

POST-WORLD WAR I NAVIGATION OF IMPERIALISM, IDENTITY, AND
NATIONALISM IN THE 1919-1920 MEMOIR ENTRIES OF OTTOMAN ARMY OFFICER
TAHA AL-HĀSHIMĪ

by

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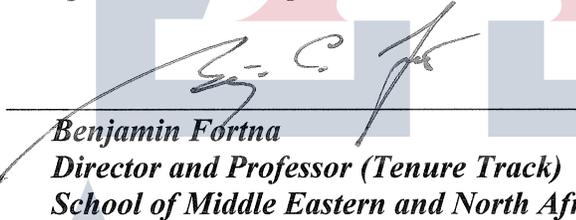


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Abstract

Taha al-Hāshimī's memoirs, more akin to a diary or journal, written at the time of observation, contain fascinating entries from the dynamic years 1919-20, including observations of his present and imaginings of the future, during his travels through occupied Ottoman lands in the aftermath of World War I. As a Baghdad-born, Istanbul-educated, Ottoman army officer who remained in Ottoman service through the war, al-Hāshimī offers unique perspectives which bridge many traditionally-understood divisions in historical scholarship.

This work consists of a discourse and historical analysis of many of al-Hāshimī's entries during this consequential time and place, focused on three general arguments. First, these entries reveal much about the historical trauma of the foreign conquest of Ottoman lands, as understood and experienced by a committed defender of the Empire. This sentiment is evident in al-Hāshimī's pervasive fears of European colonial policies and in his comparisons of Syria to Algeria and Tunisia, and Iraq to unnamed British colonies in Africa. Second, these entries illustrate seemingly-conflicting and coinciding expressions of both Ottoman and Arab identification. Through both his actions and his entries, al-Hāshimī demonstrates continuity of his Ottoman identity as well as expressions of Arab identity, without predicating it on erasure or de-legitimization of his Ottoman identity. Third, al-Hāshimī's observations of the political environment in Damascus demonstrates a multitude of nationalist activist organizations, both elite and popular, undermining Faysal's government's universalizing claims and dominant position in scholarship.

This work supports many recent works arguing for a re-examination of this traditionally marginalized, liminal time. Rather than only a period of disruption, transition, and change, this work argues there are strong episodes of continuity amid uncertain imagined futures.

Introduction

The *Mudhakkirat*—or memoirs—of Taha al-Hāshimī, have long been cited in works about the Ottoman Empire, its former Arab provinces, the mandates, and Iraq. Rarely, however, has this work been utilized to examine al-Hāshimī himself and his remarkable 1919-1920 literal and figurative navigation of occupied Ottoman lands, imaginings, speculations, and anxieties about the future, fluctuating identities, and observations of competing nationalist movements. His later, personal observations of the political environment in Iraq in the latter 1920s through 1940s, at which time he occupied senior military and political positions in that country, have been utilized in scholarship specifically focused on Iraq. His memoir has also provided details on the early activity of the secret activist group within the Ottoman army, al-‘Ahd.¹ Al-Hāshimī’s memoirs—and oral interviews—have also been utilized in works about his brother, prominent Ottoman general and Syrian and Iraqi politician Yasin al-Hāshimī. As such, Taha al-Hāshimī, during the immediate post-war era, is often only briefly referenced, almost as an afterthought, in discussions of these other groups and more prominent individuals. Relegating his memoirs to these purposes, however, misses an important opportunity to glimpse some of al-Hāshimī’s observations of the world around him. A possible reason these have been underutilized may be the seemingly-misleading characterization of the work by its publisher.

In spite of the title of “memoirs,” which often imply a work written after the events discussed, with the benefit of hindsight, there are several reasons to characterize this work differently. First, the work itself consists of periodic, sometimes daily entries, ranging from one short sentence to multiple pages in length, providing material more akin to a diary or journal.

¹ Interestingly, this information is only available in Taha al-Hāshimī’s son’s introduction to the memoir. Al-Hāshimī himself makes no explicit reference to this group or its activities in his entries.

William Cleveland characterizes it as such, when he describes the *Mudhakkirat Taha al-Hāshimī* as “the diary of one who played a significant role in Faysal’s Syria and later Iraq.”² The editor of the memoirs, historian Khaldūn al-Husrī, likewise argues that al-Hāshimī’s entries were written at the time of observation, and supports this argument with analysis of particular entries. He references passages when al-Hāshimī makes future conjectures or comments on rumors, based on his limited knowledge of specific events, which hindsight or a later re-telling would have corrected.³ Al-Husrī also argues that the presence of candid and sometimes unflattering material in his entries indicates that they were not extensively revised by either al-Hāshimī, before his unexpected death, or by his son, Suhail. He also points to al-Hāshimī’s use of often-confusing personal names by which he knew people, rather than their full name, as another indication that these entries were not something meant for broader publication, at least in its original text. Al-Hāshimī’s sudden and unexpected death in 1961 is a further point that the editor makes in arguing he did not have the time to compile the memoirs himself. While it may be impossible to ever know for sure, the above arguments make a strong case for viewing the entries in al-Hāshimī’s memoirs as passages written at the time of the events observed.

In his own brief introduction, composed in 1966, Suhail writes that he learned from his mother, Munawwer, after al-Hāshimī’s death, that his father had written memoirs in different periods of his life. Suhail also mentions that some of al-Hāshimī’s colleagues were aware that he had worked on memoirs and asked Suhail about them. Despite the memoir’s rumored existence,

² Cleveland, *Making*, p. 197.

³ In one fascinating example, al-Husrī argues that had al-Hāshimī written or significantly revised his entries much later than the dates of the events observed, he would likely have revised his early, positive characterization of Bakr al-Sidqi, especially in the wake of the Bakr al-Sidqi’s coup against Yasin and Taha’s government, which forced Yasin to flee Iraq and forced Taha to avoid returning home from a diplomatic trip abroad (al-Husrī, introduction to *Mudhakkirat Taha al-Hāshimī*, 17).

Suhail writes that it wasn't until he moved his father's effects, years after al-Hāshimī's death in 1961, that he unexpectedly found the writings, locked in a box which he compares to a "box of gold [like] Pirates from Treasure Island."⁴ Lack of further descriptions of these materials makes it difficult to definitively understand the purpose of these writings and exactly when they were composed. When Suhail writes that his mother knew of al-Hāshimī working on memoirs at different periods in his life, was she referring to him periodically keeping a journal or diary? This would seem apparent from the 1919-1920 entries, which appear in a daily-entry format. Or was she referring to al-Hāshimī undertaking a deliberate process, much later, reviewing earlier notes and attempting to compile a larger work? Accounting for the arguments referenced above by editor Khaldūn al-Husrī, the first explanation seems most likely, but it is impossible to tell for sure. As such, it is difficult to know who al-Hāshimī's intended audience was for these memoirs. First, it is unclear what language al-Hāshimī used, as it is only mentioned that they were handwritten when Suhail found them and typed them. If they had been in Ottoman Turkish, it is likely that Suhail would have mentioned it. Therefore, if al-Hāshimī was writing in Arabic, his native tongue from Baghdad, despite his education and career in Ottoman Turkish, he may have had in Arabic audience in mind for this work, though it is difficult to tell.⁵

Nevertheless, al-Hāshimī's sharp critiques of British and French policies and governments contrast with Ja'far al-'Askari's repeated praise for Britain in his memoirs, making it less likely that al-Hāshimī had a British audience in mind the way Ja'far appeared to in his memoirs. Al-Hāshimī's relative lack of criticism for most of the individuals he observes, other

⁴ Al-Husrī, introduction to *Mudhakkirat Taha al-Hāshimī*, 13. Editor Khaldūn al-Husrī writes that Suhail typed his father's writings into a manuscript, which Khaldūn later received, edited, and published (al-Husrī, introduction to *Mudhakkirat Taha al-Hāshimī*, 19).

⁵ Although al-Hāshimī's education would have emphasized Ottoman Turkish, his assignments in Syria and Yemen would likely have involved the use of Arabic.

than his condemnation of the fanatics and mobs he describes in Damascus, indicate he may have envisioned an eventual audience of fellow elite Iraqis who would have known Faysal, Nuri al-Sa'id, Ja'far al-'Askari, and Yasin al-Hāshimī, and have seen them in a positive light. Al-Hāshimī's later publication of multiple books on military topics and history during his time at the Iraqi Military Academy may have also influenced him to document his own experiences.

Methodology

Many narratives of the post-war era in former Ottoman lands consisted of accounts by members of the "Arab Revolt" and intellectual activists from the Ottoman Empire's Arab provinces who predicated their authority on a de-legitimization of Ottoman rule. In order to validate their participation in the foreign-backed revolt against the Ottoman Empire and caliph, these individuals highlighted their grievances with the Ottoman state and deployed narratives of Ottoman or Turkish oppression, tyranny, discrimination, and atrocities. Without attempting to dismiss or minimize the appalling and devastating human consequences of specific Ottoman government policies, these narratives nonetheless provide only one perspective of World War I experiences in the Arab provinces of the late Ottoman Empire. Accounts of the Sharifian Campaign only reflected a small percentage of the larger population of Ottoman soldiers and officers who participated in the First World War and did not join the Sharifian revolt, instead remaining in Ottoman army ranks across the empire, from Gallipoli to Baghdad, the Caucasus, Palestine and Yemen. This privileged narrative is predicated, in many ways, on the erasure of the widespread experience of most Ottoman officers and soldiers from Arab provinces of the Empire. It also leads to a deterministic narrative of the post-war era, dominated by the end of Ottoman state sovereignty and personal identity, followed by a seemingly inevitable progression to Arab nationalism.

