915 FO 371/2486/166421; FO to SSIO and Secretary, the Army Council 9 Nov. 1915 secret and immediate and undated minute of Grey FO 371/2486/167429. On the Sykes-Picot agreement also see, Christopher M. Andrew and A. S. Kanya-Forstner, *France Overseas. The Great War and the Climax of French Imperial Expansion* (London, 1981) pp. 87-102.

34. 'Tripartite (Sykes-Picot) Agreement for the Partition of the Ottoman Empire: Britain, France and Russia 26 April-23 October 1916' in J. C. Hurewitz, *Diplomacy in the Near and Middle East. A Documentary Record: 1914-1956* (New York, 1972) pp. 18-22.

35. Viceroy to IO secret 4 Nov. 1915 and Holderness (for Sir Austen Chamberlain Chamberlain) to Under SSFO immediate and secret 6 Nov. 1915 both FO 371/2486/166403.

36. Holderness minute 6 Nov. 1915 L/P&S/10/523 p. 4024/1915 quoted in Kedourie, *Labyrinth*, p. 77.

37. 'Negotiations with Grand Shereef. Memorandum by Secretary of State for India', 8 Nov. 1915 FO 371/2486/166807.

38. Lawrence Olyphant, a Foreign Office official who commented on this letter, wrote, 'For sheer insolence it would be difficult to find any



passage to equal Para. 2 of the Sheref's message' [which discussed compensation for Britain's occupation of Baghdad and Basra.] Oliphant minute, undated [about mid-November 1915] in FO 371/2486/172416.

Husayn's letter compounded the confusion over the use of the term *vilayet* (*wilāya*), which he employed in two inconsistent ways. When applied to Beirut, Aleppo, Baghdad and Basra, Husayn employed the term in its sense as an Ottoman administrative division. When applied to Mersina, the term was employed in its colloquial Arabic sense as 'town'. (Mersina was a town in the *vilayet* of Adana.)

39. McMahon (Mudros) to FO urgent 14 Nov. 1915 McMahon (Mudros) to FO 14 Nov. 1915 secret FO 371/2480/170824.

40. Sykes to WO 20 Nov. 1915 FO 882/13/MIS/15/17; McMahon (Mudros) to FO urgent and secret 14 Nov. 1915 FO 371/2480/170284 and McMahon to FO 19 Nov. 1915 FO 371/2486/174633.

The Foreign Office informed McMahon on 10 December 1915 that a landing could not be contemplated because 'the present situation at Gallipoli and Salonika makes it out of the question for the moment to embark on any other expedition.' FO to McMahon urgent 10 Dec. 1915 FO 371/2486/181834. A British landing at Alexandretta was originally proposed by Churchill and Kitchener in January 1915. The idea was dropped when Victor Augagneur, the French naval minister, objected. The French feared that such a landing would give Great Britain a foothold in Syria, France's sphere of influence. See Andrew and Kanya-Forstner, *France Overseas*, pp. 71-72.

41. Fārūqī to Husayn 6 Dec. 1915, 'Umarī, *Muqaddarāt*, vol. 1, pp. 219-24.

42. McMahon to Grey secret 14 Dec. 1915, including McMahon to Husayn 14 Dec. 1915 FO 371/2486/198226.

43. FO to McMahon urgent 10 Dec. 1915 FO 371/2486/181834.

44. McMahon to FO 30 Nov. 1915 FO 371/2486/181834.

45. McMahon to Grey secret 7 Feb. 1916, including Husayn to Sayyid Ali El Morghani 28 Dec. 1915 FO 371/2767/30674.

46. McMahon to FO 1 Mar. 1916 FO 371/2767/40645.

47. McMahon to FO 29 Feb. 1916 FO 371/2767/45855 and Storrs note to McMahon 11 Mar. 1916 FO 141/461/1198/48.

48. Sa'īd, *Thawra*, vol. 1, p. 110; Qadrī, *Thawra*, p. 48 and Sa'īd, *Asrār*, p. 58-59.

49. Nasīb al-Bakrī to Husayn 9 Mar. 1916 in Sulaymān Musā (ed.), *Al-Thawra al-'Arabiyya al-Kubrā: Wathā'iq wa Asānīd* (Amman, 1966) pp. 48-51. Also see, Sa'īd, *Thawra*, vol. 1, p. 110; Qadrī, *Thawra*, p. 48.

50. Sa'īd, *Thawra*, vol. 1, pp. 110-11; Abdallah, *Mudhakkirātī*, p. 105; Sulṭān, *Sūriya*, pp. 435-36.

51. Husayn to McMahon 29 March 1916 in McMahon to Grey secret 25 Apr. 1916 FO 371/2768/88001; Faruqi to Husayn 6 Dec. 1915, 'Umarī, *Muqaddarāt*, vol. 1, pp. 218-24; McMahon to Grey secret 10 May 1916 including two letters from Husayn to McMahon 18 and 21 Apr. 1916 FO 371/2768/95498.

52. Abdallah, *Mudhakkirātī*, p. 106. Abdallah does not give dates for any of these telegrams which were exchanged in April and early May 1916.

53. Sa'īd, *Asrār*, pp. 59-60.

54. *ibid.*, p. 60; Qadrī, *Thawra*, p. 49 and Antonius, *Awakening*, pp. 191, 194.
55. Sa'Id, *Asrār*, pp. 60-63; Abdallah, *Mudhakkirātī*, p. 107.
56. McMahon to Grey secret 19 Apr. 1916 including 'The Arab Question' (anonymous and undated) FO 371/2768/80305. On Cairo's policy of remaining uncommitted with regard to Arab frontiers, also see David Hogarth (Cairo) to Captain Reginald Hall 3 May 1916 FO 882/14/MIS/16/3.
57. My interpretation of this document has been influenced by Kedourie, *Labyrinth*, pp. 203-205.
58. McMahon to FO 20 Apr. 1916 sending a message from Clayton to Sykes FO 371/2768/76013; Intrusive, Cairo (signed by W. H. Deedes) to Director[militaryintelligence], London 3 May 1916 FO 882/16/SP/16/11.
59. Hogarth to Hall 3 May 1916 FO 882/14/MIS/16/3.
60. See note 58 and McMahon to Grey 4 May 1916.
61. Grey to McMahon 6 May 1916 FO 371/2768/84855.
62. McMahon to Husayn 18 and 22 May 1916 FO 371/2773/XVIII, cited in Sultān, *Sūriya*, pp. 438, 449-50.

## CHAPTER 4: HUSAYN'S 'AGREEMENT' WITH GREAT BRITAIN

### Introduction

This chapter examines the shaping of Abdallah's political ambitions in the context of Anglo-Hashimite relations from June 1916 to October 1918. Like chapter three, two assumptions underlie this chapter: first, that Abdallah's personal political ambitions evolved from Husayn's vision of a Hashimite empire in Arabia and the Fertile Crescent; second, that Husayn's vision of that empire derived from his interpretation of British commitments to support Arab independence.

This chapter will explain how Abdallah's involvement in the politics of the Fertile Crescent, particularly his ambition to rule post-war Iraq, emerged from Husayn's interpretation of British commitments, the economic and, possibly, military requirements of the post-war Hijaz and the need to justify the Arab revolt to Arab and Muslim opinion. In this context, we shall examine the strategies Abdallah and Husayn adopted to promote their personal and familial interests. Abdallah's personal, as opposed to familial, ambitions first appeared in early 1917. Until then, the British had only a vague idea how Husayn intended to organize and rule a Hashimite kingdom in Arabia and the Fertile Crescent. Abdallah's place in that kingdom had not yet been revealed. However, in March 1917, the Hashimites began explaining to British and French officials the specific structure of Husayn's Arab empire and the role Faysal and Abdallah would play in it as rulers of Syria and Iraq respectively.

Most of chapter four will be devoted to explaining Husayn's conception of British commitments to support Arab independence and how Great Britain's Arab policy was--and was not--explained to Husayn. Much attention will be paid to why Britain and, to a much lesser extent, France were reluctant to disabuse Husayn of his grandiose and exaggerated interpretation of British commitments to support Arab independence. This chapter argues that British reluctance to disabuse Husayn played an important part in the shaping of Abdallah's political ambitions. Equally important was the way in which Sir Mark Sykes deliberately misled the

Hashimites in May 1917 about British plans for the future of Baghdad and Mosul.

#### King of the Arabs

Abdallah's strategy in late 1916 for advancing his family's ambitions was to arrange for Husayn's proclamation as King of the Arabs. Abdallah's plan was for Husayn use this new title as a stepping-stone to the Caliphate and British recognition of his father as Caliph. Abdallah assumed that Husayn's assumption of the title King of the Arabs and the Caliphate would lack credibility without British recognition. As foreign minister of the newly-independent Hashimite Kingdom of the Hijaz, Abdallah was well placed to test British reactions to Hashimite ambitions.

The British authorities in Cairo learned for the first time in February 1916 that Husayn intended to assume the Caliphate. It will be recalled that, in mid-February 1916, Abdallah had asked the British for £3000, part of which would be spent on an Islamic committee from the Arab lands that would offer his father the Caliphate. The decision to grant Abdallah's request, in addition to earlier British declarations which spoke sympathetically about an Arab Caliphate, encouraged the Hashimites to conclude that Great Britain favoured Husayn's assumption of the Caliphate. On 30 June 1916, Kinahan Cornwallis of the Arab Bureau learned from Fārūqī, who had recently returned from Jidda, that Husayn planned eventually to assume the title of 'King of the Arabs' and 'Calipha of the Moslems.' When Storrs visited Jidda in early October 1916, Abdallah asked that British officials address his father as *Amīr al-Mu'minīn* (Commander of the Faithful), which is a title of the Caliph. Storrs refused this request and another from Abdallah that Great Britain recognize Husayn as *Jalāla* (majesty) and *Malik* (king).<sup>2</sup>

In an Arab Bureau memorandum dated 27 October 1916, T. E. Lawrence explained Abdallah's role in promoting Husayn's political ambitions. Lawrence wrote that Abdallah 'is probably not so much the brains as the spur of his father: he is obviously working to establish the greatness of the family, and has large ideas, which no doubt include his own

particular advancement.<sup>3</sup> As later events would show, Lawrence correctly sensed that Abdallah was also pondering his own advancement.

Abdallah was the driving force behind a ceremony held in Mecca on 29 October 1916 that proclaimed Husayn 'King of the Arabs' and 'religious leader until all the Moslem world be of one opinion concerning the Islamic Caliphate.' To build support for Husayn's new title, Abdallah and his protégés spread false rumours in the Hijaz that Great Britain, France, Russia, Italy and all neutral powers had recognized Husayn as 'King of the Arab Nation and the great religious leader.' Abdallah required the merchants and notables of Jidda to send messages of congratulation to Husayn and to decorate their homes in honour of his father's new title. A three day celebration was held in Jidda to honour King Husayn.<sup>4</sup>

Abdallah tried to hustle Great Britain and France into recognizing Husayn's new title. On 29 October 1916, Abdallah wrote to Colonel C. E. Wilson, the British representative in Jidda, and the French foreign minister announcing that Husayn had been declared 'King of the Arab Nation' and would be the 'religious head' until Muslims had reached a final decision about the Caliphate.<sup>5</sup> Husayn's action completely surprised McMahon because Storrs had recently warned Abdallah against his father's assumption of the Caliphate or Arab kingship.<sup>6</sup>

Husayn and Abdallah relied upon a fanciful interpretation of the Husayn-McMahon correspondence to justify Husayn's new regal title. Both men told Colonel Wilson on 1 November 1916 that Great Britain had sanctioned Husayn's new title. When Wilson asked why Husayn had suddenly been proclaimed King of the Arabs, Abdallah replied, 'There is no suddenness in the matter. It was not sudden as we were negotiating secretly about the matter with His Majesty's Government.' Husayn wrote to Wilson on 4 November that, because the British already had addressed him as Caliph ('which was a higher dignity than Kingship'), his assumption of the title King of the Arabs did not require British consent. Abdallah and Husayn both emphasized that the future of the Caliphate would be decided by the Muslim world. Abdallah added, however, that Husayn would be the 'religious leader' until the Islamic

world had decided the fate of the Caliphate. Wilson rightly concluded that Husayn regarded Arab kingship 'as a stepping stone to the Caliphate which he wishes to be vested in his own family.'<sup>7</sup>

Abdallah's deputy foreign minister, Fu'ād al-Khaṭīb, explained to Wilson that Husayn needed his new regal title in order to prove to the Arabs and other Muslims that he was absolutely independent. The Hashimites believed that the title 'Emir of Mecca' implied subservience to the Turks. Khaṭīb claimed that nothing short of a regal title would have satisfied Arab pride or inspired the Arabs to revolt. He added that Husayn's accession was also intended to undermine the authority of Sharīf 'Alī Ḥaydar, whom the Sultan had recently appointed as Emir of Mecca. European recognition of Husayn's Arab kingship would supposedly have placed Ḥaydar in the position of acting in order to lower Hashimite prestige, something the other *ashrāf* would never have accepted.<sup>8</sup>

The British and French governments refused to recognize Husayn as King of the Arabs. The British feared that Husayn would exploit British recognition of his new title in order to dominate his rivals in the Arabian peninsula. The French feared a conflict between Husayn's ambitions and their interests in Syria. After six weeks of discussion about a title for him, both governments agreed on 13 December 1916 to recognize Husayn as 'King of the Hijaz' only. On 3 January 1917 Colonel Edouard Brémont, head of the French military mission to the Hijaz, and Colonel Wilson informed Husayn that their governments would recognize him as 'His Highness King of the Hijaz' (*Jalālat Malik al-Hijāz*).<sup>9</sup>

Abdallah was not entirely to blame for thinking that the British would recognize Husayn's assumption of the Caliphate or his kingship of the Arabs. Contrary to what Husayn told Wilson in November 1916, no British official had ever addressed him as Caliph or sanctioned the title King of the Arabs. The British had, in fact, made it clear to the Hashimites on several occasions that they would not interfere in the Caliphate question. It was true none the less that Abdallah had received £3000 to help him finance his father's proclamation as Caliph. This gesture, and the provocative language of various British declarations, particularly Kitchener's letter of 1 November 1914, and

McMahon's letter of 30 August 1915, all strongly suggested that Great Britain did indeed favour the creation of an Arab Caliphate. Abdallah and Husayn exploited these mixed signals in order to argue that Great Britain had recognized Husayn's Arab kingship.

#### Abdallah's Personal Ambition: First Signs

Anglo-French rejection of Husayn's Arab kingship did not discourage Husayn and Abdallah from reminding British officials of their 'agreement' with McMahon. Until the end of the war and beyond Husayn and Abdallah never missed an opportunity to remind the British of their interpretation of McMahon's pledges. An early example of this is found in a letter from Husayn to McMahon dated 25 August 1916. Husayn informed McMahon that his monthly subsidy of £125,000 would be deducted from the compensation the British owed him in return for their occupation of Basra and Baghdad. Husayn left it to 'the justice of Great Britain' to determine how much compensation he was owed.<sup>10</sup>

In their meetings with British and French representatives during the first half of 1917, the Hashimites began to clarify how the future Arab kingdom would be governed. During a visit to Jidda in mid-February 1917, Hogarth learned from Fu'ād al-Khatīb that Basra would remain under British control, but that Baghdad, like each district of the Arab kingdom, would be self-governing under Husayn's suzerainty.<sup>11</sup> Edouard Brémont reported on 1 March 1917 to the French minister in Cairo that Abdallah had recently told Captain Raho, a member of the French military mission, that Husayn planned to rule his Arab kingdom as follows: Husayn and Zayd would reside in Medina; 'Alī would rule Mecca; Faysal would have Syria and Abdallah Iraq; Abdallah's cousin, Sharīf Shākīr, would rule Yemen. Soon thereafter Brémont told British officials in the Hijaz that 'Abdallah [had] boasted that he would have Mesopotamia after the war.'<sup>12</sup> Brémont's report was the first indication of Abdallah's interest in Iraq and the specific role he would play in Husayn's future Arab kingdom.

In early April 1917 Husayn visited Wilson in Jidda in order to discuss the frontiers of his future kingdom. Husayn mentioned his 'agreement' with Great Britain, 'which he said he had in writing from

McMahon giving him the whole of Syria and BAGDAD, whilst BASRA [was] to be ceded temporarily to [the] British on payment of a subsidy.' Wilson disclaimed any knowledge of that agreement. Husayn told Wilson that his cause would be ruined and that he would abdicate if the British modified their 'agreement' with him.<sup>13</sup> In a memorandum sent to Wingate in April 1917, Husayn explained that his 'agreement' with Great Britain included a British undertaking to establish an Arab Caliphate. Wingate did not respond to Husayn's memorandum.<sup>14</sup>

During an interview with Wilson at Wajh in late April 1917, Abdallah and Faysal clarified Hashimite plans to include Syria and Baghdad in an Arab kingdom, and their conception of British commitments to Husayn. Abdallah wrongly claimed that Great Britain had promised to include all of Syria in the Arab kingdom. According to Wilson, Abdallah was 'obviously under the impression that BAGDAD is to be incorporated in the Arab Kingdom.' Both brothers feared French interests in Syria and relied on 'Great Britain that they would not be turned out of any part of SYRIA that the latter might succeed in successfully occupying.'<sup>15</sup>

The Hashimites used Husayn's interpretation of McMahon's letters to justify the creation of an Arab kingdom in Arabia and the Fertile Crescent. They justified the establishment of such a kingdom on other grounds as well. Khaṭīb told Hogarth in mid-February 1917 that the Hijaz would be economically unviable if it did not form part of larger Arab state including the Fertile Crescent. Khaṭīb emphasized that for centuries no taxes had been imposed on Mecca and Medina, both of which had survived on Ottoman subsidies.<sup>16</sup> Abdallah, who worried about the legitimacy of the Arab revolt in the eyes of Muslim opinion, explained to Wilson in April 1917 that unless the Arab kingdom included 'a large portion' of Syria, Muslim opinion would denounce the Hashimites for dividing and weakening Islam. Abdallah added that, because the Hijaz was a desert with the pilgrimage as its only source of income, 'it was therefore up to the British Government to see that the Arab Kingdom is such as will make it a substitute for the Ottoman Empire.' This comment revealed that the Hashimites saw themselves as the successors of the Turks in the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire. Faysal was certain



that the vast majority of Syrians would welcome Husayn as their sovereign because he had arranged this with the 'Arab Committee in all principal cities, DAMASCUS, BEIRUT, etc.', and because he had promised this committee that each province of the Arab kingdom would be self-governing and not subject to *sharī'a* law.<sup>17</sup>

#### Husayn Meets Sykes and Picot

In the spring of 1917 the British and French governments decided that it would be in their interest to reveal the Sykes-Picot agreement to Husayn. Husayn's interest in ruling Syria, the British campaign in Palestine and the occupation of Baghdad in March 1917, all threatened to undermine French interests in the Middle East as they had been provided for in the Sykes-Picot agreement.<sup>18</sup> French prime minister Alexandre Ribot believed that Husayn's support for the Sykes-Picot agreement would strengthen France's position in the Middle East. Ribot wanted France to annex the blue zone of Sykes-Picot agreement, where Husayn would have no role. Ribot foresaw that the major towns in zone A would be organized as a confederation, each having its own emir. Husayn would have religious authority in zone A, while France would have exclusive political and economic rights. Ribot sent Picot to the Middle East in the spring of 1917 in order to convince Husayn to support the Sykes-Picot agreement.<sup>19</sup>

Until late April 1917, the British kept Husayn in the dark about the Sykes-Picot agreement. On 27 April 1917, Sir Reginald Wingate, the high commissioner in Egypt since January 1917, recommended to the Foreign Office that Sykes, who was then on his way from Cairo to Jidda, should inform Husayn of the Sykes-Picot agreement in order to allay Hashimite fears of French ambitions in Syria. The Foreign Office approved this recommendation and Wingate's instructions to guide Sykes during his talks with Husayn.<sup>20</sup> Sykes was instructed first, to reassure Husayn concerning French interests in Syria; second, to explain that Great Britain would support Arab aspirations but not the imposition of Husayn's authority on people who did not desire it; and third, to explain that Baghdad would remain under British control. If Sykes's

talks with Husayn were successful, a second meeting between Husayn and Picot would be arranged for a later time.<sup>21</sup>

Sykes's thinking on the role of the Hashimites in a post-war settlement was spelled out in a memorandum he submitted to the Cabinet on 17 May 1917, two days before Sykes and Picot held their first meeting with Husayn. Sykes called upon the British and French governments to endorse a political settlement that was remarkably similar to Husayn's vision of a Hashimite empire in the Fertile Crescent. Sykes recommended that Great Britain and France should recognize Husayn as leader of the Arab movement and titular head of the Arabs in zones A and B of the Sykes-Picot agreement. Husayn's sons would be established as hereditary princes in zones A and B, provided that such an arrangement accorded with the desires of the peoples of both areas.<sup>22</sup> Sykes's memorandum did not mention Baghdad. We know, however, that he favoured the establishment there of a British-protected Arab government under Husayn's nominal suzerainty. A few days before the British army occupied Baghdad on 11 March 1917, Sykes and representatives of the India Office and the Foreign Office went to work on a declaration that was to be published when the city fell. During the drafting of that declaration, the British government rejected Sykes's recommendation to eliminate the barriers between areas A, B and the red zone of the Sykes-Picot agreement.<sup>23</sup>

The similarity between the proposals in the memorandum Sykes submitted to the Cabinet and Hashimite plans for a post-war settlement in the Fertile Crescent was no coincidence. By 17 May Sykes already had been in the Hijaz for two weeks, and had held talks with Husayn and Faysal. The Hashimites had apparently convinced Sykes that Great Britain should support the establishment of Faysal in Syria and Abdallah in Iraq. Sykes was so impressed with this idea that he suggested it to the Cabinet on 17 May 1917.<sup>24</sup>

On 19 May 1917 Sykes, Picot, Husayn, Faysal and Fu'ād al-Khaṭīb met in Jidda in order to find a compromise between French and Hashimite ambitions in Syria. Picot read a statement to Husayn from Alexandre Ribot and then explained that France intended to rule Lebanon and the

blue zone of the Sykes-Picot agreement in the same way that the British would rule Baghdad and the red zone. Husayn insisted that Syria and Lebanon should be part of his Arab kingdom. He agreed, however, to French advisers in Syria, but rejected Sykes's proposal that European advisers should have executive authority in any of the Arab lands. The meeting ended inconclusively, with Picot being unimpressed by Husayn.<sup>25</sup>

At a second meeting held on 20 May Fu'ād al-Khaṭīb read a declaration from Husayn which, according to Sykes, was worded as follows:

His Majesty the King of Hedjaz learned with satisfaction that the French Government approve Arab national aspirations that as he had confidence in Great Britain he would be content if [the] French Government pursued [the] same policy towards Arab aspirations on Moslem Syrian littoral as [the] British did in Bagdad.<sup>26</sup>

Picot interpreted this declaration to mean that Husayn had recognized French interests in Syria and Lebanon, the Sykes-Picot agreement and the creation of an independent Arab state in the Christian parts of Syria if they were occupied by France before the end of the war. Picot understood Husayn to mean that the standing of France in Syria would be equivalent to that of Great Britain in Iraq.<sup>27</sup>

Husayn, who believed that France had made concessions to his interests, had an entirely different understanding of French intentions. Husayn explained to T. E. Lawrence on 29 July 1917 that France had renounced her ambition to annex Syria and Lebanon, and had agreed that both countries would be part of an independent Arab state, just as all of Iraq would eventually be part of that state. Husayn assumed that France's role in Syria and Lebanon would be equivalent to Great Britain's role in Baghdad, that is, France would temporarily occupy both countries in return for annual compensation paid to the Arab kingdom.<sup>28</sup>

Although Picot and Husayn were pleased with the results of their meeting on 20 May 1917, Wilson, British officials in Cairo and the French government were confused about what had been concluded. Wilson and Clayton were concerned that Husayn's idea of Great Britain's future status in Baghdad differed from that of Sykes and Picot.<sup>29</sup> Picot wrote to Ribot on 24 May 1917 that Husayn had recognized that French rights

in 'Muslim Syria' would be equal to British rights in Baghdad. Picot's report received a positive response in the Quai d'Orsay, although questions remained about the meaning of 'Muslim Syria', a term which did not appear in the Sykes-Picot agreement. Ribot was perplexed because 'Muslim Syria' could not refer to the blue zone, whose population was mostly Christian. He wondered how 'Muslim Syria', which was in area B, could be equivalent to Baghdad, which was in the red zone and designated for British annexation? Picot was asked to clarify the meaning of 'Muslim Syria'. He responded on 8 June that although Baghdad was in the red zone, Great Britain planned to include it in the Arab state to be formed in area B. According to this arrangement, only Basra would fall under direct British control. Picot was under the impression that a change had taken place in British policy towards Baghdad.<sup>30</sup> Knowledge of that supposed change could only have come from Sykes.

Contrary to the impression of Picot and the Quai d'Orsay, British policy had not changed. We have already seen that the British government had rejected Sykes's recommendation to eliminate the barriers between areas A, B and the red zone of the Sykes-Picot agreement. Acting independently, and in a way contrary to British policy, Sykes assured Husayn on the evening of 19 May 1917 that Baghdad would form part of the Arab state that would be established in area B. With this assurance in mind, Husayn made his declaration to Picot on 20 May. Once Husayn knew that Baghdad would be part of the Arab state, he had no trouble agreeing to Picot's demand that the status of France in the 'Moslem Syrian littoral', that is in Syria and Lebanon, would be equal to that of Great Britain in Baghdad. By misleading Husayn about British policy in Baghdad, Sykes hoped to reconcile Husayn and France. By deliberately misrepresenting British policy, Sykes strengthened Husayn's conviction that McMahon had promised him Baghdad. Inadvertently, Sykes had also strengthened Abdallah's ability to claim that Great Britain had recognized his right to rule Iraq.<sup>31</sup>

Anglo-French reluctance to disabuse Husayn of his mistaken understanding of British and French policy compounded the confusion that resulted from the meeting held on 20 May 1917. Wingate recognized

the need to correct Husayn's misunderstanding of British policy, but preferred 'to postpone further discussion with the King of these political issues at any rate until the result of the present negotiations with the French is known.'<sup>32</sup> Picot wrote to Ribot on 8 June 1917 that any attempt to clarify the meaning of 'Muslim Syria' would run the risk of annoying Husayn. Because of the need for British support in Europe, the French government preferred to avoid a dispute with Great Britain's client over the future of Syria, an area of secondary importance to France.<sup>33</sup>

#### Hogarth and Husayn

Political and military developments in the Middle East in late 1917 necessitated new talks with Husayn in order to clear up his misconceptions about British support for his ambitions in the Fertile Crescent. Those developments were the Balfour Declaration of 2 November 1917, Allenby's capture of Jerusalem in December of that year and Ottoman proposals to Husayn to settle their differences. Of particular concern to Husayn was the speech Jamāl Pāshā gave in Beirut on 6 December 1917. That speech divulged the Sykes-Picot agreement, which the Soviet government had recently published, and blasted Husayn as a traitor to Islam who had allied himself with Great Britain and France.<sup>34</sup>

New discussions with Husayn were held in January 1918 when David Hogarth was sent to Jidda to meet Harry St. John Philby, an official in the British administration in Iraq. Hogarth met with Husayn ten times between 8 and 14 January 1918. Hogarth had two missions in Jidda: to work with Philby to resolve Husayn's quarrel with Ibn Saud and to discuss British policy in Palestine, Syria and Iraq with Husayn.

On 31 December 1917 Wingate asked the Foreign Office for instructions to guide Hogarth in his talks with Husayn. The Foreign Office replied on 4 January 1918 with the following 'formulas' that Hogarth was instructed to present to Husayn. The 'Hogarth Message', as these 'formulas' were known, read as follows:

That the Entente Powers are determined that the Arab race shall be given full opportunity of once again forming a nation in the world. That this can only be achieved by the Arabs themselves uniting, and that Great Britain and her Allies will pursue a policy with this ultimate unity in view.

That the Entente Powers will only approve of measures and forms of Government in Mesopotamia and Syria which put no obstacle in the way of ultimate unity.

That so far as Palestine is concerned we are determined that no people shall be subjected to another, but that in view of the fact

a. That there are in Palestine shrines, Wakfs and holy places, sacred in some cases to Moslems alone, to Jews alone, to Christians alone, and in others to two or all three, and inasmuch as these places are of interest to vast masses of people outside Palestine and Arabia there must be a special régime to deal with these places approved of by the world.

b. That as regards the Mosque of Omar it shall be considered as a Moslem concern alone and shall not be subjected directly or indirectly to any non-Moslem authority.<sup>35</sup>

The 'Hogarth Message' was intended primarily to diminish the impact of the Balfour Declaration, but set the stage for further misunderstandings between Great Britain and Husayn. Hogarth's 'formulas' clearly implied that Husayn had to be consulted about the future of Palestine. The references to Arab unity were sure to encourage Husayn's mistaken impression that the British supported his ambition to rule an independent Arab kingdom in Arabia and the Fertile Crescent, and implied that French interests in the Levant would not be an impediment to Hashimite ambitions. Hogarth's message said nothing about the Husayn-McMahon correspondence or attempted to remove the misunderstandings created by Husayn's talks with Sykes and Picot in May 1917.

Hogarth's report on his interviews with Husayn sheds considerable light on Husayn's ambitions and his conception of British obligations to him. Husayn said little about the future of Baghdad or Basra, and Hogarth intentionally avoided discussing the future of either with him. Husayn's main concerns were Ibn Saud's religious threat to the Hijaz and British recognition of him as 'King of the Arabs', a title which Hogarth called Husayn's 'dearest ambition'. Not surprisingly, Husayn responded enthusiastically to the references in Hogarth's message to Arab unity, which he called 'the basis of all our Agreements'. Husayn considered Arab unity synonymous with his kingship and argued that such unity would be meaningless unless Great Britain supported 'the embodiment of the idea in one single personality--himself.' Hogarth doubted that Husayn had a well defined strategy for realizing his ambitions, but was certain that he had not abated any of his original territorial demands.

Husayn did not believe Hogarth when he told him about Great Britain's 'perfect accord' with France, and expected that the British would back Hashimite ambitions against French interests in Syria.

Although Hogarth was not instructed to do so, he discussed the Husayn-McMahon correspondence with Husayn. Hogarth's mistaken reference to that exchange as an agreement reconfirmed Husayn's conception of British commitments to his family. When Hogarth mentioned the provision 'in the original Agreement safeguarding special interests of our Allies especially FRANCE', Husayn jokingly referred to Fashoda suggesting that Anglo-French accord would soon collapse. Hogarth answered Husayn's 'joke' by explaining that Great Britain and France, who supported Faysal's plans for Syria, 'took the view so strongly held in AMERICA that peoples should have the government they desire, and wished only to protect and assist the development of independent Government in SYRIA.' Husayn doubtless interpreted this to mean that Great Britain and France approved his scheme to let his sons, including Abdallah, rule the Fertile Crescent.<sup>36</sup>

#### Wingate, Wilson and Husayn

In January 1918 Abdallah asked Wingate to answer Jamāl Pāshā's accusations about the Sykes-Picot agreement, which had led to disquiet in the Hijaz about British and French policy towards the Arabs. Wingate told the Foreign Office on 22 January 1918 that 'explicit denials', not 'vague or general assurances about Arabs' future', would be necessary to refute enemy propoganda and restore Arab confidence in Great Britain. Wingate suggested assuring Husayn that the British were 'still determined to secure Arab independence and to fulfil promise made through him at beginning of Hedjaz revolt'; that Great Britain 'will countenance no permanent foreign or European occupation of Palestine, Irak (except province of Basrah) or Syria after the war'; and 'that these districts will be in possession of their natives and that foreign interference with Arab countries will be restricted to assistance and protection.'<sup>37</sup> Wingate informed the Foreign Office a week later that Husayn had recently asked the British government to recognize him as 'King of the Arabs' in order to counter enemy propoganda about British

and French plans to annex Syria, Palestine and Iraq. Wingate asked the Foreign Office if he could inform Husayn that Great Britain was still unable to recognize him as 'King of the Arabs', 'which at present would provoke resentment among other Arab chiefs.'<sup>38</sup>

The Middle East Committee, a War Cabinet sub-committee created to consider British policy towards the Arabs, met on 2 February 1918 to consider Wingate's proposed assurances and Husayn's request to be recognized as 'King of the Arabs'. The committee decided to omit any reference to Iraq, Syria and Palestine in a new declaration to Husayn, and refused to recognize him as King of the Arabs until 'the great mass of the Arab peoples and rulers' had recognized him as such.<sup>39</sup>

Sykes drafted the declaration that Wingate sent to Husayn. That declaration said nothing about the future of Syria, Palestine, Iraq or Husayn's Arab kingship. Nor did it attempt to correct Husayn's misconception of British commitments to him. Instead, it spoke vaguely about Great Britain's commitment to the cause of Arab liberation and unity. The declaration answered Jamāl's accusations by claiming that the Turks aimed to turn the Arabs against the Allies by falsely claiming that the latter had designs on the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire. Unlike the Turks, Great Britain and her allies supported 'the liberation of the oppressed nations' and Arab unity. In an oblique reference to the Husayn-McMahon correspondence, this declaration reaffirmed Great Britain's 'former pledges to His Majesty in regard to the freeing of the Arab peoples.' Vague as this declaration was, Husayn could legitimately interpret it as a repudiation of the Sykes-Picot agreement and as one more sign that French interests in the Levant would not stand in the way of his ambitions.<sup>40</sup>

Lieutenant-Colonel J. R. Bassett, C. E. Wilson's assistant in Jidda, doubted that a reaffirmation of Great Britain's 'pledge' would satisfy Husayn or remind him of the limited nature of British commitments because

as Your Excellency [Wingate] knows, he has read into the terms of that 'pledge' very wide territorial boundaries, and professes the most implicit trust in the intention and ability of Great Britain to redeem the 'pledge' as he reads it. Wilson has written so often of the danger underlying this question that I need only say it is



uppermost in one's mind here in one's daily intercourse with the King. Since his talk with Hogarth on the Palestine question--if not before--I have little doubt that His Highness has realized that he must be prepared to meet certain slight modifications of what he describes as the "Agreement", and that he will meet them in a reasonable and proper spirit I fully believe, provided they are not too drastic, and full opportunity is given for discussion with him in detail. He said as much to Hogarth in my presence. On the other hand, anything that would mean a rude awakening for him, I dread.<sup>41</sup>

Fear of disabusing Husayn of his interpretation of British pledges was widespread among British officials who dealt with Arab affairs. Wingate and Sykes believed that Great Britain needed Husayn as a symbol of Arab unity and that his abdication would have been a serious blow to British prestige in the Arab lands.<sup>42</sup> We may add that an alliance with Husayn enabled the British to claim that they were not at war with Islam and the Arabs. Wingate and Sykes either ignored or were unaware of the intimate relationship between the ambitions of Husayn and those of his sons. Both failed to realize that as long as Husayn could claim that the British had promised him Iraq, Abdallah could maintain his claim to rule Iraq on behalf of his father.

Husayn's tenacity in reminding British officials of his 'agreement' with McMahon was one of the outstanding features of Anglo-Hashimite relations during the war. Equally important was the impact of that tenacity on Abdallah. No evidence suggests that Abdallah dissented from his father's interpretation of McMahon's letters. As we shall see in part two of this thesis, Abdallah relied upon that interpretation to stake a claim to rule Iraq. Husayn was able to persist almost unopposed in his interpretation of McMahon's pledges because of the 'dread' Bassett and others had of giving him a 'rude awakening'. It is not surprising, therefore, to find Husayn in late May and early June 1918 confidently telling Wilson about the Arab empire he intended to rule, and Great Britain's obligation to support him in that endeavour.

Husayn's vision of his future Arab kingdom was explained in detail in three interviews with Wilson in late May and early June 1918. Wilson learned that Husayn rejected the title of 'King of the Hijaz' because the Muslim world would accuse him of splitting Islam in

collusion with the British. Husayn threatened to abdicate if compelled to keep that title. He repeatedly argued that the legitimacy of his revolt depended upon Arab unity under one leader who would be known as 'King of the Arabs', and that the Ottoman Empire had to be replaced by one independent Arab state from Aleppo to the Persian frontier and then to Aden. Husayn had concluded from his correspondence with McMahon that the basis of his 'agreement' with the British was the formation of a united Arab nation under one king. Husayn assumed that Great Britain would pay the Arab kingdom compensation for the temporary occupation of Basra. On 1 June 1918 Husayn made the remarkable revelation that Sykes had told him in May 1917 that Mosul would be part of an independent Arab state. (It will be recalled that the Sykes-Picot agreement had assigned Mosul to the French zone of influence, area A.) Sykes, who had no mandate to promise Mosul to Husayn, irresponsibly misrepresented British policy and misled the Hashimites about their future prospects. Husayn reiterated that, according to his agreement with Sykes and Picot, French rights in Syria would be the same as British rights in Baghdad.

Husayn's Arab empire was to be an independent federation of emirates in the Arabian peninsula, with Syria and Iraq ruled by the 'King of the Arabs'. Ibn Saud, the Idrīsī and the other peninsular chieftains would enjoy internal autonomy, but would have to acknowledge the authority of the 'King of the Arabs'. Husayn would respect British treaties with other Arab leaders, but relied upon Great Britain to make them recognize him as overlord of the Arab empire. Abdallah would be the Emir of Iraq, Faysal the Emir of Syria and Zayd the Emir of Yemen. All three would rule on behalf of the 'King of the Arabs', who would act primarily as an arbiter to settle disputes between the Arab countries. Ibn Saud, the Idrīsī and the other emirs would not be required to pay tribute to the 'King of the Arabs' or contribute troops to his army. Husayn did not explain how or where the 'King of the Arabs' would find troops for his army. Each emir would receive a *firmān* from the King of the Arabs permitting him to rule his country 'as long as he continued his work properly, if he did badly he might be deposed.' When Wilson

asked what would happen if one of the emirs refused to join the federation, Husayn stated frankly that he would be forced to join.

Husayn feared that the Hijaz, which had survived for centuries on Ottoman subsidies and the pilgrimage, would be economically unviable if detached from a far-flung Muslim empire. Because the emirs of the Arabian peninsula would not be required to pay him taxes or tribute, Husayn looked to Syria and Iraq, which would be ruled by his sons, to support the Hijaz economically. The origin of Abdallah's ambition to rule Iraq can, therefore, be traced in part to the economic needs of the Hijaz. It is likely, although unstated in Wilson's reports, that Husayn expected that the future armies of Hashimite Syria and Iraq would protect him against his Arab rivals.<sup>49</sup>

Wilson's record of his interview with Husayn on 1 June 1918 included an important detail which did much to explain Husayn's misunderstanding of British policy. In a reference to his letter to McMahon of 14 July 1915 and McMahon's reply of 30 August 1915, Husayn told Wilson why he believed that Great Britain had agreed to the establishment of an Arab nation:

To this the King replied that he understood from his correspondence with SIR H. MC MAHON that the formation of an ARAB Nation was agreed upon because in the reply SIR H. MC MAHON sent to the particular letter in which the King had referred to an ARAB Nation no mention was made of a Nation but the letter mentioned other things which made him conclude that the principle of an ARAB Nation had been accepted because he said "Silence is a sign of acceptance", and a nation must have a Head.

This 'silence' was an unwillingness for whatever reason to correct Husayn's mistaken understanding of British policy. Husayn exploited that unwillingness and the vague language of McMahon's letters in order to proclaim at every opportunity an interpretation of British pledges that matched his own large ambitions. As we have seen, those ambitions included a place for Abdallah in Iraq.

During his interview with Husayn on 1 June 1918, Wilson made a modest but failed attempt to remind Husayn of the limits of Great Britain's obligation to support him. Wilson explained that the British government welcomed Arab unity, but had never agreed that all the

independent Arab countries should be ruled by one king. Husayn spoke of his trust in Great Britain's word of honour and left no doubt of his conviction that McMahon had agreed to Arab independence under one king. Husayn disregarded Wilson's remark that the British would not be able to recognize him as 'King of the Arabs' until the other Arab leaders had done so. Husayn and Wilson agreed that the Caliphate was a matter for Muslims alone to decide. To his surprise, Wilson discovered that Husayn and the British had different ideas about the Caliphate. Unlike the British who viewed the Caliphate as a spiritual power only, Husayn saw it as a spiritual and a temporal power.<sup>44</sup>

Wilson's response to these interviews was inconsistent and confused. Wilson believed that Great Britain would be seriously embarrassed if British policy did not aim to create a Hashimite-led Arab federation. On 5 June 1918 he wrote to Wingate recommending an urgent decision in this regard.<sup>45</sup> The next day Wilson wrote again to Wingate and ridiculed Husayn's claim to Arab kingship and his ambition to establish his sons in Iraq, Syria and Yemen as windy rhetoric that would have no practical consequences. Wilson asked for instructions as to how he should answer Husayn, but now saw no reason to offer him an unambiguous account of British policy.<sup>46</sup>

In June 1918 Husayn read an account in the pro-French newspaper, *Mustaqbal*, of Jamāl Pāshā's speech on 6 December 1917 which divulged the Sykes-Picot agreement and denounced him as the enemy of Islam. Husayn feigned ignorance of the Sykes-Picot agreement and asked Wingate about the truth of Jamāl's allegations. Wingate answered that the Bolsheviks had found in the foreign ministry in Petrograd a record of 'old conversations' and a 'provisional understanding' between Great Britain, France and Russia early in the war, not a formal treaty. According to Wingate, Jamāl had distorted the original purpose of that understanding by omitting stipulations regarding Arab self-determination, and had ignored that the Arab revolt and Russia's withdrawal from the war had created an entirely new situation in the Middle East. In a telegram to the Foreign Office dated 16 June 1918, Wingate curiously asserted that Husayn had not been 'officially' informed

of the Sykes-Picot agreement. Wingate asked if that agreement could be regarded 'as dead for all practical purposes'.<sup>47</sup> The Foreign Office answered him two days later that his telegram would be discussed by the Eastern Committee, the successor of the Middle East Committee. For the time being, however, Wingate was instructed to tell Husayn that Jamāl's aim was to cause discord among the Allies, and that the French government dissociated itself from *Mustaqbal*.<sup>48</sup>

This incident is remarkable for two reasons. First, Husayn had known about the Sykes-Picot agreement since his meetings with Sykes and Picot in May 1917. When the Eastern Committee reviewed Wingate's telegram, Sykes pointed out that he, Picot, Brémont and Hogarth had all explained the agreement in detail to Husayn. Second, Wingate knew that the agreement had not been abrogated, but misled Husayn to believe that it had been disavowed and would no longer serve as a brake on Hashimite ambitions in the Fertile Crescent. By passing such a message to Husayn, Wingate indicated his own preference for disregarding the Sykes-Picot agreement.<sup>49</sup>

The Eastern Committee approved Wingate's message to Husayn of 18 June 1918 and reaffirmed his declaration to Husayn of 4 February 1918. The Eastern Committee asked Wingate to tell Husayn that the future of the Sykes-Picot agreement could only be decided in consultation with the French government.<sup>50</sup> The Eastern Committee had, in effect, approved a message telling Husayn that the Sykes-Picot agreement would not be the basis of a post-war settlement in the Middle East. Husayn undoubtedly concluded from Wingate's message that his political ambitions had been liberated from the Sykes-Picot agreement, and that Great Britain would support his ambitions in Syria against those of France.

#### Final British Assurances and the End of the War in the Middle East

On 26 April 1918 seven Syrians in Cairo who were members of the Party of Syrian Unity (*Ḥizb al-Ittihād al-Sūrī*) presented an anonymous memorandum to the British government through Osmond Walrond, an official of the Arab Bureau. Their memorandum asked if Great Britain supported the 'complete independence' of the Arabian peninsula, Syria, Iraq, Mosul and part of the *vilayet* of Diyār Bakr, each of which would

have its own decentralized government.<sup>51</sup> Wingate passed this memorandum to the Foreign Office, where Sykes drafted what has come to be known as the Declaration to the Seven.

On 22 June 1918 Walrond and Hogarth presented this declaration in Cairo to a delegation of seven Syrians. The declaration divided the Arab lands into four categories: independent territories before the war, territories liberated from the Ottomans by the Arabs themselves, territories liberated by Great Britain and her allies and territories still under Turkish rule. In the first two categories, Great Britain would 'recognise the complete and sovereign independence of the Arabs inhabiting those territories and support them in their struggle for freedom.' Regarding the third category, the declaration called attention to the proclamations published after the capture of Baghdad (19 March 1917) and the capture of Jerusalem (9 December 1917), which 'define the policy of His Majesty's Government towards the inhabitants of those regions, which is that the future government of those territories should be based upon the principle of the consent of the governed.' The Declaration to the Seven said nothing about Syrian autonomy, Iraq, the Hashimites, the Husayn-McMahon correspondence or the Sykes-Picot agreement.<sup>52</sup> In July 1918 the British sent a copy of this declaration to Husayn; Kāmil al-Qaṣṣāb, one of the seven petitioners, sent a copy to Faysal, whose army was then camped at 'Aqaba.<sup>53</sup>

The two most important features of the Declaration to the Seven were its emphasis on Arab self-determination and the independence of Arab territories liberated by the Arabs themselves. Both provisions, especially the second, were inconsistent with the Sykes-Picot agreement and reservations in the Husayn-McMahon correspondence concerning the precedence of French rights in Syria over Arab claims to independence. The Hashimites could have concluded from this declaration that Great Britain had disavowed the reservations in the Husayn-McMahon correspondence and the Sykes-Picot agreement and now supported their vision of Arab independence in Arabia and the Fertile Crescent.

Wingate's recent message and the Declaration to the Seven did not, however, reassure Husayn about Great Britain's Arab policy or French

policy in Syria. Wilson wrote to Wingate in mid-July 1918 that Husayn worried about French aims in Syria, British policy in Iraq and that the British would never recognize him as 'King of the Arabs'. Husayn still complained that the offensive article in *Mustaqbal* had been published with the approval of the French government, and repeatedly expressed his distrust of the British authorities in Baghdad, whose policy was to exclude Hashimite influence from Iraq. Wilson foresaw difficulties with Husayn because of the contradiction between the actions of the British administration in Baghdad and 'the frequently declared policy of His Majesty's Government to foster Arab unity.'

Husayn made an urgent appeal for a confidential assurance that Great Britain and her allies supported Arab unity under one leader. He asked to be notified as soon as possible if such an assurance could not be given. After four years of war, Husayn was prepared for modifications in his 'agreement' with Great Britain as long as the British accepted the principle of Arab unity under one king. No matter how many times Wilson told Husayn that the British government had never promised the creation of an Arab kingdom under his suzerainty or that of anyone else, Husayn continually insisted that Great Britain had agreed to the creation of just such a kingdom. As evidence of his willingness to accept modifications, Husayn noted his acceptance of Picot's suggestion in May 1917 that the French position in Syria would be equal to the British position in Baghdad. In order to avoid future embarrassments, Wilson recommended that the British should speak frankly with Husayn and recognize him as head of a union of independent Arab states. Wilson argued that it was in Great Britain's interest to give Husayn an honest and straightforward account of British policy.<sup>54</sup>

The last official discussion of Hashimite ambitions before the end of the war began with a letter from Husayn to Wingate dated 28 August 1918. That letter included a copy of the 'agreement' Husayn claimed he had concluded with Great Britain. Husayn threatened to abdicate if the British did not recognize this, the 'original agreement'. Husayn began by restating the territorial demands in his letter to McMahon of 14 July 1915 and then reiterated his earlier claims that Great Britain had

agreed to cut the Hijaz railroad and compensate the Arab kingdom for the temporary occupation of Basra. Husayn made the preposterous claim that Great Britain had agreed to help him suppress his Arabian rivals, and had offered to recognize him as their representative in the Arabian peninsula and the enforcer of their treaties with other Arabian leaders. No British official had ever suggested anything of the kind to Husayn.<sup>55</sup>

Clayton, Cornwallis and Wingate reacted to this letter in a way that illustrated why British officials in Cairo had been so reluctant to correct Husayn's misunderstanding of British obligations to him. All three feared that the Arab movement would collapse if Husayn abdicated and that the Arab revolt would degenerate into a series of uncoordinated tribal attacks against the Turks, who would exploit the vacuum left by Husayn's abdication to re-establish their rule in central Arabia. Cornwallis worried that Husayn's demise would cause a loss of British prestige 'throughout the whole Mohammedan world' and 'mar our reputation for good faith in the East.' Clayton felt a 'moral obligation' to Husayn because of the Arab revolt and his 'unswerving loyalty to Great Britain.'

Clayton and Wingate suggested answering Husayn that Great Britain would support by all means short of coercion the establishment of a union of central and southern Arabian chiefs under Husayn's leadership. Clayton and Wingate suggested telling Husayn that the peace conference would decide the future of Syria, Palestine and Iraq in accordance with Arab national interests and the principle of self-determination. Cornwallis preferred to appease Husayn with a vague declaration about Arab unity along the lines suggested by Clayton and Wingate before answering Husayn's memorandum. Cornwallis assumed that answering Husayn's memorandum first 'would seem to be a mistake and would only lead to a lengthy and unsatisfactory correspondence.'

The proposals of Wingate, Clayton and Cornwallis did nothing to remind Husayn of the Sykes-Picot agreement or the limited recognition of Arab independence in McMahon's letters. Instead of contradicting Husayn's memorandum, Clayton and Wingate offered British recognition of Husayn as head of a union of emirates in the Arabian peninsula. The reference to British support for Arab self-determination in Syria and



Iraq would probably have been understood in Mecca as support for Husayn's ambition to annex both countries to his Arab kingdom.<sup>56</sup>

Events in the Middle East soon overtook the proposed declarations of Wingate and Clayton, which were never issued. Immediately after the fall of Damascus on 1 October 1918, General Edmund Allenby, the commander in chief of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force, recognized Faysal as head of an Arab administration in areas A and B of the Sykes-Picot agreement. Until the fall of Damascus, Faysal had been commander of the Northern Arab Army, a force consisting of an estimated 600 to 3000 Arab regulars, fluctuating numbers of bedouin irregulars and British military advisers. Faysal's army was controlled by Allenby, supplied almost entirely by the British and employed to harass the Ottoman army in Transjordan. Although Faysal's forces were not the first to enter Damascus--the city surrendered to the Australian Third Light Horse Brigade--Allenby, acting on instructions from the War Office, allowed Faysal to establish an Arab administration in Syria. The impression was thus created that the Arabs, not the British, had taken Damascus and earned the right to rule Syria. The decision to hand control of Damascus to Faysal did more than any number of British declarations to convince the Hashimites that Great Britain supported the extension of their domain to the Fertile Crescent.<sup>57</sup>

#### Conclusion

World War I ended with Husayn as King of the Hijaz and Faysal as head of an Arab government in areas A and B of the Sykes-Picot agreement. The Hashimite ambition to establish an Arab empire in Arabia and the Fertile Crescent had been fulfilled in large part, although Abdallah had not yet established himself outside the Hijaz. Faysal's establishment in Syria created the impression that Great Britain stood firmly behind the ambition of the Hashimite family to play a dominant part in the post-war the Fertile Crescent. Although Abdallah's reaction to the establishment of an Arab government in Damascus is unknown, we can plausibly speculate that Faysal's good fortune strengthened Abdallah's conviction that the British also supported his ambition to rule Iraq.

Considering the way British policy had been explained to Husayn, Abdallah was well entitled to be optimistic about his future prospects. British officials had spoken many times of their government's support for Arab unity and self-determination. McMahon, Wingate and their subordinates had been reluctant to disabuse Husayn of his grandiose interpretation of the Husayn-McMahon correspondence. The creation of Faysal's Syrian régime could have been interpreted as proof that, as far as Great Britain was concerned, Hashimite and Arab claims to independence took precedence over French interests in Syria. As we have seen, Sykes deliberately misled Husayn to believe that Baghdad and Mosul would be given to the Arabs. Never once had any British official told Husayn that Abdallah would not be allowed to establish himself in Iraq. Husayn, of course, regarded such 'silence' as a green light to pursue his new ambitions. On the one hand, no British official in Cairo took Abdallah or Husayn seriously when they spoke of Abdallah as future ruler of Iraq. On the other hand, officials like Sykes wanted Husayn's sons established in areas A and B of the Sykes-Picot agreement. If any British official told Husayn that his sons had no part to play in the post-war Fertile Crescent--and there is no record of anyone telling him that--Faysal's Syrian regime was concrete proof of the opposite.

With the possible exception of Lawrence and Sykes, no British official in Cairo or the Hijaz understood or took seriously the link between the ambitions of Husayn and Abdallah. The British in Cairo ignored the fact that Husayn was pursuing a political agenda for himself and his sons. The British in Cairo never understood that British reluctance to disabuse Husayn encouraged Abdallah's ambitions in Iraq.

Abdallah's ambition to rule Iraq was shaped by several other factors which came to light between June 1916 and October 1918. The first was the economic needs of the Hijaz. Husayn believed that the Hijaz would be economically unviable if detached from an Arab or Muslim empire. Husayn expected that Iraq and Syria under the control of Abdallah and Faysal would compensate for lost Ottoman subsidies. Second, it is possible, although unstated in any of the British or Arab sources known to this writer, that Husayn also expected Iraqi and Syrian

armies controlled by his sons to defend the Hijaz or help him suppress his rivals in the Arabian peninsula. Third, Husayn feared that the Arab revolt could not be justified to Arab and Muslim opinion unless it led to the creation of an Arab Muslim empire in Arabia and the Fertile Crescent. Husayn believed furthermore that he would be unable to control such an empire unless his sons ruled Syria and Iraq on his behalf.

## NOTES

1. Tauber, 'Fārūqī', pp. 39-40 and Cornwallis memorandum 8 July 1916 FO 882/4/HRG/16/31.
2. Ronald Storrs, 'Extract from Diary', 17 Oct. 1916 FO 882/5/HRG/16/55.
3. T. E. Lawrence, 'The Sherifs', 27 Oct. 1916 FO 882/5/HRG/16/57. Lawrence began his service in the Hijaz in October 1916.
4. McMahon to Grey 9 Nov. 1916, which includes Wilson to McMahon 31 Oct. 1916, 'Note by Hussein Effendi Ruhi' 30 Oct. 1916, Abdallah to Wilson 29 Oct. 1916 and a petition from the 'Ministers, notables, natives and uleme of Mecca El-Mukarramah' to Husayn 30 Oct. 1916 (quoted), all in FO 371/2782/233117.
5. Abdallah to Wilson 29 Oct. 1916 FO 371/2782/233117 and Abdallah to the French foreign minister 29 Oct. 1916 in McMahon to Grey 3 Nov. 1916 FO 371/2782/233114.
6. McMahon to Grey 9 Nov. 1916 FO 371/2782/233117.
7. Wilson, 'Telephone Message by Emir Abdulla, 1 Nov. 1916' (first quote) and 'Telephone Conversation with King Husayn' 2 Nov. 1916 both FO 882/5/HRG/16/59; The Sharif to C. E. Wilson 4 Nov. 1916 FO 371/2782/242002 and Wilson to McMahon secret 11 Nov. 1916 FO 371/2782/242008 (second quote).
8. 'Reasons for Assuming the Title', unsigned and undated (probably C. E. Wilson in November 1916) FO 882/5/HRG/16/63.
9. 'Attitude of Great Britain and France to the Sherif's Proclamation of the Assumption of the Title "Malik El Bilad El Arbia"', no date FO 882/5/HRB/16/64; Edouard Brémont, *Le Hedjaz dans la Guerre Mondiale* (Paris, 1931) pp. 74-81 and Dan Eldar, 'French Policy towards Husayn, Sharif of Mecca', *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 26, no. 3, July 1990, pp. 339-41.
10. Husayn to McMahon 25 Aug. 1916, enclosed in McMahon to Grey secret 11 Sept. 1916 FO 371/2775/195007.
11. Hogarth's secret memorandum, 'Future of the Arab Movement' 12 Feb. 1917 FO 882/6/HRG/17/12.
12. Brémont to DeFrance 1 Mar. 1917 SHA 17N/498 and Pearson (Jidda) to ARBUR (Cairo) secret 1 Mar. 1917 FO 141/736/2475 (quoted). Lawrence wrote to Wilson on 16 April 1917 that Abdallah looked to Yemen as his future domain. The reasons for Abdallah's brief and passing interest in Yemen are unknown. Lawrence to Wilson 16 Apr. 1917 FO 882/6/HRG/17/29.
13. Wilson to ARBUR (Cairo) secret 9 Apr. 1917 FO 882/12/KH/17/11.
14. Husayn to Wingate undated, but probably April 1917, enclosed in Wingate to Balfour 26 Apr. 1917 FO 371/3048/92524.
15. Secret note of C. E. Wilson, 'Note of conversations with the Emirs Abdulla and Faisal', 1 May 1917 FO 882/16/SY/17/3.
16. Hogarth, 'Future of the Arab Movement' 12 Feb. 1917 FO 882/6/HRG/17/12.
17. Wilson, 'Note of conversations with the Emirs Abdulla and Faisal', 1 May 1917 FO 882/16/SY/17/3.
18. Eldar, 'Husayn', p. 341.

19. Jan Karl Tannenbaum, 'France and the Arab Middle East, 1914-1920', *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, vol. 68, part 7, 1978, pp. 16-17 and Kedourie, *Labyrinth*, pp. 160-61.

20. Wingate to FO urgent 27 Apr. 1917 (quoted) and FO to Wingate 28 Apr. 1917 FO 371/3054/86526.

21. Wingate to FO 28 Apr. 1917 and FO to Wingate 30 Apr. 1917 FO 371/3054/87289.

22. Sykes memorandum of 17 May 1917 in FO 371/3044/120491.

23. On Sykes's interest in the creation of an Arab government in Baghdad, see L/P&S/10/666, p. 1019/17, quoted in Kedourie, *Labyrinth*, pp. 170-72, which discusses Sykes's role in drafting the proclamation that was read in Baghdad after the capture of the city on 11 March 1917; his Cabinet memorandum of 18 July 1917 in FO 371/3044/53075. Also see Sykes's minute of 15 Sept. 1917 which is attached to 'Note of T. E. Lawrence' Jidda 30 July 1917 FO 371/3054/174974.