In contrast, this work's examination of Taha al-Hāshimī's entries during 1919-20 contributes to a trend in recent scholarship which complicates these constructions of simple progression, transition, trajectories, binary identities, insider/outsider group membership, linear narratives, and simple causality. As this work will argue, al-Hāshimī's entries in this period simultaneously exhibit manifestations of both Ottoman identity and Arab identity, rather than simply one or the other.

This explains how al-Hāshimī imagines specific plans for the "progress" of "the Arab nation" while also refusing to abandon his position as an Ottoman army officer prisoner of war, in British-controlled Yemen, to join the government in Syria because of the objections of his conscience. He also laments looming threats of colonial occupation and urges collective resistance, while nevertheless spending months in Yemen and Istanbul, watching emerging opposition efforts, often led by former colleagues, in Anatolia, Syria, and Iraq, from afar. He ultimately joins Faysal's government in Syria, in spite of acknowledging its origins as a foreign-backed rebellion against the Ottoman Empire that he spent his career fighting to protect. He changes his rhetoric from characterizing the Syrian government as Hijazi and Sharifian, to eventually referring to it as "service to the homeland" and "the nation." Finally, he also describes the executions of Ottoman traitor, Arab activists, by Jamal Pasha in Syria in 1915-16, without conflating these events to a condemnation of Ottoman rule or employing the anti-Turkish, Arab nationalist rhetoric and ritual invoked by Faysal's government to legitimize their revolt and rule.

These are just a few of the apparent contradictions from specific entries in the 1919-20 section of Taha al-Hāshimī's memoirs which this work will interrogate in further detail. In the process, it will be possible to glimpse al-Hāshimī's experience of uncertainty, ambiguities, and

complicated individual navigations of different events, worries over personal destinies, uncertain outcomes, incomplete information, and realization of long-held anxieties.

This work will conduct a discourse and historical analysis of select entries by al-Hāshimī, focused on three themes. First, this work will inspect the seemingly-ubiquitous presence of historical trauma and memory in al-Hāshimī's fears of European colonialism and imperialism throughout his entries, analyzing how this anxiety influenced his imaginings of the future of occupied Ottoman lands. Second, this work will recognize al-Hāshimī's recurring manifestations of both Ottoman and Arab identities. Rather than arguing that al-Hāshimī transitioned smoothly from Ottoman to Arab identity along a simple trajectory, as exemplified by William Cleveland's account of Sāti' al-Husri, this work will argue that al-Hāshimī continually manifested salient elements of both identities. This provides a specific and detailed example of an individual embodying Michael Provence's general argument for widespread Ottoman continuity in the post-war era. Finally, this work will examine al-Hāshimī's observations of the political environment in Syria from 1919-20 and argue that his observations of multiple factions within Faysal's government, in addition to episodes of mass demonstrations and anti-government opposition, provide specific evidence of the existence of popular nationalist political organizations and agency in post-war Syria, complementing James Gelvin's argument based on other sources.

Finally, although this work will periodically reference specific aspects of the enormously complex and dynamic fields of Arab and Ottoman nationalisms, it will only do so in the context of al-Hāshimī's particular discussions of imperialism, identity, and specific nationalist movements in Syria in 1919-20.⁶ This work will not delve into larger discussions of the vast

⁶ Gelvin, *Divided Loyalties*, 11. Gelvin's argument that "social scientists and historians have increasingly approached nationalism not as it has been presented in official histories, but

topics of Arab or Ottoman nationalism, and how those concepts changed over time—even in just the short period examined in this work. An immense corpus of scholarship exists on these topics and while this work contributes to it with one individual’s navigation of specific events and movements associated with Arab and Ottoman nationalisms, it will not attempt to provide a comprehensive account of either field.

Literature Review

Three general types of existing literature are most relevant to this work. First, recent scholarly works analyzing diaries and memoirs of Ottoman soldiers from Arab provinces, originally written during World War I; second, memoirs themselves of that era, often written much later; and third, secondary works examining specific events or trends of the late Ottoman and post-war eras.

In the last ten years, especially with the centennial of the First World War, several scholars have published intriguing new scholarship analyzing individual accounts of the war from Ottoman perspectives. Of these, Glenda Abramson’s 2013 book, *Soldiers’ Tales: Two Palestinian Jewish Soldiers in the Ottoman Army during the First World War*, and Salim Tamari’s 2011 book, *Year of the Locust: A Soldier’s Diary and the Erasure of Palestine’s Ottoman Past*, specifically examine subaltern accounts by conscripted soldiers from Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire navigating Ottoman, Arab, and Turkish identity and nationalism during the First World War.⁷ Their experience of brutal wartime deprivations as

rather, in the words of Prasenjit Duara, as ‘the site where different representations of the nation context and negotiate with one another’” is useful here for discussing the intersection of identity and different interpretations or understandings of nationalism and nationalist activism.

junior conscripted soldiers provides a different perspective than that of the professional, long-serving and senior-ranking al-Hāshimī, whose experience was definitely not subaltern.

In addition to these contemporary diaries, there are a significant number of later memoirs published about this period by soldiers from the Arab provinces of the former Ottoman Empire. These include Fawzi al-Qawuqji's memoirs, which have been fascinatingly examined by Laila Parsons in her 2016 book, *The Commander: Fawzi al-Qawuqji and the Fight for Arab Independence 1914-1948*. Parsons' analysis of these memoirs, which she argues al-Qawuqji composed much of in the 1970s, provides an opportunity to identify the projection of later experiences and narratives—especially those of Arab nationalism—onto past events.⁸

Benjamin Fortna's 2016 book, *The Circassian: A Life of Eşref Bey, Late Ottoman Insurgent and Special Agent*, examines another individual's experience of this period, as recorded in personal effects and writings. Fortna's examinations of Eşref Bey's rhetoric and actions before, during, and after World War I, and Eşref's positionality as a committed Ottoman military officer provides a number of parallels with al-Hāshimī's Ottoman allegiance and experiences. However, al-Hāshimī's staff college education and later involvement in Syria and murky relationship with Arab activist groups provides interesting apparent contrasts with Eşref.

⁷ Other memoir and diary analyses along similar lines, but from a largely Ottoman and Turkish perspectives include Benjamin Fortna's 2016 *The Circassian: A Life of Eşref Bey, Late Ottoman Insurgent and Special Agent*, and Murat Çulcu's 1997 book, *Lone Pine (Bloody Ridge) Diary of Lt. Mehmed Fasih, 5th Imperial Ottoman Army, Gallipoli, 1915*, translated by Hasan Basri Danişman.

⁸ In addition to her book *The Commander*, Parsons also explores many of these themes in her 2011 article, "Micro-narrative and the Historiography of the Modern Middle East." Parsons, "Micronarrative," 89.

Ja‘far al-‘Askari’s memoirs, originally written in the mid-1920s, but published in Arabic in 1988 and in English in 2003 as *A Soldier’s Story: from Ottoman Rule to independent Iraq; the memoirs of Jafar al-Askari (1885-1936)*, are remarkable for their espousal of Arab nationalist narratives and critiques of the Ottoman Empire—a technique he utilized to legitimize his participation in the Arab Revolt. Nuri al-Sa‘id’s memoirs of the Sharifian campaign, published in 1987, form another account primarily focused on the Arab Revolt.⁹ Sāti al-Husrī’s 1966 book, *The Day of Maysalun*, is a personal memoir and history of his experiences in Syria under Faysal’s reign, leading up to the French occupation, written much later.

William Cleveland’s 1971 book, *The Making of an Arab Nationalist: Ottomanism and Arabism in the life and thought of Sāti‘ al-Husrī*, examines individual navigation of this period, using an analysis of memoirs, interviews, and al-Husrī’s own publications. Although al-Husrī and al-Hāshimī differed in civilian and military background, al-Husrī was nonetheless a committed Ottoman bureaucrat, whose zeal to save the Ottoman Empire through education and administrative reform resembled al-Hāshimī’s dedication to on the battlefield. Yet in 1919-20, both decided to join the government in Damascus. Cleveland presents al-Husrī’s decision to travel to Damascus in 1919 as a definitive and unambiguous transition and departure from his Ottoman identity, and one which would set the course for the rest of his life as a prominent and committed Arab nationalist. Cleveland argues that al-Husrī made this decision in the context of a larger, post-war “exodus” of Ottoman Arab bureaucrats from Istanbul to Syria and Iraq. Separately, it is remarkable that Sāti‘ al-Husrī’s son, Khaldūn, who helped Cleveland with his work, was also the editor for al-Hāshimī’s memoirs.