24. On Sykes's talks with Husayn and Faysal on 2 and 5 May 1917, see Wingate to FO 7 May 1917 FO 371/3054/93335.

25. Sykes (Aden) to FO 24 May 1917 FO 371/3054/104269; Tannenbaum, 'France', p. 17 and Eldar, 'Husayn', pp. 342-43.

26. Sykes (Aden) to FO 24 May 1917 FO 371/3054/104269.

27. Eldar, 'Husayn', p. 344.

28. Note of T. E. Lawrence (Jidda) 30 July 1917 FO 371/3054/174974.

29. Clayton to Symes 27 May 1917 FO 882/16/SP/17/31.

30. Tannenbaum, 'France', pp. 17-18; Kedourie, *Labyrinth*, p. 176 and Eldar, 'Husayn', pp. 344-45.

31. 'Note by Sheikh Fuad El Khatib Taken Down by Lt. Col. Newcombe' secret June 1917 FO 882/16/SP/17/36 and Kedourie, *Labyrinth*, pp. 177-80.

32. Wingate to Sir Arthur Balfour 16 Aug. 1917 FO 371/3054/174974.

33. Picot to Ribot 8 June 1917 MAE, série: Guerre 1914-1918, vol. 877, fols. 187-88 cited in Tannenbaum, 'France', p. 18 and Eldar, 'Husayn', pp. 344-46.

34. Kedourie, *Labyrinth*, pp. 185-87 and Elie Kedourie, *England and the Middle East*, pp. 107-108. Part of Jamāl's speech has been republished in English translation in Antonius, *Awakening*, pp. 254-56.

35. Wingate to FO urgent 31 Dec. 1917 and FO to Wingate 4 Jan. 1918, both FO 371/3054/245810.

36. D. G. Hogarth, 'Report on Mission to Jeddah' 15 Jan. 1918 and three letters from Husayn to Wingate all dated 31 Dec. 1917 enclosed in Wingate to Balfour 27 Jan. 1918 FO 371/3383/2577.

37. Wingate to FO 22 Jan. 1918 FO 371/3380/14373.

38. Wingate to FO 28 Jan. 1918 CAB 27/23 (M. E. C. 54).

39. Middle East Committee, meeting of 2 Feb. 1918, secret CAB 27/23 (M. E. C. 54).

40. FO to Wingate 4 Feb. 1918 FO 371/3380/22108.

41. 'Extract of a letter to His Excellency The High Commissioner from Lieut. Colonel J. R. Bassett, Dated Jeddah 11th February 1918' FO 371/3380/42105.

42. Kedourie, *Labyrinth*, pp. 196-98.

43. Wilson to ARBUR (Cairo) secret 2 June 1918, Wilson to Wingate secret 5 June 1918, Wilson to Wingate 6 June 1918 and Wilson to Wingate secret 6 June 1918 FO 141/679/4088.

44. Wilson to Wingate secret 5 June 1918 FO 141/679/4088.

45. *ibid.*

46. Wilson to Wingate 6 June 1918 FO 141/679/4088.

47. Wingate to FO 16 June 1918 FO 371/3381/107379.

48. FO to Wingate 18 June FO 371/3381/107379. *Mustaqbal* was an Arabic newspaper published in Paris by Shukrī Ghānim, a Christian Lebanese with close ties to the French government. See Tibawi, *Syria*, p. 265.

49. Eastern Committee meeting of 18 June 1918, E. C. 14th minutes, secret, CAB 27/24.

50. *ibid.*

51. On the Party of Syrian Unity and the memorandum they presented to the British government, see Amin Sa'īd, *Al-Thawra al-'Arabiyya al-Kubrā*, vol. 2 (Cairo, no date) p. 37-40. The Party of Syrian Unity represented a group of Syrians who had broken with Husayn during the Arab revolt because of his highhandedness and unwillingness to listen to the advice of others. Walrond, who supported their aims, encouraged them to present their petition to the British government. The main concern of the petitioners was that Syria would be autonomous after the war and free of Husayn's domination. The seven Syrian petitioners were Kāmil al-Qaṣṣāb, 'Abd al-Rahmān al-Shahbandar, Rafīq al-'Azm, Fawzī al-Bakrī, Mukhtār al-Sulh, Muhyī'l-Dīn al-Khatīb and Hasan Hamāda. See Antonius, *Awakening*, p. 433; Kedourie, *England*, pp. 113-14 and David Fromkin, *A Peace to End All Peace* (New York, 1989) p. 331.

52. See Kedourie, *England*, pp. 115-17 and Sultan, *Suriya*, pp. 510-13. The Declaration to the Seven of 16 June 1918 has been published in Antonius, *Awakening*, pp. 433-34.

53. Sa'īd, *Asrār*, p. 246 and Antonius, *Awakening*, p. 273.

54. C. E. Wilson, 'Interview with King Hussein at British Agency, Jeddah on 18th July, 1918' secret FO 371/3381/146251 and Wilson (Red Sea) to Wingate secret 23 July 1918 FO 371/3381/146256.

55. Husayn to Wingate 21 *Dhu'l-Qa'da* 1336/28 Aug. 1918 Mecca and 'The Agreement come to with the British Government regarding the Rising and its Foundation', *DBFP*, vol. 13, no. 342. The Arabic original of Husayn's letter to Wingate, but not Husayn's 'original agreement', appears in Wahba, *Jazīrat al-'Arab*, pp. 364-66.

56. 'Note of Brigadier-General Clayton on King Hussein's Letter and Memorandum' Ramleh 8 Sept. 1918 FO 371/3384/183342; Cornwallis's note on Husayn's letter and memorandum to Wingate, 10 Sept. 1918 FO 882/13/KH/18/35; Wingate to Balfour secret 21 Sept. 1918 FO 371/3384/171983.

57. On the fall of Damascus, see Elie Kedourie, 'The Capture of Damascus, 1 October 1918' in *The Chatham House Version and other Middle-Eastern Studies* (London, 1970) pp. 33-51 and Kedourie, *England*, pp. 117-28. After the capture of Damascus, British and Arab forces continued their northern advance. Aleppo fell on 26 October. On 30 October the Ottoman Empire signed the armistice of Mudros.

PART II

BETWEEN THE HIJAZ, IRAQ AND TRANSJORDAN: THE MAKING AND THE UNMAKING  
OF ABDALLAH'S AMBITIONS, 1916-1921

## CHAPTER 5: ABDALLAH AS EMIR OF IRAQ: FIRST CONSIDERATION

### Introduction

Part one of this thesis traced the evolution of Abdallah's political ambitions until the end of World War I against the background of his family's changing role in Arab politics. Chapters one to four explained how Hashimite political ambitions were broadened to include domination of the post-war Fertile Crescent. We have seen that four influences shaped Husayn's ambition to establish an Arab empire in Arabia and the Fertile Crescent: the Husayn-McMahon correspondence and other British declarations which spoke in vague yet provocative terms about the Caliphate and Arab independence under Hashimite leadership; the Arab political societies which encouraged the Hashimites to lead the Arab national movement; the economic and, probably, military needs of the Hijaz; the need to justify the Arab revolt to Muslim and Arab opinion. A fifth influence was Abdallah who actively encouraged his father and brothers to break with the Ottomans and ally themselves with the British in order to establish a Hashimite empire throughout most of the post-war Arab East. Husayn's strategy for maintaining control of that far-flung empire was to install Abdallah as the ruler of Iraq and Faysal as the ruler of Syria. Abdallah's involvement in the politics of the Fertile Crescent began, therefore, with Husayn's ambition to establish an Arab kingdom that would replace Turkish rule in the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire.

The first three chapters of part two will focus on the rise and fall of Abdallah's ambition to rule post-war Iraq. This chapter will concentrate mainly on the period from October 1918 to February 1919, when British officials first considered establishing Abdallah as the head of an Arab government in Iraq. Hashimite strategies to convince the British that Abdallah should become the emir of Iraq will preoccupy much of this and the next two chapters.

From March 1917 to February 1919 the desirability of a Hashimite emir or king in Iraq was the source of great controversy between the India Office and the British administration in Iraq on one side, and T.



E. Lawrence, the Arab Bureau and their supporters in the Foreign Office on the other. This chapter will explain how, until February 1919, the fate of Abdallah's ambition to rule Iraq depended on the outcome of that controversy, and why the British government decided against installing Abdallah in Iraq.

Both the British and the Hashimites knew that Abdallah would be unable to establish his authority in Iraq if the Shiite majority there did not accept him--a pious Sunni of foreign birth--as their legitimate sovereign. The Hashimites understood that, unless they could prove that Iraqi Shiites would accept Abdallah, the British would not sponsor him to head an Arab government in Iraq. Chapters five to seven will closely examine the strategies the Hashimites and their Arab and British supporters adopted to convince the British government that the people of Iraq, particularly the Shiite majority, would accept Abdallah as the legitimate ruler of their country.

#### Great Britain, the Hashimites and Iraq, March 1917-October 1918

Two weeks after the occupation of Baghdad on 11 March 1917 by the army of General Sir Stanley Maude, the Mesopotamia Administration Committee, a War Cabinet sub-committee created to consider British policy in Iraq, made four recommendations: first, that Great Britain, and not the Government of India, should administer Iraq; second, that Great Britain should annex the Basra *vilayet*; third, that the *vilayets* of Basra and Baghdad should remain separate; fourth, that Baghdad should be administered as an Arab state under British protection.'

Objections were raised almost immediately to the policy of an 'Arab façade' for Baghdad. Sir Percy Cox, Great Britain's chief political officer in Iraq, rejected this proposal because no outstanding local personality could be found to head an Arab administration. Cox preferred either an administrative council in each of Baghdad and Basra that would be headed by a British high commissioner, or one council for both with a high commissioner. Cox believed that the unsettled conditions in Iraq made it impossible to decide the precise structure of an Arab state so soon after the occupation of Baghdad.<sup>2</sup> The Government of India agreed that an Arab government would be impractical

because 'Our experience of puppet rulers in India and Afghanistan is not encouraging.'<sup>13</sup>

In May and July 1917 Sykes submitted memoranda to the Cabinet concerning the future of Arab nationalism and the Hashimites, which laid the foundation for later British proposals to associate Abdallah with Iraq. Sykes wrote that the aim of British and French policy in areas A and B of the Sykes-Picot agreement should be the development of Arab institutions, internal independence and the confederation of both zones with Arab unity as the ultimate object. Sykes recommended that King Husayn, who would reside in Mecca, should lead the Arab movement in both zones, that Great Britain and France should encourage the inhabitants of those areas to regard the Hashimites as their titular sovereigns and that Husayn's sons should become the hereditary emirs in areas A and B. Sykes added that Great Britain's position in Baghdad should 'be defined by agreement with the Arab representative' on the basis of Maude's declaration of to the inhabitants of that city on 19 March 1917. That declaration invited the people of Baghdad 'through your notables and elders and representatives to participate in the management of your civil affairs in collaboration with the political representatives of Great Britain who accompany the British Army, so that you may be united with your kinsmen in the North, East, South and West in realising the aspirations of your race.'<sup>14</sup>

Wingate also favoured a role for the Hashimites in Iraq. He asked the Foreign Office in January 1918 to reassure King Husayn that Great Britain was still resolved to secure Arab independence, fulfil promises made to him at the beginning of the Arab revolt, guarantee that there would be no permanent European occupation of Palestine, Syria or Iraq (except Basra) and pledge that those countries would remain under local control with 'foreign interference' limited to 'assistance and protection.'<sup>15</sup>

Self-determination in Iraq had the support of Lloyd George, who announced to a trade union congress in London on 5 January 1918--two days after Woodrow Wilson had announced his Fourteen Points--that 'Arabia, Armenia, Mesopotamia, Syria and Palestine are in our judgement

entitled to their separate national conditions.<sup>6</sup> It is unknown what, if anything, the Hashimites knew about Lloyd George's statement, which was published in *The Times* on 7 January 1918.

The British administration in Baghdad opposed any role for the Hashimites in Iraq. In June 1917 Gertrude Bell, Cox's oriental secretary, objected strongly to Sykes's proposals because, in her view, Husayn had no influence in Iraq:

In Mesopotamia his name carries no weight; 'Iraq is preponderately Shi'ah, northern Mesopotamia is too far removed from the Hijaz to be conscious of any political influence seated there. His rising aroused no enthusiasm, and nothing would be more bewildering to the Mesopotamian mind than to suggest him or any of his family as a ruler in Baghdad.

Bell added that the Arab revolt had been far more effective in galvanizing Arab opinion in Syria than it had in Iraq, and that no native rulers could be found in areas A and B of the Sykes-Picot agreement who were capable of establishing Arab states. Bell recognized the value of Husayn's religious prestige for Great Britain, but doubted that his prestige could be transformed into political supremacy. According to Bell, the most Husayn could become was the leader of a loose religious union consisting of the Hijaz, areas A and B and the recipient of subsidies from Syria and Iraq.<sup>7</sup>

In his comments on Wingate's proposals, Cox protested in January 1918 against negotiating the future of Iraq with Husayn, and requested that the Husayn-McMahon correspondence should not be mentioned in any new British declarations concerning Iraq.<sup>8</sup> Similar objections were heard in March 1918 from John Shuckburgh of the India Office Political Department who complained that Sykes wanted British policy in Iraq to proceed 'along purely "Arab" lines' in accordance with McMahon's pledges to Husayn.<sup>9</sup> The Government of India agreed with Cox and Shuckburgh and recommended trying to obtain Husayn's consent to a modification of 'McMahon's unfortunate pledges', and his acceptance of the idea that Great Britain would continue to administer Baghdad and Basra with the aim of gradually building self-government in both.<sup>10</sup>

Cox was summoned to London in February 1918 to discuss British policy in Iraq and Iran. On his way to London, Cox spent ten days in

Cairo discussing the future of Iraq with Wingate and the Arab Bureau. During a meeting with Wingate on 23 March 1918, Cox explained why he opposed Arab unity under Hashimite leadership. Cox argued that Husayn's Arab rivals would never accept Hashimite overlordship and that the people of Syria and Iraq would reject Hashimite interference in their affairs. For these reasons, Cox advocated putting Iraq under complete British financial and administrative control.''

By April 1918 the Foreign Office and the India Office had agreed that Iraq should have an Arab ruler under British tutelage, but disagreed as to who that ruler should be. Unlike Sykes and the British in Cairo, the India Office and Cox strongly objected to any role for the Hashimites in Baghdad. Although Abdallah's name had not yet been mentioned in connection with Iraq, by April 1918 the lines already had been drawn between those who favoured a role for the Hashimites in Iraq (Cairo and Sykes) and those who did not (Cox and India). This split would later characterize the discussion of all proposals to install Abdallah in Iraq.

On 24 April 1918 the Eastern Committee, a War Cabinet sub-committee under the chairmanship of Lord Curzon, examined a memorandum by Sir Percy Cox entitled 'The Future of Mesopotamia'. Unlike a year earlier, Cox now advocated the establishment of an Iraqi state with an 'Arab façade' and an Arab ruler whose administration would be under strict British control. Cox argued that a Hashimite emir would be unacceptable because the Hashimites had no influence in Iraq. If a position for Husayn had to be recognized, Cox recommended confining it to a subsidy from Iraqi revenues in recognition of his role during the war or, better, as a contribution to the maintenance of the holy cities. Instead of a Hashimite emir, Cox preferred the *naqīb* of Baghdad, 'Abd al-Rahmān bin Sayyid 'Alī al-Kaylānī, because he and his family had considerable local influence. Cox, who was still unenthusiastic about the idea of an Arab emir in Iraq, admitted to Edwin Montagu, the secretary of state for India, in December 1918 that his advocacy of the *naqīb* had been intended primarily to forestall a recommendation from Cairo in favour of a Hashimite emir. In addition to a titular emir, Cox

suggested that Iraq should be governed by a small group of cabinet ministers, half British and half Arab, assisted, perhaps, by a dozen local notables. Over the objections of Sir Mark Sykes, the Eastern Committee approved Cox's memorandum, which became the basis of British policy towards Iraq.<sup>12</sup>

This policy did not meet with the approval of all British officials in Iraq. In May 1918 Gertrude Bell wrote in a private capacity to Lord Hardinge, the permanent under secretary of state for foreign affairs, about her objections to having the naqib or any other Iraqi as titular emir. In her view, the Iraqis 'can't conceive of an independent Arab government. Nor, I confess, can I. There is no one who could run it.' Bell argued that the *naqib* was an old man of no personality who lacked suitable heirs and who, as a Sunni, would be unacceptable to Iraq's Shiite majority. Her preference was for the 'nominal overlordship' of Husayn who, though residing in the Hijaz, would act as the supreme religious arbiter of Iraq. Although Husayn was Sunni, Bell thought that his nominal overlordship would be acceptable to the Shiites because of his tolerant religious views. She wrote: 'It is the general opinion among the Shiah that he is one of their persuasion though he has not openly declared himself Ja'fari, and in fact the extreme liberality of his views and leanings to the Ja'fari school almost warrants this theory. Despite Husayn's supposed Shiite leanings, Bell was quick to note that he had few supporters in Iraq.'<sup>13</sup>

#### The Proposals of T. E. Lawrence

After the capture of Damascus on 1 October 1918, T. E. Lawrence returned to London where he began a round of diplomatic activity aimed at reversing the Sykes-Picot agreement. On 29 October 1918--one day before the armistice of Mudros with Turkey--Lawrence presented a plan to the Eastern Committee for the creation of Hashimite regimes in Syria and Iraq. Lawrence's plan included the first recommendation to the British government that Abdallah should head an Arab government in Iraq. Here was a landmark in Abdallah's political career: henceforth he would be viewed in British official circles as a potential candidate to head a British-controlled Arab government somewhere in the Fertile Crescent.

Lawrence told the Eastern Committee that a Hashimite federation was the key to any settlement in the Middle East. He recommended that an Arab state led by Abdallah should be created in the *vilayets* of Baghdad and Basra. According to this plan, Basra would remain under direct British control. Lawrence did not specify Great Britain's role in governing Baghdad. He proposed that Abdallah's younger brother, Zayd, should head an Arab state under British influence in an area roughly corresponding to the Mosul *vilayet*, and that Faysal should rule Syria. Implicit in this scheme was the separation of Mosul from the *vilayets* of Baghdad and Basra. Husayn would remain as the king of the Hijaz and have no temporal authority in the three states headed by his sons. Husayn would, however, become the supreme religious leader of those states, where his name would be mentioned in Friday prayers as *Amīr al-Mu'minīn*. To justify Abdallah's establishment in Iraq, Lawrence told the Eastern Committee that Abdallah was a 'crypto-Shiah'.<sup>4</sup>

No one on the Eastern Committee commented on Lawrence's reference to *Amīr al-Mu'minīn*, a title of the Caliph, or questioned his curious characterization of Abdallah as a 'crypto-Shiah'. Like Lawrence, they failed to understand that the Caliph was both a spiritual and temporal power, not a Muslim version of the Pope. They also failed to understand that the mention of Husayn's name as *Amīr al-Mu'minīn* in the Friday prayers of Syria and Iraq would encourage Abdallah to meddle in Iraq and contribute to Husayn's distorted impression of British commitments to him. The problem of Abdallah's supposed Shiite leanings will be examined later in this and the next two chapters.

Before addressing the Eastern Committee, Lawrence explained his views on the Sykes-Picot agreement, Abdallah and Iraq to Lord Robert Cecil, the parliamentary under secretary and minister of the blockade, and General Sir George Macdonough of the Army Council. Lawrence told Cecil on 28 October 1918 that he was promoting Abdallah because Iraq 'should be put under an Arab Government of as little practical activity as possible...[and] that one of King Hussein's sons should be Governor. Abdullah would do very well.' According to Cecil, Lawrence objected to the *naqīb* of Baghdad 'for many reasons, and particularly because there

was the Nakib of Busrah [Sayyid Talib], who was very undesirable but could scarcely be left out if we recognised his colleague of Baghdad."<sup>5</sup> It is possible that Lawrence opposed the *naqīb* in order to block Cox and others who opposed Hashimite involvement in Iraq. Macdonough submitted a memorandum to the War Cabinet on 28 October 1918 entitled 'Note on Policy in the Middle East'. The proposals in Macdonough's note were almost identical to those Lawrence presented a day later to the Eastern Committee.<sup>6</sup>

In response to a Cabinet decision asking for a statement of British interests in the Middle East, Arnold Toynbee of the Foreign Office Political Intelligence Department prepared a secret memorandum in November 1918 outlining British desiderata in the former Ottoman Empire. The section of Toynbee's memorandum concerning Iraq proposed an Arab government headed by Abdallah under British mandate. Toynbee rejected 'the rather objectionable sham of a titular local sovereign' or an Arab federation headed by Husayn who would reside in the Hijaz. Toynbee suggested Abdallah as a compromise between these two alternatives.<sup>7</sup> The extent to which Lawrence influenced Toynbee is unclear, although the striking similarity of their proposals for governing post-war Iraq strongly suggests an influence. Lawrence may have enlisted Toynbee's support in order to give his own proposals greater weight.

On 4 November 1918, Lawrence presented a memorandum to the Cabinet entitled 'Reconstruction of Arabia' that shed additional light on his thinking about Abdallah and British policy towards Iraq. Section (d) noted that 'In Irak the Arabs expect the British to keep control. The Sherif, relying on his Agreement with us, hopes for a nominal Arab administration there.' The reference to the Husayn-McMahon correspondence as Husayn's 'Agreement' with Great Britain clearly indicated the influence of the Hashimites on Lawrence's understanding of British obligations to the Arabs and his ideas about a post-war settlement in the Middle East.<sup>8</sup>

We do not know if Faysal encouraged Lawrence to lobby the British government on behalf of a post-war settlement favourable to the Hashimites or if Lawrence acted purely on his own initiative. The first

possibility cannot be excluded. It was explained in the previous chapter how the Hashimites convinced Sykes in May 1917 that Great Britain should support the establishment of Husayn's sons as the hereditary emirs of zones A and B of the Sykes-Picot agreement. Lawrence understood that the Hashimites, especially Abdallah, saw British officials in the Hijaz as their means to influence British policy in the Middle East. Lawrence explained in *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*:

The Arabs thought Abdulla a far-seeing statesman and an astute politician. Astute he certainly was, but not greatly enough to convince us of his sincerity. His ambition was patent. Rumour made him the brain of his father and the Arab revolt; but he seemed too easy for that. His object was, of course, the winning of Arab independence and the building up of Arab nations, but he meant to keep the direction of the new states in the family. So he watched us, and played through us to the British gallery.<sup>13</sup>

The post-war settlement that Lawrence presented to the Eastern Committee and the Cabinet bore an unmistakable resemblance to Hashimite schemes to establish Faysal and Abdallah as the rulers of Syria and Iraq respectively. When Lawrence addressed both bodies and lobbied Cecil, Macdonough and, possibly, Toynbee, he did so knowing that the settlement he proposed originated with the Hashimites. Playing 'to the British gallery' through sympathetic British officials like Sykes and Lawrence was one of the strategies the Hashimites adopted to advance their ambitions in the Fertile Crescent. Lawrence's willingness to lobby on Abdallah's behalf in London demonstrated the success of that strategy. Lawrence assumed that British and Hashimite interests coincided in Syria and Iraq, and that safeguarding British interests in both countries depended upon the appearance of British support for Arab self-determination. Lawrence thought that British interests in Syria and Iraq and Arab demands for self-determination could both be satisfied by installing Husayn's sons in Syria and Iraq.

The British and French governments issued a joint statement on 7 November 1918 committing themselves to 'the establishment of indigenous Governments and Administrations in Syria and Mesopotamia freely chosen by the populations themselves.' Both governments called for Arab self-determination in order to remove Arab fears of annexation and to avoid



a collision with President Wilson at Versailles.<sup>20</sup> This declaration said nothing about the Hashimites, although its impact on Abdallah and his ambitions in Iraq is not difficult to imagine.

The strongest objections to the Lawrence plan and the Anglo-French declaration came from Captain Arnold Talbot Wilson, the acting civil commissioner in Iraq, who replaced Cox in April 1918 when he was temporarily transferred to Tehran. Wilson foresaw that implementing the Anglo-French declaration in Iraq would lead to disaster because, 'to the inhabitants of this country, the ideas on which the Anglo-French declaration is based are new and unfamiliar, to the Sheikhs almost anarchic. They have yet to hear of the obligations of liberty, and to realise the duties of free men.' In his communications with the India Office, Wilson explained that the 'average Arab', as opposed to the 'amateur politicians of Bagdad', wanted a British protectorate, not Arab self-government. Wilson emphasized that the Christians and Jews of Iraq, who feared oppression in a Muslim-dominated Arab state, also strongly supported a British protectorate. Instead of supporting Arab government in Iraq, Wilson proposed establishing a British protectorate with Sir Percy Cox as high commissioner and no Arab emir, isolating the affairs of Iraq from those of the other Arab countries and uniting Iraq by eliminating all barriers separating the *vilayets* of Mosul, Baghdad and Basra.<sup>21</sup>

Wilson strongly objected to Lawrence's proposals to the Eastern Committee, first, because they sought to perpetuate the distinctions between Mosul, Baghdad and Basra; second, because Iraqis would not tolerate the introduction of 'foreign puppet rulers' or outside Arab interference in their affairs, be it from Syria or the Hijaz. ('In practice they dislike and distrust both. National unity means for them united Mesopotamia and not unity with either Syria or Hedjaz.');

third, because Abdallah's establishment in Baghdad would upset the delicate balance of power between Husayn and his peninsular rivals; and fourth, because the Christians and Jews of Iraq feared the domination of foreign Muslim Arabs. Despite his objections to Abdallah, Wilson believed that he 'would meet with wide acceptance in Baghdad, and would probably be

acceptable to Shi'ahs on account of the Sharif's well known latitude in religious affairs.' Wilson, like the India Office, regretted that the future of Iraq had ever been negotiated with Husayn, and wanted all Hashimite influence eliminated from the country. Wilson was equally opposed to the appointment of an Iraqi as emir because no one in Iraq was qualified to hold such high office. Wilson was convinced that the Shi'ites would never accept a Sunni emir or vice versa, the Kurds an Arab emir, and the Jews and Christians a Muslim ruler of any kind.

Wilson's preference was for direct British rule, with Sir Percy Cox as high commissioner for five years and no Arab emir. Iraqi representation in the central government would be limited to a council of Arab ministers backed by British advisers. Wilson was so confident that a British protectorate would meet with wide acceptance in Baghdad and the rural districts of Iraq that he offered to conduct a plebiscite in order to prove his point. As will soon be explained, the plebiscite Wilson conducted in late 1918 and early 1919 offered a clear, if somewhat questionable, justification of his vision of Iraq's future.<sup>22</sup>

Wilson's views were supported by the India Office, the Government of India, Sir Percy Cox and General Sir Charles Monro, the general officer commanding in Iraq. The opposition of the Government of India to 'puppet rulers' has already been mentioned. John Shuckburgh of the India Office Political Department wrote in late November 1918 that his department

has never felt the slightest enthusiasm for the "Arab State Policy" or the least confidence in Arab ability to achieve unassisted either our altruistic aim of regenerating Mesopotamia or our more selfish object of setting up a barrier against hostile penetration in the direction of the Gulf. It is clear that the enlightened and progressive Arab, in whom the enthusiasts ask us to believe, is a mere fiction as far as Mesopotamia is concerned.<sup>23</sup>

Sir Arthur Hirtzel dismissed the very idea of Arab unity, and regarded 'a solid "Arab Nation", if such a thing were conceivable, as an even more dangerous carrier of the Pan-Islamic germ than Turkey was.'<sup>24</sup>

Abdallah's prospects in Iraq depended largely upon the credibility of Wilson and Lawrence as authorities on Iraqi affairs. The India Office did not consider Lawrence a reliable authority on Iraq. Hirtzel,

who perceptively suspected that Lawrence was easily duped by the Hashimites, wrote to Montagu in January 1919 that he had 'no confidence in Lawrence's opinion on Mesopotamian questions'.<sup>25</sup> The India Office rightly distrusted Lawrence, whose only visit to Iraq took place in April 1916. (At that time, British military intelligence in Cairo sent him to southern Iraq to bribe Khalīl Pāshā, the Turkish commander at Kūt al-ʿAmāra, to raise the siege of the city and allow General Townsend's troops to withdraw.)<sup>26</sup>

The Foreign Office took Lawrence more seriously than it did Wilson. At the peace conference, Sir Louis Mallet noted that it would be 'unwise to accept at face value the assertions made to Wilson by native authorities.' About Lawrence Mallet wrote: 'I should like to emphasize here the importance the Foreign Office attaches to Colonel Lawrence's views which rest upon a thorough knowledge of the Arab countries and character, where he resided in archaeological work.'<sup>27</sup> This telling remark reveals the belief that the Arabs were in essence an undifferentiated mass about whom the most sweeping generalizations could be made. According to this faulty logic, Lawrence's assumptions about the Hijaz and Syria--the Arab countries he knew best--were equally true for Iraq.

The tendency of the Foreign Office to promote Lawrence as a greater authority on Iraqi affairs than Wilson tell us more about the partisan leanings of some British officials than it does about Lawrence's competence as an adviser on Iraqi affairs. The controversy surrounding Lawrence's competence revealed that one characteristic of British policy in the Middle East was the blurred distinction between the factual reporting of political matters and partisan advocacy.

Because of their long experience of the Persian Gulf and Iraq, Wilson, Cox and the India Office had a more subtle understanding of the complex social and political character of Iraq and the Arabian peninsula than did T. E. Lawrence. Unlike Lawrence and his partisans, Wilson was too sceptical and experienced to believe that Iraqi Shiites, Kurds, Jews and Christians would readily accept Abdallah--a Sunni Arab who had never visited, much less ruled, Iraq--as their sovereign.

Foreign Office and India Office attitudes towards Abdallah were influenced by the mutual antipathy of Lawrence and Wilson. Lawrence's dislike of Wilson was revealed in a private letter that Hirtzel sent to Montagu in October 1919. Hirtzel wrote: 'As regards A. T. Wilson-- Lawrence told me months ago (the first time I met him, in fact) that he hates Wilson, and he practically admitted that his attitude towards Mesopotamian questions is coloured by this personal feeling.'<sup>28</sup> Wilson thought little better of Lawrence. In later years Wilson wrote that Lawrence was directly responsible for the various disasters that befell Syria, Palestine and the Hijaz during and after the war, and for poisoning Anglo-French relations in the Middle East.<sup>29</sup>

Although Montagu and Cox generally agreed with Wilson about British policy in Iraq, they were willing under limited conditions to consider Abdallah's establishment as the titular ruler of Iraq. During a meeting of the Eastern Committee on 27 November 1918, which considered Abdallah's suitability to head an Arab government in Iraq, Montagu remarked that 'if Abdullah is the lascivious, idle creature he is represented to be [by Lawrence], he is the ideal man because he would leave the British administration to govern the country wholly.' By late December 1918, Cox had reluctantly agreed to accept a figure-head Arab emir, even Abdallah, if it became impossible for Great Britain to avoid the unpleasant prospect of Arab government in Iraq.<sup>30</sup> The Political Department of the India Office disagreed with Wilson that the Anglo-French declaration was incompatible with a British protectorate in Iraq. They argued that the two could be reconciled if a popular referendum in Iraq came out in favour of a British protectorate.<sup>31</sup>

The Foreign Office and the British authorities in Cairo and Jidda disagreed with Wilson and the India Office about Abdallah's suitability to head an Arab government in Iraq. Abdallah's supporters in the Foreign Office were Lord Robert Cecil, Sir Louis Mallet, Arnold Toynbee and Major Hubert Young. They supported Abdallah, first, because the Husayn-McMahon correspondence had, in their view, committed Great Britain to promote self-government in Iraq; second, because British interests in the Middle East required cooperation with Arab nationalism

under Hashimite leadership; and third, because a regime headed by Abdallah would legitimize Great Britain's presence in Iraq.

The third point presupposed considerable Hashimite influence in Iraq. As we have already seen, Lawrence assured the Foreign Office that Abdallah had a large Iraqi following. Because of Lawrence, Cecil, Mallet and Toynbee assumed that defying Arab nationalism and Islam--both were synonymous in their minds with the Hashimites--would have dire consequences for British interests in the Middle East. They accepted without hesitation Lawrence's view that Abdallah was a nominal Sunni with Shiite leanings who would be equally acceptable to the Sunnis and Shiites of Iraq.<sup>32</sup>

Cecil, who had recently become the assistant secretary of state for eastern affairs, thought of Abdallah as a clever yet indolent man ('He is a sensualist, idle and very lazy.') who would be the pliant tool of the British administration in Iraq.<sup>33</sup> Mallet envisaged Abdallah as the titular head of an administration in which British officials would have the largest share, but which would employ as many local people as possible.<sup>34</sup> In complete contrast to A. T. Wilson, Toynbee argued that Abdallah's presence in Iraq would actually reduce tension in the Arabian peninsula. Toynbee claimed that the satisfaction of Hashimite ambitions in Iraq would enable Great Britain to take a firm stand against Husayn if he antagonized Ibn Saud.<sup>35</sup>

Despite some reservations about Abdallah, Cornwallis, Hogarth and Storrs of the Arab Bureau and C. E. Wilson in Jidda recommended that Great Britain should sponsor him in Iraq. Unlike the India Office and the Foreign Office, Cornwallis, Storrs, Hogarth and Wilson all knew Abdallah personally. All four noted his intelligence and considered him the ablest of Husayn's four sons. His laziness, love of pleasure and Shiite leanings were also remarked. Cornwallis and Storrs, who emphasized Abdallah's pro-British leanings, doubted that he would be content to remain a figure-head ruler of Iraq. Cornwallis attributed this ambition to Abdallah's 'considerable political flair', 'oriental' thought patterns and an unscrupulousness learned in 'the Constantinople school of intrigue.' Hogarth wondered if Abdallah's 'love of politics

and curiosity about persons' would lead him to intrigue at home and abroad. Wilson emphasized Abdallah's favourable reputation in religious matters, tolerance and sympathy for the Shiites of Iraq.<sup>36</sup>

#### The Plebiscite of 1918-1919

Although he had little enthusiasm for Abdallah or any other potential Arab ruler of Iraq, Lord Curzon argued before the Eastern Committee on 27 November 1918 that it would be 'presumptuous folly' for Great Britain to select an Arab ruler for Iraq, even if one could be found. Curzon proposed instead to conduct a plebiscite that would ask Iraqis who they preferred as their titular emir. Cecil, Montagu and others attending the meeting agreed that a final decision in this regard could not be taken before a plebiscite had been conducted. The Eastern Committee expected trouble from Woodrow Wilson if British policy in Iraq did not appear to support Arab self-determination. It was decided, therefore, that A. T. Wilson should conduct a plebiscite on the basis of three questions:

1. Do the peoples of Mesopotamia want a single Arab State from Mosul to the Gulf?
2. Accepting British tutelage as a necessity of the case, do the said peoples want an Arab ruler to be set up as a titular head of a single Arab State in this area?
3. If the said peoples desire an Arab ruler, who is the most suitable man? <sup>37</sup>

When Montagu informed Wilson of this decision, he stressed the importance that the Eastern Committee attached to an unbiased statement of Iraqi aspirations that Great Britain could present to world opinion.<sup>38</sup>

The plebiscite conducted by Wilson and his subordinates began in early December 1918 and ended in late January 1919. The results were summarized in a series of telegrams that Wilson sent to the India Office, a collection of declarations from the notables of fourteen districts of Iraq entitled 'Self-Determination in Iraq' and a memorandum by Gertrude Bell entitled 'Self-Determination in Mesopotamia'.

A large majority of the respondents asked for a united Iraq from Mosul to the Persian Gulf and a British protectorate with Sir Percy Cox as high commissioner. An Arab emir, whether a 'son of the Sharif' or someone else, was overwhelmingly, but not entirely, rejected. Many of

those who submitted declarations claimed that no suitable local candidate existed, that no part of Iraq would accept a ruler from another part and that the Arabs were still unprepared for or incapable of self-determination. Several declarations noted that the Shiites would not accept a Sunni emir and vice versa. Christian and Jewish petitioners rejected any suggestion of an Arab government.

Support for a 'son of the Sharif', that is Abdallah, was limited to Baghdad, Basra, al-Samāwa, al-Shāmiyya, al-Kāzimiyya, Najaf and Karbala. However, only in Baghdad, al-Kāzimiyya. Najaf and Karbala did pro-Hashimite sentiment extend beyond a few scattered petitions. Support for Abdallah was strongest in Baghdad. Several definite pronouncements against a Hashimite emir came from Basra, al-Kūt, al-Shāmiyya and al-Nāṣiriyya. Sir Percy Cox received more votes than Abdallah or any other candidate for emir. The relative strength of these candidates was not noted. According to Bell, Hashimite supporters were generally young men under the age of thirty of no social or economic standing; many of them were former supporters of the CUP. Bell and Wilson attributed pro-Hashimite sentiment 'to a campaign of political agitation in Baghdad', agents from Istanbul and, in the case of Najaf and Karbala, religious fanaticism.<sup>39</sup> If taken at face value, the reports of Bell and Wilson were a powerful argument against the establishment of Abdallah or anyone else as the titular Arab ruler of Iraq.

The accuracy of the plebiscite is open to serious doubt. The interviews conducted by Wilson and his subordinates, and the method of selecting those who signed declarations, virtually guaranteed that, with little exception, only views favourable to the British administration would reach London. Many of the urban notables and tribal leaders who made statements apparently wrote or said what they did in order to remain on good terms with the civil administration. The plebiscite failed to note, or dismissed as insignificant, Iraqi opposition to British rule. Nationalists were depicted as windy demagogues who represented themselves only. Seven Baghdadis were deported for being Arab nationalist agitators. *Mujtahids* whose *fatāwā* branded supporters of non-Muslim government as heretics were dismissed as fanatics.

Petitions were not collected in the major towns of al-Dulaim, al-Ramādī and Sāmarrā'. Tribal discontent, which became so apparent during the insurrection in the summer of 1920, was not even suggested.<sup>40</sup>

The British administration in Mosul and al-Ḥilla manipulated local opinion to suit Wilson's ends. British political officers in Mosul asked local notables to sign petitions requesting a British protectorate. The British political officer in al-Ḥilla refused to accept a petition calling for the establishment of an independent Arab government led by one of Husayn's sons. Instead, he advised the mayor of al-Ḥilla--an appointee of the British administration--to bring local people to the town hall where they would sign petitions calling for the establishment of a British protectorate with Sir Percy Cox as high commissioner.<sup>41</sup>

Baghdad was the last city where the plebiscite was held. At Wilson's invitation, leaders of Baghdad's Sunni, Shiite, Jewish and Christian communities met on 22 January 1919 in order to discuss the political future of Iraq and to present petitions to the British administration. As the delegates entered the hall where the meeting was held, British soldiers at the door distributed copies of petitions from pro-British Iraqis who had asked for a continuation of the present administration and Sir Percy Cox as king of Iraq. Colonel Frank Balfour, the military governor of Baghdad, arranged for the noted Oxford orientalist, David Samuel Margoliouth, to address the assembled in Arabic. Margoliouth appealed to the communal leaders to ask for a British protectorate because Iraqis, who had lived under alien rule for centuries, were unfit for self-government. The meeting ended with a petition signed by forty-seven Sunnis and Shiites calling for the unity of Iraq from Mosul to the Persian Gulf and for one of Husayn's sons as king. The Jews and Christians refused to sign this petition. The British administration responded to the Sunni-Shiite petition, first, by exiling several nationalists to Istanbul and, then, by arranging for counterpetitions that called for a British protectorate.<sup>42</sup>

British, Iraqi and French sources on the plebiscite all agree that there was overwhelming support for the unity of Iraq from Mosul to the Persian Gulf, that the Christians and Jews of Iraq wanted a British



protectorate and that Baghdad, al-Kāzimiyyah, Najaf and Karbala were main the centres of support for Abdallah. The strength of pro-Hashimite sentiment in those cities relative to other currents of Iraqi opinion was not explained. It is noteworthy that pro-Hashimite support was concentrated in the predominantly Shiite cities of Najaf, Karbala and al-Kāzimiyyah, and in Baghdad where Sunni and Shiite leaders had asked for a Hashimite emir. Wilson and Bell dismissed signs of Shiite sympathy for Abdallah as the ranting of a few fanatic clerics.<sup>43</sup>

The India Office accepted Wilson's conclusion that Abdallah had few supporters in Iraq. Hirtzel and Shuckburgh used the plebiscite to justify rejecting a proposal from Lawrence that Abdallah should be allowed to tour Iraq in the company of Sir Percy Cox.<sup>44</sup> Lawrence, Mallet and Toynbee believed that such a tour would disprove Wilson's contention that Abdallah had a negligible Iraqi following.<sup>45</sup>

The India Office view of Abdallah in late January 1919 was well explained in a departmental minute by Shuckburgh which commented on Lawrence's proposal.

The appearance of a candidate backed by the great Sir Percy Cox, who stands in these regions strictly on his own merits for all that is most exalted & authentic in British imperial power, wd surely be taken as a direct intimation of the British Govt. The Baghdad malcontents might vote against Abdullah on that very account; our friends wd doubtless plump for him. But in any case we should be no nearer ascertaining the wishes of the population. Col. Lawrence has always been against consulting the local people; less I think on account of the obvious difficulties of taking a plebiscite in such a country as Mesopotamia, than because he feared that the popular vote would be adverse to Abdullah. But wisely or unwisely, H. M.'s Govt. decided upon consultation and having done so, & having obtained results which, however negative in other directions, certainly show no general inclination in Abdulah's favour; they cannot in decency now bring him upon the scene as their candidate. Such a course would, I venture to think, place us in an essentially false position. We should be told: "You made a pretense of putting the question to the popular vote; but when the popular vote didn't give the result you hoped, you at once called upon your heavy artillery." We should in fact be incurring the reproach of hypocrisy and double dealing on behalf of a candidate whose claims, so far as I can see, we have absolutely no interest in pursuing. [underlined in the original]<sup>45</sup>

The Arab Bureau had serious reservations about the validity of the plebiscite Wilson conducted. Hogarth complained that Wilson's telegrams to the India Office describing the progress of the plebiscite deliberately aimed 'to discredit all solutions of the Arab question except one--direct British control and administration.' Hogarth did not believe that the Shiites of Iraq would never accept a Sunni emir. He accepted Bell's assertion that Abdallah's well-known Shiite leanings would make him acceptable to the Shiites of Iraq. Hogarth mistakenly assumed that Gertrude Bell favoured a Hashimite emir. In February 1919 Wilson and Bell were, in fact, united in their opposition to Abdallah.<sup>47</sup>

The Foreign Office strongly objected to Wilson's management of the plebiscite. Curzon complained that the instructions Wilson had sent to his subordinates in late November 1918 violated the orders of the Eastern Committee. Those instructions made it abundantly clear that public opinion would not be encouraged or allowed to express itself in a manner that contradicted Wilson's well-known views. Wilson's political officers were instructed to confine their queries to the leading personalities in their districts, and to use all their influence to elicit statements favourable to the British administration.<sup>48</sup>

Curzon rejected the advice of the Foreign Office Eastern Department not to criticize Wilson, and asked the India Office to reprimand him for not complying with the policy of the Eastern Committee.<sup>49</sup> The India Office recognized that Wilson had exceeded his orders, but was disinclined to reproach him. Much to Curzon's annoyance, Montagu urged the Foreign Office to understand that Wilson faced the difficult task of 'ascertaining the real drift of public opinion--a very intangible and uncertain factor in an oriental population.'<sup>50</sup>

Despite his protest to the India Office, Curzon accepted Wilson's conclusion that an overwhelming majority of Iraqis had rejected Abdallah and that the Hashimites had little influence in Iraq. Curzon's view of the plebiscite was influenced by Wilson's dominant personality. In a comment on the plebiscite made in April 1920, Curzon noted that 'Colonel Wilson, being a man of great energy and power, had, in virtue of his official position succeeded in bring his view into force and His

Majesty's Government had been more or less obliged to acquiesce.<sup>51</sup> Whatever the state of Iraqi opinion may have been in early 1919, Wilson had for the time being succeeded in eliminating Abdallah as a candidate to head an Arab government in Iraq.

It is unknown if Abdallah knew that the British had seriously considered him to head an Arab government in Iraq. Abdallah's memoirs say nothing about Iraq in 1918 and 1919. From the end of the war until January 1919, the siege and surrender of the Ottoman garrison at Medina and his family's rivalry with Ibn Saud, not Iraq, were Abdallah's main preoccupations.<sup>52</sup> The isolation of the Hijaz and pressing concerns at home made it difficult for Abdallah to influence events in Iraq and British consideration of his abilities. None the less, Iraq almost certainly remained on his political agenda. That interest was kept alive by letters that an 'Anīza tribesman delivered to Husayn in February 1919 on behalf of Sunni and Shiite notables. Those letters explained that representatives of the major Iraqi cities, especially Baghdad and Najaf, had recently asked for Abdallah as their emir.<sup>53</sup>

As the probable originator of the idea to install Husayn's sons in Syria and Iraq, Abdallah could hardly have been indifferent to the plebiscite in Iraq and its implications for him. The Hashimite origin of the scheme Lawrence presented to the Eastern Committee in October 1918 was a clear sign of the interest the Hashimites took in post-war Iraq. That interest was voiced again in Paris in January 1919 when Faysal expressed his certainty to J. C. Moore of British military intelligence in Iraq that Abdallah would become the first emir of Iraq.<sup>54</sup>

#### Abdallah's Alleged Shiite Leanings: The Origin of an Idea in British Official Thinking

From October 1918 to February 1919 British officials advanced three main arguments to justify establishing a Hashimite regime in Iraq. The first emphasized Abdallah's religious tolerance and Shiite leanings. The second stressed his political skills. The third emphasized the need to keep faith with Husayn by fulfilling the commitments made by Sir Henry McMahon. Proponents of the third argument claimed that an understanding with Husayn and support for Arab self-determination would legitimize the British presence in Iraq.

Abdallah's supposed acceptability to Iraqi Shiites did more than anything else to convince British officials in London, Cairo and Jidda that he was qualified to be the titular ruler of Iraq. Almost all British officials who commented on Abdallah's suitability for high office in Iraq, including Wilson and Bell, agreed that he would meet with wide acceptance among the Shiites of Iraq because of his family's Shiite proclivities and religious tolerance. Only the India Office doubted that Abdallah had strong Shiite leanings.<sup>55</sup>

How did the curious notion that Abdallah was a 'crypto-Shiah' take root in British official thinking? The diffusion of this idea can be traced to five sources: T. E. Lawrence, Gertrude Bell, A. T. Wilson, the Arab Bureau and C. E. Wilson. Of the five, Lawrence and then Bell did the most to spread this idea in British official circles. Bell's private letters to Lord Hardinge in May 1918, which explained her views on the Hashimites and Iraq, were known to the Eastern Committee and the Arab Bureau. It will also be recalled that Wilson informed the India Office in November 1918 that the Shiites of Iraq would probably accept Abdallah because of Husayn's religious tolerance.

One of the strategies the Hashimites adopted to advance their ambitions in Iraq was to convince the British that Iraqi Shiites would accept Abdallah as their legitimate overlord. The Hashimites correctly sensed that Great Britain would not sponsor Abdallah unless they could prove that the Shiite majority of Iraq would accept him.<sup>56</sup> During the war, Husayn and Abdallah made numerous attempts to convince British and French officials of their religious tolerance and sympathy for Shiites. The Hashimites concentrated much of their effort on Lawrence in the apparent belief that his ignorance of Islamic institutions and enthusiasm for Arab nationalism made him easy to manipulate.

Most of what Lawrence knew about Hashimite views on the Caliphate, the Wahhabis and the Shiites was learned from an interview with Husayn in late July 1917. During that interview, Husayn made what appears to have been a deliberate attempt to convince the British government through Lawrence that Hashimite religious moderation and sympathy for the *Shi'a* qualified Abdallah to help the British rule Iraq. Lawrence learned from Husayn that

They [the Shiites] loved his family, since the Shias have a greater respect for the person of the Prophet than have the Sunnis. Some, such as the Zeidis and Jaafaris were, in his opinion, more reasonable in their attitude than the Shafeis, who oppose them. The Hanefite objection to the Shias was political and not doctrinal.

He [Husayn], in common with all orthodox Islam, was not prepared to deny the Khalifate of Abu Bekr, and regarded the Shias who condemned Abu Bekr, Omar and Othman, as mistaken. The Shias in India are largely heretical in their views, as are many of the Persian sects.

The Sherif is ostensibly a Shafei. In this conversation he took up a middle position between moderate Shia and Sunni; it is generally believed that his real beliefs are Zeidi. Sidi Abdulla is nearly a Shia of the Jaaferi wing; Sidi Ali is a Sunni, and a fairly definite one; Sidi Feisal is not a formalist, and tends to an undefined undogmatic position, more Shia perhaps than Sunni, but vague. They are all nervous of betraying their real attitude, even to their friends and betray and maintain a non-committal Shafei profession in public.

Husayn's reference to Abdallah and Faysal reveals the source of Lawrence's statement to the Eastern Committee that Abdallah was a 'crypto-Shia'. Lawrence added that the conception Husayn, Abdallah and Faysal had of the Caliphate 'was the simple Shia one . . . namely, that the Khalifate expired with Abu Bekr, and that any resurrection of the idea to-day was not only grammatically absurd but blasphemous.' Lawrence noted that, 'by ignoring the political disintegration of Islam', Husayn hoped to concentrate his efforts on 'its dogmatic differences and to do something to reduce the friction between sects.' By so doing, Husayn's 'appeal would be to moderate Sunni and moderate Shia to meet under his presidency, and to try to restrain the extremists in their camps.' Husayn is depicted here as all things to all people, an Islamic smorgasbord in whom all Arab Muslims could find something they liked, and with whose assistance the British could successfully reorganize the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>57</sup>

Faysal did his part to convince the British government that the Shiites of Iraq would accept Abdallah. Faysal told J. C. Moore in January 1919 that an Iraqi republic 'would be repugnant to Arab ideals', and that the Iraqi *Shi'a* 'would welcome an Amir of his family on account

of his lineage and the Sunnis on account of his religion.' Moore's report did not question the validity of this last claim.<sup>58</sup>

In early 1920 Abdallah looked to France to support his ambitions in Iraq. Commenting on Abdallah's solicitation of the French government, Georges Catroux, head of the French military mission to Arabia from April 1919 to July 1920, suggested that it would not have been out of character for Abdallah to spread the idea that he had a special sympathy for the *Shi'a*. Catroux knew Abdallah well, but distrusted him as a man who would readily betray his family and the British, and say anything to anyone in order to advance his personal agenda. Catroux wrote to French president Alexandre Millerand in late 1920 and explained as follows how Abdallah would try to make himself palatable to French officials:

He will present himself as a spirit liberated from religious prejudice, infatuated with progress, favourable to western ideas and convinced that the evolution of the Arab lands towards independence should have as a first step the tutelage of the adult nations.<sup>59</sup>

Bell's private letters to Hardinge in May 1918 indirectly supported the idea that Abdallah would be acceptable to Iraqi Shiites. In late 1918 the Eastern Committee and the Arab Bureau seized upon these letters in order to justify Abdallah's establishment in Iraq.<sup>60</sup> It will be recalled that Bell foresaw Husayn as the 'nominal overlord' of Iraq, even though he resided in Mecca. She supported a role for Husayn in Iraq because 'outside Baghdad practically the whole world is Shi'ah. They would not I think at all like a well known Baghdad Sunni.' Bell believed that Husayn would be widely acceptable because 'either sect of Islam turns indifferently to the Sharif. It is the general opinion among Shi'ahs that he is one of their persuasion though he has not openly declared himself Ja'fari and in fact the extreme liberality of his views and his leanings to Ja'fari doctrine almost warrants this theory.' Her reasoning on this last point was strikingly similar to that in Lawrence's report on his interview with Husayn in July 1917. That similarity suggests that Bell--who represented the Arab Bureau in Iraq during the war--may have had access to Lawrence's report.

Bell admitted, however, that there was little to encourage Hashimite ambitions in Iraq because Husayn's influence there was strictly religious, not political. The 'great Mujtahids' of Iraq had not corresponded with Husayn, although they spoke sympathetically of his revolt. She noted that very few Iraqis had joined the Arab revolt, and that Arab unity was a meaningless concept to the overwhelming majority in Iraq. According to Bell, the people of Baghdad had 'a deep seated jealousy of Arabs who are not of local birth'. The political horizons of other Iraqis were confined to the localities in which they lived.

Despite the flimsy foundation of pro-Hashimite sentiment in Iraq, Bell assumed that Great Britain could benefit from Husayn's 'nominal overlordship'. In her view, Husayn's spiritual authority, inclination towards the *Shī'a* and religious tolerance would legitimize British rule in Iraq and help Great Britain to hold the balance there between Sunnis and Shiites.<sup>61</sup>

In late November 1918 Hirtzel made use of Bell's letters in order to argue against Abdallah. Hirtzel reasoned that if Bell's views were correct ('. . . and there is no reason to doubt it'), Abdallah, who was almost unknown in Iraq, would find his father's minimal prestige among the Shiites a weak foundation on which to build a regime. Hirtzel complained that Husayn's eventual successor, Emir 'Alī, would undermine Abdallah's claim to have special sympathy for the *Shī'a*. Lawrence, it will be recalled, had previously reported that 'Ali was a strict Sunni without Shiite leanings.<sup>62</sup>

Wilson and Bell agreed that a regime headed by Abdallah would be undesirable, but disagreed about Husayn's future role in Iraq.<sup>63</sup> Wilson opposed all forms of Hashimite involvement in Iraq, including Husayn's nominal overlordship. However, in November 1918 Wilson claimed that Abdallah would meet with widespread acceptance in Baghdad, and would probably be acceptable to the *Shī'a* 'on account of the Sherif's well-known latitude in religious views.'<sup>64</sup> It is unclear why Wilson held this view of Abdallah. Bell's influence may be the reason.<sup>65</sup> What is clear is that neither Wilson nor Bell nor the India Office considered

Abdallah's alleged Shiite leanings sufficient cause to support the creation of a Hashimite monarchy in Iraq.

It is instructive to note some of the terms that Abdallah's British supporters used to characterize him: idle, lazy, indolent, lascivious, sensualist, pleasure-loving, unscrupulous, intelligent and clever. These are not the attributes of an effective political leader, but of a lackey who would be content to do Great Britain's bidding and lend his name to the pretense of Arab self-determination. The image of an Iraqi titular emir in the minds of Mallet, Cecil, the Arab Bureau or even Lawrence was not, therefore, essentially different from that of the India Office and Cox. Cox and the India Office differed from the others in their relative enthusiasm for Arab government and an emir. A. T. Wilson stands out because of his stubborn and, ultimately, fruitless refusal even to consider Arab government of any kind.

The unflattering image that British officials had of Abdallah came ironically from his supporters in the Arab Bureau and, above all, from Lawrence. One characteristic of Abdallah's long association with the British was the negative view many British officials had of him and his capabilities. That view began to take shape during and immediately after the war. Part of Lawrence's legacy to British policy in the Middle East was the negative image that dogged Abdallah in British official thinking for many years. It is ironic that Lawrence championed the cause of a man for whom he had so little personal regard.<sup>66</sup>

#### Conclusion

One of the aims of Hashimite policy after the war was for Abdallah to become the ruler of Iraq. As we have seen, Husayn never lost an opportunity to tell British officials that McMahon had promised him that Iraq would form part of his future Arab kingdom. Husayn and his sons were realistic enough to know that they lacked the material means and influence inside Iraq to establish their rule there unaided. They understood that Abdallah would never establish himself in Iraq without British support. The problem they faced was how to convince the British government to install Abdallah in Iraq. To solve that problem the Hashimites adopted a two-part strategy.



The first part of that strategy aimed to convince Sykes, Lawrence and other British officials sympathetic to Arab nationalism to support Husayn's scheme to install Faysal in Syria and Abdallah in Iraq. The Hashimites did not have direct access to the highest levels of the British government or an experienced diplomatic corps to represent them in Europe. Therefore, as a matter of necessity, they relied upon sympathetic and impressionable British officials like Lawrence to argue Abdallah's case in Whitehall.

The second part of their strategy was to convince the British government that the Shiite majority of Iraq would accept Abdallah as their legitimate sovereign. Both the British and the Hashimites understood that the legitimacy of any Arab government in Iraq depended upon its acceptability to the Shiite majority. This was especially true in the case of a foreign-born Sunni emir who had been established by the British. To convince the British government that Abdallah would be acceptable to Iraqi Shiites, Husayn, Faysal and Abdallah presented themselves to Lawrence and other British officials as 'crypto-Shiabs' or very liberal Sunnis who were in reality little different in their religious beliefs from Shiites. They carefully and successfully exploited the ignorance of Lawrence and others who knew little about the religious beliefs of the Hashimites, and even less about the Iraqi *Shī'a*.

However, concerned as the Hashimites were about about Abdallah's legitimacy in the eyes of the Iraqi *Shī'a*, their first concern was to convince the British that the *Shī'a* would accept Abdallah. The British were, after all, in military occupation of Iraq and could set up an Arab government there at will. The Hashimites rightly assumed that the British would not support Abdallah without a reasonable assurance that the Shiites of Iraq would accept him as their legitimate ruler. The Hashimites were more concerned about convincing the British that Abdallah would be acceptable to the Iraqi *Shī'a* than they were about convincing the Iraqi *Shī'a* to ask for Abdallah as their emir. Until mid-1919, the Hashimites made no effort of any note to lobby on Abdallah's behalf among the Shiites of Iraq. Abdallah's partisans were unable to produce sufficient evidence to convince the India Office and A.

T. Wilson that Abdallah had a wide enough base of support among Iraqi Shiites to justify his establishment in Iraq.

This two-part strategy met with mixed success. The Hashimites succeeded in convincing Lawrence and other British officials in the Middle East that the Shiites of Iraq would accept Abdallah as their sovereign. Husayn and his sons successfully convinced Lawrence to lobby on Abdallah's behalf in Whitehall. The fame of Lawrence's wartime exploits and first-hand knowledge of the Hashimites made him an effective advocate for Abdallah. Until Lawrence presented his proposals to the Eastern Committee, Abdallah had never been considered as a possible titular emir for Iraq or anywhere else in the Fertile Crescent. Because of Lawrence, the idea that Abdallah was qualified to head an Arab government under British auspices first took root in British official thinking.