⁹ *Mudhakkirat Nuri al-Sa‘id ‘an al-harakat al-‘askariyya lil-jaysh al-‘Arabi fi al-Hijaz wa-Suriya, 1916-1918*. Beirut: Dar al-‘Arabiya lil-Mawsu‘at, 1987.

In addition to these individual accounts, a number of broader works examine different features of this period. Michael Provence's 2017 book, *The Last Ottoman Generation and the Making of the Modern Middle East*, strongly challenges the traditional periodization model dividing the history of the late Ottoman Empire from the history of the post-war occupation and mandate eras. In doing so, he reveals fascinating examples of continuity within a network of individuals trained through the Ottoman imperial military academy. As part of this argument, Provence contends that anti-occupation resistance efforts in Syria, Iraq, Palestine, Anatolia, and Egypt during the post-war era, previously compartmentalized by scholars into national histories, should instead be viewed as related and part of a broader trend. Provence positions these movements as parallel workings of the above-mentioned network of Ottoman-trained leaders, frustrated with the aftermath of World War I, and draws attention to several specific instances of post-war Anatolian-Arab ties. While Provence references Taha al-Hāshimī, his 1919-20 experience marks a relatively minor portion of Provence's larger, intriguing narrative from the end of the war through the late 1930s.

In his 2015 book, *The Fall of the Ottomans: the Great War in the Middle East*, Eugene Rogan makes a detailed argument to contextualize the Ottoman Empire's World War I experiences against a broader backdrop of recent, nearly continuous, and devastating warfare. Rather than viewing the First World War independently, Rogan situates it in the immediate aftermath of the devastating 1912-13 Balkan Wars, the 1911 Libyan War, and previous decades of military defeats, occupations, and separatist movements, supported or carried out by British, French, Russian, Italian, and other European powers.

Mesut Uyar provides another fascinating example of revisionist scholarship on World War I and post-war Ottoman continuity of Ottoman officers from Arab provinces in his 2011

article, “Ottoman Arab Officers between Nationalism and Loyalty during the First World War.” His work argues that the Ottoman state utilized military education, training, and indoctrination of nationalist loyalty as a mechanism to reverse the tide of repeated foreign conquest and Ottoman military defeat. Uyar employs statistics from his research in Ottoman military academy records to show that most of the graduates from Arab provinces resigned from Ottoman service at the end of the war, or were killed in action during the war, and that a significant number joined the Turkish National Movement in Anatolia. These findings challenge characterizations of large numbers of Ottoman officers from Arab provinces betraying the empire through participation in the Arab revolt or through desertion. While the findings of his research are narrower in scope than all Ottoman soldiers from Arab provinces, this reevaluation complicates earlier narratives about the Arab revolt and supports more recent arguments of Ottoman continuity. Uyar’s description of the military education system Taha al-Hāshimī matriculated through also provides invaluable context for analysis of his identity.

Michelle Campos’ 2010 book, *Ottoman Brothers: Muslims, Christians, and Jews in Early Twentieth Century Palestine*, discusses fascinating concepts of Ottoman citizenship and identity after the 1908 “Young Turk” Revolution. Campos’ focus on the emergence of a “civic Ottomanism” examines nationalism, identity, and other factors present in “competing citizenship discourses” about what it meant to be Ottoman.¹⁰ Campos traces these concepts’ development

¹⁰ Campos, *Ottoman Brothers*, 6. A major focus of Campos’ revisionist argument is to “challenge entrenched historical narratives about the role of ethnic nationalisms in the breakup of the Ottoman Empire” and challenge prior scholarship and foreign observer characterizations of the Ottoman Empire—and other multi-ethnic empires as “holdovers from a previous age” that are illegitimate and act as “prisons of nations undone by natural nationalism.” Campos further critiques foreign characterization of a “deterministic understanding of ethnicity... seen as closed demographic groups with inherently competing political interests.” These arguments provide fascinating analysis for the case of someone like Taha al-Hāshimī, as an Ottoman citizen and imperial agent from an Arab province of the Empire.

through the late Hamidian era to the 1908 Revolution, and to the time of the First World War. This would have included the time when al-Hāshimī was at the military academy and Staff College in Istanbul, and would have accorded him a personal perspective of the revolution and also of public discourse about Ottoman citizenship. Additionally, her analysis of the contribution of discourses of religious awakening to Ottoman identity by both state and non-state religious actors—primarily of the Islamic modernist movement—is evident in many of al-Hāshimī’s entries, as will be seen below. Furthermore, her investigation of the rhetorical use of the terms nation (*umma*) and homeland (*watan*) in nationalist discourse is also important to al-Hāshimī’s entries. Therefore, although Campos’ book focuses on a time period predating al-Hāshimī’s memoir entries, the influences she articulates are still salient in his writings.

Keith Watenpaugh’s 2006 book, *Being Modern in the Middle East: Revolution, Nationalism, Colonialism, and the Arab Middle Class*, touches on several themes explored by al-Hāshimī. Within his examination of visions and practices of “modernity” after the 1908 Revolution and through the early mandate era in Aleppo, Watenpaugh describes the formation of a middle class that he argues asserted itself as a steward of modernity. Watenpaugh defines one component of this middle class as “New Men of the late Ottoman period,” comprising bureaucrats, officers, and white-collar professionals, who could “turn to a repertoire of organizational techniques, styles, and genres of urban politics perfected in the late Ottoman period.”¹¹ In descriptions of this class, Watenpaugh notes several features which al-Hāshimī’s entries reflect, especially regarding education, public discourse, and conceptions of the future.

¹¹ Watenpaugh, *Being Modern*, 163-164.

James Gelvin's 1998 book, *Divided Loyalties: Nationalism and Mass Politics in Syria at the Close of Empire*, focuses exclusively on this period from 1918 to 1920 and dynamically inverts previous concentration on elite individuals and elite groups as the primary agents of political activism. Where earlier scholars focused on secret military and intellectual associations, Gelvin provides a contrary narrative of popular, mass political mobilization in Syria in 1918-20, dominated by lower and middle class residents contesting the outsider government of Faysal and his companions. Gelvin also critiques earlier scholarship emphasizing an "essentialized Arab identity" and compellingly argues that accounts by Antonius, Hourani, and Zeine "ignored or glossed over fundamental differences that divided proponents of the Arab cause...as a result, nationalism in the Arab Middle East has achieved a retrospective homogeneity and coherence through their works that it never achieved in actuality."¹² Gelvin admits that recent authors have begun examining differences in these movements, but are still largely focused on notables, intellectuals, journalists and other elites. In order to examine the popular committees and subaltern movements he argues are largely excluded from previous accounts of Syria during this period, Gelvin utilizes an array of periodicals, personal interviews, and memoir accounts of individuals associated with these movements.

Other revisionist scholars have called for closer examination of activist Arab movements in the early twentieth century. Hasan Kayalı, in his 1997 book, *Arabs and Young Turks: Ottomanism, Arabism, and Islamism in the Ottoman Empire, 1908-1918*, advocates for a "reappraisal of Arab nationalism." Kayalı laments two mutually-reinforcing narratives, characterized by what he considers two trends. First, he argues that many Turkish historians see

¹² Gelvin, *Divided Loyalties*, 6-7. Gelvin posits a fascinating argument about the intellectual history of scholarship of these movements when he argues that "the competition to define the very substance of Arab nationalism paralleled the battle for political authority," Gelvin, *Divided Loyalties*, 72.

and portray this era as one in which “minorities betrayed the empire and joined Europeans.” Second, he argues many Arab historians see and portray this era as one of “pan-Turkic dictators attempting to Turkify everything.”¹³ Another point which Kayalı emphasizes is to differentiate between Arabism and Arab nationalism on one hand, and Turkism and Turkish nationalism on the other. He defines the first as more of a cultural than political movement, describing it as the “activation of cultural elements by intellectuals responding to social, political, economic currents of the second half of the nineteenth century.”¹⁴ He also characterizes it as a “mobilization of latent as well as newly forged elements of identity.”¹⁵ Regarding Arabism, Kayalı also argues that it was “short of demands for Arab sovereignty” and “did not evolve into political nationalism in this period.”¹⁶ While important to acknowledge the role of Arab nationalism, this work will largely focus on the aspect of Arab identity in this context.

Eliezer Tauber’s 1995 book, *The Formation of Modern Syria and Iraq*, illuminates interesting facets of constantly-fluctuating relationships between Syrian and Arab activist groups, the Ottoman state, Faysal’s government in 1918-20, and Britain and France. Regarding Taha al-Hāshimī’s experiences in particular, Tauber mentions his role as a founding member of the secret military organization, al-‘Ahd, in 1913-14, but does not reference him again regarding that organization. With regard to the government in Damascus, Tauber employs a largely elitist focus on Faysal, Damascene notables, intellectuals, organizations such as the Arab club, and the

¹³ Kayalı, *Arabs and Young Turks*, 5.

¹⁴ Kayalı, *Arabs and Young Turks*, 10.

¹⁵ Kayalı, *Arabs and Young Turks*, 10.

¹⁶ Kayalı, *Arabs and Young Turks*, 10.

secret societies such as al-‘Ahd and al-Fatat examined in his previous works.¹⁷ Tauber does mention a growing populist movement in Damascus in the spring and summer of 1920, but focuses mostly on its leadership under Kamil al-Qassab and the “Committee of National Defence [sic].” He briefly acknowledges the membership of lower and middle class citizens, but is largely dismissive of their agency and activism, characterizing their actions as anarchy and looting—similar to the elitist rhetoric seen below in al-Hāshimī’s entries. Regarding factionalism within the government, Tauber explores conflict between Syrian and Iraqi officers in Faysal’s administration, tracing this conflict to wartime competition over military positions during the Sharifian campaign, Iraqi officers’ dominance of these positions, and a subsequent domination of post-war positions in the Syrian administration. He also repeatedly echoes British and French fears of Yasin al-Hāshimī’s rising power and potential to usurp Faysal’s rule in Damascus.

Eliezer Tauber’s 1994 article, “Syrian and Iraqi Nationalist Attitudes to the Kemalist and Bolshevik Movements,” addresses several initiatives for Syrian-Turkish collaboration, but he argues that they were ultimately unsuccessful for a number of reasons. He acknowledges attempts by multiple members of the Syrian government and different nationalist groups, including Yusuf al-‘Azma, and the well-documented Aleppo-based Ibrahim Hananu, as well as attempts by al-‘Ahd. Ultimately, however, Tauber argues that Husayn, Faysal, Ja‘far, and Nuri’s disapproval of these efforts, British pressure, and a mid-spring 1920 cease-fire between Mustafa Kemal and French forces, nullified the potential for more substantial collaboration. Tauber concludes that “there was indeed a certain amount of linkage between the Arab nationalist organizations and the Kemalsits, but it was certainly not as extensive as indicated by some

¹⁷ These groups are the primary focus of his three volume set on “the Arab Movements,” including *The Emergence of the Arab Movements (1993)*, *The Arab Movements in World War I (1993)*, and *The Formation of Modern Syria and Iraq (1995)*.

outside factors...Their service was mainly compelled by reality and history and it did not necessarily attest to any sympathy for post-war Turkey and the Kemalist movement.”¹⁸ In this conclusion, Tauber seems to imply that coordination when “compelled by reality” is less significant than continuity out of ideological identification.

Malcolm Russell provides a sympathetic account of Faysal’s administration in his 1985 book, *The First Modern Arab State: Syria under Faysal, 1918-1920*. His centering of this specific time, and examination of the administration’s policies, agenda, and finances, provides a more focused narrative of the state during this period that is often only addressed in the conclusion of works on World War I or the introduction of accounts of the mandate era. His investigation of economic problems also add useful context. Nevertheless, his account is almost entirely focused on the elites and on Faysal, dismissing “the masses” as unsophisticated and arguing that “almost no records remain” of these non-elite groups. His description of the political scene in Damascus is limited to a conflation of the groups al-Fatat and al-Istiqlal as “the Arab Nationalists,” as well as a brief description of “the religious minorities.”

Philip Khoury, in his 1983 *Urban Notables and Arab Nationalism: The Politics of Damascus, 1860-1920*, acknowledges the contested nature of Faysal’s rule, but largely situates this opposition within the context of Albert Hourani’s “politics of notables.” Khoury argues that traditional groups of the “landowning bureaucratic aristocracy,” long used to exercising power under Ottoman rule, either resisted Faysal’s rule or allied with it when convenient to maintain their social, economic, and political power in Syria. Interestingly, Khoury argues that an “old guard” of Syrian notables opposed Faysal through domination and manipulation of the Syrian

¹⁸ Tauber, “Nationalist Attitudes,” 909.

General Congress. This provides a more complicated and nuanced version of multiple factions within the Syrian government, but is still elite-focused and attributes the actions of later popular demonstrators to direction by elites.

Historical Background

Before examining the period of Taha al-Hāshimī's entries, which begin in the summer of 1919, it is vital to briefly review some of the significant events in al-Hāshimī's life which influenced him to that point. Born in Baghdad in 1888, al-Hāshimī followed his brothers through the Ottoman military education system. This led him to attend the Imperial Military Academy in Istanbul from 1903-06, followed by the elite Imperial Staff College, where he graduated in 1909 at the top of his class. Al-Hāshimī's position in Istanbul at that time would have given him a personal perspective on the influential 1908 "Young Turk" Revolution, led by the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), which likely reinforced his views on elite military officers as saviors of the nation.¹⁹ Following graduation, al-Hāshimī was assigned to the Ottoman army in Syria and took part in the Hawran and Karak suppression campaigns of 1909-10, reasserting Ottoman imperial rule against Syrian groups that resisted state centralization policies.²⁰ This is a critical chapter of al-Hāshimī's career, as it demonstrates his role as an agent of Ottoman imperial policy in Arab lands. This event hints at an interesting tension, whereby al-Hāshimī could execute policies of Ottoman imperialism, while nonetheless opposing European imperialism.

¹⁹ Al-Hāshimī likely understood more of the CUP's activities as a result of his older brother, Yasin, being a member of the group.

²⁰ Al-Husri, introduction to *Mudhakkirat Taha al-Hāshimī*, 5. Kayali argues that earlier depictions of the Hawran uprising as an episode of Arab nationalism or separatism are inaccurate, and should rather be characterized as localized resistance to Ottoman centralization efforts.

Al-Hāshimī next participated in the calamitous Balkan Wars in 1912-13. His perspective as a staff officer likely familiarized him with the full effects of widespread Ottoman army defeats at the hands of the Greek, Serbian, Montenegrin, and Bulgarian allied forces, which led to the dramatic loss of vital Ottoman territories mere miles from the imperial capital, Istanbul.²¹ The loss of these lands, forming the core of Ottoman territory in Europe for five hundred years, also led to the displacement of hundreds of thousands of refugees.²²

After the disastrous Balkan Wars, Taha al-Hāshimī arrived in Yemen in March 1914 and campaigned against the separatist Idrisi movement. Upon the outbreak of World War I in November 1914, al-Hāshimī took part in Ottoman operations against the vital British navy port and surrounding protectorate of Aden.²³ While Taha al-Hāshimī was at war in Yemen, Entente and Ottoman forces campaigned against one another through Ottoman Arab lands in western Arabia, Palestine, Syria, Libya, and Iraq. One of the more relevant campaigns for this work was the Sharifian Revolt, popularly known as the “Arab Revolt,” and launched by Sharif Husayn of Mecca in the summer of 1916. After concluding an alliance with Britain, Sharif Husayn’s forces, led by his son Faysal, rebelled against the Ottoman Empire. Elements of these forces, operating in tandem with British armies, ultimately occupied Damascus, Syria, in October 1918, establishing an ostensibly “Arab” military occupation government under revolt leader Amir Faysal, but still subject to overall British military control and supported by British subsidies. Meanwhile, remaining Ottoman army units retreated from Damascus, attempting to reach

²¹ Rogan, *Fall of the Ottomans*, 18-19.

²² According to Rogan, these lands included approximately four million inhabitants and 60,000 square miles of territory (Rogan, *Fall of the Ottomans*, 21).

²³ Al-Husrī, introduction to *Mudhakkirat Taha al-Hāshimī*, 6.

defensive positions further north. While British forces captured many of these retreating forces, others—including future Turkish President Mustafa Kemal “Atatürk”—escaped capture and reached Anatolia, where they would eventually form the core of the later Turkish National Movement and later Turkish Republic.²⁴

The signing of the Armistice of Mudros, in October 1918, officially ended hostilities between the Ottoman Empire and the Entente powers.²⁵ Taha al-Hāshimī, in Yemen at that time, became a British prisoner of war, and remained in Aden until late 1919—almost a year later.²⁶ By the end of the war, Greater Syria, which then consisted of the eventual states of Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, Israel, and Transjordan, had been utterly devastated. The combination of a total mobilization in support of the war, known as the *seferberlik*, involving four years of conscription, military requisitions, and compounded by an Entente naval blockade, natural disasters including drought and locust plagues, as well as disease, resulted in catastrophic human suffering.²⁷ Rogan cites estimates of up to 500,000 civilian deaths as a result of these compounded events, in addition to the untold economic and social consequences of such disasters.²⁸

²⁴ Rogan, *Fall of the Ottomans*, 380.

²⁵ Rogan, *Fall of the Ottomans*, 381.

²⁶ Al-Husrī, introduction to *Mudhakkirat Taha al-Hāshimī*, 6-7.

²⁷ Tamari, *Year of the Locust*, 11. In Tamari’s translation, Turjman writes on May 9, 1915, that “Our lives our threatened from all sides: a European war and an Ottoman war, prices are skyrocketing, a financial crisis, and the locusts are attacking the country north and south. On top of all this, now infectious diseases are spreading throughout the Ottoman lands. May God protect us. I can hardly walk in the streets and talk to anybody for fear of facing these misfortunes.” Tamari, *Year of the Locust*, 75.

²⁸ Rogan, *Fall of the Ottomans*, 291.