Lawrence's proposals to the Eastern Committee, the Cabinet, Cecil, Macdonough and, probably, Toynbee fell on fertile ground. Sykes had already proposed establishing Husayn's sons as the hereditary emirs in areas A and B of the Sykes-Picot agreement. By the time Lawrence appeared before the Eastern Committee, the Foreign Office and the India Office had agreed that an Arab government under British tutelage would eventually be created in Iraq. By mid-1918, even Sir Percy Cox had concluded that an Arab government of some kind could not be avoided.

The Hashimites failed to achieve their aim of establishing Abdallah in Iraq. The most important reason for that failure was the unbending determination of A. T. Wilson and the India Office to exclude all Hashimite influence from Iraq. The India Office refused to condemn Wilson's conduct of the plebiscite, whose validity they accepted. Lord Curzon strongly objected to Wilson's manipulation of the plebiscite, but accepted its conclusion that Abdallah did not have enough local support to justify bringing him to Iraq. In the face of Wilson, the India Office and Curzon, the Foreign Office and the Arab Bureau--who believed that Abdallah's candidature had not been given a fair chance--were unable to force a reconsideration of the plebiscite.

## Notes

1. War Cabinet Conclusions, 98th meeting, 16 Mar. 1917, 11th minute, CAB 23/2. 'Report of the Mesopotamia Administration Committee' 27 Mar. 1917 signed by Sir Thomas Holderness (India Office), Sir George Clerk (Foreign Office), Sir Henry McMahon, Sir Arthur Hirtzel (India Office) and Sir Ronald Graham (Foreign Office); SSI to Viceroy 29 Mar. 1917 both IO L/P&S/10/686 P2571. See draft telegram to the Government of India, undated but mid-Mar. 1917 in War Cabinet Conclusions 94th meeting 12 Mar. 1917 Appendix I CAB 23/2.
2. Cox to SSI and Political, Basra 7 Apr. 1917 IO L/P&S/10/686 P2571 reg. P2571.
3. Viceroy to SSI 27 Apr. 1917 IO L/P&S/10/686 P2571 reg. P2571. Foreign and Political Dept., Govt. of India to Austen Chamberlain 25 May 1917 FO 371/3051/132787 (quoted).
4. Memoranda of Sir Mark Sykes 17 May 1917 FO 371/3044/120491 and 18 July 1917 FO 371/3044/153075. For Maude's declaration of 19 Mar. 1917, see War Cabinet Conclusions, 96th meeting, 14 Mar. 1917, Appendix II, CAB 23/2.
5. Wingate telegram of 22 Jan. 1918 quoted in 'Mesopotamia: British Engagements as to Future Status' 30 Jan. 1918 IO L/P&S/10/686 P2517/1917 reg. 617.
6. 'British War Aims: Mr. Lloyd George's Statement', *The Times*, 7 Jan. 1918, p. 7.
7. Confidential memorandum of Gertrude Bell on the Arab movement 25 June 1917 FO 882/3/AP/17/14. From the beginning of the war until early 1921, the British administration in Iraq was responsible to the Government of India and the India Office. The British administration in Egypt, including the Arab Bureau, was responsible to the Foreign Office.
8. Cox, 'Mesopotamia: British Engagements as to Future Status' 30 Jan. 1918 IO L/P&S/10/686 P2517/1917 reg. 617.
9. Note of J. E. Shuckburgh to Under SSI, 'Mesopotamia and Sir P. Cox's Visit', 30 Mar. 1918 IO L/P&S/10/686 P2517/1917 reg. P1469.
10. Hirtzel, 'Future of Mesopotamia' 11 Jan. 1918 and the minute of Lord Islington 22 Jan. 1919 IO L/P&S/10/686 P2517/1917 reg. 617.
11. 'The Future of Arabia', *Arab Bulletin Supplementary Series*, no. 3, very secret, Cairo 1 Apr. 1918 FO 882/3/AP/18/1 and Philip Graves, *The Life of Sir Percy Cox* (London, 1941) pp. 237-40.
12. Cox, 'The Future of Mesopotamia', 22 Apr. 1918, E. C. 173, CAB 27/25; Eastern Committee, fifth meeting, 24 Apr. 1918, CAB 27/24; Cox (Tehran) to SSI (Edwin Montagu) 24 Dec. 1918 IO L/P&S/10/755 4722/1918 part 1 reg. 26 (quoted). On the *naqīb* of Baghdad (1841 ? - 1927) see Tawfīq al-Suwaydī, *Wujūh 'Irāqīyya 'Abra al-Ta'rīkh* (London, 1987) pp. 34-39.
13. Bell to Hardinge private 22 Feb. 1918 FO 371/3406/6857 (quoted); Bell to Hardinge private 25 May 1918 and Bell's memorandum, 'Arab Aims' undated, but probably May 1918 (quoted) both FO 371/3047/143466.
14. Eastern Committee, 37th meeting, 29 Oct. 1918, CAB 27/24. Lawrence was instrumental in the creation of a Hashimite regime in Syria under Emir Faysal after the occupation of Damascus on 1 October 1918.

On the occupation of Damascus, see Kedourie, 'The Capture of Damascus 1 October 1918', *Chatham House Version*, pp. 33-51, 399-402.

15. Cecil memorandum 28 Oct. 1918 FO 371/3384/181025.

16. Macdonough, 'Note on Policy in the Middle East', 28 Oct. 1918 secret E. C. 2133 CAB 27/35 and Jeremy Wilson, *Lawrence of Arabia. The Authorized Biography of T. E. Lawrence* (London, 1989) pp. 573-75.

17. Political Intelligence Department (FO), 'Memorandum on the British Case in Regard to the Settlement of Turkey and the Arabian Peninsula', secret, undated, FO 371/4368/P. I. D. 480. A note attached to this file indicates that the first proof of Toynbee's paper was received on 28 October 1918. A reference to the Anglo-French Declaration of 9 November 1918 indicates that his memorandum took its final form in early to mid-November.

18. T. E. Lawrence, 'Reconstruction of Arabia', 4 Nov. 1918 in David Garnett (ed.), *The Letters of T. E. Lawrence* (London, 1938) pp. 265-69.

19. Lawrence, *Seven Pillars*, p. 67.

20. Busch, *Britain*, pp. 188-99 and Andrew and Kanya-Forstner, *France Overseas*, pp. 161-62. The Anglo-French Declaration of 7 November 1918 is reprinted in Hurewitz, *Middle East*, vol. 2, p. 112.

21. PB to SSI 17 Nov. 1918 FO 371/3385/192133 (quoted); PB to SSI 23 Nov. 1918 FO 371/387/194885; PB to SSI 16 Nov. 1918 FO 371/3385/191847; PB to SSI 20 Nov. 1918 FO 371/3385/193742.

22. FO to Viceroy (Repeated to Baghdad) 18 Nov. 1918 FO 371/3385/192911; PB to SSI 20 Nov. 1918 FO 371/3385/194307; PB to SSI 24 Nov. 1918 FO 371/3385/195537; PB to SSI 23 Dec. 1918 IO L/P&S/10/755 4722/1918 part 1 reg. 5580.

23. Shuckburgh minute 20 Nov. 1918 (quoted) IO L/P&S/10/755 4722/1918 part 1 reg. 5104 and Monro to WO 19 Nov. 1918 FO 371/3385/195279.

24. Hirtzel minute 17 Dec. 1918 IO L/P&S/10/755 4722/1918 part 1 reg. 5580.

25. Hirtzel to Montagu 31 Jan. 1919 FO 608/92/1106 (first quote) and Hirtzel minute 6 Jan. 1919 IO L/P&S/10/755 4722/1918 part 1 reg. 26 (second quote). Also see Shuckburgh minute 4 Jan. 1919 and Hirtzel minute 6 Jan. 1919 IO L/P&S/10/755 4722/1918 part 1 reg. 26; Hirtzel memorandum, 'Policy in Arabia', E. C. 2454, 20 Nov. 1918, CAB 27/37; Hirtzel note 'Settlement of Turkey and Arabian Peninsula' 30 Nov. 1918 FO 371/3385/199474.

26. On the Lawrence mission to Iraq in April 1916, see unsigned (Cairo) to Lawrence 26 Mar. 1916 FO 882/15/PNA/16/1; Lawrence (Basra) to Intrusive (Cairo) 8 Apr. 1916 FO 882/15/PNA/16/2; Lawrence to Intrusive 9 Apr. 1916 FO 882/15/PNA/16/3; T. E. Lawrence to his mother 18 May 1916 in Garnett, *Letters* pp. 202-208; Lawrence, *Seven Pillars*, pp. 58-60; Hubert Young, *The Independent Arab* (London, 1933) pp. 72-73 and Faydī, *Nidāl*, pp. 201-19.

27. Mallet, 'Mesopotamia and the Arabs', 24 Dec. 1918 IO L/P&S/10/755 4722/1918 part 1 regs. 26 and 37.

28. Hirtzel to Montagu 4 Oct. 1919 FO 371/4183/140356.

29. For Wilson's views on Lawrence, see John Marlowe, *Late Victorian: The Life of Sir Arnold Talbot Wilson* (London, 1967) pp. 110, 148 and Wilson's review of T. E. Lawrence, *Revolt in the Desert* (London,

1927) and Lowell Thomas, *With Lawrence in Arabia* (London, 1926) in the *Journal of the Central Asian Society*, vol. 14, 1927, pp. 282-84.

30. Eastern Committee, 39th meeting, 27 Nov. 1918, CAB 27/24 and Cox (Tehran) to SSI 24 Dec. 1918 IO L/P&S/10/755 4722/1918 part 1 reg. 26.

31. Cox to SSI 24 Dec. 1918 IO L/P&S/10/755 4722/1918 part 1 reg. 26.

32. Eastern Committee, 37th meeting 29 Oct. 1918 CAB 27/24.

33. Eastern Committee, 39th meeting 27 Nov. 1918 CAB 27/24.

34. Mallet, 'Mesopotamia and the Arabs', 24 Dec. 1918 IO L/P&S/10/755 4722/1918 part 1 regs. 26 and 37.

35. Toynbee, 'Memorandum on French and Arab Claims in the Middle East in Relation to British Interests' 19 Dec. 1918 FO 371/3385/191229.

36. On Cornwallis, Hogarth, Storrs and C. E. Wilson, see Cheetham to FO 30 Jan. 1919 FO 608/96/1376; Cheetham to FO 3 Feb. 1919 FO 608/96/1747; Wilson (Jidda) to Arab Bureau 28 Jan. 1919 FO 882/23/MES/19/2.

37. Eastern Committee, 39th meeting, 27 Nov. 1918, CAB 27/24.

38. SSI to CCB 28 Nov. 1918 FO 371/3385/198293.

39. For Wilson's view of the plebiscite and his interviews with Iraqi notables, see the following telegrams from PB to SSI: 4 Dec. 1918 L/P&S/10/755 4722/1918 part 1 reg. P5435A; 8 Dec. 1918 *ibid.* reg. P5553-5555; 14 Dec. 1918 *ibid.*, reg. P5777; 22 Dec. 1918 *ibid.* reg. P5778; 22 Dec. 1918 *ibid.* reg. P5777; 26 Dec. 1918 *ibid.* reg. 5810; 29 Dec. 1918 *ibid.* reg. 5856; 10 Jan. 1919 *ibid.* reg. 328; two telegrams dated 26 Jan. 1919 *ibid.* reg. 551. Also see 'Self-Determination in Iraq' undated IO L/P&S/10/755 4722/1918 part 1 reg. P1462 and Gertrude Bell, 'Self-Determination in Mesopotamia' 22 Feb. 1919 IO L/P&S/10/755 4722/1918 part 1 reg. P1461.

40. Bell, 'Self-Determination in Mesopotamia' 22 Feb. 1919 IO L/P&S/10/755 4722/1918 part 1 reg. P1461 (quoted). My analysis of the plebiscite of 1918-1919 owes much to P. W. Ireland, *Iraq*, pp. 166-75.

41. 'Umari, *Muqaddarāt*, vol. 3 (Baghdad, 1924-25) pp. 22-25.

42. Basir, *Qadiya*, pp. 85-87 and 'Abd al-Razzāq 'Abd al-Darrājī, *Ja'far Abū'l-Tīman wa Dawruhu fī'l-Ḥaraka al-Waṭaniyya fī'l-'Irāq 1908-1945* (Baghdad, 1978) pp. 63-75.

43. For a French view of the plebiscite, see the following telegrams of Commandant Sciard, the French military attaché in Iraq, and Honoré Roux, the French consul in Baghdad: Sciard to Guerre 17, 24, 25 Jan. and 3, 12 Feb. 1919 and Roux to MAE 20, 24 Jan., 12 Feb. and 24 Mar. 1919 in SHA 7N/4183/dossier 2.

44. Minutes of Shuckburgh 30 Jan., Hirtzel 2 Feb. and Sir Hamilton Grant 29 Jan. 1919 IO L/P&S/10/755 4722/1918 part 1 reg. 56.

45. Toynbee minutes 27 Jan., 1 and 24 Feb. 1919 and two undated minutes by Mallet from late January or early February 1919 FO 608/96/2753.

46. Shuckburgh minute 30 Jan. 1919 IO L/P&S/10/755 4722/1918 part 1 reg. 56.

47. Hogarth to FO (?) 30 Dec. 1918 FO 882/13/MES/18/7; Bell, 'Self-Determination in Mesopotamia', 22 Feb. 1919 IO L/P&S/10/755 4722/1918 part 1 reg. P1461. PB to SSI 8 Dec. 1918 IO L/P&S/10/755

4722/1918 part 1 reg. 5553-5555 notes Bell's agreement with the results of the plebiscite as explained by Wilson.

48. Wilson's secret and confidential memorandum to his Political Officers 30 Nov. 1918 FO 371/4178/12376.

49. Minutes by Young and Clark Kerr, both 24 Jan., Kidston 27. Jan., Vansittart 29 Jan. and Curzon 29 Jan. 1919 and Tilley to Under SSI 3 Feb. 1919, all in FO 371/4178/12376.

50. Shuckburgh (for Montagu) to SSFA 17 Feb. 1919 FO 371/4178/27158 (quoted); Shuckburgh to Wilson 17 Feb. 1919 FO 371/4178/27659; Curzon minute (quoted) undated but about 20 Feb. 1919 FO 371/4178/27158.

51. ICMEA, 37th meeting, 13 Apr. 1920, FO 371/5068/E3706.

52. Elie Kedourie, 'The Surrender of Medina, January 1919', *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 13, no. 1, Jan. 1977, pp. 125-43.

53. Roux (Baghdad) to MAE très confidentiel 23 Feb. 1919 SHA 7N/4183/dossier 2.

54. Moore's interview with Faysal, 30 Jan. 1919 FO 608/92/1106.

55. See, for example, Shuckburgh's minute of 26 Nov. 1918 IO L/P&S/10/755 4722/1918 part 1 reg. 5200-5201.

56. Censuses taken by the British between 1920 and 1931 showed that Shiites constituted approximately 55% of the population, Sunni Arabs 22% and Kurds 14%. Peter Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq 1914-1932* (London, 1976) pp. 300, 314.

57. Lawrence, 'Arabia. The Sherif's Religious Views', undated but after 28 July 1917, attached to Wilson (Jidda) to Director, Arab Bureau secret 31 July 1917 FO 882/12/KH/17/18. C. E. Wilson was present during Lawrence's interview with Husayn. Lawrence's account of that interview was prepared at Wilson's request and had his full approval. Wilson sent a copy of Lawrence's report to the director of the Arab Bureau, Kinahan Cornwallis.

58. Moore's interview with Faysal, 30 Jan. 1919 FO 608/92/1106.

59. Catroux to Millerand 24 Feb. 1920 MAEP Levant: Arabie-Hedjaz, vol. 9 and Georges Catroux, *Deux Missions en Moyen-Orient (1919-1922)* (Paris, 1958) pp. 223-25.

60. For Curzon's remarks to the Eastern Committee on 27 Nov. 1918, see CAB 27/24. In response to A. T. Wilson, who claimed that the Iraqi Shiites would never accept one of the Hashimites, Hogarth wrote:

Against the assertion that [the] Shia would never accept a Sherifian prince, we have to set Miss Bell's opinion that the well known Shiite leanings of the Meccan House might render a member acceptable to Shias. I regard this opinion as the least biased and best informed we have had from Iraq but it stands alone.

Hogarth to ? secret 30 Dec. 1918 FO 882/13/MBS/18/17.

61. Bell to Hardinge private 22 Feb. 1918 FO 371/3406/68571 and Bell to Hardinge private 25 May 1918 and its attached undated memorandum 'Arab Aims' FO 371/3047/143466.

62. Hirtzel, 'Policy in Arabia (Note by the India Office)', 20 Nov. 1918, E. C. 2454, CAB 27/24.

63. On Bell's opposition to Abdallah, see her letters to her father dated 5 and 13 Dec. 1918 and 10 Jan. 1919 in Elizabeth Burgoyne, *Gertrude Bell From Her Personal Papers 1914-1926* (London, 1961) pp.

101-102, 104 and PB to SSI 8 Dec. 1918 IO L/P&S/10/755 4722/1918 part 1 regs. 5553-5555.

64. PB to SSI 24 Nov. 1918 FO 371/3385/195537.

65. A suggestion of Bell's influence on Wilson comes from a letter she wrote to her father, Sir Hugh Bell, on 24 April 1918:

I don't think I've ever told you about Captain Wilson, a very remarkable creature. He began by regarding me 'a born intriguer', and I, not unnaturally, regarded him with some suspicion also, knowing that that was his opinion of me, but perhaps with more amusement than anything else. (I had a difficult time when I first came out here, you know; it makes me laugh now to think of it.) We have ended by becoming firm friends and I have the greatest respect for his amazing intelligence. I think I've helped educate him a little also, but he educates himself and someday will be a very big man. He is getting so much more tolerant and patient, such a statesman. I love working with him.

Burgoyne, *Bell*, pp. 84-85.

66. Uriel Dann has pointed out the widespread dislike of Abdallah as a 'constant' in his relationship with the British. Dann has traced the origin of that dislike to T. E. Lawrence. Dann, *Transjordan*, pp. 38, 49, 76.

## CHAPTER 6: ABDALLAH'S IRAQI SUPPORTERS

### Introduction

Until World War I the legitimacy of Hashimite rule in the Hijaz derived from the descent of the Hashimites from the Prophet Muhammad and Ottoman recognition of their right to rule the Muslim holy places. The Hashimites had no such foundation upon which to base their rule in Iraq. Before the Arab revolt, Abdallah had neither an Iraqi constituency, nor local recognition of his right to rule Iraq, nor the backing of an outside power to support his rule in Iraq. The most Abdallah could count on in Iraq was a certain degree of respect because of his descent. Iraqi respect for the *ashrāf*--the Hashimites or others--did not, however, imply recognition of their right to rule Iraq.

Abdallah confronted several obstacles in his quest to rule Iraq. First among them was the need to convince the British that he should rule Iraq in conjunction with Great Britain. The previous chapter examined the strategies his family adopted to achieve that aim. Abdallah faced the daunting task of creating a base of support for himself in Iraq, a country the Hashimites had never visited, much less ruled. To impress the British, Abdallah had to secure at least the appearance of Iraqi recognition of his right to rule Iraq.

By the end of World War I British troops were in firm control of Iraq. The Hashimites probably assumed that Iraqis would be reluctant to challenge Great Britain's choice of an Arab ruler for Iraq. For this reason, Abdallah's first task was to convince the British to establish him in Iraq. Abdallah realized, however, that British support by itself would not be enough to build a viable and legitimate Hashimite monarchy in Iraq. Without a local base to legitimize his rule, Abdallah could not be certain that he would be able to assert his independence of Great Britain or that his régime would survive the eventual demise of British rule in Iraq.

After the plebiscite of 1918-1919, Abdallah disappeared from Great Britain's agenda in Iraq until March 1920, when the British began to reconsider him for an Iraqi throne. Until Faysal became the king of



Iraq in 1921, Abdallah's ambitions in that land had the support of pro-Hashimite Iraqi nationalists in Syria, the Hijaz and Iraq. Between February 1919 and March 1920 the idea of Abdallah as the future monarch of Iraq was kept alive by those supporters, who were his first constituency in the Fertile Crescent.

This chapter will study the relationship between Abdallah and his Iraqi partisans from two standpoints: first, to determine how successful Abdallah was in his endeavour to create a body of Iraqi supporters; and second, to assess the effectiveness of those supporters in advancing his cause in Iraq. By examining that relationship, this chapter will explain how Abdallah built political alliances that were intended to legitimize his involvement in post-war Iraq.

Part one of this chapter will examine the formation of Abdallah's Iraqi constituency during the World War I. Particular attention will be paid to the relationship between Abdallah and the Iraqi officers who joined the Arab revolt. Their coalescence around him will be explained as a consequence of their hostile relations with Husayn, 'Alī, the British and the Syrian officers in the Hashimite army. Parts two and three will explain why the Iraqi political societies in Syria and Iraq supported Abdallah, describe their political programs, and discuss the extent of their cohesiveness and effectiveness in advancing Abdallah's cause. Part four will explain how Abdallah's prospects in post-war Iraq were undermined by A. T. Wilson's opposition to his Iraqi partisans.

The Beginning of Abdallah's Iraqi Constituency

The origins of Iraqi support for Abdallah can be traced to the Iraqi officers who joined *al-'Ahd* before the war and were later recruited for the Arab revolt. Between November 1914 and November 1918, the British captured approximately 45,500 Ottoman troops in Iraq. It is unknown how many of those troops were Arabs or Turks.' Most of the Iraqis who joined the Hashimite uprising were captured in southern Iraq during the early months of the war and then interned in India, Burma or Egypt. The British interned most of the captured Arabs, including many Iraqi members of *al-'Ahd*, at a camp in Sumerpur in southern India. The prisoners at Sumerpur were then sometimes transferred to internment

camps in Egypt. Starting in June 1916, the British recruited Arab prisoners of war in India to organize and train a regular Hijazi army capable of fighting the Turks. Artillery officers, of whom many were Iraqis, were in particular demand.

The first British effort to recruit in India for the Arab revolt ended in failure. In June 1916 the British sent ten Arab officers and 150 troops, almost all of whom were Iraqis, from Sumerpur to the Hijaz. Some of the recruits were cautiously willing to leave the camp; a large majority, however, refused to join the Arab revolt. When their ship reached the Hijaz in July 1916, seven out of ten officers and 130 out of 150 troops refused to join the Arab uprising and asked to return to India. Those who refused to join were interned in Egypt.<sup>2</sup>

A second unsuccessful attempt to recruit was made in November 1916 when ninety Arab officers and 2100 men were sent from Sumerpur to Rābigh. Most Iraqi internees refused to join the uprising despite British assurances that they would not be forced to fight the Turks. Once the internees had reached Rabigh, only a handful of them agreed to disembark. Lieutenant-Colonel A. C. Parker, the British officer in charge of these prisoners, called the effort to recruit them 'hopeless'.<sup>3</sup> About this time, an unknown but modest number of Iraqi and Syrian officers captured by the Russians in the Caucasus arrived at Rābigh. According to Nūrī al-Sa'īd's account of the Arab revolt, these officers had willingly volunteered to join the Hijaz uprising.<sup>4</sup>

The British were more successful in May 1917 when Wingate sent Colonel G. E. Leachman and two Iraqi officers from Egypt to Sumerpur to recruit for the Arab revolt. Leachman and his Iraqi assistants recruited forty-eight officers, 395 troops, two medical officers and ninety-nine civilians, who sailed for the Hijaz in early September 1917. Eleven more Arab volunteers were sent from Sumerpur in January 1918.<sup>5</sup>

Husayn's representative in Cairo, Muhammad Sharīf al-Fārūqī, tried unsuccessfully in July 1916 to recruit Arab officers interned in Egypt. Fārūqī found that few Arab officers were willing to join the uprising either because they remained loyal to the Ottomans or because they preferred the comfort of prison in Egypt to combat in the Hijaz. Most

of Fārūqī's recruits were returned to Egypt because they refused to fight the Turks.<sup>6</sup>

Once the Iraqi recruits reached the Hijaz, Ottoman prisoners of war and non-Hijazi Muslims residing in Mecca and Jidda discouraged them from joining the Arab revolt. The 2500, mostly Turkish, Ottoman prisoners of war who had been captured in the Hijaz at the beginning of the revolt were allowed to move freely in Jidda and Mecca. These prisoners spread rumours among the local population and the Arab recruits that Husayn had sold the *haramayn* to the British. The large number of non-Hijazi Muslims who had settled in Mecca and Jidda encouraged the Arab recruits not to join the Arab revolt.<sup>7</sup>

Only a very rough estimate can be given of the number of Iraqis who joined the Arab revolt. Between June 1916 and January 1918, 148 officers, 2645 men and 101 civilians were sent from India to the Hijaz. If we subtract the seven officers and 130 troops who refused to join the Hashimites in July and August 1916, approximately 141 officers, 2515 troops and 101 civilians joined the Arab revolt. British and Arab sources indicate that a substantial majority of those recruits were Iraqis. Unfortunately, British and Arab sources do not allow us to determine with any precision the number of Iraqi recruits who had been captured in Palestine, Syria, Egypt or at the Dardanelles, or the number of Arab officers sent to the Hijaz by the Russians.

Husayn was initially reluctant to allow ex-Ottoman officers and troops to serve in his army. He agreed to employ them only after the British had convinced him that his army would be ineffective without trained Arab officers. The unwillingness of all but a tiny minority of Arabs in the Ottoman army to join the Arab revolt apparently made Husayn suspicious of the motives of those few who did join. Husayn's experience with Fārūqī, who had deliberately misled him about British policy and had unsuccessfully recruited for the revolt, was not such as to inspire confidence in the honesty and competence of the Iraqi recruits. British and French officers in the Hijaz reported many times in mid-1918 that the Iraqi officers in 'Alī's army were outspokenly pro-Turkish. Some of those officers were known to have organized a

pro-Turkish committee. The British and French accused some of the Iraqi recruits of deliberately destroying military equipment and others of avoiding battle by offering any excuse not to fight.<sup>2</sup>

Husayn objected to regular officers commanding Hijazi bedouins. To avoid this, and keep control of the revolt within his family, Arab recruits served under the command of his sons, 'Alī, Abdallah and Faysal. 'Alī had nominal command of the entire Arab army, which was divided into three separate forces: Faysal commanded the Northern Army, Abdallah the Eastern Army and 'Alī the Southern Army. Arab officers assumed operational control of these forces, subject to British and Hashimite supervision. British advisers and ex-Ottoman Arab officers were responsible for turning these forces into a modern army.<sup>3</sup>

The first crisis between Husayn and the Iraqi officers began after the appointment in September 1916 of 'Azīz 'Alī al-Miṣrī as Husayn's minister of war. Husayn invited Miṣrī, who was then in Cairo, to come to the Hijaz create and command a regular Arab army. Although Miṣrī was not Iraqi, the Iraqi officers in the Hijaz revered him as the founder of al-'Ahd. Husayn and Miṣrī disagreed about the proper aim of the Arab revolt. Miṣrī saw the revolt as the means to achieve Arab autonomy within the Ottoman Empire; Husayn aimed to overthrow Ottoman rule in the Arab East. Because of his opposition to Arab secession, Miṣrī was initially reluctant to join the revolt. Husayn agreed to employ Miṣrī only after the British had convinced him that his army badly needed regular officers. After some effort, Nūrī al-Sa'īd and the British convinced Miṣrī to join the Arab revolt.

Miṣrī was sent to Rabigh in October 1916 to create a regular army. The first mission of that army was to attack Medina, headquarters of the Ottoman army in the Hijaz. Privately, however, Miṣrī opposed attacking Medina, and believed that the Turks would grant his political demands only if the Arabs had a strong, well-trained regular army. Miṣrī had two plans for the army at Rābigh: first, to use part of it to start an insurrection in Syria; second, to propose to the governor of Medina that a joint Ottoman-Arab force should seize control of Mecca from Husayn. Once Husayn had been ousted, Miṣrī would then negotiate a

German-guaranteed settlement with Istanbul that would grant the Arabs autonomy within the Ottoman Empire. When Husayn, 'Alī and the British learned that Miṣrī had been in contact with the Turks in Medina, they called off the attack against Medina and dismissed him as minister of war. Miṣrī returned to Cairo in December 1916 after only three months in the Hijaz.<sup>10</sup>

Relations between Husayn and the Iraqi officers continued to deteriorate after Miṣrī's dismissal. Miṣrī's prestige among those officers was one cause of that deterioration. In a report dated 16 August 1918, Captain W. A. Davenport, a British military adviser in the Hijaz, referred to Miṣrī as one of the three 'gods' of the Iraqi officers, the other two being Nūrī al-Sa'īd and Sayyid (Muḥammad) Ḥilmī, the commander of Abdallah's regular army. Lawrence characterized Miṣrī in *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* as 'an idol of the Arab officers.'

Nūrī al-Sa'īd was the focus of a second crisis between Husayn and the Iraqi officers which nearly resulted in the collapse of the revolt in early 1917. The British captured Nūrī in Basra in November 1914 and then sent him to India where he was interned from January to December 1915. Nūrī lived in semi-detention in Cairo from January to July 1916, when Husayn appointed him deputy commander of the Arab Army. Nūrī was appointed chief of staff when Miṣrī became the minister of war.

Miṣrī's successor was Major Maḥmūd al-Qaisūnī, an Egyptian officer recommended to Husayn by the British. The Arab officers led by Nūrī refused to recognize Qaisūnī as Miṣrī's successor and threatened to resign *en masse* if he was not replaced immediately. They refused to obey Qaisūnī's orders because his rank was lower than that of many of the Arab officers, and because they resented taking orders from an Egyptian officer who, unlike themselves, had not graduated from a staff college. Nūrī and his followers took pride in having studied under German officers in the Ottoman staff college and regarded the British training of Egyptian officers as inferior. Not surprisingly, this preference for German methods offended Husayn and the British.

'Alī dissuaded his father from expelling Nūrī from the Hijaz in order to prevent the mass resignation of Arab, particularly Iraqi,

recruits and the collapse of the Hashimite army. Instead of expelling Nūrī, Husayn fired him as chief of staff and transferred him to Abdallah's army in Wādī al-‘Aīṣ. In early 1917, a transfer to Abdallah's army was, apparently, a demotion and a sign of royal disfavour.<sup>12</sup>

‘Alī Jawdat al-Ayyūbī, an Iraqi officer from Mosul, replaced Nūrī as commander of the southern division of ‘Alī's army, a position Nuri held in addition to being chief of staff of the entire Hashimite Army. No sooner had Ayyūbī replaced Nūrī than Husayn appointed a certain Captain ‘Āmir as chief of staff. ‘Āmir was a Turkish officer who had been captured at Tā‘if and preferred to stay in the Hijaz rather than accompany the other Turkish prisoners to detention in Egypt. The Iraqi and Syrian officers in ‘Alī's army refused to recognize ‘Āmir--a Turk!--as their commander in an Arab insurrection against Istanbul, or to serve under a Turkish prisoner of war whose rank was lower than that of many of the Arab officers. Ayyūbī resigned in protest. Fearing again that his army would lose its Arab officers, ‘Alī asked Husayn to reconsider ‘Āmir's appointment. Husayn allowed ‘Āmir to stay in the Hijaz without command. Ayyūbī resumed his duty as commander of the southern division.<sup>13</sup>

A few days after the ‘Āmir crisis had passed, Ayyūbī sent an Iraqi officer to Cairo with a letter for ‘Azīz ‘Alī al-Miṣrī informing him of the trouble between Husayn and the Iraqi officers. Miṣrī responded by asking Ayyūbī to pass a letter to ‘Alī Najīb Bey, the Ottoman commander in Medina. Ayyūbī and the other Iraqi officers who carried out Miṣrī's request offered three justifications for betraying the Arab revolt: first, they objected to Husayn's mistreatment of Miṣrī and Nūrī; second, they resented the appointment of Qaisūnī and ‘Āmir; and third, they were disappointed by Great Britain's failure to support the revolt with sufficient arms and supplies.

Miṣrī's letter was intercepted by one of the forward patrols of ‘Alī's army. When Husayn learned of Miṣrī's letter, he banished Ayyūbī and two other Iraqi officers from the Hijaz to Egypt. Two of the Iraqi officers involved in this affair, Ibrāhīm al-Rāwī and Ḥāmid al-Wādī, were transferred to Abdallah's army as punishment for their intrigues.

(Rāwī became the artillery commander of Abdallah's army and remained in his service until September 1920.)<sup>14</sup>

Ayyūbī was succeeded by the Iraqi officer, Qāsim Rājī, who was soon replaced because of unspecified disagreements with 'Alī. Rājī's successor was Major Husayn Nūrī al-Kuwairī, a Libyan officer from Benghazi who had been captured by the British in early 1916 near the Salūm oasis in western Egypt. Kuwairī, who was detained in Cairo until he volunteered for the Arab revolt in early 1917, served with 'Alī until at least mid-August 1918, if not until the end of the war.<sup>15</sup>

Husayn's problems with the Iraqi officers continued until the end of the war. In March 1918 the Iraqi officers in 'Alī's army formed a committee to demand higher pay and faster promotions and to protest the administration of their army and the conduct of its operations. Husayn and 'Alī flatly rejected their demands. 'Alī saw these officers as a drag on the efficiency of his army and wanted to be rid of them as soon as possible.<sup>16</sup> Husayn told C. E. Wilson in July 1918 that he wanted a senior Egyptian or Indian officer as his minister of war. Husayn was pleased with Qaisūnī, but considered him too young for such high office. Husayn believed that no suitable Arab officer could be found. If an Egyptian or Indian officer could not be found, Husayn wanted a British officer residing in Jidda as his minister of war.<sup>17</sup>

British officials in the Hijaz were no less contemptuous of the Iraqi officers than was Husayn. That contempt was detailed in a letter that Captain W. A. Davenport, a British military adviser in the Hijaz, sent in May 1918 to Lieutenant-Colonel J. R. Bassett, C. E. Wilson's assistant in Jidda. Davenport wrote that 'all' of the 'Baghdadis' were anti-British, cowards and poor soldiers. He believed that they would delay the fall of Medina as long as possible in order 'to go on drawing their enormous stipends and to live their idle lives with fancy titles of Beys and Pashas.' Davenport was certain that once Medina had fallen, they would abandon the Hashimites and retire to trade in Baghdad on the large salaries they had drawn during the war. Davenport accused them of stealing supplies and making Husayn's army 'very expensive by showing false numbers for pay, showing false amounts and stealing the

proceeds.' Davenport recommended that no more of 'these gentry' should be introduced into Husayn's army, and that the activities of 'all Baghdadi officers' should be monitored after the war as 'they will be a source of great trouble to any administration.'<sup>19</sup>

In addition to their problems with Husayn, 'Alī and the British, the Iraqis quarrelled with the Syrian recruits in the Hashimite army. Davenport wrote to Wilson in mid-June 1918 that 'the hostility between the SYRIANS and the BAGHDADIS is very marked.' He noted that the Baghdadis had formed a committee to the exclusion of others in order to guarantee that only Iraqis held well paid posts in the Hashimite army. The Iraqis and Syrians in the armies of Abdallah and 'Alī banded together to protect and promote their own interests. Muḥammad Ḥilmī of Baghdad was the commander of Abdallah's army, his aide-de-camp and the leader of the Iraqis in the southern Hijaz. Dr. 'Isā Imān of Damascus was Abdallah's medical officer and the leader of the Syrians in the Hijaz. The Iraqi officers accused the Syrians of inciting the Hashimites against 'Azīz 'Alī al-Miṣrī and Nūrī al-Sa'īd. The Syrians resented the rapid promotion of Iraqi officers in 'Alī's army, and threatened to stop fighting unless they were given equal treatment.'<sup>20</sup>

The conflicts surrounding the Iraqi officers threatened the effectiveness and morale of the Hashimite army, but worked to Abdallah's political advantage. As a consequence of their problems with Husayn, the British and the Syrian recruits, the Iraqi officers gravitated towards Abdallah and Faysal, who received them sympathetically. As we have seen, some of the most prominent Iraqi officers were 'demoted' to Abdallah's army after incurring Husayn's disfavour. Abdallah cultivated his Iraqi subordinates in order to assure their loyalty to the Arab revolt, and because he saw them as his initial foothold in Iraq.<sup>21</sup> Abdallah may have foreseen that the Iraqi officers would play a major part in the political and military life of post-war Iraq.

Abdallah cultivated the Iraqi officers with wages, promotions and titles. Abdallah's officers were paid more and promoted faster than their colleagues in 'Alī's army who, it will be recalled, formed a committee in early 1918 to demand equal treatment. The rejection of



their demand sharpened the antipathy of the Iraqi officers for Husayn and 'Ali, and raised the prestige of Abdallah and Faysal. In a letter to Wingate dated 6 June 1918, C. E. Wilson described as follows the attitude of the Iraqi officers in 'Alī's army towards Abdallah:

I hear that Abdallah is playing up to every Baghdadi officer with an eye on the future and that these officers in Ali's Camp call Abdallah "Emir Iraq". With Feisal Emir Syria, Abdallah Emir Iraq, Zeid possibly Emir Yemen and the old man King of the Arabs they will be a regular Royal House won't they?<sup>21</sup>

Lieutenant Cousse of the French military mission in Egypt reported in March 1918 that the future of Iraq was the first concern of the Iraqi officers in the Hijaz.<sup>22</sup> It is logical, therefore that those officers would have appreciated Abdallah's keen interest in their country.

Abdallah was particularly fond of rewarding his favourites with titles of bey and pasha. Nūrī al-Sa'īd, for example, became Nūrī Pāshā al-Sa'īd after his transfer to Abdallah's army in early 1917. (In later years granting titles to Transjordanian notables was one of the ways in which Abdallah built a personal following in Transjordan.<sup>23</sup>)

Abdallah's relaxed prosecution of the war was attractive to the Iraqi officers. Men of doubtful enthusiasm for the Arab revolt found comfort serving a commander with little energy for battle. Lawrence ridiculed Abdallah's laziness, military ineptitude and the carefree, even circus-like, atmosphere of his camp. Abdallah emerges from Lawrence's reports as more interested in his family's political future, politics in Europe and Ibn Saud than in fighting the Turks. In a report to C. E. Wilson dated 16 April 1917, Lawrence wrote that Abdallah 'takes little interest in the war in the Hedjaz. He considers the Arab position assured with Syria and Iraq irrevocably pledged to the Arabs by Great Britain's signed agreements . . .' Under such conditions Abdallah found ample opportunity to cultivate the Iraqis in his army.<sup>24</sup>

Abdallah's Iraqi protégés became the backbone of the Hijazi army after World War I. Abdallah continued to patronize the Iraqi officers after the war, first, because the Hijaz did not have enough trained officers to maintain a regular army and, second, because of his ambitions in Iraq. Abdallah may have calculated that his protégés would

be well placed to dominate a future Iraqi army because of their wartime service with the Hashimites and the British, and the senior command posts they held in the post-war Hijaz. Abdallah probably hoped that an Iraqi army commanded by these officers would support his rule in Iraq.

Husayn's conflict with the Saudis during the first half of 1919 illustrates the prominent role of Iraqi officers in the Hijazi army and their close ties to Abdallah. In May 1919 Abdallah led a force to retake Khurmā, an oasis on the Hijaz-Najd frontier that had fallen under Saudi control. Three Iraqi officers played a noteworthy part in the expedition to recapture Khurmā: Muḥammad Ḥilmī, the commander-in-chief of Abdallah's forces, Ṣabrī al-ʿAzāwī, his chief of staff, and Ibrāhīm al-Rāwī, Abdallah's artillery commander.<sup>26</sup> In July 1919 Husayn replaced his minister of war, General Maḥmūd al-Qaisūnī, for reasons probably related to the failure of the recent Khurmā campaign. On Abdallah's recommendation, Husayn replaced Qaisuni with Ṣabrī al-ʿAzāwī.<sup>26</sup> Two other Iraqi officers who held senior command posts in the post-war Hijaz were Jamāl al-Rāwī and Aḥmad Ruṣhdī, commanders of the Medina and Jidda garrisons respectively.<sup>27</sup>

#### Al-ʿAhd Al-ʿIrāqī

The Iraqi officers who served with Faysal during the war continued to serve him in Syria after October 1918. Those officers, and other Iraqis who rallied to the Arab cause after the capture of Damascus, dominated the Syrian army, served in Faysal's governments and formed part of his personal entourage. The Iraqi exiles in Syria benefited from Faysal's influence with the British and from access to government coffers and arms, which they used to initiate a campaign of subversion against the British in Iraq. With Faysal's backing, the Iraqi exiles in Syria quickly became the most vocal and influential supporters of Abdallah's ambitions in Iraq. Like Abdallah, they aimed to create a Hashimite monarchy in independent Iraq.

Political societies played a major part in Syrian politics during Faysal's brief reign from October 1918 to July 1920. Although these societies paid lip service to Arab unity, each was concerned almost exclusively with either the future of Syria, Syria and Palestine, or Iraq.

Under Faysal's protection, the Iraqi exiles were able to do what could not be done publicly in British-occupied Iraq: organize an anti-British political society that called for the creation of a Hashimite monarchy in independent Iraq. The most important political societies in Syria were *Jam'iyat al-Fatāt al-'Arabiyya* (The Young Arab Society), *Ḥizb al-Istiqlāl* (The Independence Party), *al-Lajna al-Waṭaniyya* (The National Committee) and its offshoots and *al-Nādī al-'Arabī* (The Arab Club). *Jam'iyat al-'Ahd al-'Irāqī* (The Iraqi Covenant Society) was the organization of the Iraqi exiles in Syria.<sup>28</sup>

Two 'Ahd societies were established in Syria soon after the occupation of Damascus. *Al-'Ahd al-Sūrī* (The Syrian Covenant Society) consisted of ex-Ottoman officers from Syria, most of whom had belonged to pre-war *al-'Ahd*. *Al-'Ahd al-'Irāqī* was established by Iraqi officers who had served under Faysal during the war. Despite their common origin and stated commitment to Arab unity and independence, both societies had different aims and acted independently of one another. *Al-'Ahd al-Sūrī* and *al-'Ahd al-'Irāqī* devoted themselves to the future of Syria and Iraq respectively. Compared to the other political societies in Syria, *al-'Ahd al-Sūrī* played a negligible part in Syrian affairs.<sup>29</sup>

Opinions differ as to when *al-'Ahd al-'Irāqī* was founded. Two Iraqi writers, Taḥsīn al-'Askarī and Muḥammad Ṭāhir al-'Umarī, have written that *al-'Ahd al-'Irāqī* was established in Damascus after that city was occupied in October 1918. Colonel G. L. Easton, the British representative in Damascus, informed the Foreign Office in August 1919, that *al-'Ahd al-'Irāqī* was established in al-Karak in September 1918 by eight unnamed Iraqi officers in Faysal's army.<sup>30</sup> Easton's account suggests that the Iraqi officers in Faysal's army had banded together in much the same way as did those in the armies of Abdallah and 'Alī.

The membership of *al-'Ahd al-'Irāqī* was divided between those who joined the Arab revolt and those who remained loyal to the Ottomans until the end of the war. The percentage belonging to either category is unknown. Major-General Yāsīn al-Ḥāshimī and Nājī al-Suwaidī are two

examples of prominent members who remained loyal to the Ottomans until the end of the war. Hāshimī was a native of Baghdad and one of the original members of pre-war *al-‘Ahd*. After the war, Hashimi reluctantly accepted Faysal's appointment as chief of staff of the Syrian army and head of the military advisory council of the provisional Arab government.<sup>31</sup> Najī al-Suwaidī of Baghdad was an Ottoman lawyer and administrator educated at the legal college in Istanbul. Suwaidī was an administrative inspector in Aleppo for the ministry of interior when the Turks withdrew from Syria in October 1918. After the armistice, Suwaidī served as the deputy military governor of Aleppo.<sup>32</sup>

*Al-‘Ahd al-‘Irāqī* had about three hundred members, most of whom were ex-Ottoman officers from the lower and middle classes of Baghdad and Mosul.<sup>33</sup> Most members were Sunni Arabs between twenty-five and forty years old who did not bear the hereditary surnames which, in Ottoman times, were the prerogative of the privileged classes in Iraq.<sup>34</sup>

*Al-‘Ahd al-‘Irāqī* had branches in Syria, Iraq, Istanbul and, possibly, in Transjordan and the Hijaz. The central branch was located in Damascus, and had Yāsīn al-Hāshimī, Nūrī al-Sa‘īd, Jamīl al-Midfa‘ī, Tawfīq al-Suwaidī, and Mawlūd Mukhlis as its leading members. In late 1918 or early 1919 a second branch was established in Aleppo, whose purpose was to initiate a campaign of agitation against the British administration in Iraq.<sup>35</sup> The only known activity of the Istanbul branch was to present a petition calling for Iraqi independence to the King-Crane commission in the summer of 1919.<sup>36</sup>

According to Gertrude Bell, who toured Syria in October 1919, the three most prominent members of *al-‘Ahd al-‘Irāqī* were Yāsīn al-Hāshimī, Ja‘far al-‘Askarī and Nūrī al-Sa‘īd. Hāshimī served as chief of staff of the Syrian army from October 1918 until November 1919, when he was arrested on the order of General Allenby and jailed in Ramleh until May 1920.<sup>37</sup> In early 1917 Faysal invited Ja‘far al-‘Askarī, who was then a prisoner of war in Cairo, to organize and command his regular forces. ‘Askari served as the military governor of Transjordan from October to December 1918. After leaving Transjordan, ‘Askarī served briefly as the inspector general of the Syrian army. In early 1919 Faysal appointed

him military governor of the *vilayet* of Aleppo. 'Askarī served Faysal loyally until the latter's death in September 1933.<sup>39</sup> As Faysal's aide-de-camp and diplomatic trouble-shooter, Nūrī al-Sa'īd accompanied Faysal during his visits to Europe, and undertook diplomatic missions to London and Paris on behalf of the Syrian government.<sup>39</sup>

The presence in Transjordan of members of *al-'Ahd al-'Irāqī*, if not the society itself, is well documented. Ja'far al-'Askarī has already been mentioned. According to Easton, Rashīd al-Midfa'ī, the commander of the Amman garrison, was the leader of *al-'Ahd al-'Irāqī* in his district. Abdallah Dulaimī served for a time as the military governor and *mutasarrif* of al-Karak district. Qāsim Rājī and 'Abd al-Laṭīf Nūrī served in Transjordan as brigade commanders. Easton claimed that *al-'Ahd al-'Irāqī* had fourteen members in Medina, including Jamīl al-Rāwī, 'Ali's aide-de-camp and the commander of the local garrison. Ibrāhīm al-Rāwī and four other members had allegedly propagandized on behalf of the society among Iraqis in the army at Medina.<sup>40</sup>

Easton noted that 'the original scheme of the League, which was considered even before the occupation of Syria by British and Arab troops, was that the Amir Abdulla, elder brother of Faisal, was to become King of Mesopotamia, with Faisal in Syria, the Amir Ali in the Hedjaz, and possibly the Amir Zeyid in the Yemen, if the latter country could be brought into [the] Federation.'<sup>41</sup> The similarity of this scheme to Hashimite plans for a post-war settlement in the Fertile Crescent and the proposals Lawrence presented to the Eastern Committee in October 1918 is unmistakable. Easton's remark indicates that Faysal had successfully persuaded Lawrence and the Iraqis in his army to support his family's scheme for a post-war settlement in Syria, Iraq and Arabia.

The charter of *al-'Ahd al-'Irāqī* was published in early 1919 by the Syrian government press. The first aim of the charter was 'the complete independence of Iraq within the framework of Arab unity.' The second aim was the unity of Iraq from the 'Euphrates lying north of Dayr al-Zūr and the bank of the Euphrates lying north of Diyār Bakr to the Gulf of Basra, and shall include the left and right banks of the Tigris and the

Euphrates as limited by [their] natural frontiers.' The British role in Iraq would be confined to providing technical and economic assistance.<sup>42</sup> The section concerning British assistance was amended in early 1919 to read: 'Iraq shall choose any of the advanced nations it desires for assistance in technical and economic matters if such assistance is needed, on the condition that that assistance shall not be detrimental to complete independence.'<sup>43</sup>

This change in the charter reflected disagreements in *al-ʿAhd al-ʿIrāqī* about Great Britain's future role in Iraq. One group, led by Yāsīn and Ṭaha al-Hāshimī, rejected cooperation with the British and called for the use of all means, including violence, to achieve Iraqi independence. Nūrī al-Saʿīd and Jaʿfar al-ʿAskarī supported negotiations and cooperation with the British. Jamīl al-Midfaʿī, ʿAlī Jawdat al-Ayyūbī and Mawlūd Mukhlis and their followers were prepared to use violence to achieve independence, but did not entirely reject cooperation with Great Britain.<sup>44</sup>

The charter did not mention Abdallah. We know, however, from other sources that *al-ʿAhd al-ʿIrāqī* supported his establishment in Iraq. In late January 1919 the Foreign Office received a petition from Mawlūd Mukhlis, Nājī al-Suwaitī, Nājī al-Asīl and Thābit ʿAbd al-Nūr, 'on behalf of other Baghdadi officers and many officials now serving in Syria and the Hedjaz', saying that one of Husayn's sons should become the king of independent Iraq. The petitioners foresaw Iraq as part of a federation of Arab states whose central council would meet in Mecca. Husayn was designated as the nominal suzerain of the federation.<sup>45</sup> While attending the peace conference in late April 1919, Lawrence passed a note to Sir Louis Mallet on Faysal's behalf stating 'that some of his Mesopotamian officers will wish shortly to return home. These men are mostly convinced that Abdullah should become Emir of Baghdad and will inevitably say so on return.' A. T. Wilson, who was then in Paris, attached a comment to this note indicating his understanding that *al-ʿAhd al-ʿIrāqī* supported Abdallah.<sup>46</sup> In the summer of 1919 the Damascus, Aleppo and Istanbul branches of *al-ʿAhd al-ʿIrāqī* presented petitions to the King-Crane commission calling for a constitutional

monarchy in Iraq headed either by Abdallah or his younger brother Zayd.<sup>47</sup>

#### The Pro-Hashimite Nationalists in Iraq

The nationalist movement in Iraq was led by secret political societies that called for Iraqi independence and an end to the British occupation. The two pro-Hashimite political societies were *Ḥizb al-‘Ahd al-‘Irāqī* (The Iraqi Covenant Party) and *Ḥizb Ḥaras al-Istiqlāl* (The Guardian of Independence Party). *Al-‘Ahd* was re-established in Iraq in late 1918, and had branches in Baghdad and Mosul. The Baghdad branch was founded by Shaikh Sa‘īd al-Naqshbandī, his brother ‘Alā’ al-Naqshbandī, his nephew Bahā’ al-Naqshbandī, Nūrī al-Fattāh--an ex-Ottoman officer who became the liaison between Baghdad and the central branch in Damascus, Ḥasan Ridā, a lawyer; two other ex-Ottoman officers, Anwar and Sāmī al-Naqshali, and Ahmad ‘Izzat al-A‘zamī, a writer and the editor of the society newspaper, *al-Lisān*. Shaikh Naqshbandī was the leader of *al-‘Ahd al-‘Irāqī* in Baghdad, an influential figure among the Sunnis of that city, an authority on Muslim doctrine and a close friend of the *naqib*.

*Al-‘Ahd al-‘Irāqī* in Baghdad was unable to attract a large following. The religious and political conservatism of Sa‘īd al-Naqshbandī alienated the young nationalists of Baghdad who rejected his preference for Great Britain as Iraq's only source of foreign assistance. The predominantly military character of *al-‘Ahd al-‘Irāqī* in Syria weakened appeal of *al-‘Ahd al-‘Irāqī* to the civilian nationalists of Baghdad. The intrusive supervision of the central branch in Damascus made it difficult for *al-‘Ahd al-‘Irāqī* in Baghdad to respond effectively to the unique political conditions in Iraq.<sup>48</sup> *Al-‘Ahd al-‘Irāqī* in Baghdad dispersed in February 1921 when the British authorities closed its anti-British newspaper, *al-Istiqlāl*, and either exiled or arrested most its members.<sup>49</sup>

During the first half of 1920, Naqshbandi spread pro-Abdallah propaganda in Baghdad. A Baghdad police report dated 27 March 1920 noted that Naqshbandi had recently received 5,000 liras in order to popularize the idea of Abdallah as the ruler of Iraq. Another police

report dated 15 May 1920 noted that a certain 'HAMID IBN ABDUL MAJID [had] arrived from Syria in Baghdad with letters to Sheikh SAID and £T. 3000.00 for distribution amongst ex-Turkish officials who are engaged in pro-Abdullah and pro-Turk propaganda.'<sup>50</sup>

*Al-'Ahd al-'Irāqī* in Mosul evolved from *Jam'īyat al-'Alam* (The Flag Society), a secret political society that was established in late 1914 by four Mosuli civilians, Thābit 'Abd al-Nūr, Ra'ūf al-Ghulāmī, Makkī al-Sharabatlī and Ra'ūf al-Shahwānī. Later in the war, *Jam'īyat al-'Alam* propagandized in Mosul on behalf of the Arab revolt and encouraged Arab soldiers to desert from the Ottoman army. 'Abd al-Nūr, a Jacobite Christian who converted to Islam during the war, served as president of *Jam'īyat al-'Alam* until he joined the Arab revolt at some time after June 1916. Makkī al-Sharabatlī replaced 'Abd al-Nūr, who later became a prominent member of *al-'Ahd al-'Iraqī* in Damascus. After the war, *al-'Ahd al-'Irāqī* in Damascus supported the anti-British activities of *Jam'īyat al-'Alam* by sending posters and letters to Mosul that called for an end to British rule in Iraq. In February 1919 *Jam'īyat al-'Alam* changed its name to *al-'Ahd al-'Irāqī* because *al-'Ahd al-'Irāqī* in Syria had amended the clause of its charter concerning British assistance to independent Iraq. Beginning in February 1919, *al-'Ahd al-'Irāqī* in Mosul tried to create a climate of insurrection in Iraq by encouraging the tribes and Kurds of Mosul and the Jazira to oppose British rule.

Although the Mosul branch was initially pro-Hashimite, at some point during the first half of 1919 its members abandoned Arab nationalism and the Hashimites in favour of Islamic unity and the Kemalist movement in Turkey. By late 1919, the Mosul branch had only its name in common with the other branches of *al-'Ahd al-'Irāqī*. *Al-'Ahd al-'Irāqī* in Mosul now rejected all cooperation with Great Britain, France or the United States. Their new position was that Iraq should seek assistance from Turkey, Germany, Austria and the Bolsheviks, not Great Britain. *Al-'Ahd al-'Irāqī* in Mosul condemned the Hashimites for dividing and weakening Islam. Despite disagreements with the Mosul branch about the Hashimites, *al-'Ahd al-'Irāqī* in Damascus continued to



assist Mosul with anti-British posters, flyers and arms to be used in small scale operations against the British in northern Iraq.<sup>51</sup>

Growing support for the Kemalists was not confined to *al-‘Ahd al-‘Irāqī* in Mosul. British police reports concerning Baghdad in early 1920 noted the existence of several small political societies that were spreading 'Turkish propaganda' in Iraq.<sup>52</sup> British reports concerning Syria in late 1919 mentioned that growing sympathy for the Kemalists was undermining Faysal's prestige in Damascus and Aleppo. The same reports claimed that a majority of Muslims in Aleppo sympathized with the Turks, and that many in northern Syria preferred union with Turkey to European domination. Ja‘far al-‘Askarī and Yāsīn al-Hāshimī were known to be in contact with Muṣṭafā Kemāl, and were suspected by the British of preparing an uprising in conjunction with the Kemalists. In October 1919 Emir Zayd reportedly wanted to return to Mecca because his and Faysal's positions were becoming increasingly untenable in Syria.<sup>53</sup> On orders of General Allenby, Yāsīn al-Hāshimī was arrested in November 1919 because of his contacts with the Kemalists and his part in spreading anti-British propaganda in Iraq and anti-French propaganda in Syria.<sup>54</sup> This recrudescence of pro-Turkish sentiment in 1919 and 1920 was a setback for Abdallah's ambitions in Iraq, and a sign that enthusiasm for the Hashimites in Syria and Iraq was still superficial, even among their most devoted Iraqi supporters.

*Ḥizb Ḥaras al-Istiqlāl* was founded in late February 1919 as a response to the pro-British petitions submitted during the plebiscite. Unlike *al-‘Ahd al-‘Irāqī*, whose membership was almost entirely Sunni, *Ḥaras al-Istiqlāl* had a substantial contingent of Shiite members. *Ḥaras al-Istiqlāl* consisted of ex-Ottoman officers, teachers and students who were thirty years old or younger. The twelve founders of *Ḥaras al-Istiqlāl* were a combination of seven ex-Ottoman officers and five civilians. Four of the five civilian founders were Shiites from Baghdad; the fifth, was a Shiite from Najaf. Muḥammad Ridā al-Shabībī, a writer and journalist from Najaf, and Ja‘far Abū'l-Timan of Baghdad were two prominent Shiite members who joined *Ḥaras al-Istiqlāl* in early 1920.<sup>55</sup>

The political program of *Ḥaras al-Istiqlāl* called for complete Iraqi independence, the establishment of a democratic and constitutional Hashimite monarchy, Arab unity and cooperation with other Arab political societies. This program said nothing about British or foreign assistance. In early 1919 *Ḥaras al-Istiqlāl* and *al-‘Ahd al-‘Irāqī* in Baghdad tried to merge, but failed because of personal differences and disagreements about British assistance to Iraq. Unlike *al-‘Ahd al-‘Irāqī*, *Ḥaras al-Istiqlāl* rejected all cooperation with Great Britain. In June 1919 *al-‘Ahd al-‘Irāqī* in Damascus sent two representatives, Jamīl al-Midfa‘ī and Ibrāhīm Kamāl to Baghdad to iron out the differences between both societies. A joint committee was formed to discuss and supervise the affairs of *al-‘Ahd al-‘Irāqī* and *Ḥaras al-Istiqlāl*, but accomplished little and dissolved soon after Midfa‘ī and Kamāl had returned to Syria. *Ḥaras al-Istiqlāl* then became inactive for several months.<sup>56</sup>

After its revival in October 1919, *Ḥaras al-Istiqlāl* took control of the nationalist movement in Iraq. In late 1919 or early 1920, one of its Shiite members, ‘Alī al-Bāzirkān, established the Ahliyya school, which became an important vehicle for spreading anti-British and pro-Hashimite propaganda among the youth of Baghdad. In late 1919 *Ḥaras al-Istiqlāl* absorbed *Jam‘īyat al-Shabība al-‘Irāqiyya* (The Iraqi Youth Society) of Baghdad and established ties to *al-‘Ahd al-‘Irāqī* in Damascus and Aleppo. *Ḥaras al-Istiqlāl* may have established branches in the Shiite towns of al-Kāzimiyya, al-Hilla, Najaf and al-Shāmiyya, although this is not certain.<sup>57</sup>

*Ḥaras al-Istiqlāl* made two important contributions to the nationalist movement in Iraq. The first was to create a network of connections between the nationalists of Baghdad and the Shiite leaders of the central Euphrates region. Shabībī and Abū'l-Timan were the liaisons between *Ḥaras al-Istiqlāl* and Shiite notables of the central Euphrates. The second was that *Ḥaras al-Istiqlāl* served as the conduit between Abdallah's Iraqi partisans in Syria and the Shiite leadership of Iraq. Through *Ḥaras al-Istiqlāl*, *al-‘Ahd al-‘Irāqī* in Syria hoped to build a base of support among Iraq's Shiite majority.

Ja'far Abū'l-Timan was noteworthy for his pro-Hashimite leanings and his efforts to unite the Sunnis and Shiites of Baghdad against the British. During the plebiscite of 1918-1919 Abū'l-Timan organized anti-British and pro-Abdallah petitions, and tried to unite the Sunnis and Shiites of Baghdad. In January 1919 he signed a petition calling for the creation of an independent Iraqi government with Abdallah as king. Because of Abū'l-Timan's anti-British activities, the British administration pressured him to flee Iraq. Abū'l-Timan lived in Iran from the summer of 1919 until his return to Baghdad in early 1920, when he joined the central committee of *Haras al-Istiqlāl* and became its chief liaison to the central Euphrates.<sup>58</sup>

*Haras al-Istiqlāl* disappeared in August 1920 during the insurrection in Iraq when the British arrested a group of its leaders and banished others to Basra and Hinjam. Abū'l-Timan and several other leaders fled first to Ha'il and then to the Hijaz, where they remained until Faysal became the king of Iraq in 1921. In February 1921 Abū'l-Timan and his colleagues sent a letter to Abdallah, which appears as appendix one of this thesis. That letter indicated that *Haras al-Istiqlāl* foresaw Abdallah as the future monarch of Iraq.<sup>59</sup>

Cooperation with *Haras al-Istiqlāl* was not the only way *al-'Ahd al-'Irāqī* in Syria tried to cultivate the Iraqi *Shī'a*. In July 1919 Ja'far al-'Askarī wrote to Shaikh Muḥammad Tāqī Shīrāzī, the leading Shiite divine in Iraq, advising him how to reply if an international commission of inquiry visited Iraq. Shīrāzī was asked to demand complete Iraqi independence and technical and economic assistance from the United States if Iraq needed foreign assistance.<sup>60</sup> According to a Baghdad police intelligence report dated 27 March 1920, the Syrian government had recently sent 15,000 lira for distribution among the Shiite tribes of the central Euphrates, including those around Karbala.<sup>61</sup>

The meddling of *al-'Ahd al-'Irāqī* went beyond courting the Shiites of the central Euphrates. During the plebiscite of 1918-19 *al-'Ahd al-'Irāqī* in Syria circulated leaflets in Iraq calling for Arab unity, Iraqi independence, a Hashimite monarchy and the rejection of a foreign mandate.<sup>62</sup> In May 1919 the British police in Baghdad found

proclamations from Syria calling for the creation of an independent Iraqi state and a constitutional Hashimite monarchy. According to those proclamations, Iraq would join a Hashimite federation which included Syria, the Hijaz, Najd and Yemen. Husayn was designated as head of the federation, whose capital and central council would be in Mecca.<sup>63</sup>

In 1919 and 1920 *al-‘Ahd al-‘Irāqī* used the *sanjaq* of Dayr al-Zūr on the Syrian-Iraqi frontier as a base from which to start an anti-British uprising in Iraq. Before the war, Dayr al-Zūr had been administered directly by the Ottoman ministry of the interior. After the war, Dayr al-Zūr became a no man's land on the undemarcated Syrian-Iraqi frontier. In February and May 1919, Ramaḍān al-Shallāsh of *al-‘Ahd al-‘Irāqī* exploited the uncertain status of Dayr al-Zūr in order to spread anti-British propoganda among the local tribes. In September of that year Lloyd George and French president, Georges Clemenceau, agreed that British troops would be withdrawn from Syria, including Dayr al-Zūr, which would be included in Syria, and that the Syrian-Iraqi border would pass temporarily along the Khabur river.

After the withdrawal of British troops in November 1919, *al-‘Ahd al-‘Irāqī* stepped in to fill the political and military void in Dayr al-Zūr. From then until May 1920, Ramaḍān al-Shallāsh and, then, Mawlūd Mukhliṣ used Dayr al-Zūr as a base from which to turn the tribes on both sides of the Khābūr river against the British and to pillage inside Iraq. Mukhliṣ rejected the British claim that the two frontier towns of Mayādīn and Albū Kamāl belonged to Iraq. Shallāsh and Mukhliṣ were supported by Emir Zayd, the acting head of state during Faysal's visits to Europe, and by Yāsīn al-Hāshimī until his arrest in late 1919. Faysal, who was in Paris in December 1919 when he first learned of the disturbances in Dayr al-Zūr, consistently disclaimed all reponsibility for the actions of *al-‘Ahd al-‘Irāqī* in Dayr al-Zūr. In May 1920 a joint British-Arab commission reached an agreement which fixed the Syrian-Iraqi frontier as it is today. This agreement did not, however, deter Syrian tribesmen from attacking British convoys in Iraq or *al-‘Ahd al-‘Irāqī* from continuing their incursions into Iraq from Dayr al-Zūr. The disturbances in Dayr al-Zūr were detrimental to Abdallah's

interests in Iraq. The complicity of Zayd and *al-'Ahd al-'Irāqī* in these disturbances reconfirmed Wilson's negative view of the Hashimites and their Iraqi partisans.<sup>64</sup>

To the annoyance of the British, Husayn also meddled in Iraq. In July 1918 several Iraqi tribal leaders visited Mecca and swore allegiance to him. At that time Husayn appointed the head of the Dulaim tribe, 'Alī bin Sulaymān, as his personal representative in Iraq. Sir Percy Cox refused, however, to recognize him as Husayn's representative. As a result of this and other contacts between Mecca and Iraqi tribal leaders, the Foreign Office asked Wingate in mid-December 1918 to inform Husayn that the British government disapproved of his interference in Iraq. Husayn ignored Wingate's reproach.<sup>65</sup>

In February 1919 Husayn sent another agent, Muhammad al-'Unaizī, to Baghdad with letters for local merchants, tribal leaders and Shiite notables in al-Kāzimiyya and Mu'adhdham. (Muhammad al-'Unaizī was a relative of Nūrī al-Sha'lān, the head of the Ruwalla confederation.) Husayn's letters exhorted Iraqis to support the Hashimites and to fight for Iraqi independence. 'Unaizī returned to the Hijaz with letters from tribal leaders in the central Euphrates complaining about the evil deeds of the British administration.<sup>66</sup> Faysal received a letter of unknown authorship from Karbala in February 1919 appealing to him to tell the peace conference that the British had prevented public opinion in Iraq from expressing itself during the plebiscite.<sup>67</sup>

In June 1919 Muhammad Ridā al-Shabībī visited the Hijaz and Syria on behalf of Shiite notables and 'ulamā' in Baghdad, Karbala and Najaf. Shabībī's mission was to convince the Hashimites and *al-'Ahd al-'Irāqī* to support the political demands of the Iraqi *Shī'a*, which had been ignored during the plebiscite. Shabībī carried petitions, including one from Muhammad Tāqī al-Shīrāzī, which asked Husayn to inform the peace conference that Iraqis opposed the British occupation of their country. After visiting Mecca, Shabībī proceeded to Syria where he lived until the fall of Faysal's government in July 1920.<sup>68</sup>

Baghdad police reports for the first half of 1920 claimed, but could not prove, that Husayn had communicated with Shīrāzī and the *naqīb* of Baghdad by means of another emissary, Ibrāhīm Fawzī Bey.<sup>69</sup>

The temporary convergence of Hashimite and Iraqi Shiite interests had nothing to do with a religious affinity between men like Husayn and Shīrāzī. Husayn, Faysal and *al-‘Ahd al-‘Irāqī* assisted the Iraqi *Shī‘a* with funds and diplomatic support in order to gain a foothold for Abdallah and his partisans in Iraq. Shiite leaders looked to the Hashimites to explain their grievances to the British and the peace conference. These contacts were a mixed blessing for Abdallah. On one hand, they appeared to support the illusion of a unique affinity between the Hashimites and the Shiites of Iraq. On the other, the British in Iraq viewed these contacts as unwelcome Hashimite meddling and one more reason to oppose Abdallah's establishment in Iraq.

#### A. T. Wilson and *Al-‘Ahd Al-‘Irāqī*

In 1919 and 1920 the repatriation of the Iraqi exiles in Syria became the focus of a controversy between A. T. Wilson and the Foreign Office. All parties to this dispute agreed that once the Iraqi officers had returned to Iraq, they would campaign in favour of Iraqi independence and Abdallah. Hubert Young of the Foreign Office was the most vocal advocate of an accommodation with *al-‘Ahd al-‘Irāqī* and the creation of an Arab government in Iraq.

Wilson's opposition to the political programme and repatriation of *al-‘Ahd al-‘Irāqī* was explained in a note attached to Gertrude Bell's memorandum, 'Syria in October 1919'. Wilson argued that an effective British administration was the best guarantee of Iraq's continued existence 'as an independent state or administrative entity'.<sup>70</sup> He added that the people of Iraq had already expressed their views and that propaganda calculated to reverse the plebiscite could not be tolerated.<sup>71</sup> On the advice of 'influential', yet unnamed, Baghdadis, Wilson wrote to Edwin Montagu in mid-July 1919 that Iraqis wanted neither the Hashimites nor their exiled partisans who were out of touch with local affairs and had no influence in Iraq.<sup>72</sup>

In May 1919 the peace conference decided to send an inter-allied commission of inquiry to study public opinion in Syria, Lebanon, Palestine and Iraq. Wilson had three reservations about this commission: first, that *al-'Ahd al-'Irāqī* in Syria would exploit its presence in Iraq to inaugurate a propaganda campaign on behalf of Abdallah that would lead to civil unrest<sup>73</sup>; second, that a commission would invalidate the plebiscite by claiming that Iraqi opinion favoured Arab unity under Hashimite leadership; third, that British reconsideration of the plebiscite would create the impression that Great Britain favoured self-determination and a Hashimite monarchy in Iraq.<sup>74</sup>

The inter-allied commission, which became the exclusively American King-Crane commission, never visited Iraq because Wilson did not allow them to tour the country. The commission did, however, receive petitions from *al-'Ahd al-'Irāqī* in Syria and Istanbul. The final report of the King-Crane commission noted that the petitions they received from 'representative Iraqis', who were led by Ja'far al-'Askarī, asked for one of Husayn's sons as king of Iraq. The commission was unable, however, to determine if a majority in Iraq wanted a Hashimite king, but noted that the British had received many indications that Iraqis favoured such a course. For this reason, the commission recommended a second plebiscite in Iraq. Luckily for Wilson, this report was ignored and had no influence on British policy in the Middle East.<sup>75</sup>

Wilson complained to the India Office that British officials in Syria and Cairo had encouraged *al-'Ahd al-'Irāqī* to believe that the British government sympathized with their political aspirations. In April 1919 Major F. L. Brayne, the British liaison officer in Aleppo, received two petitions from *al-'Ahd al-'Irāqī* calling for Arab government in Iraq and the repatriation of the Iraqi exiles in Syria. Both petitions were sent to London with recommendations from Brayne and General Gilbert Clayton, the chief political officer of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force, that the Foreign Office should sympathetically consider the petitioners' request.<sup>76</sup>

Hirtzel shared Wilson's hostility to *al-'Ahd al-'Irāqī* and their British promoters. He complained to Curzon in June 1919 that Faysal

and, especially, Lawrence were personally responsible for the pro-Hashimite agitation spreading from Syria to Iraq. Hirtzel recommended that British officials in Syria should be told in no uncertain terms that an Arab ruler for Iraq, that is Abdallah, was not British policy.<sup>77</sup>

In September 1919 Wilson and Young clashed over the suggested repatriation of Yāsīn al-Hāshimī. Wilson opposed his return because letters in Hāshimī's name calling for complete Iraqi independence had been circulated in Iraq in January 1919.<sup>78</sup> Young was convinced that the British flirted with disaster in Iraq by ignoring the political demands of Hashimi and *al-'Ahd al-'Irāqī*.<sup>79</sup> Montagu disagreed with Young, and refused to pressure Wilson to approve Hashimi's return to Iraq.<sup>80</sup>

While attending the peace conference in February 1919, Wilson agreed to Faysal's request to permit the repatriation of the Iraqi exiles in Syria. Wilson insisted, however, that they refrain from holding political meetings and campaigning in favour of Abdallah. Wilson asked that any returning officers must be furnished with credentials and 'an estimate of their capacities.' To satisfy this last condition, Curzon approved Mallet's recommendation that Clayton should write a report on the credentials of each Iraqi applying to return. Faysal was told in May 1919 the Iraqi officers could return to Iraq provided that their actions 'would not be contrary to police regulations', that they carried no messages from him to the people of Iraq and that they held no official positions in the Syrian government when they returned.<sup>81</sup>

In May 1919 Montagu and Curzon approved Wilson's request for the authority to veto the return of any Iraqi exile. Wilson made this request because of pressure from unnamed Baghdadi 'friends' and 'notables' who worried that the Iraqi officers would begin a local campaign in favour of Abdallah.<sup>82</sup> Curzon believed that Iraqis who had faithfully served the British during the war should be allowed to return home. The Foreign Office instructed Clayton in mid-June 1919 to notify Wilson about each Iraqi who applied to return to Iraq.<sup>83</sup> By June 1919 the absurdity of British policy on this issue had become clear. Wilson's views on Arab nationalism, *al-'Ahd al-'Irāqī* and Abdallah were well



known and had not changed. His right of veto effectively nullified London's approval of the repatriation of the Iraqi officers.

Wilson's only attempt to employ one of the Iraqi exiles in his administration ended in farce. Nājī al-Suwaīdī returned to Baghdad in late June 1919 to accept the position that Wilson had offered him as an assistant to Colonel Frank Balfour, the military governor of Baghdad. Suwaīdī returned to Aleppo after only one week in Baghdad. He attributed his resignation to British rejection of his proposal to include Iraqis in the Baghdad municipal council he wanted established. Wilson claimed that Suwaīdī had found his work too arduous, and that the notables of Baghdad had received him coldly. Whatever the reasons for Suwaīdī's resignation, his rapid return to Aleppo demonstrated that an accommodation between Wilson and the Iraqi exiles was not possible. Wilson was able to deal with *al-'Ahd al-'Irāqī* and the local nationalists as he saw fit precisely because Curzon and Montagu did not press him to do otherwise. The unfettered pursuit of Wilson's convictions meant that the Iraqi exiles would not return as long as Wilson remained in Iraq, and that his administration would do everything possible to exclude Abdallah and his supporters from Iraq.<sup>24</sup>

#### Conclusion

One of Abdallah's strategies for realizing his political ambitions was to create an Iraqi constituency that would support and legitimize his aspiration to rule Iraq. The search for that constituency was a tacit admission on the part of the Hashimites that neither Husayn's interpretation of McMahon's letters nor British support would be sufficient for Abdallah to build a viable régime in Iraq.

With a good deal of help from Faysal, Abdallah succeeded in his aim of creating an Iraqi constituency. Abdallah did this, first, by cultivating the Iraqi officers in the Hijaz who had fallen afoul of his father, the British and the Syrian officers with titles, high salaries and senior command posts, and, second, by telling the Iraqi officers that the British government had agreed to the creation of a Hashimite monarchy in Iraq. During and after the war, Faysal encouraged his Iraqi subordinates to support Abdallah's establishment in Iraq.

Abdallah's partisans failed to create a wide base of support for him in Iraq. The most important reason for this failure was Wilson's determination to exclude all Hashimite influence from Iraq. Wilson's opposition to Arab nationalism and his policy of isolating Iraq from the surrounding Arab lands severely limited the ability of the Hashimites and their supporters to influence public opinion in Iraq. Because of Wilson, the pro-Hashimite political societies in Iraq were compelled to operate in secret. With the backing of the India Office, Wilson successfully resisted pressure from the Foreign Office and the British in Cairo to permit the repatriation of the Iraqi exiles and the creation of a Hashimite régime in Iraq.

Abdallah's partisans had a limited appeal to Iraqis. *Al-'Ahd al-'Irāqī* in Syria, *Ḥaras al-Istiqlāl* and the other pro-Hashimite nationalists in Iraq represented only a tiny fraction of Iraqi opinion. Almost all of Abdallah's partisans were Sunni ex-Ottoman officers and officials from the lower and middle classes of Baghdad and Mosul. Unlike the urban notables, tribal leaders and Shiite clerics, Abdallah's partisans had no well-established base of support and were not recognized as legitimate political leaders anywhere in Iraq. Being Sunnis and Arabs, Abdallah and most of his partisans had little appeal to the Shiite majority and the Kurds of Iraq.

Husayn, Faysal, *al-'Ahd al-'Irāqī* and *Ḥaras al-Istiqlāl* were unable to create an alliance between the Shiites and the Hashimites. The pro-Hashimite Shiites of *Ḥaras al-Istiqlāl*, most notably Ja'far Abū'l-Tīman and Muḥammad Riḍā al-Shabībī, failed to drum up much support for Abdallah among the Shiite leaders of the central Euphrates. A Hashimite-Shiite alliance was not possible because of the divergent interests of both sides. The Hashimites extended a hand to the Iraqi Shiite leadership in order to gain a foothold in Iraq and to convince the British that Iraq's Shiite majority would accept Abdallah as their legitimate monarch. The Shiite leaders looked to the Hashimites to explain their grievances to Great Britain and the peace conference, not to rule them.

Disunity prevented Abdallah and his supporters from organizing a well-coordinated campaign in favour of a Hashimite monarchy in Iraq. Isolated in the Hijaz, Abdallah was unable to unify and direct the efforts of his partisans in the Hijaz, Syria and Iraq. Irreconcilable differences about Great Britain's future role in Iraq divided *al-'Ahd al-'Irāqī* in Baghdad and *Haras al-Istiqlāl*. The anti-British activities of the Iraqis in Syria were clearly at odds with Abdallah's preference for cooperation with Great Britain and detrimental to his interests in Iraq. The often violent anti-British activities of *al-'Ahd al-'Irāqī* only hardened the opposition of Wilson and the India Office to Abdallah and his supporters. Abdallah's cause was further weakened when *al-'Ahd al-'Irāqī* in Mosul abandoned Arab nationalism for the Kemalist movement, and when some members of *al-'Ahd al-'Irāqī* in Syria briefly wavered in their support for the Hashimites in favour of the Kemalists.

Abdallah and his Iraqi partisans lacked a coherent strategy for coming to power and ending the British occupation of Iraq. Neither Abdallah nor his supporters had clear ideas about how they would establish their authority in Iraq, organize an Iraqi government or convince the Shiites, Kurds and Sunni notability of Iraq to recognize them as their legitimate rulers. The political program of Abdallah's supporters was limited to a call for independence and a constitutional Hashimite monarchy. Abdallah's Iraqi partisans disagreed among themselves and with Abdallah about what role, if any, the British should play in Iraq. Abdallah's concerns were limited to building an Iraqi base of support and securing British approval of his ambitions. Abdallah had no known strategy for convincing the Shiites and Kurds to recognize him--a foreign-born Sunni Arab king installed by the British--as their legitimate sovereign.

The lack of a strategy for coming to power and ruling Iraq undermined the credibility of Abdallah and his partisans in British eyes. The absence of such a strategy, combined with violent anti-British agitation, led A. T. Wilson and the India Office to conclude that Abdallah and his Iraqi supporters were dangerous adventurers who would lead Iraq to ruin.

## Notes

1. F. J. Moberley, *History of the Great War Based on Official Documents: The Campaign in Mesopotamia 1914-1918*, vol. 4 (London, 1927) p. 331.
2. Rāwī, *Thawra*, pp. 12-22 and 70-84; Lawrence, *Seven Pillars*, p. 68 and Ibrahim Dimitri, 'A Statement on My Visit to Jeddah and Yenbo From 30th July to 17th August 1916' secret in Wingate to Grey private 24 Aug. 1916 FO 371/2775/187454. Ibrāhīm al-Rāwī has related that 300 Arab officers and 4000 troops were interned at Sumerpur. Al-Rāwī was an artillery officer from al-Ramādī who was captured by the British at al-'Amara in April 1915, interned at Sumerpur and then recruited for the Arab revolt. His memoirs include much information about Hashimite relations with the Iraqi officers.
3. Commander-in-chief, India to WO secret 4 Nov. 1916, Viceroy, Foreign Dept. to IO 5 Nov. 1916, Chamberlain to Viceroy 6 Nov. 1916 and undated and signed minute in Hirtzel's handwriting, all in IO L/P&S/10/643 reg. P4580; Viceroy, Foreign Dept. to IO secret 19 Nov. 1916 IO L/P&S/10/643 reg. 4839; Viceroy, Foreign Dept. to IO 20 Nov. 1916 IO L/P&S/10/643 reg. P4900 (quoted); Sirdar to FO 5 Dec. 1916 IO L/P&S/10/643 reg. 5114; Parker to ARBUR 6 Dec. 1916 IO L/P&S/10/643 reg. 81 (quoted).
4. Nūrī al-Sa'īd, *Muḥādarāt 'An al-Harakāt al-'Askariyya Lil-Jaysh al-'Arabī fī'l-Ḥijāz wa Sūriyā 1916-1918* (Baghdad, 1947) p. 22.
5. Wingate to FO 19 May 1917 and SSIO to Viceroy, Foreign Dept. 22 May 1917 IO L/P&S/10/643 reg. P2078; Macdonough (WO) to FO 26 May 1917 IO L/P&S/10/643 reg. P2224; Viceroy to IO 21 June 1917 IO L/P&S/10/643 reg. P2532; Viceroy, Army Dept. to IO 1 Aug. 1917 IO L/P&S/10/643 reg. P3122; Viceroy, Army Dept. to IO 9 Sept. 1917 IO L/P&S/10/643 reg. P3660; Viceroy, Army Dept. to IO 18 Jan. 1918 IO L/P&S/10/643 reg. P267; Viceroy, Army Dept. to IO 30 Jan. 1918 IO L/P&S/10/643 reg. P452; 'Alī Jawdat al-Ayyūbī, *Dhikrayāt 1900-1958* (Beirut, 1967) pp. 35-38.
6. Tauber, 'Fārūqī', pp. 44-45.
7. Rāwī, *Thawra*, pp. 78-84.
8. Davenport to Bassett 4 May 1918; Wilson, to Director, ARBUR3 May 1918; Wilson to Davenport 2 May 1918, Davenport to Herbert Garland 30 May 1918; Garland to Wilson 3 June 1918; Hussein Nuri El-Kueiri to Bassett 17 (?) Aug. 1918 (?); Kaisuni (Mecca) to Wilson (Jidda) 30 June 1918 all in FO 686/52. Garland did not believe that the Baghdadi officers had deliberately destroyed military equipment. Also see Commandant Cousse, 'Situation au Hedjaz: Exposé Sommaire (7 Février-7 Mars 1918) and 'Extrait d'un Rapport du Capitaine Depuis N° 29 du 24 Mars 1918 sur l'état de la colonne ALI et la formation d'un Comité factieux Bagdadien', both SHA 17N/498.
9. Khadduri, 'Misri', p. 152.
10. On 'Azīz 'Alī al-Miṣrī's part in the Arab revolt, see Rāwī, *Thawra*, p. 92-103; 'Umarī, *Muqaddarāt*, vol. 1, pp. 377-79; Ghuṣain, *Mudhakkirātī*, pp. 238-39; Ayyūbī, *Dhikrayāt*, pp. 40-42; Khadduri, 'Misri', pp. 152-55; Antonius, *Awakening*, p. 212.
11. Davenport to Wilson secret 16 Aug. 1918 FO 686/52 and Lawrence, *Seven Pillars*, p. 58.

12. On Nūrī al-Sa'īd, see Rāwī, *Thawra*, pp. 105-106; Sa'īd, *Muḥādarāt*, pp. 28-30, Nuṣairī, *Nūrī*, pp. 41-56 and Ṣafwat, 'Askarī, pp. 119-20.

Nūrī fell ill in June 1917 and was hospitalized temporarily in Cairo. He returned to the Hijaz in July 1917 at the request of his brother-in-law, Ja'far al-'Askarī, who had recently assumed command of Faysal's regular army. Nūrī became Faysal's chief of staff soon after the Northern Army had occupied Wajh. Abdallah objected to Nuri's transfer but was unable to prevent it. Nūrī apparently saw greater glory in serving Faysal and a march towards Damascus than in serving Abdallah, whose forces remained in the Hijaz until the end of the war.

13. Rāwī, *Thawra*, pp. 106-109.

14. *ibid*, pp. 109-11, Ayyūbī, *Dhikrayāt*, pp. 44-47 and Ṣafwat, 'Askarī, p. 111.

15. Rāwī, *Thawra*, p. 111. On Major Ḥusayn Nūrī Bey al-Kuwairī, see Ṣafwat, 'Askarī, pp. 95, 102, 107, 110. The last reference I could find to Kuwairī was a letter he sent to Colonel Bassett in August 1918. (See Hussein Nuri El-Kueiri to Bassett, date illegible, but probably August 1918 FO 686/52.) If Kuwairī was dismissed or quit because of the Iraqi officers, he later returned to active service.

16. 'Extrait d'Un Rapport' SHA 17N/498; Wilson to Director, ARBUR 3 May 1918 FO 686/52 and Wilson to Wingate secret 23 July 1918 FO 371/3381/146256.

17. C. E. Wilson, 'Interviews with King Hussein at Jeddah on July 17th 1918', July 1918 FO 371/3381/146256.

18. Davenport to Bassett 4 May 1918 FO 686/52. The French Military Mission in the Hijaz was no less contemptuous of the Iraqi officers than were their British colleagues. See, for example, Deputi's report which is cited in notes eight and sixteen.

19. 'Umarī, *Muqaddarāt*, vol. 1, pp. 377-79 and Brémond to DeFrance 12 Jan. 1917 SHA 17N/498; Davenport to Wilson secret 16 June 1918 (quoted), Kaisuni to Wilson 30 June 1918 and El-Kueri to Bassett (date illegible, but probably Aug. 1918) all FO 686/52.

20. Davenport to Director, ARBUR secret 29 Jan. 1918 FO 882/7/HRG/18/4.

21. Wilson to Wingate 6 June 1918 FO 141/679/4088.

22. Cousse, 'Situation au Hedjaz', SHA 17N/498.

23. On the titles Abdallah granted in Transjordan, see Khayr al-Dīn al-Ziriklī, 'Amān fī 'Ammān (Cairo, 1925) pp. 62-73 and Muḥammad Aḥmad al-Ṣalāḥ, *Al-Idāra fī Imārat Sharq al-Urdunn 1921-1946* (*Irbid*, 1985 (?)) pp. 396-98.

24. Lawrence to Wilson 16 Apr. 1917 FO 882/6/HRG/17/29 (quoted); Lawrence, *Seven Pillars*, pp. 203, 219-23 and Herbert Garland, 'A Day at EL JAFR' of 29 Dec. 1918, which is reproduced in Elie Kedourie, 'The Surrender of Medina, January 1919' *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 13, no. 1, Jan. 1977, pp. 124-43.

25. Rāwī, *Thawra*, p. 132 and Abdallah, *Mudhakkirātī*, p. 154.

26. Georges Catroux, 'Détails Complémentaires sūr l'Affaire de Tarabah', 18 June 1919 SHA 7N/4183/dossier 4 and 'Rapports d'Ensemble Sūr Les Événements au Hedjaz du 10 Juillet au 10 Août 1919', 11 Aug. 1919 SHA 4H/1/dossier 3.

27. Rāwī, *Thawra*, p. 144 and Ṭaha al-Hāshimī, *Mudhakkirāt Ṭaha al-Hāshimī, 1919-1943* (Beirut, 1967) p. 50.

28. On the political societies in Syria, see two works by Khayriyya Qāsimiyya, 'Al-Nishāt al-Siyāsī wa'l-Aḥzāb al-Siyāsiyya fī Sūriyā 1918-1920', *Al-Fikr Al-ʿArabī*, Sept.-Oct. 1981, no. 22, pp. 504-17 and *Al-Ḥukūma al-ʿArabiyya fī Dimashq Bayna 1918-1920* (Cairo, 1972), pp. 63-69 and 'Alī Sultān, *Ta'rīkh Sūriya 1918-1920* (Damascus, 1987) pp. 102-11.

29. Baṣīr, *Qadiya*, pp. 99-100; Sa'īd, *Thawra*, p. 37 and Sultān, *Sūriya*, p. 105.

30. 'Askarī, *Thawra*, vol. 2, pp. 4-5; 'Umarī, *Muqaddarāt*, vol. 3, p. 35 and Easton, 'Mesopotamian League', secret, Damascus, 6 Aug. 1919 FO 371/4150/140694. Although unsigned, this document was almost certainly Easton's work. 'Mesopotamian League' was one of the terms the British used to designate *al-ʿAhd al-ʿIrāqī*.

31. Phebe Ann Marr, 'Yasin al-Hashimi: The Rise and Fall of a Nationalist (A Study of the Nationalist Leadership in Iraq, 1920-1936)', unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1966; Ayyubi, *Dhikrayat*, p. 71 and 'Note on Iraqi Ministers and Ex-Ministers', July, 1932 CO 730/150/6. Also see note 56.

32. Suwaidi, *Wujūh*, pp. 49-51.

33. 'Mesopotamian League', 6 Aug. 1919 FO 371/4150/140694. The predominance of ex-Ottoman officers is also clear from Gertrude Bell, 'Syria in October 1919', 15 Nov. 1919 FO 371/4152/172818.

34. Hanna Battatu, *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq: A Study of Iraq's Old Landed and Commercial Classes and of Its Communists, Ba'athists and Free Officers* (Princeton, 1978) pp. 319-23.

35. 'Askarī, *Thawra*, vol. 2, pp. 4-5; 'Mesopotamian League', 6 Aug. 1919 FO 371/4150/140694. 'Umarī, *Muqaddarāt*, vol. 3, pp. 35-36.

36. 'Umarī, *Muqaddarāt*, vol. 3, pp. 51-56.

37. Bell, 'Syria in October 1919', 15 Nov. 1919 FO 371/4152/172818 and note 31.

38. On Ja'far al-'Askarī, see Ṣafwat, 'Askarī', pp. 53-121, 134-48 and the chapter on his life in Khayrī Amin al-'Umarī, *Shakhsīyāt ʿIrāqīyya*, vol. 1 (Baghdad, 1955).

39. Nuṣairī, *Nūrī*, pp. 56-75.

40. On *al-ʿAhd al-ʿIrāqī* in Transjordan and the Hijaz, see 'Mesopotamian League', 6 Aug. 1919 FO 371/4150/140694. Ṣafwat, 'Askarī', pp. 134-48 and Mādī and Mūsā, *Urdunn*, pp. 83-87.

41. 'Mesopotamian League', 6 Aug. 1919 FO 371/4150/140694.

42. 'Umarī, *Muqaddarāt*, vol. 3, pp. 35-37.

43. Baṣīr, *Qadiya*, pp. 101, 110.

44. Wamīd Nazmī, Ghānim Sāliḥ, Shafīq 'Abd al-Razzāq, *Al-Taṭawwur al-Siyāsī al-Nu'āsīr fī'l-ʿIrāq* (Baghdad, no date) p. 72 and Bell's remarks about Iraqi 'extremists' and 'moderates' in Syria in 'Syria in October 1919' 15 Nov. 1919 FO 371/4152/172818.

45. Cheetham to FO 31 Jan. 1919 FO 371/4148/18974.

46. Lawrence to Mallet 22 Apr. 1919 and Wilson minute, 24 Apr. 1919, both FO 608/92/8131. Also see Bell, 'Syria in October 1919' 15 Nov. 1919 FO 371/4152/172818.

47. 'Umarī, *Muqaddarāt*, vol. 3, pp. 51-56 and Baṣīr, *Qadīya*, pp. 115-16.
48. Nazmī, *Tatawwur*, pp. 93-94 and 'Askarī, *Thawra*, vol. 2, p. 50. On Sa'īd al-Naqshbandī, see 'Personalities in the Area Occupied by the Mesopotamian Expeditionary Force or Connected Therewith, 1920', secret, WO 106/922.
49. Baṣīr, *Qadīya*, pp. 144-45 and 'Umarī, *Muqaddarāt*, vol. 3, p. 61.
50. 'Mesopotamia. Extracts from Baghdad Police Reports, January-June 1920' FO 371/5081/E13603 and 'Askarī, *Thawra*, vol. 2, pp. 30-31.
51. On al-'Ahd al-'Irāqī in Mosul, see 'Umarī, *Muqaddarāt*, vol. 3, pp. 44-47, Abdallah Fayyād, *Al-Thawra al-'Arabiyya al-Kubrā* (Baghdad, 1963) pp. 158-63; Qahtān al-Tal'afarī, *Thawrāt Tal'afar 1920 wa'l-Ḥarakāt al-Waṭaniyya al-Ukhrā fī Mintaqat al-Jazīrah* (Baghdad, 1969) pp. 47-58, 108-115, 131-142 and 'Abd al-Darrājī, *Abū'l-Timan*, p. 79.
52. 'Mesopotamia. Extracts from Baghdad Police Reports, January-June 1920' FO 371/5081/E13603. See the reports for 13 and 20 Mar. and 17 Apr. 1920.
53. Major I. N. Clayton to GHQ, Cairo 15 Oct. 1919 FO 371/4186/163275; GHQ, Egypt to DMI 20 Oct. 1919, Meinertzhagen (Cairo) FO 21 Oct. 1919 and 6 Nov. 1919 FO 371/4184/144109; Meinertzhagen to Curzon 10 Nov. 1919 FO 371/4185/156779; CCB to SSI 11 Nov. 1919 FO 371/4185/155175; Allenby to FO 28 Nov. 1919 FO 371/4185/157332; Lt.-Col. W. F. Stirling (Cairo) to Curzon 3 Dec. 1919 FO 371/4186/163276.
54. Meinertzhagen to Curzon 10 Nov. 1919 FO 371/4185/156779; Allenby to WO secret 27 Nov. 1919 FO 371/4185/156461; Thwaites (Director of Military Intelligence) to British Military Representative, British Delegation, Paris (undated) FO 371/4186/162142; 'Umarī, *Muqaddarāt*, vol. 3, pp. 182-87; 'Askarī, *Thawra*, vol. 2, pp. 24-27. Hāshimī was jailed in Ramleh until May 1920.
55. On the establishment of *Ḥaras al-Istiqlāl*, see 'Abd al-Darrājī, *Abū'l-Timan*, pp. 75-77; 'Umarī, *Muqaddarāt*, vol. 3, pp. 56-57, 60 and Baṣīr, *Qadīya*, pp. 136-37. On Muḥammad Ridā al-Shabībī, see 'Personalities in the Area Occupied by the Mesopotamian Expeditionary Force, or Connected Therewith 1920', WO 106/922.
56. Baṣīr, *Qadīya*, pp. 137-40; 'Umarī, *Muqaddarāt*, vol. 3, pp. 57-59.
57. Baṣīr, *Qadīya*, p. 140-42, 'Umarī, *Muqaddarāt*, vol. 3, p. 59-60 and 'Abd al-Darrājī, *Abū'l-Timan*, p. 80.
58. 'Abd al-Darrājī, *Abū'l-Timan*, pp. 31-102.
59. See Baṣīr, *Qadīya*, p. 145, 'Umarī, *Muqaddarāt*, vol. 3, pp. 61-62 and Rāwī, *Thawra*, p. 148-49.
60. 'Askarī, *Thawra*, vol. 2, pp. 33-35.
61. 'Extract from Police Abstract of Intelligence Report No. 13 Dated Baghdad 27th March 1920', FO 371/5074/E5414.
62. 'Askarī, *Thawra*, vol. 2, pp. 30-33.
63. D. L. Morgan, assistant commissioner of police, Baghdad, 'Confidential Reports of the Criminal Investigation Department for the Week[s] Ending 5 and 10 May 1919', FO 371/4149/110528.
64. Eliezer Tauber, 'The Struggle for Dayr al-Zūr: The Determination of Borders Between Syria and Iraq', *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 23, 1991, pp. 361-85.

65. C.E. Wilson, 'Interview with King Hussein at Jeddah 16th July 1918', 16 July 1918 FO 371/3381/146256; Gertrude Bell, 'Memorandum on Recent Communications from the King of the Hijaz (Note by the Arab Bureau, Iraq Section)', 24/25 Oct. 1918, Shuckburgh minute 14 Dec. 1918 in IO L/P&S/11/142 vol. 13 reg. 5608.

66. Political officer, Baghdad, 'Intrigues in Favour of the Sharif in Baghdad', 23 Feb. 1919 FO 882/23/MBS/1918.

67. PB to Montagu 14 Feb. FO 371/4148/28587.

68. Rāwī, *Thawra*, pp. 144-47; Baṣīr, *Qadīya*, pp. 87-88; 'Umārī, *Muqaddarāt*, vol. 3, pp. 60-61 and Hamid Khan to Major P. F. Norbury secret 20 Feb. 1920 IO L/P&S/11/172 P3882/1920 reg. P2779.

69. 'Mesopotamia. Extracts from Baghdad Police Reports. January-June 1920', FO 371/5081/E13603.

70. CCB to SSI 15 Nov. 1919 FO 371/4152/172818.

71. Wilson minute 23 Apr. 1919 FO 608/92/8131.

72. CCB to SSI 14 May 1919 FO 608/92/11364 and CCB to SSI 15 July 1919 FO 371/4149/107927.

73. PB to SSI 30 May 1919 FO 608/86/12732 and PB to SSI 4 June 1919 FO 608/86/12718.

74. Wilson minute 23 Apr. 1919 FO 608/92/8131 and CCB to SSI 14 May 1919 FO 608/92/11364.

75. On the King-Crane commission, see Harry N. Howard, *The King-Crane Commission* (Beirut, 1963), Busch, *Britain*, pp. 338-41 and Antonius, *Awakening*, pp. 443-58.

76. Memorandum of F. L. Brayne 7 May 1919, Clayton (Cairo) to Curzon 8 June 1919 and PB to Hirtzel 9 June 1919, all in FO 371/4149/91481.

77. Hirtzel to Curzon private 24 June 1919 FO 371/4149/91481.

78. PB to SSI 5 June 1919 FO 608/92/13156 and PB to SSI 10 Sep. 1919 FO 371/4150/129808 (quoted).

79. Young's minutes of 17 Sep. 1919 FO 371/4150/129808 and 21 Sep. 1919 FO 371/4150/131665.

80. Wakely (IO) to Young private 18 Sep. 1919 FO 371/4150/131665.

81. Lawrence to Mallet (Paris) 22 Apr. 1919 and Wilson minute 23 Apr. 1919 (quoted) FO 608/92/8131; Mallet to Curzon 29 Apr. 1919 FO 608/92/8016 and SSI to CCB 15 May 1919 (quoted) FO 608/92/10505.

82. CCB to SSI 14 May 1919, CCB to SSI 17 May 1919, Shuckburgh (for Montagu) to Under SSFO 26 May 1919 FO 608/92/11364.

83. Tilley to Balfour (Paris) 30 May 1919 and minutes of Forbes-Adam and Vansittart 31 May, Mallet 2 June 1919, Hardinge undated and Mallet to Curzon 6 June 1919 FO 608/92/11364; FO to Clayton 13 June 1919 (?) and FO to Under SSIO 16 June 1919 FO 608/92/12856; SSI to CCB 26 June 1919 FO 608/92/14415; FO to Colonel French (Cairo) 9 and 17 July 1919 FO 608/92/15867.

84. PB to SSI 15 July 1919 FO 371/4149/110324; PB to SSI 19 July FO 371/4149/110324; PB to SSI 24 July 1919 FO 371/4149/110028; PB to SSI 28 July 1919 FO 371/4149/111421; Balfour to Wilson 22 July 1919, Suwaidī to Balfour 21 July 1919, Young minute 28 Sept. 1919, Kidston minute 29 Sept. 1919, Garbett (IO) to Young 25 Sept. 1919 FO 371/4150/133880.



## CHAPTER 7: ABDALLAH'S IRAQI THRONE, MARCH-JULY 1920

### Introduction

Between October 1919 and July 1920 Abdallah's prospects for coming to power in Iraq, the Hijaz and Syria completely collapsed. This chapter will explain why he failed to achieve his objectives in all three countries, especially in Iraq. The collapse of those prospects threatened to banish Abdallah permanently from the Arab political arena and set the stage for the creation of Transjordan in March 1921.

The main focus of this chapter is the period from March to July 1920, when the British government reconsidered and then rejected Abdallah for an Iraqi throne. The treatment of that period concentrates on British policy towards Abdallah and the contradictory and unsuccessful strategies he and his partisans adopted in order to convince or compel Great Britain to sponsor a Hashimite monarchy in Iraq. This chapter explains why those conflicting strategies, and the disunity of Abdallah's Iraqi partisans, were largely responsible for undermining Abdallah's prospects of ruling in Iraq in cooperation with Great Britain. British opposition was, however, the main reason why Abdallah failed to realize his ambitions in Iraq. Between March and July 1920 the British government reconsidered and then rejected proposals to enthrone Abdallah in Iraq. Much of this chapter is devoted, therefore, to explaining why the British government reconsidered establishing Abdallah in Iraq, and how British officials responded to the strategies of Abdallah and his Iraqi partisans.

Part one of this chapter examines British and French attitudes towards Abdallah's ambitions in the Hijaz and Syria. Between May 1919 and March 1920 Abdallah turned his attention, first, to removing the Wahhabis from the Khurmā oasis on the frontier between the Hijaz and Najd and, then, to replacing Faysal in Syria or succeeding his father as king of the Hijaz. Part one explains how the defeat of Abdallah's forces by the Wahhabis in May 1919 undermined his political standing in the Hijaz. Part one also examines why, beginning in October 1919, the British government briefly considered the possibility that Great Britain

should support Abdallah instead of his older brother, 'Alī, as Husayn's successor. Although the Foreign Office decided not to interfere in the succession process in the Hijaz, their consideration of this issue revealed British attitudes towards Abdallah and his suitability to rule an Arab state shortly before the creation of Transjordan.

During the first half of 1920 Great Britain and France rejected Husayn's proposal to remove Faysal from Syria and replace him with Abdallah. On several occasions between January and July 1920 Abdallah tried unsuccessfully to convince the French to support his ambition either to replace Faysal in Syria or to succeed his father as king of the Hijaz. During the same period, Abdallah also failed to convince the French to support his ambition to rule Iraq. Abdallah's failure to gain French support illustrated the weakness of some of the strategies he adopted to advance his ambitions in the Fertile Crescent, and partially explained why he was unable to convince either the British or the French to support his establishment in Iraq.

The Iraqi Congress of March 1920, which proclaimed Abdallah king of Iraq, is the subject of part two. Part two examines how *al-'Ahd al-'Irāqī* tried in early 1920 to force the British government to accept the creation of an Arab government in Iraq headed by Abdallah. Their strategy for influencing the British will be compared to Abdallah's reaction to the Iraqi Congress and his strategy for convincing the British government to establish him in Iraq. Part two also examines how the British and French governments and the people of Iraq reacted to the Iraqi Congress.

Part three discusses why, beginning in March 1920, the British government seriously reconsidered and then rejected proposals that Abdallah should head an Arab government in Iraq. The motives of British officials who favoured and opposed this idea will be examined, as will motives of Nūrī al-Sa'īd and Faysal's representative in London, General Jibrīl Ḥaddād, both of whom lobbied the British government on Abdallah's behalf during the spring of 1920. Nuri's strategies for promoting Abdallah's cause will be compared to those of *al-'Ahd al-'Irāqī*. The

contrast between those strategies illuminates why Abdallah's Iraqi supporters were unable to advance his ambitions in Iraq.

Abdallah and the British, May 1919 to March 1920

The main preoccupation of Husayn and Abdallah during the first half of 1919 was a territorial dispute between the Hijaz and Najd. Husayn and the Wahhabis both claimed the right to rule the Khurmā oasis, which was located about one hundred and ten miles east of Mecca on the undemarcated frontier between the Hijaz and Najd. That dispute began shortly after the outbreak of the Arab revolt, when Husayn's representative in Khurmā, Khālīd bin Lu'ay, converted to Wahhabism and proclaimed his loyalty to Ibn Saud. Until 1918, Husayn took no steps to assert his authority in Khurmā. When Husayn tried to collect taxes there in early 1918, Khālīd expelled all elements loyal to the Hashimites. In May and June 1918 Khālīd defeated the Hijazi forces sent to recapture Khurmā. From then until January 1919, the Hashimites launched a series of unsuccessful raids against Khurmā. After the fall of the Ottoman garrison in Medina in January 1919, Husayn and Abdallah had the freedom to plan an attack to retake Khurmā. On 21 May 1919 Abdallah's force of 60 officers, 700 men, 10 guns and 20 machine guns occupied Turaba, a village south of Khurmā. On the night of 25-26 May, a Wahhabi force under Khālīd's command attacked Abdallah at Turaba and captured the town. Khālīd destroyed Abdallah's regular force and captured all their guns. Abdallah himself barely escaped with his life. After the loss of Turaba, the road from Khurmā to Ṭā'if lay open, as Mecca became vulnerable to Wahhabi attack.

The rout at Turaba was a humiliating defeat for Abdallah, who claimed in his memoirs that he had advised his father not to attack Khurmā. Husayn's relations with Abdallah deteriorated as a result of the disaster at Turaba and Abdallah's refusal to undertake new operations against the Wahhabis. As a consequence of Husayn's anger, Abdallah lived in Ṭā'if from June 1919 to January 1920 in what appears to have been a sort of internal exile imposed by his father.'

The problem of Husayn's successor first came to British attention in May 1919 when *al-Qibla*, the official newspaper of the Hijaz, referred

to Emir 'Alī as crown prince and Emir of Mecca.<sup>2</sup> In October 1919 Lieutenant-Colonel C. E. Vickery, the British representative in Jidda, reported to Sir Milne Cheetham in Cairo that Husayn was ready to abdicate and that a successor had to be found immediately in order to avoid anarchy or civil war in the Hijaz. Vickery and Cheetham agreed that Abdallah would be the most suitable successor. Cheetham's description of Abdallah in a letter to Curzon dated 16 October 1919 revealed the confidence the British authorities in Cairo and Jidda had in Abdallah's political skills and pro-British leanings:

Emir Abdullah would be the most suitable successor. He is not fanatical, will listen to advice, is progressive and Pro-British in his ideas. He has considerable diplomatic ability, learnt from long intercourse with the Turks and this, added to his personal popularity in both British and native circles should enable him to establish himself without difficulty. He would also probably be able to persuade his father to nominate him to the exclusion of his elder brother the Emir Ali, who is childish, incompetent, fanatical and weak, and therefore not a serious rival.<sup>3</sup>

Curzon agreed that Abdallah would be the most suitable successor, but preferred to delay Husayn's abdication until after the conclusion of peace with Turkey. Curzon feared that British intervention in this sensitive issue would lead the Ottoman Sultan to appoint Husayn's rival, 'Alī Haydar, Emir of Mecca.<sup>4</sup> (Curzon was apparently unaware that the Sultan had dismissed Husayn as Emir of Mecca and replaced him with Haydar on 2 July 1916.)

In January 1920 Abdallah briefly flirted with the idea of succeeding his father, but received no British encouragement to do so. Abdallah told Vickery in early January that he would take charge of the Hijaz if Husayn and 'Ali could not properly manage the country. Georges Catroux, head of the French military mission to the Hijaz, saw this ambition as a response to Great Britain's refusal to establish Abdallah in Iraq. In order not to encourage Abdallah, Vickery simply ignored his remark about ruling the Hijaz. As far as we know, this was the last time Abdallah made such a statement to any British official.<sup>5</sup>

Abdallah's defeat at Turaba raised the possibility of war between two of Great Britain's Arab allies and the Saudi conquest of the Hijaz. To settle that dispute, Field Marshal Edmund H. Allenby, the British high

commissioner in Egypt since March 1919, spent three days in Jidda in early January 1920 meeting with Husayn. Husayn agreed to Allenby's proposal to meet Ibn Saud, but dismissed his conflict with the Saudis as unimportant. Instead of discussing his dispute with Ibn Saud, Husayn preferred to speak at length about recent developments in Syria and his demand for recognition as King of the Arabs. Allenby refused to discuss Syria, recognize Husayn as King of the Arabs or grant his request for airplanes, armoured cars and tanks to use against the Saudis. Instead, Allenby advised Husayn to limit his concerns to the Hijaz, because the fate of Syria and Iraq could only be settled by the Allies.<sup>6</sup>

The Syrian situation to which Husayn referred was Faysal's recent negotiations in Paris with French president Georges Clemenceau. Lloyd George informed Clemenceau in September 1919 that British troops in Syria and Cilicia would be removed by the end of the year. The withdrawal of British troops by November 1919 gave France what was, in essence, a free hand in Syria and Lebanon. In October 1919 the British government invited Faysal to London, where he learned about the coming withdrawal of British troops from Syria, and was advised to negotiate the future of Syria with the French government. To guarantee Faysal's compliance, the British government cut his subsidy in half, while France assumed the other half. Faysal proceeded to Paris in late October 1919 to begin negotiations with the French government. The secret agreement of 6 January 1920 between Clemenceau and Faysal effectively recognized a French mandate for Syria, Arab rule in the interior of Syria under the supervision of French advisers, a French mandate for Lebanon, Druze autonomy within Syria, and French responsibility for Syrian representation abroad.<sup>7</sup>

Husayn responded to the negotiations in Paris by repudiating Faysal as his representative in Syria and at the peace conference. Husayn tried to punish Faysal by replacing him with Abdallah. Husayn objected at least as much to Faysal's willingness to act independently of the Hijaz as he did to his dealings with France. Faysal's independence, fame in Europe and apparent readiness to sacrifice his father's interests excited the anger and jealousy of Husayn and Abdallah.

Husayn's repudiation of Faysal offered Abdallah an opportunity to return from the political wilderness as the ruler of Syria and representative of the Hijaz in Europe.<sup>28</sup>

During Allenby's visit to Jidda, Abdallah tried to convince Catroux that France would benefit if he replaced Faysal in Syria. Catroux, who knew Abdallah well and considered him even more devious than Faysal, believed that his ambition now turned towards France and Syria because the British had rejected him for Iraq. Catroux doubted that France would find Abdallah more cooperative than Faysal. In Catroux's view, Faysal was willing to betray his father only, while Abdallah was ready to betray his father and brothers for the sake of his personal ambition. Catroux advised the Quai d'Orsay on 1 February 1920 to disregard Abdallah's proposals, which they did. Catroux added that Abdallah would gladly rule the Hijaz if France refused to install him in Syria.<sup>29</sup>

Beginning in late February 1920 Abdallah tried to advance his ambitions in Iraq by creating dissension between Great Britain and France. By soliciting French support Abdallah hoped to pressure the British into including him in their plans in Iraq. Abdallah approached Catroux in late February 1920 to learn how France would react to an Iraqi congress that would soon declare him king of Iraq. At the same time, Abdallah mentioned his desire to visit France so that he could convince French officials to support his political ambitions. Catroux declined to say anything that might encourage Abdallah's ambitions in Iraq. He wrote to French president Alexandre Millerand on 24 February 1920 that Abdallah would gladly seize power in either the Hijaz, Iraq or Syria. Catroux believed that Abdallah was not breaking with the British, and hoped to make himself palatable to both Great Britain and France. Abdallah's anger at the British for rejecting him in Iraq had driven him to seek French support. Jealous of the honours accorded to Faysal in Europe, Abdallah now sought the same attention for himself. Although Catroux scoffed at Abdallah's ambitions in Iraq and Syria, he recommended inviting him to meet French officials in Paris on the assumption that Abdallah would eventually succeed Husayn. Catroux argued that friendly relations with the guardian of Mecca and Medina

would help legitimize French rule among the millions of Muslims living in France's colonial empire.<sup>10</sup> As we shall see, Catroux soon changed his mind about the wisdom of inviting Abdallah to Paris.

#### The Iraqi Congress of March 1920

On 8 March 1920 a congress of twenty-nine Iraqis in Damascus declared the independence of Iraq under Abdallah's kingship. The Iraqi Congress, as that gathering was known, had been organized by *al-'Ahd al-'Irāqī*. Three influences encouraged *al-'Ahd al-'Irāqī* to take this drastic action. The first was the Syrian Congress of 7 March 1920, which defied the Allies by unilaterally declaring the independence of Syria under Faysal's kingship. The second was Faysal's offer to support an Iraqi congress on the condition that it proclaimed Abdallah king of Iraq. The third was the Ottoman Chamber of Deputies in Istanbul, which secretly proclaimed the independence of the Turkish-speaking regions of the Ottoman Empire on 28 January 1920.<sup>11</sup>

The Iraqi Congress took place against the background of the Syrian reaction to Faysal's recent agreement with Clemenceau. During November and December 1919 anti-Faysal demonstrations broke out in Damascus in response to rumours that Faysal had compromised Syrian interests in his negotiations with France. After returning to Syria on 14 January 1920, Faysal failed to convince the Syrian and Palestinian nationalists in Damascus and the executive committee of *al-Fatāṭ* to accept his agreement with Clemenceau, despite a warning that rejection of that agreement would lead to war with France. Faysal tried to expand his dwindling base of support by creating a political party to support his agreement with Clemenceau. To appease the radical nationalists, Faysal turned a blind eye to raids against French positions in Syria and cooperation between the Syrian nationalists and the Kemalists, both of whom spread anti-French propaganda in Syria. In late January 1920 Faysal convinced notables from Damascus, Homs, Hama and Aleppo to form *al-Ḥizb al-Waṭanī* (the National Party), which called for the complete independence of Greater Syria and a constitutional Hashimite monarchy, but was prepared to accept a settlement with France along the lines of the Faysal-Clemenceau agreement and a Jewish national home in Palestine. To pre-

empt the National Party before they could organize, and to force Faysal to renounce his agreement with Clemenceau, *al-Fatāt* and *Hizb al-Istiqlāl* reconvened the Syrian Congress in early March 1920 in order to challenge the Allies with the *fait accompli* of Syrian independence.<sup>12</sup> On 7 March 1920 the Syrian Congress declared the complete independence of Greater Syria under Faysal's kingship, rejected the Balfour Declaration and called for the economic unity of Syria and Iraq. The next day in the Damascus town hall Faysal was crowned king of Syria.<sup>13</sup>

Soon after Faysal returned from France, *al-‘Ahd al-‘Irāqī* asked him to support the establishment of an Iraqi congress that would forestall a British mandate by declaring the independence of Iraq. Faysal promised to assist them only if they proclaimed Abdallah king of Iraq. While negotiating the formation of an Iraqi congress with *al-‘Ahd al-‘Irāqī*, Faysal wrote to Husayn and Abdallah that a Syrian congress would soon declare the independence of Syria under his kingship, and that the Iraqis in Syria would do the same for Iraq and Abdallah.

*Al-‘Ahd al-‘Irāqī* decided that the Iraqi Congress would consist of petitions from Iraq authorizing the congress to speak on behalf of the Iraqi people and twenty-five representatives elected by a majority of the Iraqi community in Syria. A committee of five was formed to maintain contact with *Hizb al-Istiqlāl* and to coordinate the actions of the Syrian and Iraqi Congresses. On 4 March 1920 *al-‘Ahd al-‘Irāqī* held a meeting in Nūrī al-Sa‘īd's home in Damascus and elected the twenty-nine members of the Iraqi Congress. It is not clear why twenty-nine, and not twenty-five, members were elected. Tawfīq al-Suwaidī, a lawyer from Baghdad and the brother of Nājī al-Suwaidī, was elected president of the Iraqi Congress.<sup>14</sup>

In response to news from Faysal about the coming Iraqi Congress, Abdallah held a meeting with Vickery on 1 March 1920 to talk about British policy in Iraq. Vickery refused, however, to discuss the future of Iraq with Abdallah. Coming a week before the Iraqi Congress, and a year before the founding of Transjordan, Abdallah's statement to Vickery about his political ambitions merits quotation at length:



The Emir then turned the conversation on the affairs of the Iraq. He told me that he was accused of having ambitions in the Iraq. The days, he said, were over when a man could set forth with a few followers to another country and place a crown on his head and proclaim himself King or Emir of it. He himself never aspired to place himself in a position like the Prince of Wied in Albania ("Was there ever such a coward", the Emir interjected.) He liked the Iraq, the people were more civilised than in the Hedjaz, and there was an intellectual class to associate with, whilst there was none in the Hedjaz. He would certainly like to be the Emir of Iraq if guaranteed British support and aid for at least 20 years. He would not accept a position in any country for which Great Britain had not the mandate. I asked the Emir if he would not be sorry to leave the Hedjaz. "By Allah", he said, "it would break my heart to leave these Bedouin and if I had high position in the Hedjaz I should never leave it."