While the occupied Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire were reeling from these catastrophic events, European delegations in Paris began negotiations over the future of Ottoman lands. Despite the Ottoman delegation and Amir Faysal's appeals to Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points, which advocated the principle of self-determination, the June 1919 Treaty of Versailles established the League of Nations and the framework for a mandate system to legitimize the long-anticipated partition of former Ottoman lands.²⁹ Italy and Greece began to implement their concessions for partitioned Ottoman land in Anatolia in the spring of 1919; Italian troops occupied Antalya in April; Greek forces occupied Izmir in May, while French and Armenian forces began their occupation of Cilicia in January.³⁰ Interestingly, it is at this time of the Treaty of Versailles and intensified occupation that Taha al-Hāshimī begins the entries which would later become his memoirs. His first entry is dated June 26, 1919.³¹

One of the topics Taha al-Hāshimī addresses early in his memoirs is the delegation later known as the King-Crane Commission. As part of the post-war negotiations in Paris, Faysal secured agreement for a "commission of inquiry" to travel to Syria and "assess public opinion about the region's political future."³² Subsequently, this group interviewed individuals throughout Palestine and Syria in June and July 1919.³³ One significant event associated with

²⁹ Rogan, *Fall of the Ottomans*, 391.

³⁰ Rogan, *Fall of the Ottomans*, 390, Watenpaugh, *Being Modern*, 171.

³¹ Al-Hāshimī, *Mudhakkirat Taha al-Hāshimī*, 6/26/1919, 43.

³² Rogan, *Fall of the Ottomans*, 401.

³³ Some of the significant sentiments recorded by the commission which are relevant for this work included majority opposition to the idea of a French mandate for Syria, general preference for an American or British mandate in Syria, if any, and opposition to partition as well as Zionism. Although intended to aid in decision-making at the post-war conference, the

this commission was the establishment of the Syrian General Congress in the late spring of 1919. This organization was initially envisioned by Faysal as a body to represent the Syrian people to the commission and demonstrate to the commission that the country was able to rule itself. Despite al-Hāshimī's geographic separation in Aden and status as a prisoner of war, he demonstrates awareness of the delegation's activities and some of the opinions it captured.

While al-Hāshimī remained in Aden, the harsh terms dictated during the post-war negotiations and the occupation of Ottoman lands incited the emergence of resistance efforts throughout Anatolia. These began in the spring and summer of 1919, and coalesced into a widespread movement in the summer and fall of 1919, under Mustafa Kemal "Atatürk" and others, including many frustrated Ottoman veterans of the war who refused to demobilize.³⁴ This Turkish National Movement eventually diverged from the government in Istanbul and launched a "War of National Independence," which would ultimately drive European occupation forces out of Anatolia and provide a model of nationalist resistance for observers in other, European-occupied, former Ottoman lands.³⁵

In order to secure French support for the British mandate of Iraq, British leaders agreed to French demands for the Syrian mandate, despite their ongoing support for Faysal's precarious administration in Damascus and previous, wartime pledges to Sharif Husayn. This led to the September 15 Accord in 1919, and the ensuing "Evacuation Crisis," caused by the withdrawal of British forces from Syria and transfer of control to the French, which many in Syria saw as the

commission's recommendations were suppressed until publication in 1922. Antonius, *Awakening*, 296-297, 443-458 (Report of the Commission). Russell, *Syria under Faysal*, 89-91.

³⁴ Rogan, *Fall of the Ottomans*, 393.

³⁵ Rogan, *Fall of the Ottomans*, 395.

precursor to a French invasion and occupation.³⁶ Less than a month after these significant events, al-Hāshimī finally departed Aden, en route to Istanbul, where he stayed for the next several months.³⁷

Following negotiations between Faysal and French leaders in the winter of 1919-20 and the looming prospect of a French occupation and mandate, the Syrian General Congress declared the independence of Syria on March 8, 1920, and crowned Faysal as king. Significantly, Taha al-Hāshimī's decision to leave Istanbul and join the government in Syria took place less than two weeks after this declaration.³⁸ Al-Hāshimī eventually found himself a member of the Syrian government in the late spring of 1920, just in time to witness the French invasion in July. This advance culminated in the French army's defeat of a hastily-assembled Syrian army at the Battle of Maysalun on 24 July, 1920. This event marked the end of Faysal's rule and the beginning of the French mandate and occupation of Syria.

Intriguingly, in the aftermath of al-Hāshimī's short-lived time in Syria in 1920, he returned to Istanbul, where he briefly resumed duties as an Ottoman army officer as part of the Ottoman army general staff, before departing for Iraq in early 1921.³⁹ Al-Hāshimī later became an influential officer and politician in Iraq, alongside Faysal, his brother Yasin, and Ottoman officer colleagues from Damascus. Al-Hāshimī's positions included tutor to the King's son,

³⁶ Rogan, *Fall of the Ottomans*, 400.

³⁷ Al-Husrī, introduction to *Mudhakkirat Taha al-Hāshimī*, 7, also entry 10/14/1920, 50.

³⁸ Al-Hāshimī, *Mudhakkirat Taha al-Hāshimī*, 3/18/1920, 54.

³⁹ Al-Hāshimī, *Mudhakkirat Taha al-Hāshimī*, 7. Interestingly, al-Hāshimī himself does not reference these duties, but his son does in his introduction.

lecturer at the Iraqi Military Academy, and eventually Chief of Staff of the army, as well as a brief term as prime minister.

Chapter 1: Haunted by Colonial Fears: Taha al-Hāshimī's Post-War Imaginings

Introduction

Taha al-Hāshimī's memoir entries in 1919-20 illustrate that his perspective and imagined futures of the post-Ottoman world were inextricably linked to a feeling of historical and contemporary trauma and loss of Ottoman lands and sovereignty, largely as a result of foreign conquest. Al-Hāshimī manifests these feelings in three general tendencies. First, al-Hāshimī expresses skepticism and anxiety over the motives and conduct of British and French leaders during ongoing post-war negotiations. Second, al-Hāshimī draws comparisons between the imagined futures of current Arab lands and other, long-term European colonial possessions, including Algeria, Tunisia, and unnamed British colonies in Africa. Third, al-Hāshimī frames his decision to travel to Syria as an expression of anti-colonial resistance, although it ultimately led to his witnessing of the fulfillment of the French occupation that he had long feared.

Historical Background

Al-Hāshimī's discussions of colonialism and imperialism reference multiple, nineteenth-century French and British conquests in the Mediterranean and Africa. It is therefore vital to briefly examine the background of these events, as al-Hāshimī would have known them. This historical background will highlight these lost Ottoman territories, as a result of the expansion of French, British, Italian, and Russian empires, which culminated in the occupation of much of the remaining Ottoman lands by the end of the First World War. Such a perspective conveyed the

feeling of an empire besieged upon on all sides—a feeling apparent in individual accounts like those by al-Hāshimī and his comrades.

This backdrop of European expansion begins with the French occupation and colonization of Algeria in 1830, followed by its incorporation into the state of France in 1848, in spite of an extensive insurgency and resistance movement.⁴⁰ This was followed decades later by establishment of a French protectorate over Ottoman Tunisia in 1881.⁴¹ French armies also intervened in coastal Syria and Mt. Lebanon in the 1860s. Many of these interventions were advocated by French colonial officials and politicians under the doctrine of *mission civilisatrice*.

Provence defines this concept as:

To bring Francophone enlightenment and civilization to the less developed peoples of the world, and strike a blow for the supremacy of French power, prestige, and culture. French colonialists were particularly concerned to be the “Protector of the Oriental Christians” and a potent popular historical narrative combining mythic Frankish Crusaders, Catholic missionaries, the right-wing cadres of the colonial army, and provincial textile magnates from Lyon and elsewhere, evolved to advocate a French Mediterranean empire.⁴²

French language study by elite Ottoman military officers, including al-Hāshimī, would likely have familiarized them with this colonial discourse and insight into the extent and power of French imperial motives. In addition to these French imperial actions, the British occupied Aden in 1839, Cyprus in 1878, and Egypt in 1882.⁴³ Britain also supported a nationalist uprising in Ottoman Greece in the 1820s.

⁴⁰ Clancy-Smith, *A History in Documents*, 29.

⁴¹ Clancy-Smith, *A History in Documents*, 37.

⁴² Provence, *Last Ottoman Generation*, 60.

⁴³ Fortna, *The Circassian*, 53-54.

In another episode of Ottoman defeat, Italy invaded Libya in 1911-12. Rogan and Fortna each examine the impact of this episode as an important prelude to World War I. This invasion of an Arab province of the Ottoman Empire led the government to send Ottoman military officers to organize, train, equip, and coordinate a resistance movement among local tribes of the Sanusi religious order.⁴⁴ Fortna describes the Ottoman-Sanusi resistance as an important moment in the development of a narrative of “Muslim nationalism,” which unified Ottoman army officers through their struggle against the Italian colonial forces. Integral to this unification were the religious mobilization and rhetoric espoused by Sanusi tribal warriors. This war, therefore, contributed to the development of an Ottoman army officer self-image as defenders of the homeland against foreign conquest, colonialism, and imperialism.⁴⁵ It also contributed to constructions of Arab nationalist identity and a highly-gendered, patriotic Arab tribal warrior archetype, as evident in the memoirs of Ja‘far al-‘Askari.⁴⁶

While the war in Libya was psychologically traumatic because of the ultimate loss of an Arab province of the Ottoman Empire, the Empire’s subsequent defeats in the Balkan Wars in 1912-13 proved even more calamitous. Taha al-Hāshimī witnessed first-hand the bitter series of

⁴⁴ Rogan, *Fall of the Ottomans*, 15-18.

⁴⁵ Fortna, *The Circassian*, 59-60, Rogan, *Fall of the Ottomans*, 16-7.

⁴⁶ An example of this rhetoric includes: “All those who followed the Sanusi way supported and helped each other like brothers; their teachings advocated manliness, bravery, and sacrifice of self and all possessions for the sake of the advancement of Islam.” Further passages include portraits of brave *mujahidin* warriors, and virtuous *nafaqah* female servants. Al-Askari, 67.

Ottoman defeats and the eventual loss of almost all of the Empire's European territory to Balkan allies.⁴⁷

A little-known episode of the above-mentioned Libyan War was Italian support for the Idrisi movement, located in the Asir region between the Hijaz and Yemen, which was designed to divert Ottoman resources from Libya.⁴⁸ Although Yemen appears a remote outpost of empire, it nevertheless was cast as a battleground of anti-European imperialism and related to the campaign in Libya.⁴⁹ Therefore, if al-Hāshimī's assignment to Yemen in early 1914 was voluntary, as his son contends, it may have been out of a motivation to follow in the footsteps of earlier Ottoman colleagues who contested European interventions in Libya. The fact that one of al-Hāshimī's colleagues, 'Aziz 'Ali al-Misri, preceded him in Yemen by a few years may also support this reasoning.⁵⁰ Interestingly, viewing the Idrisi movement as an episode of resistance and reaction to Ottoman centralization may suggest that al-Hāshimī could have viewed this movement as similar to the Hawran and Karak insurrections of 1909, which he helped suppress through Ottoman army campaigns. Therefore, despite his opposition to European imperialism and Arab activism, al-Hāshimī nonetheless repeatedly acted as an agent of Ottoman imperialism or hegemony in Arab lands.

⁴⁷ Rogan, *Fall of the Ottomans*, 21. Rogan argues one impetus of this war was Italian diplomatic efforts to take pressure off their stalled campaign in Libya.

⁴⁸ Kayalı, *Arabs and Young Turks*, 164, Antonius, 124.

⁴⁹ Rogan, *Fall of the Ottomans*, 17.

⁵⁰ Antonius, *Awakening*, 119. Antonius writes that 'Aziz 'Ali al-Misri served in Yemen in 1910 and "scored a triumph by inducing the Imam [Yahya] to compose his differences with the Porte."

In order to understand how Taha al-Hāshimī and his classmates at the military academy would have understood these episodes of foreign conquest, it is useful to briefly examine one aspect of the Empire's curriculum. Fortna, in his 2002 book, *Imperial Classroom: Islam, the State, and Education in the Late Ottoman Empire*, explains the didactic use of imperial maps in the Empire's classrooms, where they were used by the state as a "pedagogical device" to foster nationalism and develop a unique mental geography and spatial perception with regard to imperial territories.⁵¹ Fortna also describes the adoption of "imperial logo maps" under Abdulhamid II, which showed the empire in its entirety, rather than split among different continents.⁵² Many of these maps also showed historically-Ottoman lands, which likely would have included occupied territories such as Egypt and Tunisia.⁵³ Studying such maps throughout his secondary school, military academy, and Staff College education would have equipped al-Hāshimī with a unique mental geography and the perception of an empire under siege from all corners. Provence describes this sense of siege when he writes "by 1914 the Ottoman East had been the object of British, French, and Russian imperialist expansion for more than a century."⁵⁴

This pre-World War I European seizure of Ottoman lands only intensified during and after the war, as the 1916 Sykes-Picot Treaty revealed the territorial aims of the entente powers for the post-war world. By the end of the war, British armies occupied the Ottoman provinces of Basra, Baghdad, and eventually Mosul. They also occupied major portions of Greater Syria, consolidating control by establishing Occupied Enemy Territory Administrations (OETA).

⁵¹ Fortna, *Imperial Classroom*, 165.

⁵² Fortna, *Imperial Classroom*, 187.

⁵³ Fortna, *Imperial Classroom*, 194.

⁵⁴ Provence, *Last Ottoman Generation*, 59.

OETA-West later became the state of Lebanon, OETA-East became the state of Syria, and OETA-South became the states of Palestine, Israel, and Transjordan.⁵⁵ Post-war negotiations between Britain and France included the exchange of British control of OETA-W and OETA-E to France, in return for French recognition of British control in Iraq and Palestine. Portions of this deal were included in the September 15 (1919) Accord and triggered the Evacuation Crisis, so called for the withdrawal of British forces and anticipated arrival of French occupation forces. These systems of control would be ostensibly legitimized through the establishment of the League of Nations mandate system, as chartered in 1919, and further recognized at the San Remo Conference of April 1920.

In order to contextualize al-Hāshimī's experiences in this section, it is necessary to first review a few specific events from the post-war negotiations. First, the Armistice of Mudros, in October 1918, officially ended the war for the Ottoman Empire, almost four years after it began. At this point, al-Hāshimī and his unit in Yemen became British prisoners in Aden. Second, the post-war negotiations in Paris published the plan for the establishment of the League of Nations and the mandate system in the Treaty of Versailles in June 1919. These negotiations also sanctioned the above-mentioned King-Crane Commission. Third, despite the Istanbul government's cooperation with occupation powers, many Ottoman military units and Anatolian residents, frustrated with the occupation and looming partition, began to coalesce into resistance groups called "Defense of Rights Committees" in the spring and summer of 1919. Mustafa Kemal and others consolidated these groups into a wider movement through a series of conferences at Sivas, Erzurum, and the summer and fall of 1919.

⁵⁵ Russell, *Syria under Faysal*, 42-43. Antonius, *Awakening*, 279.

Al-Hāshimī's entries demonstrate that the September 15 Accord, in 1919, was a pivotal moment for his imagining of the future of occupied Syria. Gelvin characterizes this deal as a "turning point of the Arab government of Syria," arguing that the replacement of British occupation forces on the Syrian coast with French troops led Syrians to believe the French forces would spread to the rest of Syria, including Damascus and other areas under until-then relatively-limited British occupation. In addition to heightening the prospect of eventual French occupation, Gelvin also argues that this deal increased fears of partition, because of the framework embedded in the continuation of an OETA-W and OETA-E. This undermined Faysal's public demands for an independent, united Syrian nation.⁵⁶ The fact that this deal was made without consulting the Arab government also demonstrated "the inability of the Arab government [as headed by Faysal] to represent the Syrian people at the European negotiations."⁵⁷

Another critical event at this time was the anticipated San Remo Conference, held in April 1920. It was at this event that British and French leaders formalized the assignments of mandates for former Ottoman lands. France was awarded mandate of Syria and Lebanon, while Britain was recognized as the mandatory power for Mesopotamia (Iraq), and Palestine.⁵⁸ Anticipating the possibility of such an outcome, the Syrian General Congress met and proclaimed the independence of Syria on March 8, 1920. Provence argues that "the congress proclaimed Faysal king almost in spite of himself."⁵⁹ He also contends that this event should be

⁵⁶ Gelvin, *Divided Loyalties*, 35.

⁵⁷ Gelvin, *Divided Loyalties*, 87.

⁵⁸ Tauber, *Formation*, 29.

⁵⁹ Provence, *Last Ottoman Generation*, 114.

viewed as an act of anti-colonial defiance, as it attempted to head off the legitimization of a European mandate.

Anxieties Over Post-War Negotiations

Taha al-Hāshimī vividly demonstrates his concern about European colonialism and imperialism in his despairing entry on September 19, 1919, when he comments on the recent September 15 Accord and increasingly apparent prospects of partition. Al-Hāshimī begins his passage on 19 September, 1919 with the statement that:

I am very worried about the agreement between Lloyd George and Clemenceau about the issue of Syria. And if the agreement comes to pass and America consents to it[,] despite the declaration of the men of the [King-Crane] delegation[,] and Syria becomes under [a] French mandate, or more accurately speaking, under a protectorate. In it will be the worst conditions and situation and calamities and goodbye to the Arab world!... the foreigners will be pleased by it and give the Christians rights, as for the Muslims who number three million people they will be denied everything.⁶⁰

This entry is full of fearful concerns about the future of occupied, post-Ottoman Syria, which al-Hāshimī extrapolates to include the rest of “the Arab world.” Al-Hāshimī begins his entry with “I am very worried” and then names the Prime Minister of England, David Lloyd George, and the Prime Minister of France, Georges Clemenceau, the two personalities who dominated the post-war negotiations and planned the partition of the occupied Ottoman territories. After attributing his concerns to the designs of these leaders, al-Hāshimī argues that the idea of a mandate is simply a euphemism for a protectorate, and therefore imperialism by another name. The concept of a protectorate would have been very familiar to al-Hāshimī, after spending the better part of a year in the British protectorate of Aden, Yemen. This entry, four days after the publication of the September 15 Accord, demonstrates that despite his status as a British prisoner in Yemen, al-

⁶⁰ Al-Hāshimī, *Mudhakkirat Taha al-Hāshimī*, 9/19/1919, 47.