Vickery was left with the impression that Abdallah was slightly more interested in an Iraqi than a Hijazi throne, although he was quite prepared to accept the latter. Abdallah's reference to a British mandate was probably an attempt to distance himself in advance from an anti-British congress associated with his name, without renouncing his interest in Iraq.<sup>15</sup>

Abdallah's remarks about setting forth with a few followers to declare himself king of another country are of particular interest. Chapter eight will explain how, in late 1920, Abdallah and a band of followers forced their way into Transjordan in order to compel the British to include him in their plans for post-war Iraq.

In early March 1920 Allenby and General Henri Gouraud, the French high commissioner for Syria and Lebanon since October 1919, informed their respective foreign ministries of rumours that a congress would soon be held in Damascus to decide the future of the Arab lands. The British and French governments reacted immediately. Curzon instructed Allenby to inform Faysal that only the peace conference, and not a local congress, could settle the Syrian question.<sup>16</sup> Curzon's warning did not deter Faysal or the Iraqi Congress, which met on 8 March 1920 in the home of Nūrī al-Sa'īd and proclaimed the absolute independence of Iraq from the Mosul *vilayet* in the north to the Persian Gulf in the south. Abdallah was proclaimed constitutional monarch of Iraq with his younger brother, Zayd, as regent. The declaration announced an end to the

military occupation of Iraq and its replacement by an Iraqi national government. The declaration said nothing about a British mandate or British assistance to independent Iraq. It did, however, state the desire of the 'Arab Iraqi nation' to respect Allied and other foreign interests in Iraq 'in the hope that they will recognize its independence and withdraw their troops from Iraq, which will be replaced by a national army and administration.'

The declaration began by noting how the 'Arab Nation' had allied itself with the Allies during the war in order to achieve its unity and independence. It was then explained how 'the noble Allies' had pledged to support 'the independence of peoples, their right to self-determination and to choose their own form of government.' According to the Iraqi Congress, Great Britain had concluded 'a well-known treaty (*mu'āhada ma'rūfa*) with King Husayn that recognized the independence of the Arabs from the Taurus Mountains and the northern Mosul *vilayet* in the north to the Persian Gulf, the Indian Ocean and the Red Sea in the south'. This 'treaty' had been confirmed in the statements of Woodrow Wilson and the various declarations of the British and French governments concerning self-determination for the Arabs and other peoples. The declaration then noted that Husayn and his sons had led the Arab nation to victory during the war.

The reference to Husayn's 'well-known treaty' with Great Britain reflected how the Hashimites interpreted the Husayn-McMahon correspondence. That reference revealed that the Hashimites had tried to advance their ambitions and legitimize their claim to Arab political leadership by popularizing Husayn's interpretation of his 'agreement' with McMahon among the nationalists of Syria and Iraq. The declaration of the Iraqi Congress was evidence of their success in popularizing that interpretation among the Iraqi nationalists, who used it as propaganda against the British in Iraq.

The declaration noted that the members of the Iraqi Congress were 'the proper legal representatives of the Iraqi Arab people' who had authorized them to proclaim the independence of Iraq. It was not

explained why these twenty-nine Iraqis were qualified to speak on behalf of the entire Iraqi people or who had authorized them to do so.

The Iraqi Congress called for the economic and political unity of Syria and Iraq. How that unity would be achieved was not explained. Husayn was not mentioned as head of a Hashimite federation comprising Syria, Iraq and the Hijaz. This omission may have reflected anger at Husayn for his treatment of the Iraqi officers during the war.

The Iraqi Congress offered no evidence that Abdallah or *al-'Abd al-'Iraqī* had any clear strategy for governing Iraq. The declaration said nothing about the structure and organization of an Iraqi government or the role of its signatories in the politics of Iraq. No mention was made of how Iraq would be governed with or without the cooperation of the Shiite majority, the Kurds and the urban Sunni notability. Reading this declaration, with its references to the Arab nation and the right of the Hashimites to rule Iraq and Syria, one would never know that Iraq had a Shiite majority and a substantial Kurdish minority. The declaration assumed without question that Abdallah would be universally accepted as the legitimate ruler of Iraq because of his family's leadership of the Arab nation during the war.

Of the twenty-nine members of the Iraqi Congress, twenty came from Baghdad, eight from Mosul and one from Najaf. Nine were ex-Ottoman officers serving in the Syrian army, of whom six were from Baghdad and three from Mosul. Of the twenty-one civilians, fifteen were from Baghdad, five from Mosul and one from Najaf. The civilians included eight lawyers (seven from Baghdad, one from Mosul), six writers (three from Baghdad, two from Mosul, one from Najaf), four merchants (three from Baghdad, one from Mosul), one *'Alim* from Mosul and a telegraphist from Baghdad. Except for Muḥammad Ridā al-Shabībī of Najaf, the Iraqi Congress was composed entirely of Sunni Arabs.<sup>17</sup>

The British and French governments refused to recognize the Syrian and Iraqi Congresses on the grounds that only the Allied powers acting in concert could decide the future of the Arab lands. Curzon, however, objected more to the way Abdallah had been proclaimed king of Iraq than he did to Abdallah himself. Curzon was surprised to learn that,

contrary to the findings of the plebiscite A. T. Wilson had conducted, Abdallah had a substantial following in Iraq.<sup>19</sup>

Hubert Young, the leading authority on Iraq in the Foreign Office, agreed with Curzon that Great Britain should not accept that the Iraqis in Damascus had the right to decide the future of Iraq. Young argued, however, that Great Britain should not reject an Iraqi demand for Abdallah or anyone else as king of Iraq if a national congress made such a demand *after* the establishment of a British mandate. Young believed that Abdallah had a large Iraqi following, and recommended publishing a declaration stating that Great Britain would not object to Abdallah if Iraqis wanted him as their monarch. Young argued that a British statement in favour of Arab self-government would prevent a violent upheaval in Iraq. Curzon and Hardinge rejected Young's recommendation on the grounds that only the peace conference could decide the future of Iraq and because nothing was known about those who had recently proclaimed Abdallah king of Iraq.<sup>20</sup> Details of the Iraqi Congress were not known to the Foreign Office until late March 1920 when Colonel Richard Meinertzhagen, Allenby's chief political officer for Palestine and Syria, sent a French translation of its final resolution.<sup>20</sup> A list of participants in the Iraqi Congress did not reach the Foreign Office until late June 1920.<sup>21</sup>

Husayn was ambivalent about the Syrian and Iraqi Congresses. According to Abdallah, Husayn preferred delaying a declaration of Syrian independence until after the Turks had renounced their claims to the Arab lands in a peace treaty with the Allies.<sup>22</sup> On the one hand, Husayn considered both congresses a blow to his prestige because they called for the independence and unity of Syria, Palestine and Iraq but said nothing about him or the Hijaz. On the other hand, as the self-proclaimed leader of the Arab nation, Husayn could not denounce the independence of Syria and Iraq without a loss of prestige to the advantage of Abdallah and Faysal, who would then supercede him as the leaders of the Arab movement. Husayn feared that his unqualified approval of both congresses would endanger British financial and diplomatic support for the Hijaz. In the end, however, Husayn endorsed

both congresses, if only because the survival of the Hijaz depended upon the economic and diplomatic support of Syria and Iraq.<sup>23</sup>

On 12 March 1920 Husayn allowed *al-Qibla* to publish an account of the two congresses that did not mention Faysal as king of Syria or Abdallah as king of Iraq. On 25 March *al-Qibla* rejoiced in the independence of Syria and Iraq, but called the Iraqi and Syrian Congress resolutions premature. At the same time *al-Qibla* expressed its confidence that the peace conference would act justly by recognizing Syrian and Iraqi independence and thanked the Allies, especially Great Britain, for supporting the Arabs. The next day Husayn made the congress resolutions public and allowed pro-Abdallah demonstrations to take place in Mecca, Jidda and Ṭā'if.<sup>24</sup>

On orders from the Foreign Office, Vickery informed Husayn and Abdallah in early April 1920 that the Iraqi Congress had no authority to speak for Iraq, whose future could only be decided by the peace conference.<sup>25</sup> Husayn responded by informing Allenby of his support for the Iraqi and Syrian Congresses and denying any connection to the peace conference because he dealt with Great Britain only.<sup>26</sup>

Abdallah reacted cautiously to the Iraqi Congress by saying nothing that might offend the British. Unlike *al-'Ahd al-'Irāqī* in Syria, Abdallah recognized that their common aspirations in Iraq could be realized only through cooperation with the British. Abdallah did not want to disavow his partisans by denouncing the Iraqi Congress, but had to distance himself from them so as not to alienate the British. Soon after the Iraqi Congress, Zayd invited Abdallah to come to Syria to form an Iraqi government-in-exile. Abdallah answered that he would come at the first available opportunity. As we know, Abdallah never went to Damascus to head an Iraqi or any other government. Abdallah replied to his Iraqi partisans by sending an agent to Syria and Iraq with circulars thanking them for their support, but adding that he would be unable to proceed to Iraq, which was still under British occupation. The British authorities in Iraq arrested Abdallah's agent and confiscated the circulars.<sup>27</sup>

Abdallah's show of loyalty to Great Britain favourably impressed Vickery, Allenby and the Foreign Office. Demonstrations in honour of the Iraqi Congress were held in Jidda, Mecca and Tā'if in late March 1920 with the tacit approval of the Hijazi government. According to Vickery, Abdallah's address to a demonstration in Mecca included friendly references to Great Britain but did not repudiate the Iraqi Congress. Although Vickery objected to the official sponsorship of these demonstrations, he praised Abdallah for his outspoken loyalty to Great Britain.<sup>28</sup> After reading Vickery's account of these demonstrations, Allenby wrote to Curzon on 21 March that Abdallah was 'a candidate worthy of consideration if the time comes for the selection of an Arab ruler for that country [Iraq].'<sup>29</sup>

Abdallah's letter to Vickery of 6 April 1920 illustrates the skillful manner in which Abdallah successfully reassured the British of his loyalty without denying his interest in Iraq. He wrote:

I am not in touch with, nor am I aware of the various factors secret and public of the present day political situation, nor am I acquainted with the position of the Mesopotamian Congress as to their authority or the nature of their powers. I receive my information from periodical newspapers and from regular telegraphic services. I do not conceal that I was and still am the very sincere friend of Great Britain and I insist on acknowledging my gratitude to her even if it should happen that I must declare this gratitude in the very midst of those hot-headed Radicals who consider such an acknowledgement a loss of self-respect and of our sacred national prestige. I am not one of those who float with the stream, or deny the favours that they have received. I am firm in my attitude and constant in my principles. I conclude my letter by announcing to you that all the Syrian newspapers I have received by this mail intimate the near despatch by land of a Mesopotamian mission to see me at Mecca. It is understood that their object is to invite my cooperation with the nation's declaration.<sup>30</sup>

Abdallah was less successful in gaining French support for his ambitions in Iraq and in playing Great Britain and France against one another to his personal advantage. After the Iraqi Congress Abdallah persisted in his determination to be invited to Paris. Abdallah gambled that the British would interpret his reception in Paris as French recognition of the Iraqi Congress. Catroux advised his government not to invite Abdallah to Paris and considered Hashimite political ambitions

a danger to both British and French interests in the Middle East.<sup>31</sup> Millerand and Gouraud agreed that Abdallah should not visit Paris or replace Faysal.<sup>32</sup>

A few days after the Iraqi Congress, the India Office asked A. T. Wilson if Iraqi views of Abdallah had changed since the plebiscite.<sup>33</sup> Wilson replied that 'a very small minority', which 'has power only for evil', still called for Arab government but had not gained strength during the past year.<sup>34</sup> Wilson saw 'every indication' that a government headed by Abdallah owing its existence to 'the so-called Baghdadis at Damascus' would be unpopular and set off widespread anti-Hashimite disturbances in Iraq that would be difficult to contain.<sup>35</sup> Wilson confidently asserted that a legislative council with a British high commissioner or local notable as president and Arab ministers backed by British advisers, and not Abdallah and his cronies, would satisfy all local ambitions.<sup>36</sup> Wilson was not, however, nearly as confident of Iraqi opposition to Abdallah as his reports to the India Office suggested. Honoré Roux, the French consul in Baghdad, reported in mid-April 1920 that the British in Iraq had allowed the local press to mention the Iraqi Congress, but not Abdallah's proclamation as king of Iraq.<sup>37</sup>

Wilson firmly believed that Iraqis would not accept 'Syrian' interference in their affairs because 'there is no community of feeling whatever between this country and Syria.' Any recognition, therefore, of a role for 'Syrians'--Wilson's term for the Iraqi exiles in Syria--would be perceived locally as a betrayal of Iraqi interests. Wilson suggested once more to ignore any pledges to Husayn allowing for the association of Iraq with Syria and the Hijaz. Now, instead of criticizing the Anglo-French declaration of 8 November 1918, Wilson argued that it committed Great Britain to the establishment of an indigenous government in Iraq independent of Syria.<sup>38</sup>

The Foreign Office, including Young, agreed with Wilson that Syria, Palestine and Iraq should remain separate entities. In early March 1920 Curzon rejected a proposal from Allenby and Colonel B. H. Waters-Taylor, the chief of staff of Occupied Enemy Territory South (Palestine), that the Allies should recognize Faysal as the representative of an Arab

state consisting of Syria, Palestine and Iraq, and that, if Iraqis so desired, Iraq should form part of an Arab federation led by Faysal.<sup>39</sup>

The Iraqi Congress and the anti-British subversion of *al-'Ahd al-'Irāqī* had an unsettling impact on the internal security of Iraq and emboldened the nationalists in Baghdad to press harder for an end to British rule. The activities of *al-'Ahd al-'Irāqī* after the Iraqi Congress practically assured that an accommodation between Abdallah and Wilson's administration would not be possible.

By June 1920, the immediate formation of an elected Iraqi national convention like the Iraqi Congress had become one of the demands of the nationalists in Baghdad. That demand was voiced in demonstrations in Baghdad and in meetings Wilson held on 3 June 1920 with a group of fifteen nationalist leaders, including Ja'far Abū'l-Tīman. Both the demonstrators and the nationalist leaders called for an Iraqi national congress that would declare the independence of Iraq without a British mandate.<sup>40</sup>

The renewal of disturbances in Dayr al-Zūr in June 1920 was probably the final blow to what little credibility Abdallah may have had in the eyes of A. T. Wilson. A few days after the Iraqi Congress, 'Alī Jawdat al-Ayyūbī and several other Iraqi officers met with Faysal and asked him to support the struggle for Iraqi independence with arms and money. Their plan was to proceed to Dayr al-Zūr, where they and Zayd would launch a campaign of subversion against the British in Iraq. Faysal was reluctant to support them, first, because he needed British support in his dealings with France, and, second, because he hesitated to do anything that could be interpreted as a challenge to Abdallah's rights in Iraq. Faysal agreed, however, to finance Ayyūbī's operations, but forbade Zayd from participating in them. In Faysal's view, Zayd's participation would have been tantamount to a Hashimite declaration of war against Great Britain. Ayyūbī and his colleagues did not press Faysal for arms when they sensed his reluctance to supply them.

After meeting Faysal, Ayyūbī and his cohorts conferred in the home of Ja'far al-'Askarī with most of the Iraqi officers and some of the civilians living in Damascus to discuss plans for military operations in



Dayr al-Zūr. Some of those present advised delay until Abdallah could be consulted about their plans. A majority, however, wanted immediate action. After receiving 3000 Egyptian pounds from Faysal, the conspirators raided an arms warehouse near Damascus and then headed for Dayr al-Zūr via Aleppo. At Dayr al-Zūr and Sinjār they established an Iraqi government in Abdallah's name and propagandized against the British administration in Iraq on behalf of Abdallah, Faysal and the Syrian government. With a force estimated by the British at 400 officers and men, Ayyūbī and his colleagues attacked the town of Tal'afar near Mosul. Wilson--who rightly assumed that *al-'Ahd al-'Irāqī* and Faysal were behind the disturbances in Tal'afar--pressed London to force the Syrian government to replace the Iraqi officers in Dayr al-Zūr with Syrians who had no interest in agitating against the British administration in Iraq.<sup>41</sup>

#### Abdallah's Iraqi Throne: British Reconsideration and Final Collapse

Anglo-French rejection of the Iraqi Congress did not mean that the British government had rejected Abdallah for an Iraqi throne. Abdallah's candidature was revived on 23 March 1920 when the Cabinet reaffirmed Great Britain's support for self-determination and representative institutions in Iraq. At the same time the Cabinet reopened the possibility of a Hashimite ruler for Iraq:

The inhabitants of Mesopotamia when consulted in 1918, rejected the proposal that they should be given an Arab ruler. Should, however, the inhabitants change their opinion, the British Government would not oppose their wishes. They would have no objection to the candidature of a member of King Hussein's family if acceptable to the inhabitants.<sup>42</sup>

Abdallah's prospects were enhanced two days later in the House of Commons when Lloyd George reaffirmed Great Britain's support for the Anglo-French declaration of November 1918 and noted that Iraq would have an Arab government and a British mandate.<sup>43</sup>

Until March 1920 the plebiscite of 1918-1919 had effectively blocked any reconsideration of Abdallah's suitability to rule Iraq. However, the Cabinet decision of 23 March 1920 and Lloyd George's statement in the House of Commons clearly implied that the plebiscite would not be regarded as the final word on Iraqi political aspirations,

and that public opinion in Iraq might be tested again. Once the validity of the plebiscite had been called into question, the British government could reconsider Abdallah's establishment in Iraq.

In response to repeated assertions from Baghdad that Abdallah had no support in Iraq, Hubert Young began to reread and reinterpret *Self-Determination in Iraq*, a summary of the plebiscite that Wilson had sent to London in late January 1919. Young was now 'convinced' that Iraqis had objected to an Arab emir only because 'he would be uncontrolled'. Young criticized Wilson for not recognizing that national sentiment in Iraq would continue to grow and that the Iraqi Congress represented a significant body of Iraqi opinion, if not yet a majority.<sup>44</sup>

Until March 1920 Curzon's acquiescence in the plebiscite had been an insuperable obstacle to Abdallah's candidature. Curzon's view of Abdallah changed in April 1920. Several influences account for that change: the Cabinet decision of 23 March 1920, Lloyd George's recent statement in the House of Commons, Allenby's reports about Abdallah's loyalty to the British and his ability to rule either the Hijaz or Iraq, Hubert Young, and Nūrī al-Sa'īd, who visited Europe in early 1920 as Faysal's emissary. Another influence may have been Curzon's ill health.

Faysal sent Nūrī to Europe in early March 1920 in order to explain the Syrian and Iraqi Congresses to the Allies and to convince the British that Abdallah should become king of Iraq. Nūrī's strategy for promoting Abdallah differed sharply from that of his colleagues in *al-'Ahd al-'Irāqī*. That difference was a sign of fundamental disagreements between the members of *al-'Ahd al-'Irāqī* about how to deal with the British. Nūrī's strategy was to convince the British government that the Iraqi Congress wanted to cooperate with Great Britain and that the Shiites and Kurds of Iraq would accept Abdallah as their legitimate sovereign.

Nūrī told Young during an interview in early April 1920 'that not only the people of Mosul and Baghdad, but also the Kurds of Southern Kurdistan [underlined in Young's report] were anxious for Abdullah to be their Emir, provided the British did not withdraw their advice and assistance.' Although the Iraqis in Damascus had received no

communications from Basrah, 'so far as he [Nūrī] knew, every-one was quite content that there should be a special administration, and special British occupation in the Basrah vilayet.' Young asked Nūrī to explain his views in writing to Lord Curzon.<sup>45</sup> Nūrī prepared two memoranda for Curzon which gave a detailed account of the Iraqi Congress and made a case for installing Abdallah in Iraq.

Nūrī's memorandum dated 5 April 1920 discussed the Iraqi Congress and argued strongly for Abdallah. Although he had not participated in the congress, Nūrī knew most of its members well. In Nūrī's view, 'the Congress as composed completely and indubitably represented the views and aspirations of the overwhelming majority of the inhabitants [of Iraq]', and was well disposed towards cooperation with Great Britain. Nūrī wrote that the Sunnis, Shiites and Kurds of Iraq from Mosul to Basra wanted Abdallah as their ruler. In his description of the establishment of the Iraqi Congress, Nūrī explained that unnamed notables from Baghdad, Mosul and various tribal chiefs had authorized Faysal, Ja'far al-'Askarī, Nāji al-Suwaidī, Mawlūd Mukhlis, Yāsīn al-Hāshimī and 'Alī Jawdat al-Ayyūbī to act in their name on behalf of the Iraqi people. These six also had the authorization of unnamed nationalist societies in Iraq who had been represented at the Iraqi Congress by members from Mosul, Baghdad and Najaf. No one from Basra attended because time was too short to wait for the arrival of representatives from so distant a city. The Iraqi Congress asked for a constitutional monarchy and the safeguarding of British interests in Iraq. Nūrī asked for an Anglo-Arab commission of inquiry to tour Iraq because Wilson's administration had prevented the free expression of Iraqi national aspirations. Nūrī's second memorandum, which was dated 13 April, complained bitterly about the hostility of Wilson's administration towards Iraqi political aspirations.

Both memoranda emphasized Abdallah's acceptability to the Shiites of Iraq because of his descent from the Prophet. Nūrī wrote in his first memorandum that 'the Shiachs will be greatly gratified to become subjects of a true descendant of their chief Ali bin Abi Taleb. This for them is a historical event that will range as the consummation of their

long deferred hopes.<sup>46</sup> Nūrī made this point again in his talks with Edwin Montagu and Lieutenant-Colonel W. H. Gribbon, a representative of the War Office at the San Remo conference. General Jibrīl Ḥaddād, Faysal's diplomatic representative in London, used the same argument when he tried to convince the Foreign Office that Abdallah should become king of Iraq.<sup>47</sup>

Young enthusiastically recommended Nūrī to Curzon. Young hoped that Nūrī would change Curzon's perspective on Iraq, which had been influenced by A. T. Wilson. However, Young cautioned Curzon that Nūrī's memoranda showed 'a certain ignorance and have no real value as representing Mesopotamian opinion in the absence of the names of the notables and chiefs concerned [who had authorised Faysal and five Iraqis to represent them at the Iraqi Congress].' Nūrī refused to reveal their identity to Young fearing that the British authorities in Iraq would punish them. After reading Nūrī's memoranda, Curzon reversed his earlier opposition to establishing Abdallah in Iraq.<sup>48</sup>

But was Nūrī a reliable source on Iraqi affairs? Young's reservations have just been mentioned. A comparison of Nūrī's two memoranda to the Iraqi Congress resolution suggests that he tried to convince the Foreign Office that *al-'Ahd al-'Irāqī* was more favourably disposed towards cooperation with Great Britain than was actually the case. His assertion that the Iraqi Congress would accept a British occupation of the vilayet of Basra contradicted the congress resolution which called for the unity and independence of Iraq from Mosul to the Persian Gulf. Both of his memoranda indicated that Nūrī, who had not been in Iraq since the British captured him in early 1915, was out of touch with recent developments in the land of his birth. By his own admission, Nūrī knew little of Iraqi affairs because Wilson had blocked the flow of information between Syria and Iraq. Nūrī wrongly claimed that the Iraqi Congress was composed mostly of Iraqis who had fought with the British during the war. As we have seen, most of the participants in that congress were civilians. Nūrī did not explain, and Curzon and Young did not question, the claim that the Shiites and Kurds of Iraq would accept Abdallah as their sovereign. His unsubstantiated

claims of Shiite and Kurdish sympathy for Abdallah were reminiscent of similar pleading from Lawrence and the Arab Bureau.

Hubert Young and, possibly, ill-health contributed to Curzon's sudden and rather surprising enthusiasm for Abdallah and Nūrī. Young's influence on Curzon was an important feature of British policy towards Iraq during 1919 and 1920. Curzon respected Young for his first hand knowledge of Iraq, including his long-standing personal acquaintance with Nūrī, even if he did not always accept Young's policy recommendations.<sup>49</sup> Until April 1920 Curzon had always doubted the wisdom of encouraging Hashimite ambitions in Iraq. In mid-1920 Curzon was known to be severely overworked and in poor health. Physical and mental exhaustion may have made him vulnerable to Young's enthusiasm for Arab government in Iraq. Curzon read and commented on most of the Foreign Office correspondence concerning Iraq and should have noticed that Nūrī's two memoranda contradicted what the Foreign Office already knew about the Iraqi Congress. It is possible that Curzon's illness may have eroded his usually sceptical approach to Arab affairs.<sup>50</sup>

The British government began to reconsider Abdallah for Iraq on 13 April 1920 during a meeting of the Inter-Departmental Committee on Middle Eastern Affairs (ICMEA). Relying on what he had learned from Nūrī's two memoranda, Curzon invited the committee 'to consider the possibility that the intervention of Abdulla might extricate His Majesty's Government from all their problems [in Iraq].' He added that, 'Over a year ago the people of Mesopotamia had been invited to express their opinions. He [Curzon] did not wish to hint that the reply they had given did not accurately reflect their feelings at that time. But there were people who knew the country well, Miss Bell among others, who were of the opinion that they would now accept Abdulla.' Curzon argued that Wilson had been quite wrong to ridicule the Iraqi Congress:

What had the twenty-nine done? They had proclaimed Abdulla as King of Mesopotamia with Zeid as Regent. Zeid was a young man in the early twenties, whose chief desire was apparently to be educated at an English university. His regency need not be taken seriously. Abdulla, on the other hand, was quite a different personality. He had recently been invited to Cairo in connection with the trouble between King Hussein and Ibn Saud.

Curzon 'saw no possibility of a united Arab State unless Abdulla were accepted as its ruler', and wanted him invited to London to discuss arrangements for Iraq.<sup>51</sup>

During a visit to Paris in late April and early May 1920, Nūrī suggested to Robert Vansittart of the Foreign Office and W. H. Gribbon that Abdallah and Curzon should meet to discuss the future of Iraq. Nūrī proposed a meeting between them in Paris on 11 May 1920 when the peace treaty would be presented to the Turks. Abdallah would attend that ceremony as the foreign minister of the Hijaz. Curzon rejected this suggestion because he saw no reason why the Hijaz should be represented on that occasion. Curzon feared that if Abdallah were present, 'he will put forward all sorts of claims about Mesopotamia.' Curzon agreed, however, to Gribbon's suggestion to meet Abdallah in London in a private capacity on the strict understanding that this would in no way commit Great Britain to recognizing any connection between Abdallah and Iraq.<sup>52</sup>

Nūrī's efforts to promote Abdallah had the support of General Jibrīl Ḥaddād, who apparently had orders from Faysal to plead Abdallah's case in London. Ḥaddād arranged and was present during Nūrī's meeting with Gribbon on 5 May 1920.<sup>53</sup> Ḥaddād's strategy for promoting Abdallah was similar to that of the Hashimites, Lawrence and Nūrī. In early June 1920 Ḥaddād submitted a memorandum to the Foreign Office which argued that the Shiites of Iraq would readily accept Abdallah as their ruler because of their veneration for the family of the Prophet. Ḥaddād emphasized that Abdallah would turn to Great Britain for assistance and protection, and that the future Iraqi army would operate under the guidance of British officers.<sup>54</sup> In mid-June the Foreign Office rejected a suggestion from Ḥaddād that Sir Percy Cox should meet Abdallah in Jidda before returning to London from Tehran. Curzon, who preferred to consult Cox before meeting Husayn or Abdallah, feared that Cox's presence in Jidda would give the appearance of a British commitment to Abdallah. Curzon also refused to meet Ḥaddād in order to discuss Abdallah's prospects in Iraq.<sup>55</sup>

Nūrī's activities in Europe were opposed by A. T. Wilson, the India Office, the Iraqi Congress and *al-Ahd al-Iraqī* in Baghdad and Mosul.

Wilson deplored the tendency of the Foreign Office to regard Nūrī al-Sa'īd as a reliable source on Iraq ('he in no sense represents Mesopotamian interests').<sup>56</sup> This view was shared by C. C. Garbett of the India Office Political Department, who wrote in a departmental minute dated 19 May 1920: 'so far as we know [Nūrī has] no influence in Mesopotamia and his elevation to the role of Adviser to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs [Curzon] is an innovation which we may hope will not be encouraged.'<sup>57</sup> Edwin Montagu told Nūrī on 16 April 1920 that he opposed Abdallah's establishment in Iraq despite Nūrī's argument that Abdallah would command the loyalty of Iraq's Shiite majority. Montagu was one of the few British officials who doubted that the Shiites of Iraq would accept Abdallah as their ruler.<sup>58</sup>

One of Nūrī's strategies for promoting Abdallah was to spread false rumours that Great Britain had decided to create a Hashimite government in Iraq. Nūrī first tried this after his meeting with Montagu when he sent the following telegram to Zayd in Damascus: 'An understanding has been reached with Montagu on the subject of Iraq. Inform our Lord Abdullah that the (early) realisation of our hopes is expected'.<sup>59</sup> The British intercepted this telegram and passed it to Montagu who assumed that Nūrī's poor English was the source of the misunderstanding. The impact of this telegram on Abdallah, if it ever reached him, is unknown. Montagu notified Curzon at San Remo that Nūrī's account of their interview should be disregarded.<sup>60</sup>

After the San Remo Conference, Nūrī sent telegrams to Iraq and Syria claiming that the British would soon establish an Arab government in Iraq. *Al-'Ahd al-'Irāqī* in Baghdad and Mosul were too sceptical of the British to believe that Iraq would soon have an Arab government.<sup>61</sup> The Iraqi Congress responded to Nūrī's telegrams by writing to the leaders of al-Shāmiyya and warning them that Nūrī was a British stooge trying to convince Iraqis that they should acquiesce in the British occupation of their country. The leaders of al-Shāmiyya were told to disregard anything Nūrī wrote, even if he claimed to speak in the name of Husayn, Faysal or Abdallah, because his actions were unauthorized by the Iraqi Congress. This letter was full of personal malice and a clear

sign that personal rivalries within *al-ʿAbd al-ʿIrāqī* had prevented that society from presenting a united front on Abdallah's behalf.<sup>62</sup>

In mid-February 1920 Husayn asked Allenby to meet Abdallah in order to discuss recent events in Syria and the Hashimite-Saudi dispute.<sup>63</sup> Because of the Iraqi Congress, the Foreign Office and the Arab Bureau were apprehensive about inviting Abdallah to Cairo. The Arab Bureau feared that Abdallah would interpret such an invitation as British support for his ambitions in Iraq.<sup>64</sup> Vickery and Allenby were able, however, to convince the Foreign Office that Abdallah could be invited without harm. Vickery reasoned that Great Britain's rejection of the Iraqi Congress had been made sufficiently clear to the Hashimites, and that inviting Abdallah to Cairo would ensure his loyalty to Great Britain. Allenby foresaw serious trouble with Husayn if Abdallah did not pay a ceremonial visit to Cairo. Allenby feared a crisis because Vickery had recently informed him that Husayn considered the political programmes of the Syrian and Iraqi Congresses consistent with the commitments McMahon had made to the Arabs during the war.<sup>65</sup>

During his largely-ceremonial visit to Cairo from 26 April to 11 May 1920, Abdallah found Allenby unwilling to negotiate the future of Iraq or Syria with him. Although Great Britain had firmly rejected the Iraqi Congress, Abdallah tried to discuss his prospects in Iraq with Allenby, and handed him a memorandum calling for the unity of Palestine, Syria and Iraq. Allenby flatly refused to discuss Iraq or Arab unity. Abdallah was bluntly told that his future in Iraq could only be decided by popular referendum. Abdallah responded by disclaiming any interest in ruling Iraq.

Abdallah had instructions from Husayn to inform Allenby and Catroux that he would replace Faysal as his father's representative in Syria and at the peace conference. As representative of the 'Leader of the Arab Uprising' Abdallah would negotiate all matters concerning the Arabs at the peace conference. Allenby made it clear to Abdallah that Great Britain recognized his father as King of the Hijaz only and did not accept that he had any right to speak for Syria and Iraq. Allenby added that only the mandatory powers acting in consultation with the



people of Syria, Iraq and Palestine could decide the future of those countries.<sup>66</sup>

Catroux, who accompanied Abdallah to Cairo, warned his government against complicating the Syrian problem by replacing Faysal with Abdallah. Catroux argued that France benefitted from Husayn's estrangement from Faysal and had no interest in renewing the crumbling alliance between Syria and the Hijaz. He thought, moreover, that Abdallah was too closely tied to the British to be of much use to France.<sup>67</sup>

Vickery reported to the Foreign Office that Abdallah was pleased with his reception in Cairo.<sup>68</sup> It is more likely, however, that Abdallah was disappointed that his visit to Cairo did little to advance his ambitions in Iraq or Syria. Abdallah's only tangible gain was the Grand Cross of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire he received from Allenby. Allenby concluded that Abdallah's visit 'has had an excellent effect and that the honour shown to the Emir will result in strengthening the feeling of loyalty which he has always shown towards us.' Allenby informed the Foreign Office in mid-May 1920 that Abdallah had spoken of his nomination as king of Iraq 'with moderation and restraint' and that, if 'he were to occupy a more important position', Great Britain would find him a most cooperative client. Allenby thus cautiously recommended that Abdallah should be invited to London to meet Lord Curzon.<sup>69</sup>

On 12 May 1920 Curzon agreed to meet Abdallah in London in a strictly private capacity.<sup>70</sup> A week later Allenby recommended delaying Abdallah's invitation until Husayn and Ibn Saud had agreed to meet under British auspices in order to settle their differences.<sup>71</sup> (The Foreign Office had warned both Husayn and Ibn Saud in early May that they would lose their British subsidies if they refused to negotiate their differences.<sup>72</sup>) The Foreign Office approved Allenby's recommendation, but added that an invitation should also await further developments in Faysal's relations with Great Britain and France.<sup>73</sup> After Husayn and Ibn Saud had agreed to meet, Allenby advised the Foreign Office in mid-June to invite Abdallah to London.<sup>74</sup>

Despite his admission in late April 1920 that 'the section [of Iraqi opinion] in favour of Abdulla is probably growing in strength, its programme is intelligible and logical', A. T. Wilson had not waived in his hostility towards Abdallah and his partisans. Wilson dismissed Abdallah's supporters as 'extremists' and 'religious fanatics' who were out of touch with the majority view in Iraq. He continued to argue that installing Abdallah in Iraq would lead to major disturbances, 'and would incontestably involve the disappearance of any organised administration whether foreign or indigenous.' Although Wilson now grudgingly accepted the inevitability of Arab government, he believed that such could not be established immediately because, as he warned Montagu on 30 April 1920, Iraq had been under alien government for two hundred years.<sup>75</sup>

The India Office still accepted Wilson's view of Abdallah, and resisted Curzon's inclination to invite him to London. In mid-April Hirtzel wrote to Wilson that the India Office was resisting Curzon 'as hard as we can.'<sup>76</sup> Garbett doubted the reliability of the Hijazi Arabs, while Shuckburgh was 'personally all against inviting these potentates to London. It seldom does any good.' In Hirtzel's view, '. . .the idea that we shall be any wiser when we have seen Abdullah is disproved by experience. All that will happen will be (as in the case of Feisal) that we shall be hoodwinked by the interpreter!' Montagu did not object if Abdallah came to London to see ministers, but opposed offering him an Iraqi throne.<sup>77</sup> Unfavourable reports from Bell and Garbett had made Montagu 'exceedingly doubtful of encouraging the idea that Abdulla should be ruler of Mesopotamia.' Abdallah's recent statement to *The Times* that the Arab states should form a federation added to Montagu's misgivings.<sup>78</sup>

India Office opposition to Abdallah did not, however, mean rejection of Arab government in Iraq. By April 1920 Montagu and Curzon had agreed that Iraq should have an Arab government. Despite his reservations about Abdallah, Montagu had become an advocate of what he called 'the native-state ideal' as opposed to Wilson's 'British-Indian ideal.'<sup>79</sup> Throughout 1919 and 1920 Hirtzel had repeatedly reminded Wilson that, whether he liked it or not, an Arab government would

eventually be established in Iraq. Although Wilson grudgingly accepted the inevitability of Arab government, his administration, except for Gertrude Bell, was determined to resist this as long as possible.<sup>60</sup>

Much to Wilson's annoyance, Bell had abandoned her earlier opposition to Arab government in Iraq and Abdallah. Until October 1919 Bell and Wilson had both firmly opposed Abdallah and the repatriation of the Iraqis in Syria. Bell's meetings in Syria in October 1919 with the leadership of *al-'Ahd al-'Iraqi* changed her mind about the Iraqi exiles, Arab government in Iraq and the Hashimites. In a report submitted to the India Office entitled 'Syria in October 1919', Bell called for the repatriation of the Iraqi exiles in Syria and the establishment of a Hashimite-led Arab government in Iraq. For reasons which she did not explain, Bell wanted Zayd, not Abdallah, to head that government.<sup>61</sup>

Although Bell originally feared that the Iraqi Congress would destabilize Iraq, by mid-June 1920 she had become an enthusiastic supporter of Abdallah. On 14 June she wrote to her father, Sir Hugh Bell:

What would really simplify matters would be if they [the Iraqis] would ask for Abdullah, Faisal's brother, for Amir. Abdullah is a gentleman who likes a copy of the Figaro every morning at breakfast time. I haven't any doubt we should get on with him famously. Then recall the Mesopotamians from Syria and set up your national government as quick as you can--they are some of them capable men with considerable experience.<sup>62</sup>

Bell's formerly harmonious relationship with Wilson deteriorated as her enthusiasm for Arab government and Abdallah grew. By the time Wilson left Iraq in September 1920, he and Bell were barely on speaking terms. Their estrangement showed how isolated Wilson had become by June 1920 because of his unflinching opposition to Arab government in Iraq.<sup>63</sup>

In early June 1920 Curzon started having doubts about inviting Abdallah to London. Husayn's repudiation of Faysal had made Curzon uncertain about the direction in which Abdallah focused his ambition and his standing *vis-à-vis* his father and younger brother. After Husayn had agreed in late May to meet Ibn Saud, A. M. Patrick and Sir John Tilley of

the Foreign Office drafted a letter on 2 June 1920 to Husayn inviting him and Abdallah to visit London.<sup>84</sup> Curzon opposed inviting them on the mistaken and rather incredible assumption that Abdallah had already been invited to London. Because of Husayn's intention to replace Faysal with Abdallah, Curzon did not know in what capacity Abdallah should be invited to London. Since March 1920 the Foreign Office had considered inviting Faysal to the peace conference in order to settle problems concerning Syria. In early June, Curzon foresaw two problems if Abdallah were invited to London: first, that he would come as Husayn's representative and 'put forward all sorts of impossible claims', and, second, that if Abdallah and Faysal were in Europe at the same time each would claim to represent the Hijaz. 'Surely we are plunging into deep water' was Curzon's cautious assessment of that prospect.<sup>85</sup>

On 5 June Tilley and Patrick tried unsuccessfully to convince Curzon that the Foreign Office could sidestep the problem of Husayn's disavowal of Faysal by inviting Abdallah to London in a strictly private capacity. However, uncertainty about Abdallah's official standing since his recent resignation as Husayn's foreign minister had made Curzon even more reluctant to see him in London. Remarkably, Curzon was still under the impression that Abdallah had already been invited to London, even though he could not find the relevant telegram.<sup>86</sup>

In mid-June 1920 the Foreign Office preferred to consult Sir Percy Cox, who was then on his way home from Tehran, before inviting Abdallah to London. After Ibn Saud and Husayn had agreed to meet in Ṭā'if or Aden, Allenby advised the Foreign Office on 16 June to invite Abdallah to London. To keep Abdallah busy until the British government had decided what its policy in Iraq would be, Young recommended that he should stay in the Hijaz in order to greet Ibn Saud at Ṭā'if. (Abdallah had recently asked to meet Ibn Saud at Ṭā'if before the latter met Husayn.) Tilley agreed with Young, but suggested that Abdallah should meet Cox in London as soon as possible after his meeting with Ibn Saud. In Tilley's view, 'If he [Abdallah] is to be Emir of Mesopotamia and of Mosul the sooner the better.' Lord Hardinge disagreed and advised delay until Iraqi public opinion had expressed its views in a second

plebiscite, although he considered it 'extremely doubtful' that the Iraqi people would vote for Abdallah. The Foreign Office informed Allenby on 21 June that Abdallah should greet Ibn Saud in Ṭā'if, and that the British government would consider inviting him to London only after Cox had been consulted.<sup>87</sup>

All hope that the British government would enthrone Abdallah in Iraq vanished in July 1920. The insurrection in Iraq, which lasted from July to October 1920, diverted British attention from Abdallah, as did the downfall of Faysal's régime in Syria. On 24 July--the day France routed Faysal's army at Khān Maysalūn--the long-awaited views of Sir Percy Cox on Iraq were submitted to the Cabinet. Cox's proposals called for limited self-rule in Iraq, and left little room for an Arab emir and none for Abdallah. Cox recommended that a British high commissioner should rule Iraq for several years before the installation of an Arab emir. Cox argued that an Arab head of state would be difficult to find, first, because there were no suitable local candidates and, second, because the objections to Abdallah and Ibn Saud were 'insuperable'. Cox did not explain what those objections were or why they were insuperable. His preferred solution was an Arab republic whose first president would be British-appointed.<sup>88</sup>

The final blow to Abdallah's candidature came from A. T. Wilson. After railing for so long against the Hashimites, Wilson invited Great Britain on 31 July 1920 to consider enthroning Faysal in Iraq. Having no interest in Abdallah ('Nothing that I have heard during the last few months has led me to modify my views of unsuitability of Abdalla . . .'), Wilson now argued that 'Feisal alone of all Arabian potentates has any idea of practical difficulties of running a civilised government on Arab lines. He can scarcely fail to realise that foreign assistance is vital to the continued existence of an Arab State. He realises danger of relying on an Arab army.' Wilson added that Faysal's establishment in Iraq would remove all accusations of British bad faith towards the Hashimites and the Iraqi people.<sup>89</sup> Montagu concurred, but warned that due account would have to be taken of French objections to Faysal's establishment in Iraq.<sup>90</sup>

On 8 August 1920 Curzon informed Alexandre Millerand that Great Britain was considering the possibility of installing Faysal in Iraq.<sup>21</sup> Now, for the first time, the India Office, the Foreign Office and the British administration in Iraq all agreed that Iraq should have an Arab emir. Their preference for Faysal spelled the end of Abdallah's prospects, if not his ambitions, in Iraq.

#### Conclusion

In late July 1920 Abdallah faced the grim prospect of political extinction. His hopes for high office in Iraq, the Hijaz and Syria had collapsed. The strategies Abdallah, his family and Iraqi supporters had adopted to promote his interests in Iraq had failed for four reasons. First, Abdallah and his Iraqi partisans lacked a coherent and well-coordinated strategy to achieve their common aims in Iraq. Second, Abdallah's strategies for dealing with Great Britain conflicted with those of *al-'Ahd al-'Irāqī*. Third, Abdallah and his supporters had no plan for governing Iraq once they had come to power. Fourth, Abdallah's interests in Iraq were undermined by rivalries within the Hashimite family and *al-'Ahd al-'Irāqī*.

Abdallah and *al-'Ahd al-'Irāqī* made no known effort to adopt a joint strategy aimed at convincing or compelling the British government to establish a Hashimite monarchy in Iraq. Abdallah favoured cooperation with the British and was prepared to accept a British mandate in Iraq. Immediately before and after the Iraqi Congress Abdallah deliberately distanced himself from *al-'Ahd al-'Irāqī* in order not to offend his British patrons. *Al-'Ahd al-'Irāqī*, except for Nuri al-Sa'id, rejected a British mandate and preferred to confront Great Britain with the *fait accompli* of Iraqi independence, subversion on the Iraqi-Syrian frontier and anti-British propaganda. Abdallah convinced Allenby, Vickery and the Foreign Office that he disapproved of the anti-British actions of his partisans. Wilson and the India Office, however, refused to differentiate between Abdallah and the violent subversion of his Iraqi supporters, over whom he had little control.

The hostile reaction of *al-'Ahd al-'Irāqī* to Nūrī's diplomatic mission in Europe in mid-1920 illustrated how the effectiveness and

cohesion of that society was undermined by personal rivalries and the lack of a single strategy for influencing British policy in Iraq. Nūrī both helped and hindered Abdallah's quest for an Iraqi throne. On the one hand, Nūrī convinced Curzon and Young that Abdallah should be considered for the kingship of Iraq. On the other, Nūrī damaged his and Abdallah's credibility by spreading false rumours in Syria and Iraq that the British would soon create an Arab government in Baghdad.

The declaration of the Iraqi Congress was evidence that neither Abdallah nor *al-'Abd al-'Irāqī* had any clear strategy for ruling Iraq. That declaration said nothing about the structure and organization of a future Iraqi government or the future role of its signatories in the politics of Iraq. Abdallah was mentioned as a constitutional monarch, although his specific duties as head of state were not explained. Nothing was said about how Iraq would be governed with or without the cooperation of the Shiite majority, the Kurds, the bedouins and the urban Sunni notability. The Iraqi Congress made the questionable assumption that Abdallah would be universally accepted as the legitimate ruler of Iraq because of his family's part in the Arab revolt.

The temporary interest of Husayn and Abdallah in replacing Faysal had negative consequences for Abdallah's ambitions in Iraq. Abdallah's failed attempt to convince the French government that he should replace Faysal left French officials with a negative impression of his trustworthiness. Abdallah's passing interest in ruling Syria confused Curzon about the object of his ambitions. That confusion contributed to Curzon's reluctance in the spring of 1920 to receive Abdallah in London.

Abdallah and his partisans were disunited and often worked at cross-purposes. The same cannot be said for Abdallah's British opponents. Except for Gertrude Bell, the British administration in Iraq, Sir Percy Cox and the India Office consistently, firmly and effectively opposed any suggestion to establish Abdallah in Iraq. Their unbending opposition to Abdallah was the most important obstacle to the realization of his ambitions in Iraq.

The opposition of Wilson and the India Office was not, however, the only reason why the British government refused to install Abdallah in

Iraq. During the tumultuous spring and summer of 1920 the Foreign Office had higher priorities in the Middle East than inviting Abdallah to London to meet Lord Curzon. A final decision as to whether or not Abdallah should be installed in Iraq was delayed because of the need to reconcile Husayn and Ibn Saud, the French occupation of Syria, the uprising in Iraq and uncertainty about British policy in Iraq until the Foreign Office had consulted Sir Percy Cox. Faysal's downfall in late July 1920 completely changed the political equation in the Middle East and ended any hope that Abdallah had to realize his ambitions in Iraq. The preference of the Foreign Office, the India Office and the British administration in Baghdad for Faysal ensured that Great Britain would not establish Abdallah in Iraq. Abdallah's reaction to the collapse of his prospects in Iraq is discussed at length in chapter eight.

Although Abdallah did not know it in late July 1920, all hope for his political advancement had not disappeared. Between October 1918 and July 1920 an influential group of British officials in the Foreign Office, Cairo and Jidda had concluded that Abdallah was qualified either to succeed his father as King of the Hijaz or to head an Arab government within the framework of a British mandate. The argument that Abdallah would be acceptable to both the Sunnis and Shiites of Iraq had persuaded many British officials that a broad spectrum of Arab opinion in the Fertile Crescent would recognize him as their legitimate sovereign. The next chapter will explain how this positive perception of Abdallah contributed to the creation of Transjordan.

The Iraqi Congress relied on Husayn's interpretation of the Husayn-McMahon correspondence to justify Abdallah's establishment in Iraq. Their use of this argument was a sign that, by mid-1920, Husayn's version of British commitments to support Arab independence had become part of the official ideology of the pro-Hashimite nationalists of Syria and Iraq. With the power of the Hijaz and the Arab government of Syria behind it, Husayn's interpretation of the Husayn-McMahon correspondence quickly became one of the ideological pillars of post-war Arab nationalism.



## Notes

1. On the Khurmā dispute and Abdallah's defeat at Turaba, see Abdallah, *Mudhakkirātī*, pp. 154-65; Rāwī, *Thawra*, pp. 132-42; 'Note by Captain Garland of the Arab Bureau, on the Khurma Dispute Between King Husayn and Ibn Saud', 4 June 1919 FO 371/4146/91521; Unsigned, undated but after 25 May 1919, 'Note Sur Les Operations des Ouahabites Contre La Mecque' SHA 4H/1/dossier 3; Catroux to Guerre 20 June 1919 SHA 7N/4183/dossier 4. Ibrāhīm al-Rāwī was one of Abdallah's commanders at Turaba. On Khālīd bin Lu'ay's break with Husayn, see Wilson, *Abdullah*, p. 35 and Mohammed Almana, *Arabia Unified. A Portrait of Ibn Saud* (London, 1980) p. 64.
2. Bassett, to ARBUR secret 17 May 1919 FO 141/683/9366 and Allenby to Curzon 27 May 1919 FO 371/4146/84546.
3. Cheetham to Curzon 16 Oct. 1919 FO 141/683/9366.
4. Lord Gerald Wellesley (for Curzon) to Allenby 15 Nov. 1919 FO 141/683/9366.
5. Vickery to Director, ARBUR secret 11 Jan. 1920 FO 141/683/9366 and Catroux, 'Aperçu d'Ensemble des Evénements du Hedjaz Pendant La Période du 1er au 31 Janvier 1920' 1 Feb. 1920 MAEP Levant: Arabie-Hedjaz vol. 8.
6. Vickery to ARBUR 9 Jan. 1920 FO 882/22/KH/20/2; Vickery to Director, ARBUR 11 Jan. 1920 FO 882/22/KH/20/3; Allenby to Curzon 15 Jan. 1920 FO 882/22/KH/20/4; Catroux, 'Aperçu d'Ensemble des Evénements Survenus au Hedjaz Pendant La Période du 1er au 31 Janvier 1920' 1 Feb. 1920 MAEP Levant: Arabie-Hedjaz vol. 8; Abdallah, *Mudhakkirātī*, p. 165.
7. Andrew and Kanya-Forstner, *France*, pp. 200-204; Dan Eldar, 'French Policy in the Levant and Its Relation to Arab Nationalism and Zionism, 1914-1920', unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, Tel Aviv University, 1978, pp. 389-409 (In Hebrew); Tannenbaum, 'France', pp. 33-36.
8. Catroux to Pichon 11 Jan. 1920 MAEP Levant: Arabie-Hedjaz vol. 9.
9. Catroux, 'Aperçu d'Ensemble des Evénements Survenus au Hedjaz Pendant La Période du 1er au 31 Janvier 1920' 1 Feb. 1920 MAEP Levant: Arabie-Hedjaz vol. 8; Catroux, *Deux Missions*, pp. 223-25 and Abdallah, *Mudhakkirātī*, pp. 166-67.
10. Catroux to Millerand 24 Feb. 1920 and Catroux, 'Aperçu d'Ensemble des Evénements Survenus au Hedjaz Pendant Le Mois de Février 1920' 1 Mar. 1920 both MAEP Levant: Arabie-Hedjaz vol. 9.
11. On the action of the Ottoman Chamber of Deputies, see Lewis, *Modern Turkey*, pp. 250-51 and Fromkin, *Peace*, pp. 427-28.
12. The Syrian Congress was first convened in Damascus in June 1919. Faysal then called for the creation of an elected body from Greater Syria that would support the political program he intended to present to the peace conference, convince the Allies that he, a Hijazi, genuinely represented the Syrian people and channel the energies of the Syrian nationalists into constructive support for his régime. Sultan, *Suriya, 1918-1920*, pp. 128-32.
13. On the Syrian Congress of March 1920, see Khoury, *Notables*, pp. 89-90; Andrew and Kanya-Forstner, *France*, pp. 215-16, Sultān, *Sūriya 1918-1920*, pp. 272-80; Yehoshua Porath, *The Emergence of the*

*Palestinian-Arab National Movement, 1918-1929* (Tel Aviv, 1976) pp. 55-99 (In Hebrew) and 'Umarī, *Muqaddarāt*, vol. 3, pp. 192-96.

14. 'Umarī, *Muqaddarāt*, vol. 3, pp. 188-91, 'Askarī, *Thawra*, vol. 2, pp. 63-66 and Sa'īd, *Thawra*, vol. 2, p. 34-35.

15. Allenby to Curzon 21 Mar. 1920 and Vickery 'Extracts from a Report Dated March 6, 1920' both FO 371/5061/E2534.

16. Curzon to Allenby 8 Mar. 1920 FO 371/5032/E1087; Curzon to Allenby 13 Mar. 1920 FO 371/5032/E1461; Millerand to Gouraud 8 Mar. 1920 and Millerand to Gouraud 9 Mar. 1920 both SHA 4H/44/dossier 1. Eldar, 'French Policy', p. 424.

17. Jarīdat al-Ayyām, *Al-Wathā'iq wa'l-Mu'āhadāt fī'l-Bilād al-'Arabiyya* (Damascus, 1937 ?), pp. 316-19; Ayyūbī, *Dhikrayāt*, pp. 88-89, Sa'īd, *Thawra*, Vol. 2, pp. 34-37; Forbes to Young private 24 June 1920 FO 371/5227/E7508; Ernest Scott (acting HC, Egypt) to Curzon 24 Sept. 1920 FO 371/5040/E12137. See appendix two.

18. GHQ to WO 12 Mar. 1920 and Paul Cambon to Curzon 11 Mar. 1920 FO 371/5032/E1452; Curzon to Allenby 13 Mar. 1920 FO 371/5032/E1461; Minutes of a conversation between Curzon and Cambon 13 Mar. 1920 FO 371/5032/E1595; Curzon to Allenby 19 Mar. 1920 FO 371/5033/E1813; Millerand to Gouraud 11 Mar. 1920 très urgent secret and Millerand to Gouraud 14 Mar. 1920 SHA 4H/44/dossier 1.

19. Minutes of Young and Tilley 13 Mar. 1920, Hardinge undated and Curzon 13 Mar. 1920 FO 371/5032/E1452.

20. Meinertzhagen to FO 27 Mar. 1920 FO 371/5034/E2329.

21. Forbes to Young private 24 June 1920 FO 371/5227/E7508. Joan Rositta Forbes, an English writer and traveller with an interest in the Arabs, sent Young a list of the participants in the Iraqi Congress.

22. Abdallah, *Mudhakkirātī*, p. 167.

23. Catroux, 'Aperçu d'Ensemble des Evénements Survenus au Hedjaz Dans La Période du 1er au 31 Mars 1920', MAEP Levant: Arabie-Hedjaz vol. 9.

24. *ibid.* and Mission Militaire Française du Hedjaz, 'Extrait et Analyse de la KIBLA No. 369 du 25 Mars 1920' and No. 374 du 12 Avril 1920, MAEP Levant: Arabie-Hedjaz vol. 9.

25. Allenby to FO 30 Mar. 1920 and FO to Allenby 1 Apr. 1920 FO 371/5033/E2491; ARBUR to Vickery 3 Apr. 1920 FO 882/23/MES/20/2 and Vickery to Husayn and Abdallah 4 Apr. 1920 FO 686/43.

26. Husayn to Allenby undated FO 882/23/MES/20/3.

27. Baṣīr, *Qadīya*, p. 130; 'Askarī, *Thawra*, vol. 2, p. 66, 'Umarī, *Muqaddarāt*, vol. 3, p. 197 and Roux to MAE 15 Apr. 1920 MAEP Levant: Arabie-Hedjaz vol. 9.

28. Vickery, 'Political and Intelligence Reports' for 22 Mar.-1 Apr. and 1-12 Apr. 1920 FO 686/26; Vickery to Abdallah 27 Mar. 1920, Vickery to Arbur 23, 25, 26, 28 Mar. 1920, all FO 686/42 and Mission Militaire Française du Hedjaz, 'Extrait et Analyse de la KIBLA No. 374 du 12 Avril 1920' MAEP Levant: Arabie-Hedjaz vol. 9.

29. Allenby to Curzon 21 Mar. 1920 FO 371/5061/E2534.

30. Abdallah to Vickery private 6 Apr. 1920 FO 371/5242/E4451.

31. Catroux, 'Aperçu d'Ensemble des Evénements Survenus au Hedjaz Dans La Période du 1er au 31 Mars 1920' 1 Apr. 1920 MAEP Levant: Arabie-Hedjaz vol. 9.

32. Gouraud to MAE 4 Apr. 1920 MAEP Levant: Arabie-Hedjaz vol. 9 and Gouraud to MAE 6 Apr. 1920 MAEN Archives du Haut Commissariat de France en Syrie et au Liban (henceforth Beirut papers) carton 2211.

33. Egyptforce to Wilson 12 Mar. 1920, SSI to CCB 13, 16, 19 Mar. 1920, all in 1920 FO 882/23/MES/20/1.

34. CCB to SSI 18 Mar. 1920 FO 882/23/MES/20/1.

35. CCB to SSI 20 Mar. 1920 FO 882/23/MES/20/1.

36. CCB to SSI 18, 20, 21 Mar. 1920 FO 882/23/MES/20/1 and Wilson to Hirtzel (?) 10 June 1920, The Sir Arnold Wilson Papers, The British Museum, London, vol. 52455C pp. 117-126.

37. Roux (Baghdad) to Millerand 12, 13 and 18 Apr. 1920 MAEP Levant: Mesopotamie-Irak, vol. 15.

38. CCB to IO 21 Mar. 1920 FO 882/23/MES/20/1.

39. Allenby to Curzon 8 Mar. 1920 FO 371/5032/E1087; Allenby to Curzon 9 Mar. 1920 FO 371/5032/E1165; Allenby to Curzon 8 Mar. 1920 FO 371/5032/E1167; minutes of Young and Tilley 9 Mar. 1920 and minutes of Hardinge and Curzon undated, Allenby to Curzon 20 Mar. 1920, FO to Allenby 22 Mar. 1920 FO 882/23/MES/20/1; Allenby to Curzon 18 Mar. 1920 FO 371/5033/E1813; SSI to CCB 19 Mar. 1920 FO 371/5033/E2003; Curzon to Allenby 19 Mar. 1920 FO 371/5033/E18132; Young minute 22 Mar. 1920 FO 371/5033/E1932; Allenby to FO 23 Mar. 1920 FO 371/5033/E2068.