Hāshimī remained informed of European negotiations discussing the future of former Ottoman lands. Al-Hāshimī's statement that a French mandate should be more accurately characterized as a French protectorate demonstrates his view that the mandate system was no more than a continuation of European colonial and imperial conquest at the expense of Ottoman lands and peoples.

Continuing the analysis of al-Hāshimī's remarks about the September 15 Accord, he makes several comments about the King-Crane Commission and French and British intentions to subvert it. Al-Hāshimī argues that the establishment of a French mandate in Syria would disregard the sentiments expressed to the members of the King-Crane Commission when he characterizes an anticipated French mandate as “despite the declaration of the men of the [King-Crane] delegation.”⁶¹ In this assertion, al-Hāshimī echoes the sentiments of many individuals interviewed by the King-Crane Commission, who overwhelmingly expressed opposition to a French mandate. Some of these protests argued that since former elements of the Austro-Hungarian Empire were not subject to post-war mandate rule, neither should regions of the Ottoman Empire. Other interviews documented a hesitant preference for an American mandate, rather than French or British, if mandate rule was unavoidable.⁶² In his statement that a French mandate would be “despite the declaration of the men of the delegation,” al-Hāshimī argued that French imperial authorities would continue to seek their imperial objectives in Syria, regardless of the Commission's findings about popular sentiment. This demonstrates al-Hāshimī's skepticism about the post-war negotiations and motives of the negotiating parties.

⁶¹ Al-Hāshimī, *Mudhakkirat Taha al-Hāshimī*, 9/19/1919, 47.

⁶² Antonius, *Awakening*, 443-458. Tauber, *Formation*, 17-19, 50-52. Provence, *Last Ottoman Generation*, 70-71.

Al-Hāshimī also mentions the King-Crane Commission in his discussions of the future of Iraq, similarly arguing that the English and French would reject the delegation’s findings and acted contrary to the wishes of those interviewed by the Commission. Al-Hāshimī writes in the same entry that:

These English hid their victim Iraq from America and the delegation declared that America should accept the mandate of Turkey, Syria, and Iraq. And they [the English] agreed with France to support them against America and remain in Palestine as its governor. If lesser Syria is partitioned to three parts: [they will be] [the] Syrian Arab Protectorate, Lebanon, [and] Palestine[.]⁶³

Therefore, al-Hāshimī again demonstrates an awareness of the sentiments expressed to the King-Crane Commission by individuals in Palestine and Syria, who largely communicated reluctant support for an American mandate, rather than Britain or France. Al-Hāshimī says that “the delegation declared that America should accept the mandate of Turkey, Syria, and Iraq.” He argues that the English took efforts to disrupt the findings of the King-Crane Commission, in order to conceal “their victim Iraq from America.” This is a fascinating assertion, as it recognizes the curtailment of the King-Crane Commission’s efforts to continue its work from Palestine and Syria to Iraq. Although the delegation intended to travel to Iraq, it did not, warned off by British administrators—or “blocked” according to Provence.⁶⁴

⁶³ Al-Hāshimī, *Mudhakkirat Taha al-Hāshimī*, 9/19/1919, 47. Since the findings of the Commission were not published until their release in the United States in 1922, al-Hāshimī’s use of the word “declared” is somewhat confusing. It could indicate that this entry was rewritten later, after learning of the published report, or that he was aware of sentiments expressed to the commission in interviews, by different Syrian, Iraqi and Palestinian delegations, or that some of the periodicals he read documented some of the sentiments or analyses of the commission members and interviewees.

⁶⁴ Tauber, *Formation*, 187-189. Provence, *Last Ottoman Generation*, 70-71. This limited the ability of the delegation to interview the population in Iraq as to opinion toward British occupation and post-war rule, an attempt to allow British administrators to monopolize claims to speak on behalf of Iraqis at the post-war conference. Nevertheless, some delegations of Iraqis spoke with the delegation in Damascus.

In addition to his recognition of manipulations of the King-Crane Commission's agenda, al-Hāshimī also implies that English and French governments or colonial administrations negotiated in the interest of imperial ambitions, trading the spoils of war. Al-Hāshimī writes that “they [the English] agreed with France to support them against America” in return for the French allowing the English to “remain in Palestine as its governor.” Therefore, al-Hāshimī attributes the principles of the September 15 Accord and the ongoing negotiations primarily to imperial ambitions toward former Ottoman lands. This provides another example of al-Hāshimī's realization of the designs of a European power to seize and legitimize control of a former Ottoman territory. His characterization of Iraq as England's “victim” explains how he viewed the British occupation of his homeland and what he thought of British intentions. Al-Hāshimī astutely recognizes the manipulation of the commission's itinerary in order to avoid it documenting anti-British sentiment and sharing that sentiment with the post-war negotiating parties. Al-Hāshimī also detects an imperial quid pro quo between France and England in order to secure the other's support for control of each desired mandate.

Historical and Contemporary Colonial Comparisons

In a fascinating comparison, al-Hāshimī foresees the destiny of Syria as a reproduction of French efforts in Tunisia and Algeria, arguing that a French mandate in Syria will be no more than a continuation of French colonization and imperialism in those North African former Ottoman lands. Al-Hāshimī writes “Syria will become as Algeria and Tunisia.”⁶⁵ This is a fascinating comparison and reveals much about al-Hāshimī's perception of history, European colonial and imperial projects, mental geography, and his fears for the future. After dismissing a mandate as no more than a euphemism for a protectorate, al-Hāshimī predicts that post-war

⁶⁵ Al-Hāshimī, *Mudhakkirat Taha al-Hāshimī*, 9/19/1919, 47.

French rule in Syria will be the same as its long-term colonial projects in Algeria and Tunisia. Al-Hāshimī would have been envisioning this against the backdrop of the ongoing, ninety year, seemingly-permanent French rule and colonial settlement in Algeria.⁶⁶ Al-Hāshimī would have also understood the long-term nature of French protectorate rule (again the parallel to al-Hāshimī’s comment about mandate rule being a protectorate is notable) over Tunisia, approaching forty years since its establishment in 1881.⁶⁷ Intriguingly, al-Hāshimī’s military assignment in Damascus in 1909-1912 may have led him to associate with members of the substantial Algerian or Tunisian exile and expatriate community, including the descendants of Algerian independence leader Amir ‘Abd al-Qadir.

In light of al-Hāshimī’s reference to these two examples of former Ottoman territories being conquered and incorporated into the French empire, it is easy to see how al-Hāshimī would have viewed the prospect of mandate rule as another extension of French imperial power. With no end in sight at that time for French rule in Algeria and Tunisia, he would have little reason to anticipate that the French rule in Syria would not be permanent as well. As such, al-Hāshimī sees through the rhetoric of tutelage and aid espoused in mandate and League of Nations discourse.

In a continued analysis of al-Hāshimī’s remarks on the September 15 Accord and prospects of partition, he demonstrates the presence of a powerful national trauma, amid fears of European imperialism, in his argument that a French mandate will mean “goodbye to the Arab world!”⁶⁸ Al-Hāshimī’s despair is palpable in his expression that the feared establishment of a

⁶⁶ Clancy-Smith, *A History in Documents*, 29.

⁶⁷ Clancy-Smith, *A History in Documents*, 37.

⁶⁸ Al-Hāshimī, *Mudhakkirat Taha al-Hāshimī*, 9/19/1919, 47.

French mandate “will be the worst conditions and situation and calamities.”⁶⁹ After demonstrating his understanding of the long-term nature of European rule over former provinces of the Ottoman Empire, al-Hāshimī expresses his view that the establishment of the mandates will be a continuation of these occupations and will represent the ultimate and possibly permanent loss of Arab autonomy. In addition to his above references to long-term French rule in Algeria and Tunisia, al-Hāshimī separately mentions French seizure of the island of Rhodes, and British control of Iraq and Palestine. While not mentioned directly, al-Hāshimī acknowledges British control of Egypt when he references British military authorities based there. He also would have been well aware of Italian control of Libya, as mentioned in the background. Al-Hāshimī’s elite education and proficiency in French may also have informed his understanding of French public discourse over expanding its empire, especially regarding French designs in Lebanon and its *mission civilisatrice*.

While hindsight informs us today of the eventual independence movements in the 1940s-1960s of many of these former Ottoman territories—many only after brutal and prolonged anti-colonial insurrections—there was no indication at that time that the specter of European conquest and ongoing rule would end. In continuation of his argument that the mandate system would do little more than establish long-term colonial rule over Syria, Iraq, and Palestine, al-Hāshimī would have realized that few Arab, former Ottoman lands remained free of European hegemony. This is likely why he wrote that it would be “goodbye to the Arab world!”⁷⁰ Such a perspective, informed by his military education and from reading of Arabic and possibly French press, would

⁶⁹ Al-Hāshimī, *Mudhakkirat Taha al-Hāshimī*, 9/19/1919, 47.