40. CCB to IO 3 June 1920 FO 371/5227/E6060; Gouraud to MAE 5 June 1920 SHA 16N/3204/dossier 2 and 'Abd al-Darrājī, *Abū'l-Tīman*, pp. 85-102.

41. Ayyūbī, *Dhikrayāt*, pp. 90-96; Baṣīr, *Qaḍīya*, p. 130-33; GHQ, Mesopotamia to WO secret 15 June 1920 FO 371/5129/E6717; CCB to IO 18 June 1920 FO 371/5103/E7219 (quoted); Service des Informations de la Marine dans le Levant, 'Rapport Hebdomadaire sur la Situation Politique', secret, Beirut 18 June 1920 SHA 7N 4184/dossier 1.

42. Cabinet Conclusions, meeting no. 16, 23 Mar. 1920, 3rd minute CAB 23/20.

43. *Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons*, 25 Mar. 1920, vol. 127, cols. 662-64.

44. Young minute 10 Apr. 1920 FO 371/5071/E2942.

45. Young minute 3 Apr. 1920 FO 371/5068/E2571. Young noted in this minute that his friendship with Nūrī dated from the period April to October 1918 when he served as an adviser to Faysal's Northern Arab Army. On Nūrī's mission to Europe, also see Gouraud to MAE 11 Mar. 1920 MAEN, Beirut papers, carton 2211.

46. Nūrī's memoranda of 5 Apr. 1920 FO 371/5226/E2719 and 13 Apr. 1920 FO 371/5226/E3110.

47. Haddad to FO 14 June 1920 FO 371/5122/E10257.

48. Young minute 7 Apr. 1920 FO 371/5226/E2719.

49. On Young's relationship with Curzon, see Hubert Young, *The Independent Arab* (London, 1933) pp. 282-85.

50. Regarding the impact of Curzon's health on British policy, the following remark of Sir Arthur Hirtzel bears note:

It is becoming increasingly difficult to do business with the Eastern Committee, especially as Lord Curzon-who has been tremendously overworked lately-invariably falls ill at critical moments. This happened again after an adjourned meeting last week.

Hirtzel to Wilson private 23 May 1920, Wilson papers, vol. 52455C, pp. 99-100.

51. ICMEA, 37th meeting, 13 Apr. 1920 FO 371/5068/E3706; Curzon to Montagu 16 Apr. 1920 FO 371/5226/E3322.

52. Nūrī to Gribbon 30 Apr. 1920 FO 371/5061/E4248; Vansittart (Paris) to FO 1 May 1920 and undated minute of Curzon (quoted) FO 371/5061/E4065; Gribbon memorandum of 5 May 1920 (quoted) and minutes of Hardinge (undated); Curzon 9 May 1920 FO 371/5061/E4391 and FO to Allenby 12 May 1920 FO 371/5061/E4391.

53. Gribbon memorandum, 5 May 1920 FO 371/5061/E4391.

54. Note by Haddād, June 1920 FO 371/5036/E8205.

55. Minutes of Sir John Tilley (who met Haddād on or about 14 June 1920), 14 June, Hardinge and Curzon, both undated, FO 371/5035/E6625.

56. CCB to SSI 5 May 1920 FO 371/5226/E4539.

57. Minute of C. C. Garbett 19 May 1920 IO L/P&S/10/760 4722/1918 part 6 reg. P3888.

58. 'Memorandum of an Interview Granted to General Nuri Said by the Secretary of State for India on April 16', Nūrī to Montagu private 17 Apr. 1920 IO L/P&S/10/759 4722/1918 part 5 reg. 3643/20.

59. Nūrī to Zayd intercepted telegram no. 359 17 Apr. 1920 (Arabic original with a translation by Hubert Young) FO 371/5225/E3470.

60. Montagu to Curzon undated IO L/P&S/10/759 4722/1918 part 5 reg. 3643/20.

61. In 1953 the Baghdad newspaper, *Ṣadā al-Ahrār*, published a letter from *al-‘Ahd al-‘Irāqī* in Mosul to its counterpart in Baghdad which mentioned that Nuri had written to the mayor of Karbala announcing that Britain would soon establish an Arab government in Iraq. *Ṣadā al-Ahrār* 7 and 14 Aug. 1953, cited in Nuṣairī, *Nūrī*, pp. 81-83. The British intercepted the telegrams Nūrī sent to Iraq and passed them to Wilson. See, for example, CCB to SSI 5 May 1920 FO 371/5226/E4539.

62. *Al-Furāt* (Najaf) 14 Aug. 1920, cited in Nuṣairī, *Nūrī*, pp. 83-85.

63. Allenby to FO 18 Feb. 1920 FO 371/5060/E494.

64. FO to Allenby 18 Mar. 1920 and minutes of Young and Tilley (16 Mar. 1920), Curzon and Hardinge (undated) FO 371/5060/E494; ARBUR to Vickery 26 Mar. 1920 secret FO 882/22/KH/20/11.

65. Allenby to FO very urgent 25 Mar. 1920 FO 371/5061/E2644; Vickery to ARBUR secret 27 Mar. 1920 FO 882/22/KH/20/13; FO to Allenby very urgent 6 Apr. 1920 FO 371/5061/E2644; Allenby to FO very urgent 7 Apr. 1920 FO 371/5034/E2839.

66. 'Translation of a Statement Handed by Emir Abdullah to the High Commissioner in Egypt, Cairo. May 3rd 1920' and Allenby to Curzon 16 May 1920, both in FO 371/5062/E5374.

67. Catroux (Cairo) to Gouraud secret 9 May 1920 MAEP Levant: Arabie-Hedjaz vol. 10; Catroux, 'Aperçu d'Ensemble Sur Les Evénements Survenus Au Hedjaz Dans La Période du 1er Avril au 31 Mai 1920' 1 June 1920 SHA 16N/3203/dossier 1.

68. Vickery, 'Political Report 11th May-21st May 1920' FO 882/22/KH/20/25.

69. Allenby to Curzon 16 May 1920 FO 371/5062/E5374.

70. FO to Allenby very urgent 12 May 1920 FO 371/5061/E4391.

71. Allenby to FO 19 May 1920 FO 371/5062/E5075.

72. Curzon to Allenby 4 May 1920 FO 371/5061/E3798.
73. Minutes of A. M. Patrick 21 May, Tilley 26 May 1920 and Curzon undated, all in FO 371/5062/E5075.
74. Allenby to Curzon 16 June 1920 FO 371/5062/E6659.
75. CCB to SSI 30 Apr. 1920 FO 371/5226/E4200 (quoted); Wilson to Hirtzel (?) private, 10 June 1920, Wilson papers vol. 52445C pp. 117-26 (quoted); CCB to SSI 2 June 1920 FO 371/5227/E6591 (quoted).
76. Hirtzel to Wilson private 15 Apr. 1920 pp.79-80 and Hirtzel to Wilson private 23 May 1920 pp. 99-100, Wilson papers vol. 52455C.
77. Minutes of Garbett and Shuckburgh (quoted) 19 May 1920, Hirtzel minute 20 May 1920 (quoted), Montagu minute 24 May 1920 IO L/P&S/10/760 4722/1918 part 6 reg. P3888.
78. ICMEA, 38th minutes 17 May 1920 FO 371/5226/E5645; *The Times* 30 Apr. 1920 FO 371/5187/E3996.
79. ICMEA, 37th minutes, 12 Apr. 1920 and 38th minutes, 17 May 1920 FO 371/5226/E5645.
80. The following letters are quoted in John Marlowe, *Late Victorian. The Life of Sir Arnold Talbot Wilson* (London, 1967): Hirtzel to Wilson 16 July 1919 (p. 165), Hirtzel to Wilson 14 to 17 Sept. 1919 (p. 166), Hirtzel to Wilson 2 Feb. 1920 (pp. 182-83), Hirtzel to Wilson 6 Apr. 1920 (p. 186).
81. Bell, 'Syria in October 1919' 15 Nov. 1919 FO 371/4152/172818.
82. Bell to her father (Sir Hugh Bell) 7 Mar. 1920 and Bell to her father 14 June 1920 (quoted) in Burgoyne, *Bell*, pp. 131, 140.
83. On the collapse of Bell's relationship with Wilson, see Bell to her father 3 Oct. 1920, Burgoyne, *Bell*, pp. 169-70 and Marlowe, *Victorian*, pp. 202-207.
84. Minutes of Patrick and Tilley, both 2 June 1920, attached to Allenby to Curzon 30 May 1920 FO 371/5244/E5529.
85. Curzon minute 4 June 1920 FO 371/5244/E5529.
86. Minutes of Patrick, Tilley and Curzon, all 5 June 1920 FO 371/5244/E5529.
87. Allenby to Curzon 16 June 1920 and minutes of Young (18 June), Tilley (19 June 1920) and Hardinge undated in FO 371/5062/E6659.
88. 'Note on Mesopotamia-Persia Situation by Sir Percy Cox July 24, 1920', C. P. 1715, CAB 24/110.
89. CCB to SSI 31 July 1920 FO 371/5038/E9252.
90. Montagu's undated comment on Wilson's telegram is found in C. P. 1725 CAB 24/110.
91. 'Notes of a Conference 8 August 1920', *DBFP*, vol. 8, no. 83, min. 2, pp. 716-22.

## CHAPTER 8: ABDALLAH AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF TRANSJORDAN

### Introduction

Abdallah's role in the creation of the Emirate of Transjordan is the subject of this chapter. In late 1920 Abdallah and a band of his followers forced their way into Transjordan, a territory under nominal British control, ostensibly to lead a movement that would expel the French from Syria and re-establish Faysal's regime in Damascus. By leading such a movement in Transjordan, Abdallah tried deliberately to create tension between Great Britain and France. The Emirate of Transjordan was established against the background of Abdallah's disruptive presence in Transjordan, the problems Abdallah created for Anglo-French relations in the Middle East and the inclination of the British government to install Faysal in Iraq.

Abdallah's motives for forcing his way into Transjordan went beyond his stated aim of restoring Faysal's Syrian regime. This chapter explains how Abdallah's intervention in Transjordan was part of a strategy to pressure the British government to install him, not Faysal, in Iraq. The creation of Transjordan was an unintended consequence of Abdallah's failure to realize his ambitions in Iraq.

British policy towards Transjordan from July 1920 until March 1921 is the focus of much of this chapter. This chapter explains how the refusal of the British government to occupy Transjordan after July 1920 created a political vacuum east of the Jordan River that Abdallah exploited in order to stir up tension between Great Britain and France. Abdallah was helped in this regard by the Syrian exiles who fled to Transjordan after the occupation of Damascus. As we shall see, the desire to avoid a crisis with France contributed to the decision of the British government to reach an accommodation with Abdallah that led to the establishment of Transjordan.

The creation of Transjordan raised the problem of how Abdallah, a foreign-born ruler installed by Great Britain, would establish his authority in a land he had never aspired to rule, and with whose people he had had virtually no contact before late 1920. A related problem was

how Abdallah would convince the people of Transjordan to accept him as their legitimate sovereign and the Emirate of Transjordan as the political framework to which they owed their loyalty. These problems were complicated by the fact that Transjordan was created in a territory where national boundaries had never been drawn, and where no sense of national identity had ever existed.

How Abdallah dealt with these problems after March 1921 is beyond the scope of this thesis. Our aim here is to examine Abdallah's prospects in March 1921 of establishing his authority in Transjordan, and of being recognized by the people of Transjordan as their legitimate ruler. The people of Transjordan had extensive experience with Hashimite rule before March 1921. The Transjordanian reaction to the Arab revolt, being ruled by Faysal's Syrian government and Abdallah's intervention in Transjordan illuminate the prospects for the creation of a viable and legitimate Hashimite monarchy.

This chapter is divided into five parts. Part one begins with an overview of the social structure of Transjordan and examines Hashimite-Transjordanian relations during the Arab revolt and Faysal's reign in Syria. Part two examines British policy towards Transjordan from July 1920 until March 1921. The Transjordanian reaction to Abdallah's intervention in Transjordan in late 1920 is the subject of part three. Part four explains the connection between Abdallah's intervention in Transjordan and his ambitions in Iraq. How the Cairo and Jerusalem conferences of March 1921 led to the creation of Transjordan are treated in part five.

#### The Hashimites and Transjordan Until July 1920

Compared to Lebanon, Syria or Iraq, Transjordan was religiously and ethnically homogeneous. The fundamental social divide in Transjordan was not between religious or ethnic groups, but between the bedouins and the settled population. The settled population was divided among rival clans which preserved tribal loyalties and organization. The overwhelming majority of Transjordanians were Sunni Arabs. A miniscule community of Chechens, who came from the Caucasus and settled in Transjordan in 1907, were the only Shiites. Small Circassian settlements

were located in Amman, Jerash, Wādī Sīr and Ṣuwailīh. The Circassians settled in Transjordan after fleeing their ancestral homeland in the Caucasus during the Russo-Turkish war of 1877-78. About ten percent of the population was Christian, mostly Greek Orthodox, in addition to a few small Roman Catholic, Protestant and Armenian communities. Though little different in language and customs from their Muslim neighbours, the communal solidarity and consciousness of Transjordan's Christians remained strong. Mādabā was the only town with a Christian majority.

Transjordan had three major confederations of nomadic and semi-nomadic tribes. The Ḥuwaiṭāt of southern Transjordan were the most 'purely bedouin' of the three. Breeders of camels and almost entirely nomadic, the Ḥuwaiṭāt had been little influenced by the outside world. Before the war the Turks had little success in taxing the Ḥuwaiṭāt or restricting their raiding. The Huwaitat had a tradition of enmity with the Banū Ṣakhr, whom they usually defeated in battle. 'Auda Abū Tāyih was their paramount *shaikh* from about 1904 until his death in 1927.

To the north of the Huwaitat were the Banū Ṣakhr (or al-Sukhūr)-- the largest tribal confederation in central Transjordan. The Banū Ṣakhr spent their summers south of Amman near al-Jīza and their winters in Wādī Sirhān and the Ṣuwwān. The sedentarization of this confederation was well underway by 1918. More sedentary than the Huwaitat, the Banū Ṣakhr raised camels, sheep, goats, cattle and chickens and showed a greater inclination to agriculture than did the southern tribes. By 1918 many of their *shaikhs* had become owners of villages and large tracts of land cultivated by tribesmen who had become peasant cultivators. Mashūr al-Fā'iz was the paramount *shaikh* of the Banū Ṣakhr from 1917 to 1919, when he was succeeded by his uncle Mithqāl. The Banū Ṣakhr had a tradition of rivalry with the 'Adwān who resided in al-Balqā'.

The Banū Ḥasan resided in north-west Transjordan around 'Ajlūn and were the most sedentary of the major bedouin confederations. By 1918 most of their *shaikhs* had become village and large landowning *effendis*. The tribesmen exploited by these *shaikhs* became peasant cultivators. 'Awaḍ bin Qillāb was their paramount *shaikh* until the 1930s.'



The sedentary population of Transjordan lived west of the Hijaz railroad and inhabited four distinct regions, each of which had its own peculiar topographic and social features. The 'Ajlūn region was bounded in the north by the Yarmuk River, in the south by the Zarqā' River, in the west by the Jordan River and Lake Tiberias and in the east by the Hijaz railroad. 'Ajlūn, Irbid and Jerash were its major towns. Densely populated by cultivators, this region had been dominated for generations by a well-established sedentary population. The bedouins had less of an impact on this mountainous region than elsewhere in Transjordan. Being the first region to fall under Ottoman domination, 'Ajlūn had longer experience of central control than the other three districts, and a tradition of family and economic ties to the Ḥawran, Jebel Druze and north-eastern Palestine. Political upheavals in Syria and north-eastern Palestine were felt first and more strongly in 'Ajlūn than in the other three regions of Transjordan.

The Balqā' region was bounded in the north by the Zarqā' River, in the south by Wādī al-Mujib, in the west by the Jordan River and in the east by the Hijaz railroad. Amman and al-Salt were its two most important towns. Until Amman became the capital of Transjordan in 1921, al-Salt was the largest and most important city in the country. Al-Salt had a tradition of family ties to Nāblus, animosity towards Irbid and, later, suspicion of the central government in Amman. Most of the Circassians inhabited this region.

The al-Karak region was bounded in the north by Wādī al-Mujib, in the south by Wādī al-Ḥasā, in the west by the Dead Sea and in the east by the Hijaz railroad. The leading families of this district, especially, the Majālīs, played a leading role in Transjordanian politics before and after 1921. Al-Karak had a tradition of commercial and family ties to Hebron.

The Ma'an-'Aqaba region was bounded in the north by Wādī al-Ḥasā, in the south by the Gulf of 'Aqaba, in the west by Wādī al-'Araba and in the east by the Hijaz railroad. The major towns of this region were al-Ṭafīla, Ma'an and 'Aqaba. Strong bedouin influences on the values and family structure of the sedentary population here made this the most

conservative of Transjordan's four regions. This conservatism was accentuated by the remoteness of the Ma'ān-'Aqaba region from the centres of upheaval in the Arab world and its proximity to the Hijaz.<sup>2</sup>

In March 1921, Major F. R. Somerset and Captain F. G. Peake, two British officers serving in Transjordan, estimated the population of the country at 230,000, including the region between Ma'ān and Tabūk. According to their calculations, the four districts of Transjordan had the following populations: 'Ajlūn, 100,000; al-Balqā', 80,000; al-Karak, 40,000; Ma'ān as far south as Tabūk, 10,000.<sup>3</sup>

The Ottoman government reasserted its control of Transjordan during the first decade of the twentieth century. The construction of the Hijaz railroad, which reached al-Mudawwara in the northern Hijaz in 1906, was the most important instrument of increased Ottoman control. The people of Transjordan resisted the expansion of Ottoman control, even though that control brought greater security to their towns and villages and contributed to a local revival of agriculture. The Hijaz railroad faced strong opposition from the bedouins who feared that pilgrims would no longer rent their camels and that annual government subsidies to them would cease. In 1907 Ottoman reinforcements were sent to the garrison near Ma'ān to prevent the Banū Ṣakhr from attacking railway engineers and workers. Fears that the central government would introduce conscription, taxation and a census led to a large-scale uprising in November 1910 that spread from al-Karak to southern Transjordan, and included the Banū Ṣakhr and other tribes who attacked the Hijaz railroad.<sup>4</sup>

Pre-war discontent with growing Ottoman control was exacerbated by the extreme hardships of World War I. Large areas near 'Ajlūn, al-Salt and Shawbak were deforested in order to provide fuel for the Hijaz railroad. Deforestation included the destruction of many fruit and olive trees, which severely reduced the food supply in Transjordan. A plague of locusts early in the war destroyed many crops and fruit trees. The blockade of Ottoman ports led to a scarcity of sugar and rice. The confiscation of grain and other agricultural products drove up the price of food. Paying for what little food remained became even more

difficult when the Ottoman government required their subjects to exchange gold Turkish pounds for paper money. To make matters worse, conscription was applied for the first time throughout the settled regions of Transjordan, except in al-Karak where the Ottomans feared a repeat of the 1910 uprising.

The hardships of the war and widespread discontent with Ottoman rule did not, however, translate automatically into support for the Arab revolt, which most Transjordanians did not support. Many of those who did--particularly the bedouins--were paid by Faysal and the British to fight the Turks. In such cases, support for the Arab revolt fluctuated with the availability of British subsidies. Support for the Turks or the Hashimites often became intertwined with inter- and intra-tribal rivalries. Arab nationalist considerations played almost no part in determining who supported or opposed the Arab revolt.

The Turks and the Hashimites competed for influence in Transjordan before Faysal's forces occupied 'Aqaba in July 1917. Before July 1917 circulars in King Husayn's name urged Transjordanians to join the Arab revolt. Husayn sent two Damascenes, Nasīb al-Bakrī and Zākī al-Darūbī, to northern Transjordan and Jebel Druze to propagandize on his behalf. To prevent defections in Transjordan, Jamāl Pāshā and Taḥsīn Bey, the *vālī* of Syria, tried to buy the loyalty of local notables with money, titles, gifts of clothing and a warning that Faysal was making it possible for foreigners to seize Muslim lands. The Christian notables of al-Karak, who were later mistreated by the Turks, received medals for supporting the Ottoman war effort.<sup>5</sup>

The war reached Transjordan in early July 1917 when a force led by 'Auda Abū Tāyih of the Ḥuwaitāt, Sharīf Nāṣir bin 'Alī and T. E. Lawrence captured 'Aqaba. From then until the fall of Damascus in October 1918, Faysal's forces and their British advisers tried to divert the Ottoman army in Transjordan from obstructing Allenby's advance in Palestine. Although few Transjordanians actively supported Faysal, the bedouins of Transjordan usually fought for the side that paid them the most. Chronic shortages of funds, however, made it difficult for Faysal to retain the allegiance of his bedouins.<sup>6</sup> Except for the Huwaitat faction

led by 'Auda Abū Tāyih--the main bedouin ally of the Hashimites in Transjordan--bedouin irregulars contributed little to the success of Faysal's operations. 'Auda and his followers took part in the occupation of 'Aqaba on 6 July 1917, the occupation of Ṭafīla and Ma'ān and the offensive of September 1918, which led to the expulsion of the Turks from Transjordan. Ḥamad bin Jazī, 'Auda's chief rival in the Ḥuwaiṭāt, was paid by the Turks for fighting Lawrence and Faysal, and, later, by Lawrence for fighting the Turks.<sup>7</sup>

Most of the notables of Ma'ān supported the Turks until their town fell to the Hashimites in September 1918. The Jordanian historians, Munīb al-Mādī and Sulaymān Mūsā, have attributed Ma'ānī support for the Turks to a local tradition of allegiance to the ruling power. In Ma'ān support for the Hashimites or the Turks became intertwined with local rivalries. The followers of Ḥamid al-Sharrārī opposed the Arab revolt, while the followers of Khalīl al-Talhūnī supported the Hashimites, but did little to help them because they feared Turkish reprisals. Ma'ānī leaders who were suspected of being in contact with Faysal were banished to Hama by Jamāl Pāshā. After the fall of Damascus, Emir Zayd had several shaikhs from Ma'ān and Ṭafīla deported to the Hijaz as punishment for having supported the Turks.<sup>8</sup>

The Banū Ṣakhr were divided between factions who supported the Turks and those who supported the Hashimites. Fawwāz al-Fā'iz, the paramount shaikh from 1909 to early 1917, publicly supported the Turks while maintaining secret contact with the Arab nationalists in Damascus. After his death, the Banū Ṣakhr split over the choice of a successor. Most of the shaikhs supported Fawwāz's seventeen year old son, Mashūr, while a minority supported Fawwāz's brother, Mithqāl. The matter was brought before Jamāl Pasha, who decided in favour of Mashūr, but appeased Mithqāl by granting him the title of *pāshā*. Mithqāl loyally supported the Turks and was paid by his friend Jamāl Pāshā to raise a 300-man bedouin force to fight Faysal. Mashūr's faction supported Faysal. When the defeat of the Turks became imminent, Mithqāl and his followers fled eastward to the desert to avoid British or Hashimite retribution.<sup>9</sup>

The Circassians of Transjordan loyally supported the Turks. In 1915, Mīrzā Pāshā Waṣfī, a retired Circassian officer living in Amman, assisted the Ottoman war effort by raising a Circassian volunteer force. Mīrzā's troops guarded the Hijaz railroad and tracked Ottoman deserters in Transjordan. In 1917 and 1918 they participated in operations against the Hashimites near Ma'ān, Ṭafīla and al-Salt.<sup>10</sup>

The people of al-Karak did not support the Arab revolt, even though the Turks mistreated them during much of the war. In order to avoid a repeat of the 1910 uprising, the Turks did not introduce conscription in al-Karak until after the fall of 'Aqaba in July 1917. On orders from Jamāl Pasha, the deputy *mutaṣarrif* of al-Karak raised a force of 500 Muslim and 80 Christian troops who took part in operations against the Hashimites near Ma'ān. In September 1917 Qadr al-Majālī, the instigator of the 1910 uprising, was arrested and detained in Damascus. At the urging of two of his Karaki supporters, Rufaifān al-Majālī and Ḥusayn al-Ṭarāwna, Jamāl Pāshā had the Christian leaders of al-Karak and Mādabā banished to northern Syria and Cilicia until April 1918. During their absence, much of their property was destroyed. The Christians who remained in both towns were attacked and sometimes killed by their Muslim neighbours. Despite the brutal treatment they received from Jamāl, the Christians of al-Karak and Mādabā--like their Muslim neighbours--did not defect to the Hashimites.<sup>11</sup>

Ṣāliḥ al-Najdāwī of al-Salt and 'Alī Khulqī and Muḥammad 'Alī al-'Ajlūnī of 'Ajlūn are the only three Ottoman officers from Transjordan known to have joined the Arab revolt. Najdāwī joined the Arab revolt while serving in Medina, although the circumstances of his defection are not clear. Najdāwī served in the Northern Arab Army and then resided in Syria until July 1920.<sup>26</sup> While serving in al-Karak as a reserve officer, 'Ajlūnī deserted and fled to Wadi Musa to join the Arab revolt. 'Ajlūnī fought with the Hashimites in Transjordan and was badly injured near Ma'ān in September 1918. Khulqī was captured by the British near Baghdad in early 1917. During his internment in India, Khulqī was recruited for the Arab revolt. After training for several months in Ismailia, Khulqī and 800 men and sixty-five officers were sent to 'Aqaba

in November 1917. Khulqī became one of the leaders of the disgruntled Syrian officers in Faysal's army who complained that Iraqis were given preference in promotion to senior command posts. After the war, Khulqī served as an officer in the Syrian army.<sup>12</sup>

From October 1918 to July 1920 Transjordan as far south as Ma'ān was ruled by Faysal's Arab government in Damascus. Transjordan was occupied by British troops until November 1919 and then by Syrian troops until July 1920. The country was administered by military governors, most of whom were Iraqis. Most of the civil administrators were Syrians, Palestinians and Hijazis. Local leaders assisted the military and civil administrators. Ottoman administrative divisions in Transjordan and Syria were abolished in November 1919. Syria was then reorganized into eight *liwās*, three of which were in Transjordan. The internal security of each *liwā'* was entrusted to its gendarmerie and police forces.<sup>13</sup>

Transjordanians played a minor part in the political life of Syria. No Transjordanians served in any of Faysal's governments, *al-Fatāt* or the leadership of *Ḥizb al-Istiqlāl*. The ten Transjordanians who attended the Syrian Congress, which opened in June 1919, had little, if any, known influence on that body's deliberations. Muḥammad 'Alī al-'Ajlūnī and 'Alī Khulqī were the only two senior officers from Transjordan in the Syrian army. Other Transjordanians who served in the government did so as junior officials in their home districts.<sup>14</sup>

Faysal's government was unable to establish an effective administration or maintain order in Transjordan. Most of Faysal's energy was devoted to his negotiations with Great Britain and France. His government had little time and few resources to devote to Transjordan, which quickly became a lawless and chaotic backwater. The army, the gendarmerie, the police and the civilian bureaucracy were ineffective because the salaries of government employees were usually in arrears. The withdrawal of the British garrison in November 1919, and the transfer of the headquarters of the Amman garrison to Dar'ā, further undermined public security.<sup>15</sup>

With no one to stop them, the bedouins raided the settled population and openly defied the authority of Faysal's government. In mid-March 1920, the commander of the gendarmerie in al-Karak wrote as follows to the *mutaṣarrif* of his district:

The Ḥuwaitāt, Salāyīṭeh, Banū Ṣakhr and Shawbak bedouins have disobeyed the orders of the government. Their attacks on telegraphic lines, the Hijaz railroad and railway officials have grown in number. In so doing they are following the example of Shaikh 'Auda Abū Tāyih who has announced that he will not comply with government orders and that he considers himself the absolute ruler and conquerer of this land.<sup>16</sup>

A recent history of al-Ramthā, a small town in north-west Transjordan, has described how Faysal's government made no attempt to stop almost two years of fighting between the inhabitants of that town and the surrounding tribes that began after the Ottoman withdrawal in September 1918. Twenty-two residents of al-Ramthā and 105 tribesmen were killed in the fighting.<sup>17</sup>

Faysal could not count upon the loyalty of his officials in Transjordan. In order to settle landownership disputes between Muslims and Christians, Faysal ruled in late 1918 that land sales made in Transjordan during the war were invalid. Despite Faysal's ruling, government officials in Transjordan tended to favour Muslim land claims, even when Christians had firm proof of ownership. As a result of this mistreatment, and harassment from the neighbouring tribes, particularly the Banu Sakhr, in late 1918 the Christians of Mādabā considered asking the French government for a tract of land where they could be resettled.<sup>18</sup> In January 1919 part of the force of 500 to 600 men commanded by Zākī al-Ḥalabī, the military governor of al-Karak, threatened to revolt rather than accept a transfer to Ma'ān.<sup>19</sup>

During the war destitute Armenian women and girls, who had been exiled to al-Karak, were forced to adopt Islam and marry bedouin men. In early 1919 a certain Kilidjian, who represented an organization concerned with the fate of Armenian refugees, was authorized by Faysal to find these women and escort them to Jerusalem. King Husayn issued an *irāda* ordering the release of all Armenian women, married or single, to Kilidjian's committee. For two months Zākī al-Ḥalabī refused to

publish Husayn's *irāda*. Local gendarmerie officers and a government official, who had married one of the Armenian women, supported the local men who refused to give up their Armenian wives. When Kilidjian tried to escort a group of thirty Armenian women to Jerusalem, local soldiers attacked his party and forced them to return to al-Karak.<sup>20</sup>

The bedouins of Transjordan did not recognize the authority of Faysal's government, and usually refused to pay taxes. It has already been mentioned that 'Auda Abū Tāyih, the Hashimites' main bedouin ally in Transjordan during the war, declared his independence of Faysal's government after October 1918. In February 1919, Mithqāl al-Fā'iz, the paramount shaikh of the Banū Ṣakhr, refused an invitation from Emir Zayd to visit Damascus because he did not recognize Faysal's authority. Mithqāl, who had not waived in his loyalty to the Ottomans, turned down a gift of £10,000 in gold from Faysal. In March 1919 the Banū Ṣakhr shaikhs refused to sign petitions calling for an end to foreign control of the Arab lands and the independence of Syria, Palestine, Iraq and the Hijaz under Hashimite rule. These petitions would have been presented to the inter-allied commission of inquiry sent to study public opinion in the Middle East.<sup>21</sup>

Faysal was unpopular in al-Karak because his government could not effectively administer the province and control the bedouins. Despite the many gifts he received from Faysal, Rufaifān al-Majālī continued to sympathize with the Turks. The French consulate in Jerusalem learned that agents working for the British had received petitions from the Ma'āyṭah and Ḥabashna clans of al-Karak asking for British rule. The same consulate received petitions from the Christians, particularly the Roman Catholics, of al-Karak, Mādabā and al-Salt asking for French protection.<sup>22</sup>

When Faysal's régime was overthrown in July 1920, the prospects appeared dim that the people of Transjordan would welcome a return of Hashimite rule. Support for the Hashimites during the Arab revolt had been a function of financial subsidies and tribal rivalries, not devotion to the Arab national cause. Faysal's unpopular régime had been unable to establish its authority in Transjordan, even among the staunchest



supporters of the Arab revolt. A wide base of support for a revival of Hashimite rule did not exist in Transjordan when Abdallah reached Ma'an in November 1920.

#### British Policy Towards Transjordan

Until July 1920 the British government paid little attention to how Transjordan should be governed, even though Great Britain had assumed responsibility for that land. According to the Sykes-Picot agreement, Transjordan fell within Great Britain's sphere of influence. British troops occupied Transjordan until late 1919. Transjordan was included in the mandate for Palestine, which was awarded to Great Britain at the San Remo Conference of April 1920. From Allenby's occupation of Jerusalem in December 1917 until June 1920, Palestine was governed by the British military as enemy occupied territory. The military administration ceased to exist when Sir Herbert Samuel became the first high commissioner of Palestine on 1 July 1920. The future of Transjordan was one of the first problems Samuel faced.

The British government faced three problems in Transjordan after Faysal's downfall in late July 1920. The first was whether or not Transjordan, which had been ruled by Faysal's government, was included in the French mandate in Syria. In early August 1920 the French government agreed to instruct General Gouraud that French authority did not extend to Transjordan.<sup>23</sup> The second was whether or not the administrative authority of the Government of Palestine extended to Transjordan. On the advice of Lord Curzon, Andrew Bonar Law, the lord privy seal, informed the House of Commons on 28 July 1920 that the administrative authority of Palestine did not include Transjordan.<sup>24</sup>

The third problem was not so easily solved. The British government had to decide if British troops should occupy Transjordan. After Faysal's downfall, Transjordan quickly drifted into anarchy. The public security forces there collapsed and the bedouins raided the settled population without restraint. This disorder was compounded by refugees from Syria who tried to organize an anti-French resistance.

After the French occupation of Damascus, Sir Herbert Samuel lost no time in recommending to the Foreign Office that British troops should

occupy Transjordan. Samuel's views in this regard were influenced by his belief that Transjordan as far south as 'Aqaba should be annexed to Palestine and included in the area of Zionist colonization.<sup>25</sup> In a series of very urgent telegrams sent to the Foreign Office in late July and early August 1920, Samuel argued that Transjordan would fall into chaos without British troops and a British administration. Samuel warned that the French would take control of Transjordan if Great Britain did not act quickly.<sup>26</sup> Samuel wrote to Curzon during the first week of August 1920 that, since the fall of Damascus, 'sheikhs' from Transjordan, Qunaitra and the Ḥawrān had visited Jerusalem asking for a British occupation. Samuel added that his officers who knew Transjordan were unanimous that the Transjordanian people wanted a British occupation.<sup>27</sup> To strengthen his case, Samuel noted that Major-General Sir J. S. M. Shea, the commander-in-chief in Palestine, believed that Transjordan could be easily occupied without fighting.<sup>28</sup>

The claim that support for a British occupation was widespread in Transjordan was more than a self-serving figment of Samuel's imagination. Fearful of anarchy and falling under French control, many Transjordanians, particularly the settled population, hoped that Great Britain would re-establish order in Transjordan. Arab officials in Transjordan did not know if they were responsible to the authorities in Damascus or Jerusalem.<sup>29</sup> Samuel learned from his district officers in Tiberias and Haifa that support for a British occupation was strongest in al-Salt and the Ḥawrān in southern Syria. Captain I. N. Camp, who served in Transjordan during the British occupation of 1918-1919, reported to Samuel from al-Salt in early August that the local people favoured a British occupation because they 'want a more settled state of affairs and prefer us to any other Power.'<sup>30</sup>

Curzon consulted the War Office before taking a final decision on Samuel's recommendation to occupy Transjordan. Because of public and parliamentary pressure for demobilization and deep cuts in military expenditure, the War Office was reluctant to accept new and costly responsibilities in the Middle East, especially at a time when tens of thousand of British troops were being used to suppress an uprising in

Iraq.<sup>31</sup> The War Office asked General Sir Walter Congreve, the general-officer-commanding in Egypt, for his views on Samuel's recommendations, and if the occupation of Transjordan would involve additional troops or delay troop withdrawals elsewhere in the Middle East. The War Office decided against occupying Transjordan when Congreve could not give an absolute assurance that troop reinforcements would not be needed there in the future.<sup>32</sup>

After learning the views of the War Office, Curzon wrote to Samuel on 6 August 1920 telling him that the occupation of Transjordan could not be contemplated without a clear indication that the French were trying to extend their authority south of the Sykes-Picot line. Samuel was instructed to make it known that Great Britain would not admit French influence south of that line, 'and that our policy is for this area [Transjordan] to be independent but in closest relation with Palestine.' Curzon asked for the whereabouts of Emir Zayd, and if there was any prospect of his being accepted locally as the emir of Transjordan. Curzon's telegram of 6 August was the first indication of British interest in a Hashimite ruler for Transjordan.<sup>33</sup>

Samuel did not give up easily. On 7 August he wrote to Curzon and Lloyd George in order to convince them that British troops should occupy Transjordan. In his telegram to Curzon, Samuel argued once more that the leading shaikhs of Transjordan had been to Jerusalem asking for a British occupation, and that his officers who knew the country were unanimous that it could be easily occupied without additional expense. Zayd, who was then in Haifa with Faysal, was dismissed by Samuel as unacceptable because 'the sheikhs and tribes east of Jordan [were] utterly dissatisfied with Shereefian Government' and because he 'carried little weight and lacks the personal qualifications needed to establish [his] authority.' Samuel pleaded in a private letter to Lloyd George that it would be a 'grave error of policy' if Transjordan were not included in Palestine.<sup>34</sup>

The Foreign Office and War Office refused to reconsider their decision not to occupy Transjordan--a decision that had momentous consequences for the future of that land. Had the British government

decided to rule Transjordan with an occupying army and a corps of British administrators, Abdallah and his partisans probably would not have been able to force their way into the country in late 1920.

Curzon's letters to Samuel of 11 and 26 August 1920 explained the general outlines of British policy in Transjordan. Curzon noted that France had agreed not to interfere in Transjordan. The British government did not want to give the impression that they were imitating the French who had imposed their rule in Syria by force. For this reason, and because the War Office had refused to furnish troops, British troops would not occupy Transjordan. The Foreign Office feared that the inclusion of Transjordan in Palestine 'might give a handle to Nationalist agitators and result in a change of sentiment on the part of those who now express a wish for our advice and assistance.' In order to prevent Transjordan from falling into anarchy, Great Britain was prepared to assist Transjordanians in the creation of a local administration by sending a few British political officers 'to such places as Salt and Kerak, provided that no military escorts are necessary to ensure their safety.' Those officers would assist in the formation of municipal and district self-governing bodies and encourage trade between Transjordan and Palestine. Curzon emphasized that 'there must be no question of setting up any British Administration in that area and all that may be done at present is to send a maximum of four or five political officers' to help establish a 'native administration'.<sup>35</sup>

Samuel invited the leaders of Transjordan to meet him in al-Salt so that he could personally explain this policy to them. On Saturday 21 August 1920 Samuel addressed a crowd of 600 Transjordanians in the court-yard of the Catholic church in al-Salt. Some of those who attended had come from as far north as Jerash and as far south as al-Karak and al-Ṭafīla. Rūfāifān al-Majālī of al-Karak, Ḥamad bin Jāzī of the Ḥuwaiṭāt, Sulṭān al-ʿAdwān, head of the ʿAdwān of al-Balqā', and representatives of the Banū Ḥasan, the Banū Ṣakhr and the Circassians of Amman and Wādī Sīr were among those who attended the meeting.<sup>36</sup>

Samuel outlined British policy and emphasized that Transjordan would not fall under French control. Samuel reported to the Foreign

Office that he was 'warmly applauded' when he announced that conscription and disarmament would not be imposed and that trade with Palestine would be promoted. Samuel claimed that 'several [unnamed] representative speakers' were strongly in favour of a British administration and that the suggestion of one 'unknown Saltese' that one of Husayn's sons should rule Transjordan drew no support from the crowd. At the end of the meeting Samuel won the approval of the crowd by agreeing to grant an amnesty to two Palestinians, Amīn al-Ḥusaynī and ʿĀrif al-ʿĀrif. (Both men had fled to Transjordan after being accused of starting anti-Zionist riots in Palestine in April 1920.)<sup>37</sup>

After the meeting at al-Salt, Samuel appointed six British officers to represent British interests in Transjordan. They were Major I. N. Camp, Major F. R. Somerset, Captain C. D. Brunton, Captain Alec S. Kirkbride and his brother Captain Alan L. Kirkbride and Captain R. F. P. Monckton. Somerset, Camp, Brunton and Alec Kirkbride were assigned to ʿAjlūn-Irbid, al-Salt, Amman and al-Karak respectively. Monckton and Alan Kirkbride were the assistants of Somerset and Camp respectively. Ronald Storrs, the civil secretary of the Palestine Government, informed these officers on 27 August that no British administration would be created in Transjordan. Storrs instructed them to form elected councils in al-Salt, al-Karak and ʿAjlūn; outside the towns, the leading shaikhs would be nominated to local councils. Each council would have the local British representative as its head. Storrs also instructed them to develop the existing gendarmerie as much as possible.<sup>38</sup>

Three governments were soon established in Transjordan. The Government of ʿAjlūn had its capital in Irbid, was headed by ʿAlī Khulqī and had Major Somerset as its British adviser. Because Khulqī's government lacked the means to establish its authority, five *nāḥiyas* seceded from ʿAjlūn and formed their own governments. Under Khulqī's leadership Irbid quickly became a centre of pro-Hashimite activism and opposition to the French occupation of Syria. The Government of al-Salt was created in the *qaḍā'* of al-Balqā' and included the cities of al-Salt, Amman and Mādabā. This government had al-Salt as its capital, Maḥzar Raslān of Homs as its *mutasarrif* and Major Camp as its British adviser.

Amman became a centre of pro-Hashimite nationalist activity under the leadership of its mayor, Sa'id Khayr, and the Syrian political exiles who flocked there. Sa'id Khayr, the Syrian exiles and the local bedouins, most notably the Banū Ṣakhr, did not recognize the authority of Raslan's government. The Government of al-Karak had Rufaifāin Pāshā al-Majālī as its *mutaṣarrif* and Major Alec Kirkbride as its British adviser. The authority of Rufaifān's government was severely undermined when they were unable to stop a violent confrontation between the Ma'āyṭas of al-Karak and the al-Dhunaybāt of al-Jadīda. Pro-Hashimite sentiment was far less pronounced in al-Karak than in 'Ajlūn or al-Salt.<sup>39</sup>

Captain Brunton made the only attempt to create a local defence force. In September 1920 Brunton established the Reserve Force, which was recruited entirely from Transjordan's settled population. The Reserve Force was created to protect the settled population from the bedouins, to support the local gendarmerie and to act as a strike force in the event of disturbances. In October 1920 Samuel appointed Lieutenant-Colonel F. G. Peake to reorganize the gendarmerie in Transjordan. After Brunton's departure in December, Peake continued his predecessor's policy of using the Reserve Force to protect the settled population. Despite the valiant efforts of Brunton and Peake, the Reserve Force had little success in establishing order in Transjordan.<sup>40</sup>

The period between July 1920 and March 1921 was a time of chaos and physical insecurity in Transjordan. The local governments were unable to punish those who flaunted their authority, collect taxes and pay their officials, the police and the gendarmerie on a regular basis--if at all. With no one to stop them, the bedouins raided without restraint. In a land where people were well armed after the war and had no fear of the local governments, travel became unsafe everywhere.<sup>41</sup>

Chaos and lawlessness resulted largely because the British government had no long-term plans for Transjordan. In September 1920 Curzon had no clear idea how Transjordan would be governed in the future, but left open the possibility that 'an independent Arab Government' might be established there 'by arrangement with King Hussein

or other Arab chiefs concerned.' Curzon also hoped to avoid the annexation of Transjordan to Palestine.<sup>42</sup>

The experience of Transjordan from July 1920 to March 1921 demonstrated that politics, like nature, abhors a vacuum. By effectively abdicating its responsibility for Transjordan, the British government created a void that Abdallah, his agents and pro-Hashimite Syrians filled to the detriment of the local governments. As we shall now see, Abdallah and other outsiders lost no time in turning Transjordan into a base from which to pursue personal agendas that had little or nothing to do with the welfare of the local people.

#### Abdallah and Transjordan: The Beginning of a Long Involvement

In late September 1920 Abdallah, a band of Hijazi *ashrāf*, several Iraqi officers and a force of 'Utayba tribesmen travelled together from Mecca to Medina. Major W. Batten, the acting British agent in Jidda, estimated Abdallah's bedouin escort at between 500 and 1000 men.<sup>43</sup> The ostensible purpose of Abdallah's journey became known on 7 September when Rūfāifān al-Majālī and Sultān al-'Adwān received telegrams from King Husayn announcing that one of his sons was coming north to organize a movement to oust the French from Syria.<sup>44</sup> In early November the Palestine Government learned from Major Camp and Kāmil Muḥammad al-Nābulī, a former officer of the Syrian army, that Yemenis and 'Uqailīs working for Abdallah had been seen in al-Salt spreading pro-Hashimite propaganda. 'Abdallah al-Dulaimī--one of the leaders of *al-'Ahd al-'Irāqī* in Syria and a former *mutṣarrif* of al-Karak--had reportedly carried letters from Abdallah to the notables of Amman inviting them to join his anti-French crusade.<sup>45</sup>

After a twenty-seven day journey by train from Medina, Abdallah arrived in Ma'ān on 21 November 1920, where he spent the next three months receiving visitors, following events in Transjordan and Syria and the course of Faysal's negotiations in London. Situated on the undemarcated and uncontrolled frontier between Transjordan and the Hijaz, Ma'ān, with its railway station and telegraphic services, offered Abdallah an excellent vantage point from which to follow developments in the north and plan his next move.<sup>46</sup> In a declaration issued on 25

November that was distributed in Transjordan, Palestine and Syria, Abdallah announced that he had come to Ma'ān in response to cries for help from the Syrian people, and that his goal was to expel the French from Syria. Abdallah claimed to represent, Faysal, the King of Syria and called upon the Syrian Congress, the Syrian army and the leaders of Transjordan to join him in Ma'ān, the new seat of the Syrian government.<sup>47</sup>

The people of Transjordan reacted in different ways to Abdallah's northward advance. Their reactions were a valuable indication of the extent pro-Hashimite sentiment in Transjordan shortly before the establishment of the emirate in late March 1921. Those reactions, and other stirrings of pro- and anti-Hashimite sentiment in Transjordan during and after World War I, shed light on the prospects that the Transjordanian people would accept Abdallah as their legitimate sovereign.

Abdallah has written that Syrians loyal to the Arab national cause and the notables of Amman and Ma'ān wrote to Husayn asking him to send one of his sons to lead the anti-French resistance in Syria.<sup>48</sup> A similar claim has been made by Sa'īd al-Muftī, one of the Circassian leaders of Amman in 1920.<sup>49</sup> The Jordanian historian Sulaymān Mūsā has written that Sa'īd Khayr, the mayor of Amman, 'Auda Abū Tāyih in Ma'ān and the Syrian partisans of Faysal who fled to Transjordan wrote to Husayn asking him to send one of his sons to lead the anti-French resistance.<sup>50</sup> Abdallah, al-Muftī and Mūsā have all tried to convey the impression that Abdallah's presence in Transjordan was legitimized by an invitation from the Syrian nationalists and the notables of Transjordan to restore Arab rule in Syria.

Neither Abdallah nor al-Muftī nor Mūsā has published or cited any of the letters Transjordanian notables supposedly sent to Husayn. Abdallah's reference to these letters strongly suggests that they had been sent by Faysal's Syrian partisans, not by the notables of Transjordan. Mūsā has quoted a letter from Husayn to Allenby dated 15 September 1920 in which Husayn wrote that he had received letters from 'all the tribal leaders of Syria' warning of disaster if the French were



not removed from Syria. Mūsā has also published a letter that Aḥmad Muraywīd, a Syrian exile in Transjordan and former member of the *Istiqlāl* party and the Syrian Congress, sent to 'Alī Khulqī in late October 1920. Muraywīd encouraged Khulqī and other Hashimite partisans to ask Mecca to assist the anti-French resistance in the Hawran.<sup>51</sup> Abdallah, al-Muftī and Mūsā would have us believe that after July 1920 an overwhelming majority of Transjordanians wanted one of Husayn's sons to rule Transjordan and Syria. However, the evidence at hand seems to indicate that the Syrian exiles, not the notables of Transjordan, invited Husayn to send one of his sons to lead the anti-French resistance.

Political trends in Transjordan after July 1920 were more complex than Abdallah, al-Muftī or Mūsā would suggest. Initially many Transjordanians, including some of the bedouins, hoped for a British occupation that would maintain calm and prevent the French from taking control of Transjordan. Samuel concluded from the meeting he held in al-Salt that political sentiment in Transjordan was generally pro-British and that the Hashimites had few supporters in the country. Major F. R. Somerset and Captain Reginald Monckton, who were with Samuel in al-Salt, reached the same conclusion.<sup>52</sup>

Camp reported from al-Salt in late August 1920 that the leading Muslim families, the Circassians, the Greek Orthodox and the Greek Catholics in his district were all pro-British. The Latin Catholics were pro-French because they assumed that the French would use more force than the British to control the bedouins. The sedentary tribes, particularly the 'Adwān and the Banū Ḥamīda, were pro-British. Sulṭān al-'Adwān, the paramount shaikh of the 'Adwān, the largest of the Balqā' tribes, ignored Abdallah's invitation to visit Ma'ān and agreed to Samuel's request not to assist the anti-French rebels in the Ḥawrān. The Banū Ṣakhr, Banū 'Aṭiya and the Ḥuwaiṭāt were prepared to accept British rule in return for subsidies. In late August Mithqāl and Mashūr al-Fā'iz, the two leading shaikhs of the Banū Ṣakhr, wrote to Camp professing their loyalty to Great Britain. Camp sent their letter to Jerusalem with a warning that the bedouins would become 'troublesome' if the British did not subsidize them. Support in al-Salt

for the Hashimites and Arab independence was limited to a group of about thirty-five young men who were led by Captain Adīb Wahba of Jerusalem, who was a former official of the Syrian administration. According to Camp, 'no one of any importance in the town belongs to the Society and very few, if any, of the notables support it or sympathise with its aims.'<sup>53</sup>

On 1 September 1920 a group of notables from the 'Ajlūn area met in the village of Umm Qais and drew up a list of political demands that were presented to Major Somerset. Known as the Umm Qais Treaty, those demands stated the conditions under which the people of 'Ajlun would accept a British mandate for an independent Arab state comprised of the Ottoman *liwā's* of al-Karak, al-Salt and the *qaḍā's* of 'Ajlūn, Jerash, the Ḥawran, Qunaitra, Marj'ayūn and Tyre. Four of those conditions were that this state would have a Hashimite emir, the Syrian flag as its symbol, no connection to the Palestine Government and that political exiles in Palestine and Transjordan would not be extradited.<sup>54</sup> Somerset reported to Jerusalem in mid-September that the Syrian flag had been hoisted in his district and that 'the hope of a united Arab Empire exists, and it is the desire of a number of the leading men here that the state now being formed may in the future become an item in this empire.'<sup>55</sup> Samuel instructed Somerset to tell the leaders of 'Ajlūn that Great Britain would not consider the establishment of a Hashimite emir or the other demands of the Umm Qais Treaty until the people of al-Salt, Amman and al-Karak had been consulted. Samuel added, however, that political exiles would not be extradited.<sup>56</sup>

In early October 1920 'Alī Khulqī sent copies of the Umm Qais Treaty to Rufaifān al-Majāli and Maḥzar Raslān and explained that the British would reject this treaty if the people of al-Salt and al-Karak did not present a united front with 'Ajlūn. Khulqī asked to be informed if the people of their districts supported the treaty. Neither man answered Khulqī's letter or ever mentioned the treaty to the British.<sup>57</sup>

Rufaifān and Maḥzar both opposed Abdallah's presence in Transjordan. In mid-September 1920 Rufaifān asked Samuel how he should respond to King Husayn's telegram of 7 September, and pointed out that

the people of al-Karak had refused to assist the rebels in the Ḥawran. Rūfāifān told Samuel in early November that British troops would be needed to expel Abdallah from Ma'ān.<sup>59</sup> Rūfāifān and Maẓhar wrote to Abdallah in Ma'ān warning him to stay out of Transjordan. Maẓhar told Abdallah that his disruptive presence in the south had made it difficult for the government of al-Salt to collect taxes from the local tribes.<sup>60</sup>

After the fall of Damascus, Muḥammad 'Alī al-Ajlūnī, the former commander of Faysal's royal guard, returned to his village in Jebel 'Ajlūn where he was visited by Aḥmad Muraywīd and Fu'ād Salīm, who had been condemned to death by a French military court in Syria. When rumours reached 'Ajlūn that Abdallah was preparing to march on Damascus, 'Ajlūnī, Muraywīd, Salīm and two officers from Irbid, Major Khalaf al-Tall and Lieutenant Aḥmad al-Tall, canvassed Transjordan collecting petitions that urged Abdallah to come north. 'Ajlūnī and his cohorts found only one government official in al-Salt who showed any interest in Abdallah. They did not visit al-Karak because of Rūfāifān's opposition to Abdallah. In Ma'ān 'Ajlūnī gave Abdallah the petitions they had collected and encouraged him to head for Amman before 'a strong opposition develops in the country.' Abdallah was reluctant to take this advice because he feared how the British would react and knew that Rūfāifān and Maẓhar opposed him. Abdallah agreed, however, to 'Ajlūnī's suggestion to send an emissary to test the political waters in Transjordan. If the emissary was well received, Abdallah would then leave for Amman. Abdallah appointed Sharīf 'Alī bin al-Ḥusayn al-Ḥārithī as his emissary and 'Ajlūnī as Sharīf 'Alī's military adviser.<sup>61</sup>

After it had become clear that the British would not subsidize them, the Ḥuwaiṭāt, Banū Ṣakhr and Banū 'Aṭiya declared their support for Abdallah. By November 1920, Ḥamad bin Jāzī and 'Auda Abū Tāyih of the Ḥuwaiṭāt had both openly declared their support for Abdallah.<sup>62</sup> Mithqāl al-Fā'iz and a force of about 1000 Banū Ṣakhr tribesmen greeted Sharīf 'Alī when he reached the al-Zīziā' railway station south of Amman.<sup>63</sup>

When Sharīf 'Alī arrived in Amman in early December 1920, he and his followers were warmly received by the town's people who had

decorated the streets in their honour with anti-French banners.<sup>63</sup> By that time Amman had already become a centre of pro-Hashimite, anti-French and anti-British activism. Mithqāl al-Fā'iz, Sa'īd Khayr, Sayyidū Kurdī and two Circassian leaders, Mahmūd and Sa'īd al-Muftī, were the leaders of the pro-Hashimite movement in Amman, which had the enthusiastic support of the Syrian exiles and ex-officials of the Syrian government who had stayed in Transjordan after July 1920. After receiving the title of pāshā from Abdallah, Mīrzā Waṣfī agreed to recruit Circassians for his army in the south.<sup>64</sup>

Sharīf 'Alī assumed the leadership of the pro-Hashimite and anti-French movement in Amman and quickly filled the political vacuum there that had been created by British neglect and the inability of the Salt government to establish its authority.<sup>65</sup> Sharīf 'Alī wrote to Hashimite supporters in Transjordan telling them that Abdallah, the 'Commander of the Syrian Revolutionary Armies', would soon arrive and that they should prepare for an uprising to liberate Syria.<sup>66</sup> Sharīf 'Alī was unable to recruit for Abdallah's army because he could not pay the Syrian and Iraqi officers who visited him in Amman in gold.<sup>67</sup>

The unwillingness of the British to assert their authority was interpreted in Transjordan as a sign that Great Britain was ceding control of the country to Abdallah. On 8 December 1920 the Palestine Government issued a notice warning Transjordanians not to take part in Abdallah's anti-French activities. No one, however, tried to stop Sharīf 'Alī when he took counter-measures by posting notices declaring war against the French and the independence of Syria, or when he threatened to kill a police officer in Amman who distributed the British notice. Similarly, no action was taken against the leaders of Amman when they sent gendarmes to collect the British notices that had already been distributed, or when they encouraged the people of their district to declare their independence of the local government at al-Salt.<sup>68</sup>

Even the Reserve Force--the mainstay of British authority in Transjordan--could not be relied upon to support the local governments. In early December Brunton transferred the Reserve Force from Amman to al-Salt in order to prevent their defection to Abdallah.<sup>69</sup> British

military intelligence in Egypt learned from an Ammani police officer in January 1921 that three-quarters of the gendarmerie and the Reserve Force were ready to join Abdallah.<sup>70</sup>

By early February 1921 the British military authorities in Cairo had concluded from reports received from 'all sources' that 'the Sherif's influence has now completely replaced that of the Local Governments and of the British Advisers in Trans-Jordania, and [that] it must be realised that if and when Abdallah does advance northwards in the spring, he will be considered by the majority of the population to be the ruler of that country.'<sup>71</sup>

Abdallah tried unsuccessfully to prevent his supporters from antagonizing the British. In mid-December 1920 he instructed Sharīf 'Alī to pay due respect to the British representative in Amman, not to interfere with the local governments and to stop all anti-British activities. Abdallah's wishes did not deter Mithqāl al-Fā'iz. In January 1921 Peake tried to arrest Mithqāl and bring him before a court in al-Salt to settle a landownership dispute. Mithqāl resisted arrest and had Peake jailed for a day or two in a storage bin for straw in the village of Umm al-'Amad.<sup>72</sup>

The standing of Great Britain's most loyal supporters, Mazhar Raslān and Rufaifān al-Majāli, rapidly deteriorated after Abdallah reached Ma'an. Sharīf 'Alī's arrival in al-Salt in February 1921 eroded the authority of Raslān's government, whose financial stability had already been undermined by its inability to collect taxes from the Banū Şakhr and other tribes. Finally realizing that he was powerless to prevent Abdallah from taking control of the district he had tried to govern, Mazhar joined a nationalist delegation that visited Ma'an in late February 1921.<sup>73</sup>

By late December 1920 Rufaifān's standing had become so tenuous that he feared for his personal safety if the British abandoned Transjordan. Rufaifān, Somerset and Peake complained to Samuel in January 1921 that the lack of a definite policy for Transjordan, and the refusal of the British government to station troops there, had undermined British authority. Rufaifān, who spent all of January in

Jerusalem, admitted his inability to control his district and had to be convinced by the British not to resign as the *mutaṣarrif* of al-Karak.<sup>74</sup>

Until late November 1920 support for the re-establishment of Hashimite rule in Transjordan had been limited to a handful of Arab nationalist Transjordanians like ʿAlī Khulqī and Muḥammad ʿAlī al-ʿAjlūnī who had joined the Arab revolt and then served in the Syrian army, Syrian exiles and ex-officials of the Syrian government. Abdallah's influence grew beyond this initial core of supporters because of the widespread and growing perception that the British had ceded control of Transjordan to him and his followers. As Abdallah gradually replaced the authority of the British and the local governments, the Banū Ṣakhr, the Huwaitāt and the Banū ʿAṭiya declared their support for him, as did the Circassian and Arab leaders of Amman, Maḥzar Raṣlān and a growing segment of opinion in al-Karak.

Although his influence grew rapidly in Transjordan, Abdallah was disappointed by the response to his appeal to join him in Maʿān. The tribal leaders who visited Abdallah expected him to subsidize them the way Faysal had during the war. Abdallah received no response from the Syrian Congress. Some Arab officers in Transjordan refused to join Abdallah unless the Hijaz government guaranteed their pensions in case the anti-French movement failed. Two ex-officers of the Syrian army, Kāmil al-Budayrī of Jerusalem and Nabīh al-ʿAzma of Damascus, asked Abdallah for £80,000 and £120,000 respectively in order to establish intelligence and propaganda bureaus. Abdallah, who borrowed £3000 from ʿAuda Abū Tāyih to cover his expenses in Maʿān, was unable to pay such large sums.<sup>75</sup>

The list of those who came to Maʿān accurately reflected the extent of Abdallah's support in Transjordan soon before the establishment of the emirate. Those who visited Abdallah can be divided into two groups: native Transjordanians on one side and Syrians, Palestinians and Lebanese who had served either in the Syrian army or as members of the *Istiqlāl* party on the other. Abdallah had two kinds of Transjordanian supporters: former officers of the Syrian army and tribal, urban and communal leaders who had never served in the Syrian administration or

army or affiliated with any Arab nationalist society. The first group included Major Muḥammad ʿAlī al-ʿAjlūnī, Major Khalaf al-Tall and Lieutenant Aḥmad al-Tall. The second group included ʿAuda Abū Tāyih and Ḥamad bin Jazī of the Ḥuwaiṭāt, Mithqāl and Mashūr al-Fāʿiz, Ḥadītha al-Khuraisha and Shaikh al-ʿIsā of the Banū Ṣakhr, Ḥusayn al-Tarawna and ʿAtwī al-Majālī of al-Karak, Saʿid Khayr of Amman and Saʿid al-Muftī, a Circassian from Amman. Husayn al-Ṭarāwna and ʿAtwī al-Majālī were both members of the central council of the government of al-Karak. Their support for Abdallah may have resulted from a rift with Rufaifān al-Majālī, although this is not certain. Saʿid Khayr's interests were closely tied to those of the Banū Ṣakhr through his son-in-law, Mithqāl al-Fāʿiz. Saʿid al-Muftī has written that he and others in Amman turned to the Hashimites, first, in the hope that one of Husayn's sons would put an end to the disorder and insecurity in Transjordan and, second, because many Transjordanians were alarmed by rumours of a secret Anglo-French agreement to partition the Arab lands.<sup>76</sup> Abdallah was not visited by the notables of al-Salt, the tribal leaders of ʿAjlūn, the Christian leaders of Transjordan, Rufaifān al-Majālī or Sulṭān al-ʿAdwān.

Despite his growing influence in Transjordan, Abdallah was reluctant in late February 1921 to accept Sharīf ʿAlī's invitation to come to Amman. To convince Abdallah that he should come north, the Syrian exiles and their supporters in Amman sent a delegation to visit him in Maʿān.<sup>77</sup> One member of that delegation, ʿAunī ʿAbd al-Ḥādī, who had been Faysal's private secretary in Damascus, played a crucial part in persuading Abdallah to come north. After the fall of Damascus ʿAbd al-Ḥādī fled to Cairo, where he lived until he decided in early February 1921 to join Abdallah's crusade in Maʿān. Before meeting Abdallah in Maʿān, ʿAbd al-Ḥādī discussed the situation in Transjordan with Sir Herbert Samuel. According to ʿAbd al-Ḥādī, Samuel wanted Abdallah to know that the British would not allow Transjordan to become a base from which to harass the French in Syria, and that he should return to the Hijaz. ʿAbd al-Ḥādī convinced Abdallah that, as long as he refrained from antagonizing the French, the British would allow him to visit Transjordan--a country whose independence Great Britain had already

recognized. 'Abd al-Hādī implored Abdallah to seize the opportunity to rule Transjordan even if he could not recover all of the territories once governed by Faysal. With these arguments in mind, Abdallah headed north on the Hijaz railroad.<sup>78</sup>

Abdallah arrived in Amman on 2 March 1921 with an escort of thirty officers and 200 Hijazi bedouins. A large crowd warmly received him at the local train station. Abdallah stayed as a guest in the home of the mayor, Sa'īd Khayr. Abdallah turned immediately to reassuring the British of his friendly intentions. He told Captain Alec Kirkbride, who had accompanied him from al-Qutṛāna near al-Karak to Amman, that he would not interfere with the local governments. As a sign of good will towards Great Britain, Abdallah ordered the local tribes to respect the wishes of the British and the local governments. Abdallah sent 'Aunī 'Abd al-Hādī to Jerusalem to tell Samuel, first, that he had come to Transjordan as Faysal's representative, second, that he had no hostile intentions towards the British and, third, that his only aim was to restore order in Transjordan whose independence had been recognized by Great Britain. Samuel appreciated Abdallah's loyalty to Great Britain, but made it clear to 'Abd al-Hādī that Transjordan could not be used as a base from which to attack Syria. Samuel asked that Abdallah refrain from meddling in the administration of Transjordan until Winston Churchill, the colonial secretary, had arrived in Cairo for a conference to discuss British policy in the Middle East.<sup>79</sup>

Abdallah had four bases of support in Transjordan when he arrived in Amman in March 1920. The first was the native Transjordanians whose reasons for supporting him have already been explained. The second was the Syrian political exiles. The third was an unknown number of Syrian and Iraqi ex-officials from Faysal's administration who had stayed in Transjordan after July 1920. The fourth was the 'Utayba tribesmen, Hijazi *ashrāf* and Iraqi officers who came with Abdallah from the Hijaz.

The divergent interests of these four groups limited Abdallah's prospects of being recognized as the legitimate sovereign of Transjordan. Except for a few officers from north-west Transjordan, most of Abdallah's Transjordanian supporters were not committed Arab



nationalists or devoted to Abdallah personally. Most of the Transjordanians who rallied to Abdallah did so either because the British would not subsidize them or because of the perception that Great Britain had deliberately ceded control Transjordan to Abdallah. It is reasonable to assume that the settled population of Transjordan, who wanted security and stability after years of war and upheaval, had grave reservations about outsiders who intended to turn their home into a base of operations against the French. For the Syrian exiles and, probably, many ex-officials of the Syrian government, Abdallah and Transjordan were of interest only as means to restore Arab rule in Syria. Abdallah did not come to Transjordan to promote the welfare of its people. His declared reason for coming was to restore Faysal's throne in Damascus, not to rule Transjordan.<sup>80</sup> As we shall now see, Abdallah's actual motives for intervening in Transjordan had more to do with his ambitions in Iraq than with the liberation of Syria.

Abdallah's Iraqi partisans, particularly *al-'Ahd al-'Irāqī* and the Iraqi Congress, were conspicuously missing from those who rallied to him in Transjordan. The only Iraqis who joined Abdallah were the four officers who came with him from the Hijaz, 'Abdallāh al-Dulaimī, Jamīl al-Midfa'ī and ex-officials of the Syrian government who had stayed in Transjordan after July 1920.<sup>81</sup> Many of the Iraqis in Syria returned to Iraq soon after the India Office decided in late September 1920 to permit their repatriation.<sup>82</sup> Some of the Iraqi exiles returned to Iraq at the invitation of the British government. In early November 1920, Sir Percy Cox, the newly-appointed high commissioner for Iraq, announced the creation of a temporary Arab government headed by the *naqīb* of Baghdad, 'Abd al-Rahmān al-Kaylānī. Cox invited Ja'far al-'Askarī and Nūrī al-Sa'īd to join the *naqīb's* government.<sup>83</sup> Until Faysal's coronation in August 1921, the Iraqis who had participated in the Dayr al-Zūr and Tal'afar disturbances were reluctant to leave Syria because the British wanted them tried for murder.

#### Abdallah, Faysal and the Future of Iraq

Abdallah claimed that he intervened in Transjordan in order to restore Faysal to power in Syria. The Syrian nationalists who rallied

to Abdallah took him at his word that his aim was to liberate Syria from French rule. Abdallah was, however, too realistic and sensitive to the balance of power in the Middle East ever to have thought that he and his followers could have forced France to reinstate Faysal.

Abdallah intervened in Transjordan primarily in order to prevent Faysal's enthronement in Iraq. Abdallah did not set out to establish and rule a new political entity in Transjordan. His intervention in Transjordan coincided with rumours that the British government had plans to establish Faysal in Iraq. The turmoil in Transjordan and Syria that followed the French occupation of Damascus offered Abdallah an opportunity to emerge from the political wilderness and force his way onto Great Britain's political agenda in the Fertile Crescent. Since late February 1920, if not earlier, Abdallah had contemplated the idea of setting forth with a band of followers in order to establish his rule outside the Hijaz. Abdallah championed his brother's return to Syria so that Faysal would not be able to challenge his claim to Iraq. By disrupting Transjordan when he did, Abdallah intended to remind Faysal and the British that he was the choice of the Hashimite family, the Iraqi Congress and other Iraqi nationalists to rule Iraq.

Abdallah's actions suggest that he adopted a three-part strategy for achieving his aim of forcing the British government to establish him in Iraq. First, by presenting himself as head of the anti-French movement in Syria, Abdallah tried to precipitate a crisis between Great Britain and France that could only be resolved by satisfying his political ambitions. This was not, as we have seen, Abdallah's first try at advancing his interests by playing Great Britain against France. Second, Abdallah hoped that the anti-French movement would become so disruptive that Great Britain would pressure France to reinstate Faysal in Syria. Failing that, Abdallah probably hoped the British would install Faysal in Transjordan. Third, in all his pronouncements Abdallah was careful to emphasize his loyalty to Great Britain.

After his army was defeated at Khān Maysalūn on 24 July 1920, Faysal fled first to Dar'ā and then to Haifa. In August Faysal sailed for Milan, his home until the British government received him in London

in early December.<sup>84</sup> Immediately after Faysal's ouster from Syria, the British government began to consider the possibility of establishing him in Iraq. A. T. Wilson, it will be recalled, favoured Faysal's establishment in Iraq as a way to restore British prestige in the eyes of the Arabs and refute charges of British double-dealing. The French government learned from Lloyd George and Curzon in late July and early August 1920 that Great Britain was considering Faysal's enthronement in Iraq. Alexandre Millerand and Phillipe Berthelot, the secretary general of the French foreign ministry, both reacted angrily to the possibility that their British allies would allow Faysal to turn Iraq into a centre of intrigue against the French mandate in Syria.<sup>85</sup> When Sir Percy Cox was appointed the high commissioner for Iraq in August 1920, his instructions from the India Office noted that the British government favoured Faysal's enthronement in Iraq.<sup>86</sup>

By September 1920 rumours had reached Abdallah that Great Britain planned to install Faysal in Iraq. In a note entitled 'Emir Abdallah and Irak', Major Batten, the acting British agent in Jidda, described Abdallah's mood in mid-September 1920--barely two weeks before he departed for the north--as follows:

The Emir recently stated that Feisal appears to be "our man now", referring to the current reports that the latter is to be offered the Kingship [of Iraq]. He is obviously uneasy and inclined to be somewhat hurt, and has referred more than once to his being the only one of the three elder brothers with no prospects, inspite of the part he played in the war and subsequently.<sup>87</sup>

Hubert Young argued in early November 1920 that Faysal's enthronement in Iraq would restore British prestige in the Muslim world and convince the Arabs that Great Britain had not abandoned her Hashimite allies. Later that month, Young recommended that the coming negotiations with Faysal should be used to convince Husayn to sign the treaties of Versailles and Sèvres, to restrain Abdallah from antagonizing the French and to tell Faysal that Great Britain would respect the decision of the people of Iraq and Transjordan if they chose members of the Hashimite family as their rulers.<sup>88</sup>

Restraining Abdallah was the first problem on the agenda when King George V and Lord Curzon met with Faysal in London in early December

1920. Both men made it clear to Faysal that the British government strongly objected to any anti-French actions Abdallah was planning. Faysal then sent two telegrams to his father asking him to pressure Abdallah to stop all anti-French actions in Transjordan. Faysal explained that such actions threatened to undermine his negotiations in London. Husayn instructed Abdallah by telegram to refrain from antagonizing the French.<sup>89</sup>

In late December Faysal sent a telegram to Ṣubḥī al-Khadrā in Jerusalem asking him to spread the word in Transjordan that all anti-Allied actions should cease so as not to derail the negotiations in London. (Khadrā of Ṣafad was a former officer in the Northern Arab Army and member of the *Istiqlāl* party.)<sup>90</sup> Abdallah assured Khadrā when they met in Maʿān in early January that he was pro-British and that his followers had been ordered not to attack the French while Faysal was negotiating in London. As a result of Khadrā's visit to Transjordan, Samuel was able to report to the Foreign Office in mid-January that the situation in Amman had calmed down while Sharīf ʿAlī awaited the results of Faysal's negotiations.<sup>91</sup>

In January 1921 Faysal and Foreign Office officials began to discuss his possible installation in Iraq. The most important results of these talks were that British support for establishing Faysal in Iraq grew stronger, that Faysal agreed to head an Arab government in Iraq and that a consensus developed in the Foreign Office that Transjordan, like Iraq, should have a Hashimite ruler.

Curzon consulted Sir Percy Cox before the Foreign Office began discussing the future of Iraq with Faysal. Cox wrote from Baghdad on 2 January 1921 that the local notables--none of whom were worthy of heading an Arab government--should not be consulted in the choice of a ruler for Iraq. Cox recommended that the initiative to install Faysal should come from London, not Iraq.<sup>92</sup>

On 7 January Curzon instructed Kinahan Cornwallis, a former director of the Arab Bureau, how to conduct the first round of talks with Faysal. Cornwallis was instructed to suggest to Faysal that he should return to Mecca to persuade his father to sign the Versailles

treaty and to nominate him to rule Iraq. Once Faysal had been nominated, he would then inform the Iraqi people of his willingness to be their monarch. If they agreed to have him as their king, Faysal would then form a government in Baghdad.<sup>33</sup>

During his interview with Cornwallis on 8 January Faysal refused at first to accept the kingship of Iraq because Husayn and the Iraqi Congress had chosen Abdallah for that position. Faysal agreed to place his name in nomination only if the British government and the Iraqi people wanted him, and not Abdallah, to rule Iraq. Faysal added that 'in such a case both my father & Abdulla would agree for they could not go against the wishes of the people. But I will not take the initiative.' Faysal also needed to know that the form of government Great Britain contemplated in Iraq was in the best interests of the Arabs. Faysal was prepared 'to do anything which Great Britain desires' provided that it did not violate his personal honour or 'the ideals which I have at heart.' Cornwallis concluded that Faysal 'would like to go to Mesopotamia but he will not push himself & will not work against Abdulla.' Cornwallis was impressed by Faysal's 'firmness' and 'loyalty', 'which it would be difficult to find in many Orientals. It would have been so easy for him to have agreed but it was a sense of duty [to Abdallah] & not lack of courage which deterred him.' Cornwallis suggested that Great Britain could either arrange for Abdallah to go to Iraq or instruct Cox 'quietly & unostentatiously to engineer the election of Feisal.' Cornwallis supported the latter because Faysal was 'by far the better man & will serve us loyally and well.'<sup>34</sup>

On 9 January the India Office sent Cox a summary of Cornwallis's interview with Faysal, which explained that the British government would not oppose Faysal's enthronement in Iraq provided that Faysal was acceptable to the Iraqi people. The India Office objected, however, to overt British intervention in Faysal's favour. Cox answered on 11 January that the majority in Iraq would probably accept a Hashimite emir. Cox himself had no objection 'to Abdulla being given first innings', although he supposed that his activities in Ma<sup>ā</sup>n would have made him as unacceptable to the French as was Faysal.<sup>35</sup>

Sir Ronald Lindsay, the assistant under secretary of state for foreign affairs, interviewed Faysal on 20 January. Lindsay's record of that interview indicated that his government foresaw the creation of Arab states in Iraq and Transjordan only if the Arab rulers of both countries did not intrigue against French Syria. The British government would also support the Arab ruler chosen by the Iraqi people. Lindsay added, 'If he is a member of the Sherifian family we should welcome him. If it is Abdulla well and good. If Feisal--perhaps better.'<sup>96</sup>

In his comments on the India Office letter to Cox of 9 January and Lindsay's interview with Faysal, Young noted his preference for pursuing a 'Sherifian policy' in both Iraq and Transjordan. Young, however, rejected Abdallah for Iraq on the assumption that his installation in Baghdad would be more embarrassing to France than that of Faysal. Young reasoned that with Abdallah in Iraq, Faysal in the Hijaz and 'a lesser Sherif' in Transjordan, Faysal would be regarded by the Arabs as the deposed ruler of Syria waiting for the chance to retake Damascus.<sup>97</sup>

By mid-February 1921 a consensus had developed in the Foreign Office that Transjordan should have a Hashimite ruler who agreed not to intrigue against the French. Abdallah, however, had not yet been suggested as that ruler. Curzon wanted to delay the choice of a ruler for Transjordan until it had been decided whether Faysal or Abdallah would be enthroned in Iraq.<sup>98</sup>

In late 1920 the Cabinet resolved to centralize control of British Middle Eastern policy, which, until then, had been divided among the Foreign Office, the India Office and the War Office. The Cabinet decided on 31 December 1920 to transfer control of Palestine (including Transjordan), Iraq and Aden to a new department that would be created in the Colonial Office. When Winston Churchill succeeded Lord Milner as colonial secretary on 9 January 1921, he assumed responsibility for Great Britain's mandates in the Middle East. On 14 February 1921 the Cabinet approved the creation of a Middle East Department in the Colonial Office, which assumed responsibility for the administration of Palestine, Transjordan, Iraq and Aden. Two officials of this department, Hubert Young and T. E. Lawrence, were well known for their pro-Hashimite

sympathies. At the same time, the Cabinet authorized Churchill to hold a conference in Cairo of British officials from London, Palestine, Iraq, Aden and Somaliland that would delineate the main lines of British policy in the Arab world.<sup>99</sup>

By the time of the Cairo Conference, which began in mid-March 1921, Churchill and his subordinates in the Middle East Department were inclined to support a Middle Eastern settlement based on five principles. First, they agreed that Faysal, not Abdallah, would be the most suitable ruler for Iraq. Second, there was a consensus in the Colonial Office that an Arab state with a Hashimite emir should be created in Transjordan. Sir John Shuckburgh, the assistant undersecretary of the Middle East Department, suggested to Churchill in late February 1921 that Abdallah should be the Arab governor of Transjordan. Third, it was generally assumed that Abdallah had to be provided for in any settlement in order to prevent him and his followers from playing Great Britain against France. Fourth, British prestige among the Arabs would suffer if it appeared that Great Britain had abandoned her Hashimite allies. Fifth, once their political ambitions had been satisfied, Faysal and Abdallah would have no reason to intrigue against the French mandate in Syria.<sup>100</sup>

#### The Cairo and Jerusalem Conferences

The Cairo Conference began on 12 March 1921. During the next twelve days over forty meetings were held to discuss British policy in the Middle East.<sup>101</sup> The Cairo Conference was attended by Winston Churchill, the high commissioners and general officers commanding of Palestine and Iraq, the British residents in Aden and the Persian Gulf and the governor of Somaliland. Each was accompanied by his civilian and military staffs.

Reducing military expenditures in Iraq was the first priority of the conference. It became clear, however, that reductions could not be made until the political future of Iraq had been decided. The conference turned first, therefore, to the problem of an Arab ruler for Iraq. Sir Percy Cox argued that Faysal was the best candidate. When asked by

Churchill why Faysal was preferable to Abdallah, Cox answered that Faysal was the most qualified of his family because of his military experience during the war and his familiarity with the Allies. T. E. Lawrence supported this view and added that Abdallah was lazy and lacked the strength of character to rule Iraq effectively. General agreement was quickly reached that Faysal should be enthroned in Iraq.

On the first day of the conference, Churchill spoke in favour of a comprehensive policy that included Faysal in Iraq, Husayn in the Hijaz and Abdallah in Transjordan. This policy, Churchill argued, would enable Great Britain to apply pressure to any one of the three Hashimite rulers in order to influence the other two. Churchill assumed that each of the three would be easier to manipulate if he knew that his British subsidy depended upon the behaviour of the other two.

Churchill informed the prime minister on 14 March that the conference was approaching a 'unanimous conclusion' that Faysal should be established in Iraq. Churchill asked Lloyd George if he approved Faysal's enthronement, and if the conference could proceed on the assumption that the initiative in proposing his candidature should appear to come from Iraq, not the British government.<sup>102</sup> On 16 March Lloyd George approved this policy, but reminded Churchill that Faysal would not go to Iraq until suitable arrangements had been made for Abdallah.<sup>103</sup> The same day Churchill cabled Lloyd George that the conference had unanimously approved a procedure devised by Cox, Lawrence and Gertrude Bell for installing Faysal that would give the appearance of a spontaneous Iraqi demand for his coronation. One part of this procedure was that Abdallah would inform his partisans in Iraq that he had withdrawn in favour of Faysal. Churchill made an urgent request for Cabinet approval of this plan.<sup>104</sup>

On 18 March Churchill explained to Lloyd George in greater detail why the conference considered Abdallah unsuitable for Iraq:

Among Shereefians we are equally agreed that Feisal is incomparably more suitable than Abdullah, who is weak and would not command elements of support essential to [the] Shereefian system . . . Moreover, it would ensure failure of policy in both directions at once to put [the] weak brother on [the] throne of Irak and leave [?] excessively active brother loose and



discontented to work off his grudges against the French by disturbing Trans-Jordania.

As to the prospect that Faysal would not go to Iraq until arrangements had been made for Abdallah, Churchill answered, 'We think we are very much better informed of his [Faysal's] real views and wishes.'<sup>105</sup>

After the arrival of Sir Herbert Samuel and his staff on 16 March, the conference turned its attention to Palestine and Transjordan. During the first meeting of the Palestine Political and Military Committee on 17 March, Samuel agreed with the Middle East Department that Transjordan should be included in the Palestine mandate, but should be administered differently from Palestine and should not be regarded as an independent Arab state. Samuel's most pressing problem was Abdallah, who regarded Faysal as the king of Syria, including Transjordan. Samuel advocated combining 'our Sherifian with our mandatory policy.' He warned, however, that the present situation in Transjordan threatened to jeopardize relations between Great Britain and France, that Abdallah might in the future encourage anti-Zionist sentiment in Palestine and that a government in Transjordan deriving its authority from both Abdallah and Great Britain would be unworkable and provide no security against raids coming from east of the Jordan River.

Churchill answered Samuel that the 'Sherifian cause' should be supported in both Transjordan and Iraq because 'in fact no other alternative presented itself.' Churchill argued that 'peace and prosperity in Arabia' depended upon the goodwill of the Hashimite family and placing them as a whole under an obligation to the British government. Churchill proposed to do this by reaching an accommodation with Abdallah and sending part of the Palestine garrison to Transjordan.

Samuel doubted the wisdom of installing Abdallah in Transjordan. Lawrence and Young agreed with Churchill that Transjordan should have an Arab governor, but not Abdallah. For Lawrence 'the ideal would be a person who was not too powerful, and who was not an inhabitant of Trans-Jordania, but who relied upon His Majesty's Government for the retention of his office.' Such a governor would be appointed by Samuel and have no connection to the Hijaz. Lawrence claimed to have heard from unnamed French officials that France might install Abdallah in

Damascus. Lawrence feared that Transjordan would fall under French control if this happened.<sup>106</sup>

The conferees soon concluded that it would be impossible to remove Abdallah from Transjordan, and that no alternative to him could be found. Lawrence suggested three possible alternatives: a. appointing Abdallah the governor of Transjordan; b. appointing a local governor approved by Abdallah, who would then leave Transjordan; or c. removing Abdallah from Transjordan by force. Lawrence recommended 'the appointment of a loyal and amenable Sherif, but an inactive one. . .' Lawrence believed, however, that neither the British nor Abdallah were strong enough to control Transjordan without assistance from the other. Churchill invited General Walter Congreve and the Palestine Military Committee to consider alternatives a and b and to recommend the minimum garrison needed for Palestine and Transjordan.

The Palestine Military Committee met that day and proceeded on the assumption that either Abdallah or his nominee would become the governor of Transjordan with the general consent of the inhabitants. The committee agreed that the minimum garrison necessary for Transjordan would be one battalion of infantry, two squadrons of cavalry, one section of artillery, all stationed at Amman. Air-Vice Marshal Sir G. Salmond, Royal Air Force commander of the Middle East area, proposed the construction of aerodromes at Amman, Irbid and al-Karak. The R. A. F. squadron in Palestine would fly over Transjordan once a month and visit Amman, Irbid and al-Karak as necessary. Peake submitted a scheme for a local reserve force based in Amman.

Churchill cabled Lloyd George on 18 March that Samuel, Congreve and Lawrence had convinced him that no alternative existed to a British occupation of Transjordan on the basis of an arrangement with Abdallah. Churchill argued that this policy would 'afford [the] best prospect of [the] discharge of our responsibilities [in Transjordan] with future reduction of expense.' He added that a British occupying force would be needed in order to establish a 'settled Government' in Transjordan, to stop the intrigues against the French, and to reopen the Hijaz railroad and the pilgrimage route. Churchill noted that these proposals were

part of a general policy of co-operation and friendship with the Hashimites and harmonized with the proposal to establish Faysal in Iraq. He emphasized that if this comprehensive Sharifian policy were adopted, British expenditure in Palestine, Transjordan and Iraq for 1922-23 would not require more than £8,000,000 as against £30,000,000 for 1921-22. Churchill closed by requesting the authority to reach an agreement with Abdallah on the basis of this telegram.<sup>107</sup>

Lloyd George answered Churchill on 22 March that the Cabinet had approved his proposed schedule and procedure for arranging Faysal's establishment in Iraq. The British government would welcome Faysal's candidature only if Husayn and Abdallah offered their consent, if the people of Iraq welcomed Faysal and if Faysal was prepared to accept the British mandate and would not intrigue against the French. However, the Cabinet had 'considerable misgivings' about the proposals for Transjordan. They feared that the French would regard the installation of Faysal in Iraq and Abdallah in Transjordan as a deliberate menace to their position in Syria. The Cabinet had been warned by its military advisers that the occupation of Transjordan 'would involve a military commitment, the extension and duration of which it was impossible to forecast.' Finally, the Cabinet was not sure that Abdallah would accept a position 'in a territory too small for a Kingdom', agree to a British mandate and refrain from intriguing against the French. The Cabinet wanted Churchill to be aware of these misgivings when he met Abdallah and not to exclude other alternatives such as 'preserving [the] Arab character' of Transjordan, which would be treated as an 'Arab province or adjunct of Palestine.'<sup>108</sup>

The next day Churchill thanked the Cabinet for approving his policy towards Faysal. With regard to Transjordan he explained that 'We do not expect or particularly desire indeed Abdullah himself to undertake Governorship.' Churchill agreed that Abdallah would regard Transjordan as too small for him. It was necessary, however, to secure Abdallah's goodwill because he had the power to do 'a great deal of harm particularly against the French', and because Great Britain did not have the means to deal with him if he became 'actively hostile'. Churchill

agreed, moreover, that Transjordan should be treated as an adjunct of Palestine whose 'Arab character' would be preserved. Churchill emphasized once more that further reductions in military expenditure and the establishment of a stable government in Transjordan could not be effected without stationing a British force east of the Jordan River. Churchill wanted to end the 'lamentable situation' in which Transjordan had become a base for aggression against Syria. He ended by noting that General Gouraud had asked to meet him in Jerusalem on 29 March. Churchill wanted to reassure Gouraud that Transjordan would not threaten the security of Syria.<sup>109</sup>

The Cairo Conference ended on 22 March. The next day Churchill travelled by train from Cairo to Jerusalem. Churchill and Abdallah held three meetings between 28 and 30 March to discuss the future of Transjordan and British policy towards the Hashimite family.

About two weeks after arriving in Amman, Abdallah accepted an invitation from Samuel to meet Churchill in Jerusalem. Abdallah's mood shortly before his meetings with Churchill has been described by Khayr al-Dīn al-Ziriklī and 'Aunī 'Abd al-Hādī. Al-Ziriklī was a Syrian writer and partisan of the Hashimites. 'Abd al-Hādī was the messenger who brought an invitation from Samuel to meet Churchill in Jerusalem. On 11 March Abdallah told a group of his Hijazi confidants and al-Ziriklī that he was the legitimate claimant to the throne of Iraq because the Iraqi people had proclaimed him their king. Unsure if Faysal would accept the kingship of Iraq, Abdallah asked al-Ziriklī to write a series of articles supporting his own claim to rule that country. Al-Ziriklī, who did not want to offend Faysal or Abdallah by taking sides in a dispute between them, extricated himself from an embarrassing situation by neither accepting nor rejecting Abdallah's request.<sup>110</sup>

A week later 'Abd al-Hādī found Abdallah worried that his meetings with Churchill would lead to his removal from Transjordan. Abdallah was angry that, despite the decision of the Iraqi Congress, the British government had decided to support Faysal's candidature in Iraq. 'Abd al-Hādī had this to say about Abdallah's anger at Faysal for usurping the throne of Iraq:

'Emir Abdallah was furious and agitated and complained to all his visitors and his entourage. He hurled abuse at Faysal, who had agreed to accept the throne of Iraq, and was determined to discuss this subject with Mr. Churchill because the throne [of Iraq] was his throne and he was not permitted to abdicate.'<sup>111</sup>

On 27 March T. E. Lawrence and several R. A. F. officers met Abdallah at al-Salt. That evening Abdallah learned from Lawrence that Churchill was going to tell him that Faysal's return to Syria would not be possible. The next day Lawrence escorted Abdallah to Jerusalem to meet Churchill. The talks between Abdallah and Churchill were attended by Samuel, Deedes, Lawrence, Young, and 'Abd al-Hādī. These talks were conducted in French, with Lawrence acting as Churchill's interpreter, and 'Abd al-Hādī as Abdallah's interpreter and secretary.<sup>112</sup>

During the first meeting, which was held on 28 March, Churchill explained that his government 'wished to revert to the original policy of supporting Arab nationality on constructive lines, using the Sherifian family as a medium.' Great Britain objected, however, to Hashimite domination of Palestine west of the Jordan River, Syria and King Husayn's Arabian neighbours. Churchill then explained that the British government favoured Faysal's establishment in Iraq, and that Faysal was then on his way from London to Jidda to discuss this policy with Husayn. Churchill believed that Faysal's standing in Iraq would be strengthened 'if the Sherifian party in Mesopotamia knew that the Emir Abdullah supported his [brother's] candidature.'

According to the British record of this meeting, Abdallah claimed to have 'no personal feeling' regarding Iraq, and that Faysal, not himself, had arranged his proclamation as king of Iraq. Abdallah was supposedly 'delighted with the policy as outlined for Mesopotamia' and agreed to cooperate in making it a success. The British record left no hint of Abdallah's bitter disappointment.

A very different version of Abdallah's reaction is found in the memoirs of 'Aunī 'Abd al-Hādī, who wrote that Churchill's statement about Faysal 'fell upon His Highness the Emir like a bolt of lightning. He felt as if the room had become a fiery furnace.' Abdallah 'tried to bear this painful blow with patience and endurance', and changed the

subject from Faysal and Iraq to Arab opposition to Zionism. Abdallah told Churchill with sorrow that his reward for being the first to call for an alliance between Great Britain and the Arabs, for his wartime service and for bringing Faysal and Lawrence together was to lose Iraq to his brother. Abdallah continued: 'This preference cut into my soul, especially because the Iraqis who represented Iraq at the Syrian Congress held in 1920 were the ones who proclaimed me the king of Iraq.''<sup>13</sup> Abdallah recorded in his memoirs that he agreed to Faysal's enthronement in Iraq, but refused Churchill's request to encourage the Iraqi people to accept Faysal as their king. Abdallah refused because he had never corresponded with anyone in Iraq.''<sup>14</sup>

After discussing Iraq, Churchill turned the conversation to Transjordan. Churchill explained that the British government had decided that Transjordan should be governed as an Arab province with an Arab governor responsible to the high commissioner in Jerusalem. When asked to comment on this policy, Abdallah suggested that Palestine and Transjordan should have one Arab emir whose relation to the high commissioner for Palestine would be the same as that of Faysal to the high commissioner in Iraq. Churchill and Samuel rejected this suggestion and another from Abdallah that Transjordan should be annexed to Iraq.

Churchill explained that the Arab governor would be appointed by Samuel in agreement with Abdallah and have a British force at his disposal in Amman. The Arab governor would be expected to recognize British control over his administration and stop all anti-French activities in Transjordan. Zionist colonization would not be allowed because Transjordan was not included in the administrative system of Palestine. Abdallah was favourably impressed by this policy, although he continued to argue that Palestine and Transjordan should be combined under an Arab emir. He was prepared to consider Churchill's proposals, but could not give a final answer until he had consulted Husayn and Faysal.

To tempt Abdallah into accepting this arrangement, Churchill suggested that France eventually might reconsider her opposition to a

Hashimite emir in Syria. Churchill claimed that this could only happen if Abdallah improved his relations with the French by stopping all anti-French activities in Transjordan. 'Abd al-Hādī's memoirs explained how he and Abdallah understood Churchill's remarks:

The meeting ended at this point, and His Highness said goodbye to Minister Churchill and the members of the British side. When we crossed the door of the conference hall, His Highness the Emir said to me: 'The minister broke my back.' I said to His Highness: 'The man the English want to seat on the throne of Iraq is your brother Faysal, and no one else. I understood from Mr. Churchill that you will take charge of the region detached from Syria, where Faysal's authority had ended, and which has fallen under British influence. He hopes that it will not be long before Your Highness assumes the throne of Syria, following the efforts he will make towards that end.'<sup>115</sup>

Abdallah and Churchill held their second meeting on 29 March. Abdallah explained that he had come to Transjordan 'to preserve the remnant of his brother's kingdom in Syria' and to defend the country from French attack, but had never ordered anyone to attack the French. Abdallah promised to keep Transjordan quiet until Husayn and Faysal had replied to Churchill's proposals. Abdallah preferred to have no British troops in Transjordan until he had heard from Husayn and Faysal.

When Churchill and Abdallah met for the last time on 30 March, Churchill suggested 'that the Emir himself should remain in Trans-Jordania for a period of six months to prepare the way for the appointment, with his consent, at the end of that time of an Arab Governor under the High Commissioner.' During that time, Abdallah would have the support of a British political officer and British troops. In return for British support, Abdallah was asked to guarantee that there would be no anti-French and anti-Zionist agitation in Transjordan, to accept the British mandate and to assist in opening the trans-desert route to Iraq and in the reopening of the Hijaz railroad.

Abdallah 'replied that after full consideration he had decided to accept the proposal' and promised to do his best to make it a success. Abdallah mentioned that one of the main difficulties in Transjordan was the presence there of exiled Syrians who were very hostile to the French. Churchill responded positively to Abdallah's request that he

should ask Gouraud to proclaim an amnesty for the exiled Syrians. After the conclusion of this meeting, Abdallah returned to Amman to implement his agreement with Churchill and form a government. Before leaving Jerusalem, Churchill authorized Samuel to give Abdallah an immediate advance of £5,000 for his personal expenses.

On March 30 Churchill held 'a long and not unsatisfactory interview' in Jerusalem with Comte Robert de Caix, the secretary-general of the high commissioner in Syria. Churchill emphasized that the first aim of British policy in Transjordan was to prevent attacks against the French mandate in Syria.<sup>116</sup> The next day Churchill sent a personal letter to General Gouraud assuring him that the Colonial Office 'would do everything in their power to further and facilitate French interests and the security of French territory.'<sup>117</sup> Churchill said nothing to de Caix or Gouraud about installing Abdallah in Syria.

On his way to London, Churchill cabled the Cabinet on 2 April that Abdallah--whose attitude he described as 'moderate, friendly and statesmanlike'--had agreed to rule Transjordan on a temporary basis for six months with the assistance of a British political officer, British officers commanding local levies and R. A. F. aerodromes. For the time being, however, British troops would not be sent to Transjordan. Abdallah and the levies would be supported and visited regularly by the air squadron at Ludd.<sup>118</sup> After reassuring his Cabinet colleagues on 11 April that 'his proposals really involved a diminution rather than an increase of our responsibility respecting Trans-Jordania', the Cabinet approved Churchill's arrangement with Abdallah.<sup>119</sup> With the approval of this arrangement, the Emirate of Transjordan was born.

#### Conclusion

The collapse of Faysal's Syrian régime created an opportunity for Abdallah to emerge from the political wilderness and pressure the British government to establish him in Iraq. Abdallah intervened in Transjordan in a desperate and fruitless attempt to prevent the British from installing Faysal in Iraq.

Abdallah adopted a two-part strategy to realize his long-cherished ambitions in Iraq. The first part of his strategy was to delegitimize



Faysal's claim to the throne of Iraq. By encouraging the nationalists in Syria and Transjordan to demand Faysal's reinstatement in Damascus, Abdallah aimed to remind his brother and the British that he had been chosen by Husayn and the Iraqi Congress to rule Iraq. The second part of Abdallah's strategy was to engineer a crisis between Great Britain and France that could only be defused by meeting his political demands. Abdallah gambled that the British would 'buy him off' with the throne of Iraq in order to prevent Transjordan from becoming a staging ground for an uprising in Syria. Abdallah balanced his support for the anti-French movement with several statements to the Palestine Government that he and his followers were pro-British.

This strategy met with only partial success. By filling the political vacuum left by a failed policy of indirect British control, and establishing himself as the *de facto* ruler of Transjordan, Abdallah succeeded in compelling the British government to reach an accommodation with him. By the time of the Cairo Conference, both the Colonial Office and the Palestine Government had concluded that Transjordan could not be pacified without Abdallah's cooperation. Winston Churchill wanted Abdallah's assistance in order to ensure the success of a policy of cooperation with the Hashimites in the Hijaz, Iraq and Transjordan. A consensus emerged during the Cairo Conference that an accommodation with Abdallah would eliminate one obstacle to Faysal's enthronement in Iraq and enable the British government to claim that they had kept faith with their Hashimite allies and fulfilled their wartime promises to Husayn to support Arab independence.

Abdallah's intervention in Transjordan failed to achieve its primary objective of preventing Faysal's enthronement in Iraq. Abdallah's strategies for achieving that end badly misfired. Abdallah did not march north with his followers so that he could become the founder of a new political entity in Transjordan. By disrupting Transjordan and threatening to create a crisis between Great Britain and France, he unintentionally made himself indispensable to the tranquility of a land that he saw only as a stepping-stone to Iraq. Churchill was well aware of Abdallah's ambitions in Iraq, and knew that he would not

be satisfied with ruling Transjordan. Knowing this, Churchill convinced Abdallah to accept the governorship of Transjordan by deceiving him with the false hope that France might consider establishing him in Syria.

In late March 1921 Abdallah's prospects of establishing his authority and the legitimacy of his rule in Transjordan were unfavourable. The history of Hashimite-Transjordanian relations until March 1921 demonstrated that Transjordanians would not readily accept Hashimite rule. Transjordanian support for the Arab revolt was a function of inter- and intra-tribal rivalries and the availability of cash subsidies, not loyalty to the Arab national cause. Faysal's brief reign was unpopular in Transjordan. After Faysal's downfall, most of the settled population wanted a British administration and troops to protect them from the bedouins. In return for subsidies, the bedouins were prepared to accept British rule. Support for a revival of Hashimite rule was originally limited to the Syrian exiles and a handful of Transjordanians who had served in the Syrian administration or army. However, once it became clear that the British would not occupy Transjordan or subsidize the bedouins, the Banū Ṣakhr and others flocked to Abdallah. As Abdallah filled the political void in Transjordan, most, but not all, of the sedentary population resigned themselves to the *fait accompli* of his presence among them. Only the Syrian exiles and a few Transjordanians like Sa'īd Khayr and 'Alī Khulqī rallied to him for nationalist reasons. When the British did not eject Abdallah from Transjordan, many Transjordanians assumed that Great Britain had deliberately ceded control of the country to him.

In March 1921 neither Abdallah nor his subjects identified themselves as Transjordanians. Abdallah, who wanted to rule Iraq, had little interest in creating a new political community in Transjordan. The Syrian exiles of his entourage saw Transjordan only as a base from which to plot the downfall of French rule in Syria. Personal identity in Transjordan was based in tribe, family and religion. The new political entity that Churchill and Abdallah created was designed to meet British needs, not those of the people of Transjordan. The Emirate

of Transjordan had no precedent in local history and no basis in the social structure of the country. It was unlikely, therefore, that Transjordanians would quickly recognize the legitimacy of the Emirate of Transjordan and its British-appointed ruler.

Abdallah did not, however, lack the means to influence Transjordanians and command their obedience. The widespread belief that Abdallah had British backing and would be the source of British-supplied largess enabled him to convince Transjordanians that he was the local centre of power whose favour had to be cultivated. The pragmatic recognition that the welfare of one's tribe, clan or religious community depended on placating Abdallah was not, however, the same as recognizing the legitimacy of his rule. It is true, nonetheless, that habituating Transjordanians to the idea that Abdallah was worth placating was the first step in consolidating the authority of his regime. The long and complicated process of legitimizing Abdallah's rule began with convincing Transjordanians that their welfare depended upon him and that, because of his British backing, he would not be removed from their midst.

The establishment of Transjordan suggests that a foreign-born Arab ruler, who had been installed in an entity created to meet the strategic needs of a European power--and not those of the local people--could not establish his authority without the backing of that power. This was especially true in a country like Transjordan where loyalty and identity were grounded in religion, tribe and clan, and not in allegiance to a local central government of the kind Abdallah established in Amman.

## Notes

1. Walid Kazziha, *The Social History of Southern Syria (Trans-Jordan) in the 19th and Early 20th Century* (Beirut, 1972). On the Circassians, see Muḥammad Khayr Ḥaghandūqa, *Al-Sharkas. Asluhum, Ta'rīkhuhum, 'Ādātuhum, Taqālīduhum, Hijratuhum Ilā al-Urdunn* (Amman, 1982) pp. 28-70, 140-151 and Muḥammad Khayr Ḥaghandūqa (ed.), *Mīrzā Bāshā Wasfī. Kitāb Wathā'iqī* (Amman, 1979). On the Christians of Transjordan, see George Sābā and Rūkus bin Zayd al-'Azīzī, *Safahāt min Ta'rīkh al-Urdunn wa Hayāt al-Bādiya. Mādabā wa Dawāhīhā* (Jerusalem, 1961) pp. 134-55 and F. G. Peake, *A History of Jordan and Its Tribes* (Coral Gables, 1958) pp. 180-82 and 223-24 on the Chechens. On the tribes of Transjordan see, Peake, *Tribes*, pp. 146-253; Būlus Salmān, *Khamsat A'wām fī Sharq al-Urdunn* (Leipzig, 1929) pp. 259-81 and Eliahu Epstein, 'The Bedouins of Transjordan', *Akhdut Ha'Avoda*, vol. 2, 1931, pp. 467-74 (In Hebrew).
2. On the regions and towns of Transjordan, see Kazziha, *Social History*, pp. 9-24, Eliahu Epstein, 'Urban Settlement in Transjordan', *Akhdut Ha'Avodah*, vol. 3, 1932, pp. 177-19 (In Hebrew). On al-Karak, see Peter Gubser, *Politics and Change in Al-Karak, Jordan* (London, 1973) chapters one to three and Mādī and Mūsā, *Ta'rīkh*, p. 25. On Ma'an, see Ziriklī, *Amān*, pp. 21-26.
3. Somerset and Peake, 'Observations on Dr. Weizmann's letter to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, with reference to Trans-Jordania', 14 Mar. 1921, F. R. Somerset Papers, Middle East Center, St. Antony's College, Oxford (henceforth Somerset papers).
4. Mādī and Mūsā, *Ta'rīkh*, pp. 13-15; Ochsenswald, 'South Jordan', p. 300; also see note seventy-two of chapter one.
5. The information in this and the previous paragraph comes from, Qasūs, *Mudhakkirāt*, pp. 81-84; Mādī and Mūsā, *Ta'rīkh*, pp. 29-30, 53-54.
6. In his wartime correspondence with Faysal and Husayn, Zayd continually complained that the lack of funds made it difficult for the Northern Arab Army to retain the services of the Transjordanian bedouins. Zayd, who was one of Faysal's commanders, repeatedly requested funds to pay the bedouins. Sulaymān Mūsā (ed.), *Al-Thawra al-'Arabiyya al-Kubrā. al-Ḥarb fī'l-Urdunn 1917-1918. Mudhakkirāt al-Amīr Zayd* (Amman, 1976).
7. Sulaymān Mūsā, *Suwwar min al-Buṭūla* (Pictures of Heroism) (Amman, 1968) pp. 37-58 and Epstein, 'Bedouins', p. 469.
8. Mādī and Mūsā, *Ta'rīkh*, pp. 75, 78 and Ṣafwat, *'Askarī*, p. 140.
9. Epstein, 'Bedouins', p. 468 and Eliahu Elath (Epstein), *Zionism and the Arabs* (Tel Aviv, 1974) pp. 125-28 (In Hebrew).
10. Ḥaghandūqa, *Mīrzā*, pp. 94-105.
11. On al-Karak, Mādabā and al-Salt during the war, see Qasūs, *Mudhakkirāt*, pp. 81-106 and Père Antonin Jaussen, 'Renseignements sur la Transjordanie', Jerusalem, 22 Dec. 1918 and Jaussen, 'Renseignements Fournis Par L'Agent A. S.', 12 Feb. 1919, both MAEN, Papers of the French Consulate, Jerusalem (henceforth, Jerusalem consular papers) carton 207. Head of the Latin Mission, al-Salt (signature illegible) to the French HC, Jerusalem, 7 Aug. 1919, MAEN Jerusalem consular papers, carton 193 and Kazziha, *Social History*, p. 28. Mādī and Mūsā, *Ta'rīkh*, p. 30.

12. Walīd al-Nadjāwī, undated biographical sketch of Sāliḥ al-Najdāwī, National Directorate of Libraries and Documents, Amman; Musa, *Suwwar*, pp. 177-86; Sulaymān Mūsā, *Wujūh wa Malāmiḥ* (Amman, 1980) pp. 13-17 and Baṣīr, *Qaḍīya*, p. 123.

13. Yitzhak Gil-Har, 'The Separation of Trans-Jordan from Palestine', in Lee I. Levine (ed.), *The Jerusalem Cathedra: Studies in the History, Archaeology, Geography and Ethnography of the Land of Israel* (Jerusalem, 1981) pp. 289-90. On the military and civil administration of Transjordan, see Mādī and Mūsā, *Tārīkh*, pp. 83-87, 96 and Qasūs, *Mudhakkirāt*, p. 109-13

14. Mādī and Mūsā, *Tārīkh*, pp. 85-88; Mūsā, *Suwwar*, pp. 186-87; Mūsā, *Wujūh*, pp. 17-21.

15. Mādī and Mūsā, *Tārīkh*, pp. 95-96.

16. *ibid.*, pp. 94-95.

17. Fārūq Nawwāf Surayḥīn, *Tārīkh Madīnat al-Ramthā wa Liwā'ihā. Dirāsa Tārīkhiyya, Iqtisādiyya, Anthrōbōlōgiyya* (Amman, 1985) pp. 73-86.

18. Jaussen, 'Renseignements sur la Transjordanie', 22 Dec. 1918 and 'Dans La Contrée A L'Est Du Jourdain', 29 Mar. 1919, both in MAEN Jerusalem consular papers, carton 207.

19. Jaussen, 'Rapport de M. Ar. Mindikian. Arménien', 29 Jan. 1919, MAEN Jerusalem consular papers, carton 207.

20. *ibid.*, and Jaussen, 'Renseignements Fournis Par L'Agent A. S.', 12 Feb. 1919, MAEN Jerusalem consular papers, carton 207.

21. Jaussen, 'Renseignements Fournis Par L'Agent A.S.', 12 Feb. 1919, 'Dans La Contrée A L'Est Du Jourdain', 29 March 1919, both MAEN, Jerusalem consular papers, carton 207 and Iḥsān al-Nimr, *Tārīkh Jabal Nāblus wa al-Balqā'*, vol. 3 (Nāblus, no date) pp. 141-42.

22. Jaussen, 'Rapport de Kerak: Régime Cherifien', 26 Nov. 1918, MAEN Jerusalem consular papers, carton 207 and the documents cited in notes eighteen and nineteen. Also see, Capt. I. N. Camp, 'French Propaganda in Jerusalem', secret, 2 Feb. 1919 WO 106/189.

23. Curzon to Samuel very urgent 6 Aug. 1920 FO 371/5121/E9524; Curzon to Derby (Paris) very urgent 7 Aug. 1920 FO 371/5038/E9536; Curzon minute 8 Aug. 1920 FO 371/5121/E9471.

24. Parliamentary Question of Mr. Raper to Andrew Bonar Law 28 July 1920 FO 371/5121/E9131.

25. For Samuel's views on Zionism, see Elie Kedourie, 'Sir Herbert Samuel and the Government of Palestine', *The Chatham House Version and Other Middle-Eastern Studies* (London, 1970) pp. 52-56 and Gil-Har, 'Trans-Jordan', pp. 291-92.

26. Samuel to FO very urgent 29 July 1920 FO 371/5121/E9077; Samuel to FO very urgent 31 July 1920 FO 371/5038/E9176; Samuel to Curzon very urgent, personal and private, 7 Aug. 1920 FO 371/5121/E9599.

27. Samuel to district governors, Beersheba and Hebron 26 July 1920 ISA CS/106 Occupation of Transjordan, vol. 1, Records of the chief secretary's office, 2/50/A. (henceforth ISA CS/106, 2/50/a); Samuel to FO 3 Aug. 1920 FO 371/5121/E9471; Samuel to FO very urgent 7 Aug. 1920 FO 371/5121/E9542.

28. Samuel to FO very urgent 29 July 1920 FO 371/5121/E9077; Shea to Congreve 31 July 1920 ISA CS/106, 2/50/a.

29. Zirīklī, *Amān*, p. 38. This confusion was made worse by 'Alā' al-Dīn al-Darūbī, the Syrian prime minister, who wrote to government

officials in Transjordan on 10 August 1920 asking them to obey the orders of his government. Mādī and Mūsā, *Ta'rīkh*, pp. 99-100.

30. GSI, Tiberias to Samuel undated but late July 1920; Note of I. N. Camp 2 Aug. 1920; Egyptforce to Troopers (WO) secret 3 Aug. 1920, Stanton (district governor, Haifa) to Storrs secret 10 Aug. 1920, all ISA CS/106, 2/50/a.

31. Young minute, 29 July 1920 FO 371/5121/E9077 and minutes of Crowe 1 Aug. and Curzon 2 Aug. 1920 FO 371/5038/E9467. On the problem of demobilization and retrenchment in the Middle East after World War I, see Keith Jeffrey, *The British Army and the Crisis of Empire* (Manchester, 1984) chapters 1-4 and 7-8.

32. WO to GOC, Egypt secret 29 July 1920 FO 371/5122/E10063; Congreve to WO secret 31 July 1920 FO 371/5122/E10063. WO to Congreve secret 2 Aug. 1920 FO 371/5122/E10063, GHQ, Egypt to WO 3 Aug. 1920 FO 371/5122/E10063, WO to Congreve secret 7 Aug. 1920 FO 371/5122/E10063.

33. Curzon to Samuel very urgent 6 Aug. 1920 FO 371/5121/E9542.

34. Samuel to Curzon very urgent 7 Aug. 1920 FO 371/5121/E9542 and Samuel to Lloyd George and Curzon very urgent, personal and private, 7 Aug. 1920 FO 371/5121/E9599.

35. Curzon to Samuel 11 Aug. 1920 FO 371/5121/E9542 and Curzon to Samuel urgent 26 Aug. 1920 FO 371/5122/E10245.

36. Samuel to FO very urgent 14 Aug. 1920 FO 371/5122/E9919. Attendance at this meeting became intertwined with tribal rivalries. 'Auda Abū Tāyih did not attend because his rival for leadership of the Huwaitāt, Ḥamad bin Jāzī was there. Several shaikhs of the Banū Ṣakhr did not attend because of their feud with Mithqāl and Mashūr al-Fā'iz, the two leading figures of the tribe, and because the British refused to subsidize them. The shaikhs of Irbid and 'Ajlūn did not attend because of their disputes with the tribes of al-Balqā'. I. N. Camp (al-Salt) to civil secretary (Ronald Storrs), secret 23 Aug. 1920 ISA CS/106, 2/50/a and Sulaymān Mūsā, *Ta'sīs al-Imāra al-Urdunniyya. Dirāsa Wathā'iqiyya, 1921-1925*, (Amman, 1971) p. 27.

37. Samuel to Curzon 22 Aug. 1920 FO 371/5122/E10245.

38. Samuel to Curzon very urgent 27 Aug. 1920 FO 371/5122/E10564; Storrs to Camp, Somerset, Brunton and Alec Kirkbride 27 Aug. 1920 ISA CS/106, 2/50/a.

39. Mādī and Mūsā, *Ta'rīkh*, pp. 104-32; Qasūs, *Mudhakkirāt*, pp. 114-18; the chapter on the National Government of Moab in Alec Kirkbride, *A Crackle of Thorns* (London, 1956) and Dann, *Studies*, chapters two and three.

40. Dann, *Studies*, chapter two and C. S. Jarvis, *Arab Command: The Biography of Lieutenant-Colonel F. G. Peake Pasha* (London, 1942) pp. 60-62, 69-78.

41. Mādī and Mūsā, *Ta'rīkh*, pp. 123-26.

42. Curzon to Vansittart 30 Sept. 1920 FO 141/440 part 1.

43. Scott to Curzon 13 Oct. 1920, enclosing 'Report by Major W. Batten, acting British agent, Jeddah for the Ten-Day Period ending 30 September 1920' secret FO 371/5243/E12958 and Mādī and Mūsā, *Ta'rīkh*, p. 132.

44. Husayn's telegram of 7 Sept. 1920 is enclosed in Rufaifān to Samuel 13 Sept. 1920 ISA CS/106, 2/50/a.

45. J. P. Groves (assistant civil secretary) to civil secretary (Deedes) 1 Nov. 1920 and Camp to civil secretary 1 Nov. 1920, both ISA CS/106, 2/50/b.

46. Zirikiī, *‘Amān*, pp. 21-26 and Wilson, *Abdullah*, p. 44.

47. Abdallah's declaration has been published in Mādī and Mūsā, *Ta'rikh*, pp. 132-36. Abdallah's journey from Medina to Ma'an took twenty-seven days because much of the Hijaz railroad had not been repaired since the war and fuel supplies were limited.

48. Abdallah, *Al-Amālī al-Siyāsiyya*, (Amman, 1939) p. 20 and *Mudhakkirātī*, pp. 167-68.

49. 'Sa'id al-Muftī Yatadhakkaru', part 1, *Al-Dustūr*, (Amman), no. 3077, 21 Feb. 1976.

50. Mādī and Mūsā, *Ta'rikh*, p. 132; Mūsā, *Ṣuwwar*, pp. 51, 103 and Mūsā, *Ta'sīs*, pp. 26, 45-47, 181.

51. Mūsā, *Ta'sīs*, p. 46-47 and *Ṣuwwar*, pp. 113-14. Mūsā did not indicate where Husayn's letter to Allenby is found in the PRO.

52. Monckton to ? 21 Aug. 1920, the R. F. P. Monckton papers, Middle East Center, St. Antony's College, Oxford (henceforth Monckton papers) and Somerset to his father 24 Aug. 1920, Somerset papers.

53. Camp to civil secretary 26 Aug. 1920, Camp to Storrs 30 Aug. 1920, P. B. Bramley to Samuel 30 Aug. 1920 and Sulṭān Majīd al-‘Adwān to Samuel 17 Sept. 1920 ISA CS/106, 2/50/a.

54. Mādī and Mūsā, *Ta'rikh*, pp. 106-107.

55. Somerset to civil secretary 19 Sept. 1920 ISA CS/106, 2/50/b.

56. Somerset to HC 2 and 6 Sept. 1920 and civil secretary (Deedes) to Somerset 11 Sept. 1920 ISA CS/106, 2/50/a.

57. Khulqī to the *Mutaṣarrif* of al-Karak (Rufaiḫān al-Majālī) and Maḥzar Raslān 3 Oct. 1920 Mādī and Mūsā, *Ta'rikh*, p. 114. Sulaymān Mūsā has found no evidence in the private papers of ‘Alī Khulqī that Rufaiḫān or Maḥzar answered this letter. Mūsā, *Wujūh wa Malāmiḫ*, p. 64.

58. Kattan (for Rufaiḫān) to Samuel 5 Nov. 1920 ISA CS/106, 2/50/a.

59. Zirikiī, *‘Amān*, pp. 3-4; Muhammad ‘Alī al-‘Ajlūnī, *Dhikrayātī ‘an al-Thawra al-‘Arabiyya al-Kubrā* (Amman, no date) pp. 106-107; Mādī and Mūsā, *Ta'rikh*, p. 137.

60. ‘Ajlūnī, *Dhikrayātī*, pp. 103-107. Fu‘ād al-Salīm was a Lebanese Druze who joined the Arab revolt in 1917 or 1918 and later served as an officer in the Syrian Army. Ahmad Muraywīd of al-Qunayṭra was a pre-war member of *al-Fatāt* and a member of the *Istiqḫāl* party in Syria after the war.

61. Samuel to FO 2 Oct. 1920 FO 371/5123/E12110; Samuel to Prodrôme (FO) undated, but early November 1920 and 'Résumé of Salt and Amman Reports from 23.10.20 to 2.11.20', both ISA CS/106, 2/50/b and L. D. Christie (military intelligence, EEF, Cairo) to DMI 19 Jan. 1921 secret WO 106/205.

62. ‘Ajlūnī, *Dhikrayātī*, pp. 105-108. The British estimated their followers at 200 to 500 men. Samuel to FO 8 Dec. 1920 FO 371/5290/E15399.

63. Deedes, 'Summary of recent events in Trans-Jordania' in Samuel to Curzon 20 Dec. 1920 FO 141/440A.

64. Abdallah and Ghālib al-Sha'lan (the *mutṣarrif* of Ma'ān) to Mīrzā Bey, both 25 Rabī' al-Awwal 1339, Ḥaghandūqa, *Mīrzā*, pp. 126-127; Samuel to Curzon 4 Jan. 1921 FO 371/6371/E244.

65. Ziriklī, *Amān*, pp. 29-30.

66. Sharīf 'Alī to 'Alī Khulqī and Qāsim al-Gharāyba, 7 Dec. 1920, Mādī and Mūsā, *Ta'rīkh*, p. 139.

67. Samuel to Curzon 20 Dec. 1920 FO 141/440A, 'Ajlūnī, *Dhikrayātī*, pp. 107-109, 'Extracts from Reports by the Inspector of Gendarmerie, Trans-Jordania and the British Representative, Es Salt' secret 1 Feb. 1921 FO 141/440 part 1.

68. Samuel to Curzon 20 Dec. 1920 FO 141/440A and GHQ, EEF, 'Situation in Trans-Jordania and Palestine' secret 1 Feb. 1921 WO 106/205; Abdallah, *Mudhakkirātī*, p. 173.

69. Dann, *Studies*, p. 27.

70. Captain L. D. Christie (Cairo) to DMI 19 Jan. 1921 secret WO 106/205.

71. GHQ, EEF, 'Situation in Trans-Jordania and Palestine', secret, 1 Feb. 1921 WO 106/205 and 'Extracts from Reports by the Inspector of Gendarmerie, Trans-Jordania and the British Representative, Es Salt' secret 1 Feb. 1921 FO 141/440 part 1.

72. Ziriklī, *Amān*, pp. 7-8.

73. Abdallah, *Mudhakkirātī*, p. 173 and 'Report on the Political Situation in Palestine and Trans-Jordania for the Month of February 1921' 3 Mar. 1921 CO 733/1/CO13449. Ziriklī, *Amān*, p. 5,

74. Samuel to Curzon 20 Dec. 1920 FO 141/440A; Samuel to FO 1 Feb. 1921 FO 371/6371/E1515; 'Political Report for the Month of January 1921' 1 Feb. 1921 FO 371/6374/E1922; 'Report on the Political Situation in Palestine and Trans-Jordania for the Month of February 1921' 3 Mar. 1921 CO 733/1/CO13449.

75. Abdallah, *Mudhakkirātī*, p. 170-71.

76. 'Sa'īd al-Muftī Yatadhakkaru', *Al-Dustūr*, nos. 3077, 3078, 21 and 22 Feb. 1976. The rift between Rūfāifān al-Majāli and Ḥusayn al-Tarāwna may have been connected to a land dispute between the Majālis and the Tarawnas. See Gubser, *Al-Karak*, p. 94.

77. The delegation consisted of two Damascenes, Kāmil al-Qaṣṣāb and 'Aunī al-Qudmānī, Amīn al-Tamīmī and 'Aunī 'Abd al-Hādī, both of Nāblus, and Mazhar Raslān. They departed on 23 February 1921. The delegation had the support of Mithqāl al-Fā'iz who pledged to protect Abdallah if he came to Amman. Ziriklī, *Amān*, p. 8.

78. Khayriyya Qāsimiyya (ed.), 'Aunī Abd al-Hādī. *Awrāq Khāssa* (Beirut, 1974) pp. 39-42; Samuel to Curzon 12 Feb. 1921 FO 371/6375/E2354.

79. 'Report on the Political Situation in Palestine and Trans-Jordania for the Month of March 1921' CO 733/2/16814; Jerusalem to HC, Egypt 3 and 6 Mar. 1921, both FO 141/440 part 1; Samuel to Churchill 11 Mar. 1921 CO 733/1/12516; Abdallah, *Mudhakkirātī*, pp. 174-75; Qasimiyya, 'Abd al-Hādī, pp. 42-43; Ziriklī, *Amān*, pp. 28-29.

80. This was made clear in the speeches Abdallah delivered when he arrived in Ma'ān and Amman. The Ma'ān speech has already been cited. The Amman speech is reprinted in Ziriklī, *Amān*, pp. 28-29.



81. Jamīl al-Midfa'ī came to Transjordan after the creation of the emirate and served as the governor of al-Karak for two years. Suwaidī, *Wujūh*, p. 96.
82. Montagu to Wilson 24 Sept. 1920 WO 106/200.
83. Şafwat, 'Askarī, pp. 173-77, Nuşairī, Nūrī, pp. 90-93 and Klieman, *Cairo Conference*, p. 61.
84. Curzon to Churchill (Milan) urgent 11 Nov. 1920, *DBFP*, vol. 13, no. 336.
85. Curzon to Sir G. Grahame (Paris) 28 July 1920 FO 371/5037/E9106; Note of Sir Eyre Crowe on a conversation with the French chargé d'affaires 10 Aug. 1920 FO 371/5038/E9799. Aimé de Fleuriau, the French chargé d'affaires in London, complained to the Foreign Office in mid-August 1920 that his government would view Faysal's establishment in Iraq as a hostile act towards France. De Fleuriau to Curzon 17 Aug. 1920 FO 371/5039/E10057.
86. 'Appointment of Sir Percy Cox as High Commissioner: Instructions of His Majesty's Government' 28 Aug. 1920 WO 106/199.
87. Batten, "Emir Abdullah and Irak", in 'Jeddah Report 10th-20th September 1920' FO 686/26.
88. 'Memorandum by Major Young', 6 Nov. 1920, *DBFP*, vol. 13, no. 332; Young, 'Foreign Office Memorandum on Possible Negotiations with the Hedjaz', 29 Nov. 1920, *ibid*, no. 342.
89. Curzon to Hardinge, *DBFP*, vol. 13, no. 346; Musa, *Ta'sis*, p. 62; Curzon to Batten very urgent 13 Dec. 1920, FO 371/5290/E15577; Curzon to Samuel 15 Dec. 1920 FO 371/5290/E15544; Abdallah, *Mudhakkirātī*, p. 172.
90. Khadrā (al-Salt) to 'Alī Khulqī, 22 Dec. 1920, in Mādī and Mūsā, *Ta'rīkh*, p. 173; Ahmad Muraywīd to Khulqī 22 Dec. 1920, in Mūsā, *Şuwwar*, pp. 115-17 and Khadrā to Ḥaddād Pāshā 1 Jan. 1921, cited in Mūsā, *Ta'sīs*, pp. 62-63.
91. Khadrā to Ḥaddād 13 Jan. 1921, cited in Mūsā, *Ta'sīs*, p. 75 and Samuel to FO 13 Jan. 1921 FO 371/6371/E713.
92. Cox to IO 2 Jan. 1921 FO 371/6349/E277, cited in Klieman, *Cairo Conference*, p. 101.
93. 'Instructions to Mr. Cornwallis from Secretary of State regarding his interview with Feisal' 7 Jan. 1921 FO 371/6349/E583.
94. Cornwallis, 'Note of an Interview with Emir Feisal on 8.1.21' FO 371/6349/E583.
95. SSI to Cox 9 Jan 1921; Young minute 13 Jan. and Cox to SSI 11 Jan. 1921 FO 371/6349/E557.
96. 'Record of a conversation between Mr. Lindsay and Emir Feisal' 20 Jan. 1921 FO 371/6237/E986; Curzon, 'Note by the Secretary of State on the Negotiations with Feisal', undated, but late January or early February 1921 FO 371/6371/E2559.
97. Young minutes 13 Jan. FO 371/6349/E557 and 21 Jan. 1921 FO 371/6237/E986.
98. Minutes of Young 11 and 14 Feb. 1921 and Curzon 11 Feb. 1921 FO 371/6371/E1868.
99. Klieman, *Cairo Conference*, pp. 85-93 and Helmut Mejcher, 'British Middle East policy 1917-1921: The inter-departmental level', *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 8, 1973, pp. 81-101.

100. Draft agenda of the Cairo Conference, 25 Feb. 1921 CO 732/3/CO9837; Shuckburgh minute undated, but late-February 1921 CO 732/3/10127.

101. Unless stated otherwise, all information in this section comes from 'Report on Middle East Conference Held in Cairo and Jerusalem March 12th to 30th, 1921, with Appendices' secret CO 935/1. Chapter six of Aaron Klieman's impressive study of the Cairo Conference has been of great help in the preparation of this part of chapter eight.

102. Churchill to prime minister personal and secret 14 Mar. 1921 FO 371/6342/E4211.

103. Prime minister to Churchill secret and personal 16 Mar. 1921 FO 371/6342/E4211.

104. *ibid.*

105. Churchill to prime minister secret and personal 18 Mar. 1921 FO 371/6342/E4211.

106. I have found no evidence that the French government considered Abdallah's establishment in Syria or that any French official had mentioned this possibility to Lawrence. The return of the Hashimites to Syria was anathema to Gouraud and de Caix. The British consul in Damascus proposed to de Caix in mid-March 1921 that Abdallah's enthronement in Damascus would solve the difficulties that Transjordan had caused for France. De Caix rejected this idea as an attempt by the British to use their Hashimite client to undermine French rule in Syria. De Caix asked his foreign minister, Aristide Briand, to call the attention of Lord Curzon and, if need be, Lloyd George to the danger of such a policy for French interests in Syria. Briand to de Saint-Aulaire 21 Mar. 1921 MAEP Palestine, 1918-1929, vol. 6. De Saint-Aulaire learned from Curzon in late March 1921 that the British had no intention of installing Abdallah in Damascus. Briand to Gouraud très urgent 26 Mar. 1921 SHA '4 H 44/dossier 6.

107. Churchill to prime minister 18 Mar. 1921 FO 371/6342/E4211.

108. Lloyd George to Churchill very urgent and secret 22 Mar. 1921 FO 371/6342/E3592 and Cabinet conclusions, meeting of 22 Mar. 1921 CAB (14) 21.

109. Churchill to the prime minister secret 23 Mar. 1921 CAB 24/121 C.P. 2770.

110. Zirikli, *'Amān*, pp. 46-47.

111. Qāsimiyya, *'Abd al-Hādī*, pp. 43-44.

112. Three records exist of Churchill's meetings with Abdallah in Jerusalem, CO 935/1, pp. 107-14; Abdallah, *Mudhakkirati*, pp. 176-82 and Qāsimiyya, *'Abd al-Hādī*, pp. 44-49.

113. Qāsimiyya, *'Abd al-Hādī*, pp. 46-48.

114. Abdallah, *Mudhakkirātī*, p. 180.

115. Qāsimiyya, *'Abd al-Hādī*, pp. 48-49.

116. 'Trans-Jordania. Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies', 2 Apr. 1921 CAB 24/122, C. P. 2815. De Caix to MAE 3 Apr. 1921 MAEP Arabie-Hedjaz, 1918-1929, vol. 13.

117. Churchill to Gouraud 31 Mar. 1921 CO 935/1.

118. 'Trans-Jordania. Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies' 2 Apr. 1921 CAB 24/22 C. P. 2815.

119. 'Conclusions of a Conference of Ministers held in Mr. Chamberlain's Room, House of Commons', 11 Apr. 1921 CAB 23/25.

## Conclusion

Abdallah was bitter and angry that the British had chosen Faysal to rule Iraq. Abdallah considered Transjordan scant compensation for what he had lost in Iraq. In early April 1921 Abdallah angrily refused an invitation from his father to meet Faysal in Cairo and then to attend a family conference in Mecca to discuss the future of Transjordan and Iraq. Abdallah stayed in Amman, but sent 'Aunī 'Abd al-Hadī to Port Said to rebuke Faysal for usurping his rights in Iraq.' After visiting Transjordan in June 1921, Wyndham Deedes reported to Samuel that Abdallah refused to ask his friends in Iraq to support Faysal.<sup>2</sup> French intelligence in Syria learned from an informer in January 1922 that Abdallah spoke abusively of Faysal and suffered from 'a great nervousness bordering on neurasthenia that was caused by his resentment at having lost the throne of Mesopotamia.'<sup>3</sup> Khayr al-Dīn al-Zirikī has recounted how, in mid-April 1922, Abdallah flew into a rage when the brother of Fu'ād al-Khaṭīb recited a line of poetry praising him for graciously renouncing the throne of Iraq.<sup>4</sup>

Looking back at all he had hoped to achieve since the outbreak of World War I, Abdallah was disappointed that his ambitions in Iraq had gone unfulfilled. When measured against his family's grandiose ambition to create an empire embracing most of the Fertile Crescent and the Arabian peninsula, the Emirate of Transjordan was indeed a paltry prize. Abdallah's accomplishments and contributions to the making of a new Arab political order were, however, far greater than he knew in 1921.

By April 1921 the Hashimites had realized much of their ambition to dominate the Fertile Crescent. Although Husayn failed to establish an empire based in Mecca that included most of the Fertile Crescent and the domination of his Arabian rivals, he and his sons did found four political entities in the Arab East: the Kingdom of the Hijaz, the Arab government of Syria and Hashimite monarchies in Iraq and Transjordan. The extension of Hashimite rule from the Hijaz to Transjordan, Iraq and, briefly, to Syria was a remarkable achievement for a dynasty whose rule until World War I had always been confined to the Hijaz. Abdallah's

most important achievement was, of course, the creation of Transjordan, whose successor, the Hashimite Kingdom of Jordan, is the only survivor of the four Hashimite states established between 1916 and 1921.

Abdallah contributed to the shaping of post-war Arab political expectations and of Arab nationalist ideology. His early political career illustrated the influence of the Husayn-McMahon correspondence on both. Because of their leadership of the Arab revolt and the régimes they established in the Hijaz and the Fertile Crescent, the Hashimites had, by mid-1921, succeeded to a large extent in molding Arab nationalism in their image. This thesis has examined at length how the Husayn-McMahon correspondence shaped Abdallah's political expectations. Through Abdallah, the political expectations of his Iraqi partisans and the Syrians and Transjordanians who rallied to him after July 1920 were also shaped by the Hashimite interpretation of that correspondence and other British statements concerning Arab independence. From their positions of power and influence in the Hijaz, Syria, Iraq and Transjordan, the Hashimites were able to make their interpretation of the Husayn-McMahon correspondence part of the ideology of Arab nationalism after World War I. It is ironic that Abdallah, who remained a loyal client of Great Britain until the end of his life, helped spread a version of the Husayn-McMahon correspondence that played a part in delegitimizing British rule in the Middle East.

Abdallah's early career revealed that the primary aim of Arab nationalism until 1921 was to justify the creation of Arab governments in the Fertile Crescent. The Arab contribution to the defeat of the Turks and statements made by the British and French governments in favour of Arab independence were often mentioned in nationalist declarations in order to justify the establishment of Hashimite-led Arab régimes in Syria and Iraq. The declaration of the Iraqi Congress was evidence that, by early 1920, Husayn's 'well-known treaty' with the British had become one of the arguments Arab nationalists used to justify the independence of Syria and Iraq.

Until 1921 the theoretical foundations of Arab nationalism had not been elaborated. The Arab nationalists of Syria and Iraq had not yet

turned their attention to fundamental issues such as defining the nature of Arab nationalism, examining its relationship to Islam or explaining who precisely the Arabs were.

Abdallah and his Iraqi partisans had given more thought to coming to power than they had to how they would actually rule Iraq. The declaration of the Iraqi Congress revealed that Abdallah's Iraqi supporters had given little, if any, thought to how they and their Hashimite patron would organize and rule Iraq, and to the role that the Shiite majority, the Kurds and other minorities would play in the political life of Iraq. We have seen that Abdallah's partisans disagreed among themselves and with Abdallah about Great Britain's future role in Iraqi affairs. There is also no evidence that Faysal had thought much about how Iraq should be ruled before his coronation in August 1921.

Prior to March 1921 neither Abdallah nor his partisans had given any thought to how Transjordan should be governed. Abdallah and those who rallied to him in Transjordan never intended to establish a new political entity in that land. Initially, Abdallah saw Transjordan as nothing more than a sop for losing Iraq. The Syrian nationalists of his entourage saw the emirate as little more than a base for continuing their struggle against France, not as an end in itself.

Abdallah contributed to the emergence of new forms of political leadership in Transjordan and Iraq. The Syrian exiles, who rode Abdallah's coattails to power, dominated the politics of Transjordan until the mid-1920s. To the chagrin of the French authorities in Syria, Abdallah gave these men a second chance to exercise political leadership and a new platform from which to continue their struggle to liberate Syria. The creation of Transjordan offered the indigenous leadership of that land a new framework in which to exercise their authority, although, in March 1921, their role in ruling Transjordan had not yet been defined.

One of Abdallah's most important achievements was his part in bringing a group of Iraqi ex-Ottoman officers, who came from the lower and middle classes of Baghdad and Mosul, to the forefront of post-war

Arab politics. Abdallah indirectly helped to make it possible for men like Nūrī al-Sa'īd and Ja'far al-'Askarī, whose families had never exercised political leadership in Iraq, to play a major part in post-war Iraqi politics. Abdallah did this by patronizing the Iraqi officers who joined the Arab revolt and later held senior military posts in the Hijaz. Abdallah's isolation in the Hijaz made it difficult for him to directly influence events in Syria and Iraq. For this reason, his contribution to promoting Nūrī al-Sa'īd and his generation of Iraqi nationalists was less than that of his brother Faysal, who put the resources of the Damascus government at their disposal.

Abdallah's Iraqi partisans contributed to his emergence as a major figure in post-war Arab politics. The violent anti-British agitation of some of Abdallah's Iraqi supporters ensured that A. T. Wilson and the India Office would never agree to Abdallah's installation in Iraq. Abdallah's Iraqi supporters, particularly Nūrī al-Sa'īd, played an important part in convincing British officials in Cairo and the Foreign Office that a broad spectrum of opinion in the Fertile Crescent--Sunni, Shiite and Kurdish--would welcome Abdallah as their legitimate monarch.

Abdallah helped set the stage for the establishment of a Hashimite monarchy in Iraq. Faysal was, however, the ultimate beneficiary of arguments that the Hashimites and their British and Iraqi partisans had made before July 1920 to justify Abdallah's establishment in Iraq. For example, it was widely believed in British official circles in early 1921 that Faysal would be acceptable to the Shiite majority in Iraq because of his descent and religious toleration.<sup>5</sup>

Abdallah's early career illuminates the nature of state formation in the Fertile Crescent after World War I. Hashimite régimes in Transjordan and Iraq were established in order to satisfy the needs of British policy in the Middle East. The establishment of Arab governments in both countries was the result of a compact between the British and their Hashimite collaborators. Transjordan was created in order to divert Abdallah and his partisans from intriguing against the French mandate in Syria, and to give the appearance that Great Britain had kept faith with her Arab allies by honouring her commitments to

support Arab independence. The success of British policy in Transjordan and Iraq depended upon Hashimite cooperation. Abdallah and Faysal agreed to head Arab governments on behalf of Great Britain in order to advance their purely personal and familial agendas.

The Emirate of Transjordan was established to meet British strategic and financial needs, not the needs of Transjordanians. No one asked the people of Transjordan if they wished to become 'Transjordanians' or live in a tiny emirate detached from the surrounding countries and administered by Abdallah and the British. Evidence suggests that, if Transjordanians had been left to manage their own affairs without outside interference, the history of Transjordan would have taken a different course from that which Abdallah and the British imposed on them. The brief history of the local governments indicates Transjordan probably would have disintegrated into a series of entities ruled by the most powerful tribes and clans.

The needs and aspirations of Transjordanians were not discussed when Churchill and Abdallah met in Jerusalem in March 1921. Churchill and his subordinates in the Middle East Department had not pondered Abdallah's prospects of being widely recognized as the legitimate sovereign of Transjordan. British officials gave less thought to the feasibility of establishing a Hashimite monarchy in Transjordan than in Iraq. The British gave more thought to the coercive means that would be needed to establish Abdallah's authority and end the chaos in Transjordan. Consequently, the British government decided to support Abdallah with a subsidy, a British political officer in Amman, British officers to train and command local levies and R. A. F. aerodromes.

The political elite that came to power in Transjordan in April 1921 consisted of Abdallah, the Syrian exiles and several Hijazi confidants who came with him from Mecca. Abdallah and his entourage had never lived in, much less ruled, Transjordan. Their ties to the indigenous leadership of the country were tenuous at best. To ensure the future viability of his régime--and to lessen his dependence upon Great Britain--Abdallah had to widen his base of support in Transjordan. This could only be done by convincing the leaders of the tribes, the urban

clans and the Circassians that they had a vital stake in the existence of Transjordan and in harmonious relations with its emir. Integrating them into the political life of the emirate would be one of Abdallah's major tasks in the years to come.

Faysal and the ex-Ottoman officers of his entourage faced similar problems in Iraq. However, Abdallah's prospects of widening his base of support were better than Faysal's prospects in Iraq. Compared to Iraq, the social structure of Transjordan was relatively homogenous, the overwhelming majority of Transjordanians being Sunni Arabs. Unlike Faysal, Abdallah did not face the problem of integrating a Shiite majority and large Kurdish minority into the political life of a state headed by a British-installed régime dominated by Sunni Arabs.

Nonetheless, serious obstacles threatened to limit Abdallah's ability to establish his personal authority and the authority of his government. The first was that he had never ruled Transjordan and had no well-established base of support there. The second was that the British had entrusted him with the task of establishing a central government in a land where nothing of the kind had previously existed, and whose people had resisted the encroachment of Ottoman power before World War I. The third was that the people of Transjordan initially showed little support for Abdallah's takeover of the country. As we have seen, many, but certainly not all, Transjordanians rallied to Abdallah only when it became clear the British would not stop him from filling the political vacuum in Transjordan. For these reasons, his prospects of being quickly recognized as the legitimate ruler of Transjordan were not promising in March 1921.

No sense of Transjordanian national identity existed in Transjordan in March 1921. The collapse of the local governments demonstrated that identity in Transjordan was based on religion, family, tribe, clan and ethnic community. Transjordanians thought of themselves as Majālīs, Circassians or members of the Ḥuwaitāt. Before a Transjordanian national identity could emerge, Transjordanians had first to recognize the legitimacy of the Emirate of Transjordan and of Abdallah's rule. As



of March 1921, there was no certainty that either would happen quickly, if at all.

In 1921 there were two prerequisites for Abdallah's later recognition as the legitimate ruler of Transjordan. The first was to establish his unchallenged power as ruler of the country who could not be removed by any local force. The second was to provide what Transjordanians expected from anyone who ruled them. In the case of the settled population, this meant security from bedouin harassment. For the bedouins, this meant finding an acceptable alternative to their traditional means of livelihood--raiding, guiding pilgrims and Ottoman subsidies--whose demise resulted from the gradual establishment of an effective central government. Both prerequisites for achieving legitimacy depended on British backing. In 1921 Abdallah had neither the coercive means nor the financial resources to establish his uncontested control of Transjordan or to deliver the security desired by the settled population and the means of livelihood needed by the bedouins. Without British support, Abdallah had little chance of being recognized as the legitimate ruler of Transjordan. It is perhaps ironic that the ability of an Arab Muslim ruler of an Arab Muslim land to establish the legitimacy of his rule and the entity he governed depended ultimately on the backing he received from a European power.

#### NOTES

1. Batten to FO 7 Apr. 1921 FO 371/6239/E4197; Allenby to FO 8 Apr. 1921 FO 371/6239/E4240; Samuel to Churchill 9 Apr. 1921 FO 371/6239/E4431; Batten to FO 12 Apr. 1921 FO 371/6239/E4397; Qāsimiyya, 'Abd al-Hādī, pp. 50-53; Intelligence summaries of the French liaison officer in Cairo for 20 and 27 Apr. 1921, SHA 4H 60/dossier 3.

2. Deedes to Samuel 2 July 1921 CO 733/4/36252.

3. Unsigned secret report based on information from informer number 530, Haifa 11 Jan. 1922 MAEN Jerusalem consular papers, carton 193.

4. Zirikiī, 'Amān, pp. 143-45.

5. See, for example, L. Worthington-Evans, 'The Proposed Kingdom of Mesopotamia. Memorandum by the Secretary of State for War' 19 Feb. 1921 CAB 24/120, C. P. 2607.

## Appendix One

Hā'il. 4 Jumādā al-Ākhira 1339 [10 February 1921] To Medina. To His Highness, the Emir, Sharīf, Our Lord, Abdallah, Son of His Majesty, King Al-Ḥusayn bin 'Alī. May His Sublime Shadow Long Endure!

May peace, God's mercy and His blessings be upon you. It is known to Your Highness that, like most tribal leaders in Iraq, we have written numerous letters to Your Highness. In those letters we addressed you as that for which we chose you: verily, the Kingship of Iraq! Time, however, did not assist us in our endeavours. Several of the emissaries we sent to you were apprehended between Iraq and Syria; others encountered the Syrian uprising when they reached that land and returned in despair.

Your Highness well knows that, immediately following the Great War, and in accordance with the action of the Allies to lay the foundation for the liberation of peoples, Great Britain publicly announced in her newspapers a joint declaration with her ally France dated 8 November 1918, whose contents are known to you. Because the cruel deeds of their English rulers aroused discontent, the Iraqi people grew impatient waiting for the hour when it would be possible to liberate themselves from the rule of those whose tyranny they have had to bear. Had we wanted to offer details, it would have been necessary to discuss this at great length.

When news was spreading of the arrival of a mixed international commission, Iraqis yearned to proclaim the desire of the Iraqi people for self-determination. It was soon learned, however, that the commission would visit Syria, but not Iraq. The English government at that time charged representatives of the Iraqi people to form councils to discuss the future of Iraq. The result was that the people chose to establish an independent Arab government headed by an Arab Muslim king, who was one of the sons of our Lord, Al-Ḥusayn bin 'Alī, that is, Your Highness, for at that time Emir Faysal headed the Syrian Arab government. It was hoped that the kingship of the Arab countries (the Hijaz, Syria and Iraq) would be confined to your family and that the Arabs would form a great union and a vast wealthy kingdom. However, the idea of unity angered the English, who exiled, banished and

threatened, and who, by oppression and terror, obtained false petitions supporting their views, which they claimed accorded with the desires of the [Iraqi] people. They sent these petitions to the Peace Conference in Europe, even though Iraqis had made the voice of truth known to that body. The English continued to deceive the people by all means in order to induce them to accept the rule of tyranny. This went on for nearly two years. By means of those appointed by the Iraqi nation in Baghdad and in many of the provinces, this year we peacefully and legally asked the English government to keep its promises and to carry out its declarations. This meant that an elected general conference representing the Iraqi nation should meet in the capital, Baghdad, in order to determine the form of government [needed in Iraq]. Because many cries proclaiming Your Highness king of Iraq were heard during our public and private councils, they [the English] tried to suppress us by sending large armies to fight us, by pouring gunfire even on mosques and churches, by breaking the law, by killing the innocent--even women and children--by burning property and homes, by exiling and banishing anyone they wanted--even the sons of the leading 'ulama--for the sole crime of demanding their rights. We, and those like us among the notables and tribal leaders, had no choice but to defend ourselves, our property and our honour and to protect our rights. The war lasted nearly five months because we had no one to help us, no money and no arms. Your Highness knows the power and might of the English. They were resolved to violate Iraqi rights. Some of the tribes began to flag and weakened the others. The enemy army went on the rampage as it advanced through the country. [English] rule was restored with severity and pressure. They asked us in writing to acquiesce in their rule, and they began to form an illegitimate Arab government composed of their accomplices, whom the nation and the people hate. They have no mandate. Our souls have refused humiliation, degradation and the rule of tyranny. We have chosen to emigrate to the land filled with the justice of His Majesty, Our Lord, your father. We desire to meet in your service in order to discuss with you what needs to be done so that you will show us the way to His Majesty, Our Lord, the King. May His Sublime Shadow

Long Endure! We ask God to grant you long life and strength! May God's peace, mercy and blessings be upon you.

Signed

Ja'far Āl Abī'l-Timan, al-Baghdādī	(signature)
Muḥsin Āl Abī Ṭabīkh al-Ḥusaynī	(seal)
Hādī Āl Makwaṭīr al-Ḥusaynī	(seal)
Nūr ibn 'Azīz al-Yāsīrī al-Ḥusaynī	(seal)
'Alī Āl al-Bāzirkān	(signature)

Source: 'Abd al-Razzāq 'Abd al-Darrājī, *Ja'far Abū'l-Timan wa Dawruhu fī'l-Ḥaraka al-Wataniyya fī'l-'Irāq 1908-1945* (Baghdad, 1978) pp. 385-87.

## Appendix Two

### Letter from the President of the Iraqi Congress to the President of the Syrian Congress'

To the President of the Noble Syrian Congress:

Whereas the Arab revolt aimed at the liberation of all the Arab countries, and whereas the Iraqis were an active part of it, during the war they performed the service to the Arab cause incumbent upon them until they, with their Syrian brothers, reached Syria, which is tied economically, racially and politically to Iraq. Because the earlier resolutions of the Syrian Congress did not neglect the decisions of the Iraqi Congress respecting Syria, the Iraqi Congress, which was held in Damascus on 4 March 1920, has, therefore, decided to ask the Syrian Congress to participate with it in deciding the future of the liberated lands in accordance with the wishes of the Nation, statements of the Allies and the principles of President Wilson. I have the honour to inform you of its particulars.

President of the Iraqi Congress, Tawfīq al-Suwaidī

### Resolution of the Iraqi Congress Proclaiming the Independence of Iraq

In the Name of the Arab Iraqi People:

The Arab Nation entered the last war on the side of the Allies in order to lift the yoke of foreign rule from its shoulders, recover its former glory, renew its natural role in civilising the East, realise its national aspirations by means of unity and complete independence and by following the example of other peoples less civilised and developed than the Arabs who have already attained their independence. The noble Allies pledged to support them in this endeavour and announced, in the name of their governments and parliaments, that their sole war aim was the independence of peoples, their right to self-determination and to choose their own form of government. Great Britain concluded a well-known treaty with King Husayn that recognized the independence of the Arabs from the Taurus Mountains and the northern Mosul *vilayet* in the north to the Persian Gulf, the Indian Ocean and the Red Sea in the south. President Wilson confirmed this when he announced his lofty principles, which all the Allies supported and adopted as the basis of a

permanent settlement. This was stated in the declaration of Lord Grey, foreign minister of England, before the Committee for Foreign Affairs on 23 October 1916, the statement of Monsieur Briand, the French prime minister, on 3 November 1916 and the reactions of the Allies to the memorandum of the Central Powers delivered by the American ambassador in Paris, their response to the memorandum of President Wilson of 22 June 1918, the declaration of the French Chamber of Deputies on 5 June 1918, the declaration of the [French] Senate on 7 June of the same year, the statement of Mr. Lloyd George in Glasgow on 9 June 1918 and similar statements calling for the liberation of peoples great and small, their independence, right of self-determination and the abrogation of secret treaties violating their rights.

His Majesty King Husayn I and his sons, their princely Royal Highnesses, had the great distinction to play a leading role in the liberation of the Arab Nation, to save it from the yoke of slavery and humiliation, to achieve collective victory over the enemy in the East and to prove themselves brave in war. For three years they led the Nation from victory to victory, when the blood of the finest sons of Iraq, Syria and the Hijaz was shed. They were an object of admiration of both the Allies and the enemy because of the calamities and horrors endured by the Nation in the different Arab regions, the glorious deeds they undertook in support of its just cause and the assistance they rendered to His Majesty the King and his Allies.

This continuous, collective effort resulted in the defeat of the enemy, their banishment from Iraq and the entry of the British army in its capacity as ally and liberator. They declared at that time that they had no ambition in the country and no aim other than the independence of the Nation, its self-determination and the right of its people to choose their own form of government.

Although the Great War ended nearly a year and a half ago, the country still groans under the weight of foreign occupation, which has inflicted enormous material and moral damage upon it. This occupation has put a stop to the normal functioning of its industry, economy and administration in a way that has nearly undermined Iraq's political

standing. Under such circumstances, the people have lost patience and revolted in various places against foreign military rule and demanded the complete independence of Iraq.

We, the members of this Congress, who are the proper legal representatives of the Iraqi Arab people, now see it as our duty to proclaim its will and extricate the country from this critical, dark and disturbed situation. Relying upon the natural right of the Nation to a free life and complete independence, the lofty principles announced by the Great Powers more than seventy times during the previous war, the wishes expressed on 6 Rabī' al-Thānī 1337 by the Arab Iraqi Nation in official documents signed by tribal chiefs, notables, leaders, thinkers and other classes of the people, and what we have witnessed and [still] witness every day of the determination of the Iraqi Arabs to obtain their independence by all possible means, we, in our capacity as representatives of the people authorised to express its will, now unanimously proclaim the absolute independence of Iraq (formerly part of Turkey) within its recognised frontiers from the Mosul *vilayet* in the north to the Persian Gulf in the south. We support the complete independence of Syria and proclaim its economic and political unity with Iraq. We hereby proclaim His Royal Highness, the Emir Abdallah constitutional monarch with the title His Highness King of Iraq, and we entrust the regency to His Highness, the Emir Zayd. We hereby announce an end to the present régime of military occupation, in whose place shall be established a national government responsible to the people.

We, in the name of the Arab Iraqi nation, which has authorised us to represent it and entrusted us with its self-determination, hereby announce our desire to maintain the friendship of the noble Allies and our determination to respect their interests and the interests of all foreign states in our country, in the hope that they will recognize its independence and withdraw their troops from our Iraq, which will be replaced by a national army and administration. Only then will it be possible for our Iraqi state to take its place as one of the elements of progress of the civilised world.

The Iraqi government to be formed forthwith shall be charged with the execution of this resolution.

8 March 1920/18 Jumādā al-Ūlā 1338<sup>2</sup>

(Signed)

From Baghdad: General Ja'far al-'Askarī, Colonel Sa'īd al-Midfa'ī, Major Taḥsīn 'Alī, Major Ismā'īl Nāmiq, Major Sāmī al-Ūrfalī, Captain Faraj 'Amāra, Najī al-Suwaidī (lawyer), Tawfīq al-Suwaidī (lawyer), Yūnis Wahbī (lawyer), Ḥamdī Sadr al-Dīn al-Shabībī (lawyer), Mahmūd Adīb (writer), 'Izzat al-Karkhī (telegraphist), 'Abd al-Laṭīf al-Fallāḥī (merchant), Tawfīq al-Hāshimī (merchant), Muḥammad al-Bassām (merchant), Hasan Ghasība (lawyer), Rashīd Hāshūtī (writer), Aḥmad Rafīq (lawyer), Nūrī Qāqī (lawyer), Ṣubḥī Najīb (writer).

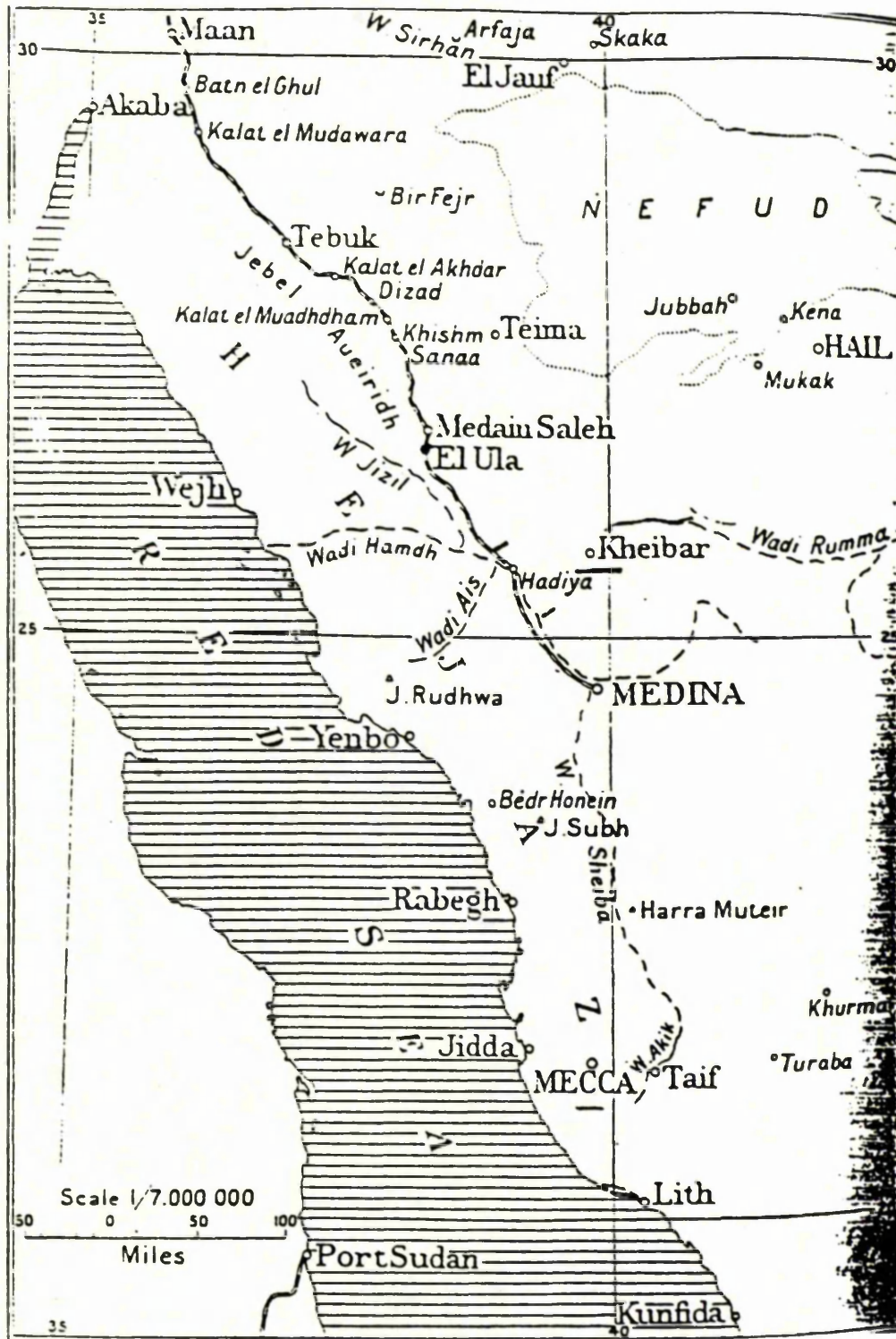
From Mosul: Colonel 'Alī Jawdat al-Ayyūbī, Colonel 'Abdallāh Dulaimī, Colonel Jamīl al-Midfa'ī, Makkī al-Sharbitlī (writer), Ibrāhīm Kamāl (lawyer), Thābit 'Abd al-Nūr (writer), Asad Ṣāhib ('Alim), Al-Ḥājj Muḥammad Khayr (merchant).

From Najaf: Muḥammad Ridā al-Shabībī (writer).<sup>3</sup>

1. Hāshim al-Atāsī of Homs was the president of the Syrian Congress.
2. The Arabic original of this resolution can be found in: Jarīdat al-Ayyām, *Al-Wathā'iq wa'l-Mu'āhadāt fī'l-Bilād al-'Arabiyya* (Damascus, 1937 (?)) pp. 316-19.
3. The list of those who participated in the Iraqi Congress and signed its resolution was compiled from the following sources: 'Alī Jawdat al-Ayyūbī, *Dhikrayāt 1900-1958* (Memoirs 1900-1958) (Beirut, 1967) pp. 88-89; Rosita Forbes to Hubert Young 24 June 1920 FO 371/5227/E7508; Ernest Scott (acting HC, Egypt) to Curzon 24 Sept. 1920 FO 371/5040/E12137. Forbes and Scott list Muḥammad Ridā al-Shabībī as a writer from Baghdad; he was, in fact, a native of Najaf.

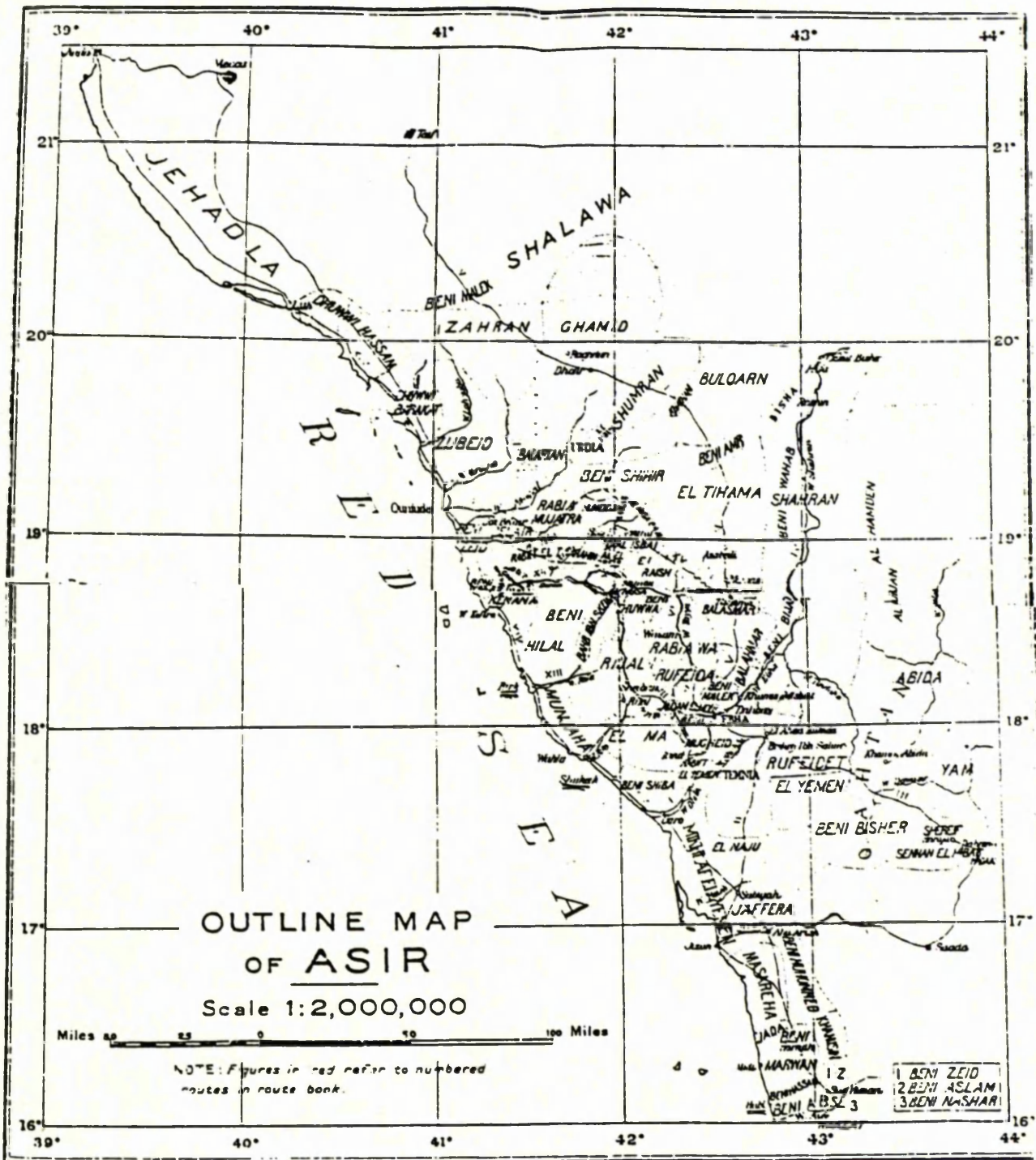


MAP ONE  
THE HIJAZ



From D. G. Hogarth, 'War and Discovery in Arabia', *The Geographical Journal*, Volume 55, January-June 1920, p. 424.

MAP TWO  
 OUTLINE MAP OF °ASIR



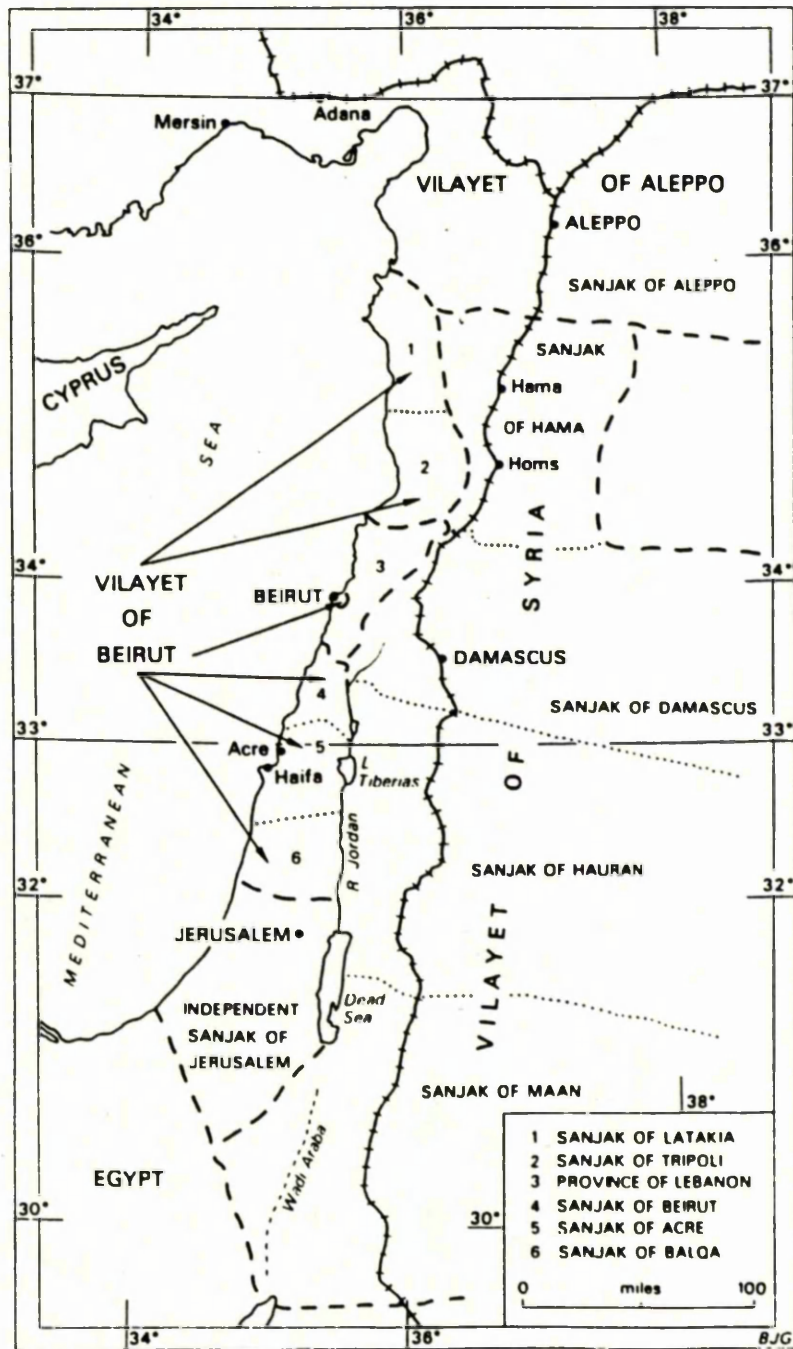
Source: Kinahan Cornwallis, *Asir Before World War I* (Cambridge, 1976).

MAP THREE  
ASIR AND ADJOINING AREAS



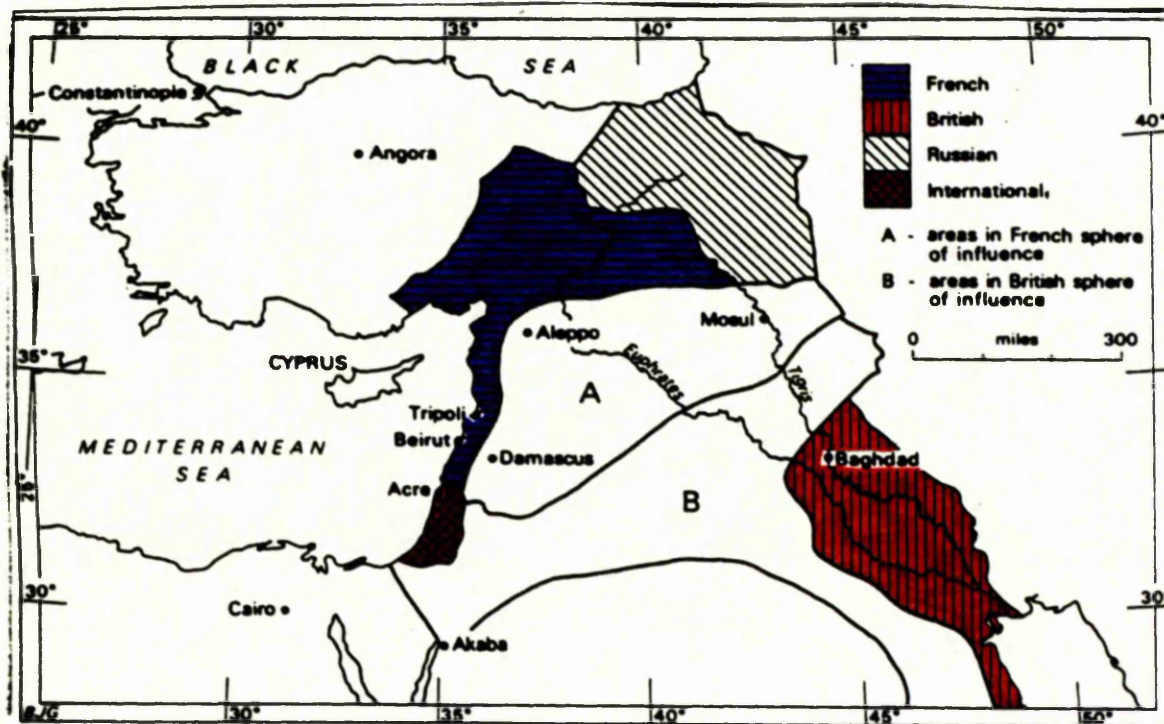
Source: *ENCYCLOPEDIA OF ISLAM*, New Edition, Volume 1 (Leiden, 1960) p. 708.

**MAP FOUR**  
**OTTOMAN ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISIONS ON THE EVE OF WORLD WAR I**



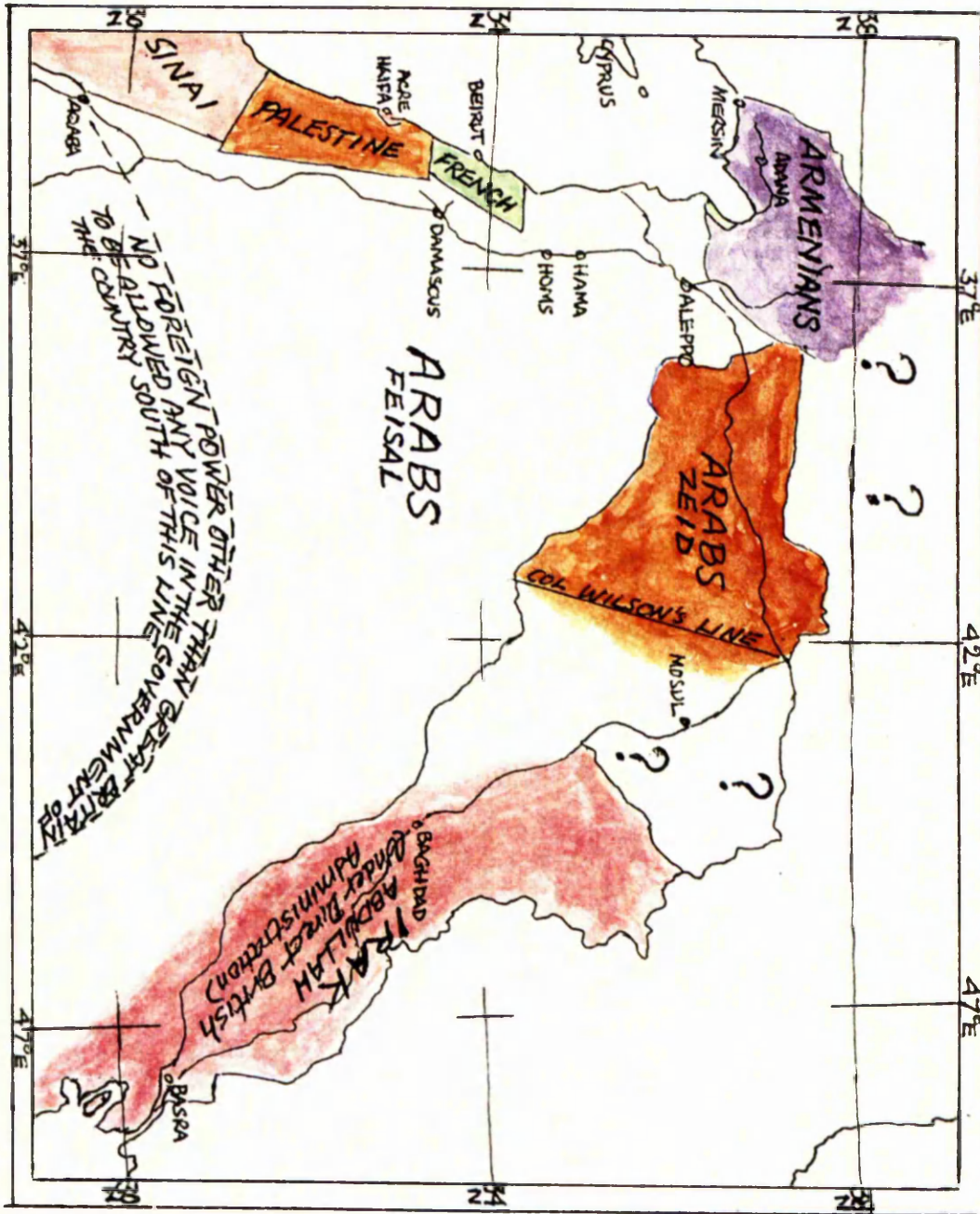
Source: Elie Kedourie, *In The Anglo-Arab Labyrinth* (Cambridge, 1976) p. 81.

MAP FIVE  
 THE ASIA MINOR, 'SYKES-PICOT', AGREEMENT



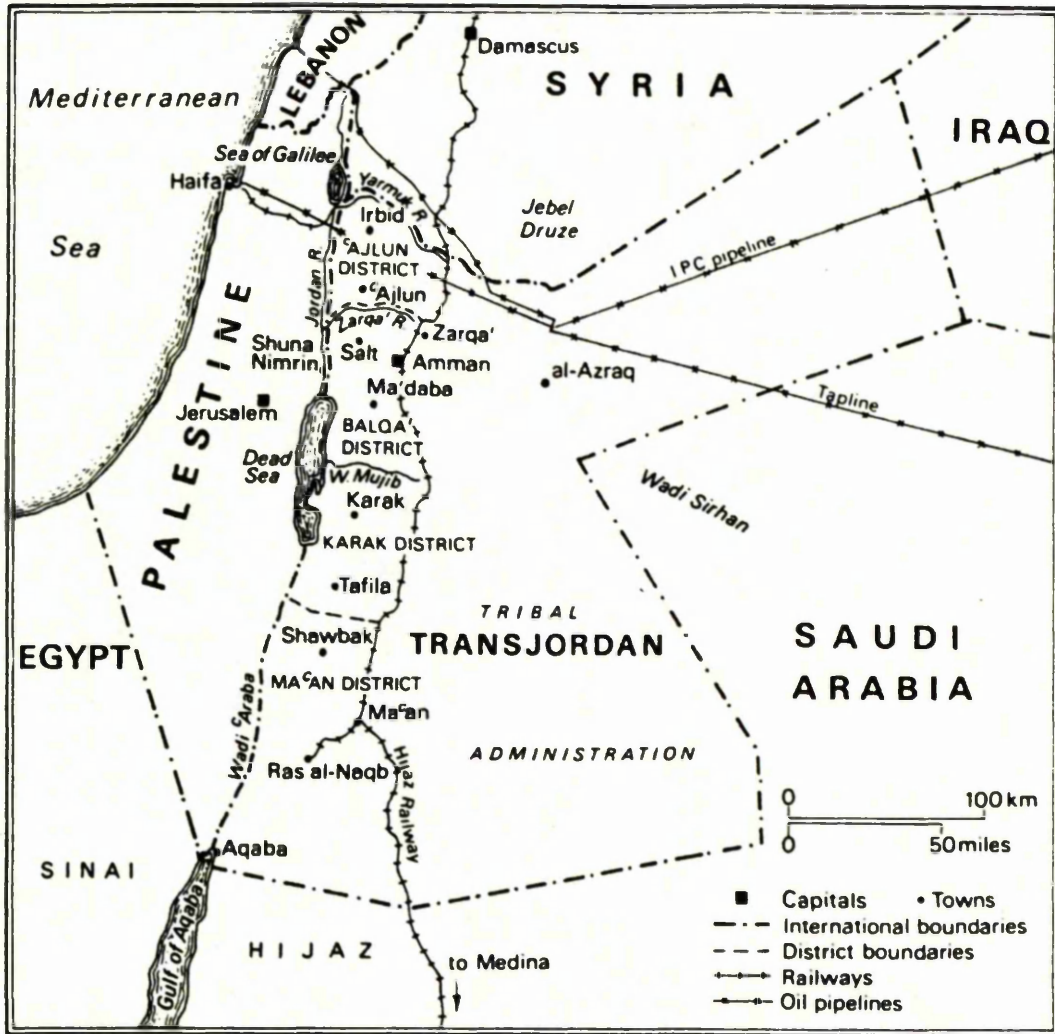
Source: Elie Kedourie, *In The Anglo-Arab Labyrinth* (Cambridge, 1976) p. 168.

MAP SIX  
 THE PROPOSALS OF T. E. LAWRENCE FOR A POST-WAR SETTLEMENT IN THE MIDDLE  
 EAST AS PRESENTED TO THE EASTERN COMMITTEE ON 29 OCTOBER 1918



Source: Based on PRO MPI 720

MAP SEVEN  
TRANSJORDAN



Source: Mary C. Wilson, *King Abdullah, Britain and the making of Jordan* (Cambridge, 1987) p. xxi.

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