⁷⁰ Al-Hāshimī, *Mudhakkirat Taha al-Hāshimī*, 9/19/19, 47. It is notable that in his entry describing the partition of Arab lands, al-Hāshimī writes that Ibn Rashid and Ibn Sa‘ud would be called “blessed,” seeming to imply that their lands in Arabia would be the only remaining Arab lands free of European control.

have contributed to al-Hāshimī's desperation and frustrated impotence as a highly-trained and elite, but nonetheless defeated soldier.

One week after his fearful comments on the September 15 Accord, al-Hāshimī shares anxieties about the future of Iraq and continues his historical comparisons by comparing his homeland to British colonies in Africa. In his entry on September 26, 1919, al-Hāshimī writes:

It appears that the English have possessed Iraq and have made it a colony like their African colonies and they bought the residents. There is no doubt that the English system is truly treacherous and the foreigners are expanding. And the homeland [Iraq] is in [the system] and will remain without rights and without distinction to those, except if they learn from the English and become subjects and take a quarter of what the foreigner takes. And English will become the official language, not Arabic."⁷¹

This entry demonstrates al-Hāshimī's continued use of historical and contemporary comparisons between political entities, as illustrated by comparisons between Syria, Algeria, and Tunisia. In this case, al-Hāshimī focuses on the British Empire, rather than the French, owing to the four-year British occupation in Iraq and the prospects of long-term British rule. Although geographically separated from Iraq while in Yemen, al-Hāshimī indicates that he remained informed of events in his homeland when he complains of the lack of news coverage in newspapers about Iraq.⁷² Al-Hāshimī's post-war imprisonment in Aden, a British imperial outpost administered by the British government of India, would have familiarized him with aspects of the "Mesopotamia Campaign," troop movements, and British discourse over rule in

⁷¹ Al-Hāshimī, *Mudhakkirat Taha al-Hāshimī*, 9/26/19, 48.

⁷² Complaining of a sudden lack of coverage would imply that he was used to more frequent news on the topic until that point. Additionally, letters and telegraphs from his sister in Iraq and brother in Syria attested to at least some communication—albeit likely censored—that would have included some understanding of events there.

Iraq.⁷³ Furthermore, Aden would have also acquainted him with the British colonies in Africa, just across the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden, in British Somaliland and elsewhere, to include indirect British rule over Egypt, approaching forty years since its occupation in 1882.

Finally, like his critique above that a French mandate would be a protectorate in reality, al-Hāshimī demonstrates that he sees through similar, paternalistic rhetoric about the mandate system, cloaked in terms of “tutelage” and “helping the residents.”⁷⁴ Therefore, al-Hāshimī’s projection of British rule in Africa to the imagined future of Iraq is parallel to his projection of French colonial rule in Algeria and Tunisia to the imagined future of Syria. This demonstrates a vital aspect of al-Hāshimī’s imperial military education, grasp of history, insight, extensive travels, conversations, and identity as a defender of Ottoman territories. The emphasis on Arab metaphors also illustrates the growing focus on the Arab component of his identity as well.

Other important components to unpack in al-Hāshimī’s fears about Iraq include his imagining of demographic changes, surrender of political control to London, and that Iraq will

⁷³ Britain’s wartime campaign and occupation in the Ottoman provinces of Basra, Baghdad, and Mosul was referred to as “Mesopotamia” in British government policy, media and public discourse. Documents from the King-Crane Commission and elsewhere demonstrate that commission interviewees, especially Ottoman officers in Damascus, but originally from Iraq, described it as “Iraq.”

⁷⁴ Article 22 of the Treaty of Versailles states that “To those colonies and territories which as a consequence of the late war have ceased to be under the sovereignty of the States which formerly governed them and which are inhabited by peoples not yet able to stand by themselves under the strenuous conditions of the modern world...the tutelage of such peoples should be entrusted to advanced nations...and that this tutelage should be exercised by them as Mandatories on behalf of the League [of Nations]...Certain communities formerly belonging to the Turkish Empire have reached a stage of development where their existence as independent nations can be provisionally recognized subject to the rendering of administrative advice and assistance by a Mandatory until such time as they are able to stand alone. The wishes of these communities must be a principal consideration in the selection of the Mandatory.” Treaty of Versailles, 56.

“become Indian in character.” On September 26, 1919, al-Hāshimī writes that his homeland, Iraq:

will become Indian in character, if it comes to pass that numbers of Indian immigrants and foreigners increase and the country will become Indian and foreign after it was Arab. It is not inconceivable that its peoples [will] increase in years to come and reach six or nine million, three million Arab and the remainder foreign colonists. If conditions make it easy after that [for] Iraq to govern itself[,] by itself[, and] that most of the people [will be] foreigners, will it become as the English colonies and possessions? [Will an] English government follow from London? ... This is what is on my mind.⁷⁵

Analyzing the anxieties al-Hāshimī expresses in this statement reveals several significant points.

First, his physical position in Aden would have allowed him to observe large troop movements of British and Indian soldiers traveling between fronts, including the four-year occupation of Iraq. Furthermore, al-Hāshimī’s correspondence with his sister and brother in Iraq and Syria, and reading of Egyptian newspapers, would have made him aware of large numbers of Indian soldiers and noncombatants making up the British occupation of Iraq, beginning with the occupation of Ottoman Basra in 1914 and Baghdad in 1917.⁷⁶ This may have led al-Hāshimī to assume that Indian soldiers and a nominally Indian government would retain a significant presence in occupied Iraq.⁷⁷

Second, al-Hāshimī’s mention of these specific numbers of Indian immigrants to Iraq is strikingly similar to a provocative newspaper article in *The Times*. According to Tauber, this particular article discussed a proposal for the migration of millions of Indian settlers to Iraq,

⁷⁵ Al-Hāshimī, *Mudhakkirat Taha al-Hāshimī*, 9/26/1919, 48.

⁷⁶ Rogan, *Fall of the Ottomans*, 71. According to Rogan, over half a million Indian soldiers served in the Mesopotamia campaign, out of a total of 1.4 million soldiers and noncombatants from India to serve in the war across all fronts.

⁷⁷ Rogan, *Fall of the Ottomans*, 325. Again, this nuance between “Indian,” “British-Indian,” and “British” is often blurry.

apparently as part of a potential British colonial project. According to Tauber, the al-‘Ahd group sent a petition to British officials in Istanbul and Damascus officially protesting this article.⁷⁸ Al-Hāshimī’s concerns about demographic changes to Iraq are also relevant at this time, especially in the context of Zionism in Palestine, French settlement in Algeria, and population exchanges and resettlements throughout Greek-occupied parts of Anatolia, Thrace, and Armenian provinces. Therefore, the idea of demographic changes as an instrument of imperialism and colonialism would have been fresh in his mind as he witnessed public discourse over the migration of Indians to Iraq.

This entry by al-Hāshimī demonstrates some of his very specific concerns about specific tools, policies, and effects of imperialism and colonialism which he envisions occurring to his homeland. Whether prompted by the newspaper article or communication with al-‘Ahd individuals, these fears of demographic engineering in Iraq reflect tools of empire readily apparent in other former Ottoman territories turned European possessions.

Al-Hāshimī’s Agency to Take Part in Anti-Colonial Resistance

After imagining Syria’s desperate future from afar, al-Hāshimī frames his decision to travel to Syria and join the Syrian government in March 1920 in a similar context—but with a glimmer of hope, as an opportunity to “save some Arab countries from colonialism.” It also demonstrates that he characterized the rule by ex-Ottoman officers, Amir Faysal, and Damascene notables as a defiant rebuke of European designs. In his passage on March 17, 1920, Taha al-Hāshimī writes that Nuri al-Sa‘id informed him of the overall situation in Syria, as “in a state of

⁷⁸ Tauber, *Formation*, 185. This reference to the same article indicates al-Hāshimī may have been in contact with al-‘Ahd at this time or read the same article and had a similar reaction.

alarm.” Despite this warning, al-Sa‘id encourages al-Hāshimī when he says that he has a “firm hope in saving some of the Arab countries from colonization” and invites al-Hāshimī to join him.⁷⁹ Al-Hāshimī’s subsequent enthusiasm is tangible when he writes that after he returned to his hotel he felt pleased and that his “heart was beating with excitement” at this opportunity.⁸⁰ In his passage for the next day, al-Hāshimī writes that he made up his mind to travel to Syria.⁸¹ In terms of timing, al-Hāshimī’s fateful meeting with Nuri al-Sa‘id in March 1920 would have been less than two weeks after the Syrian General Congress’ proclamation of independence. Al-Hāshimī therefore appears to connect anti-colonial agency with Syrian independence.⁸² In light of his previous and despairing entries expressing fears of European conquest and long term rule, al-Hāshimī portrays this event as an opportunity to defy these colonial projects.

Additionally, although he does not mention other ongoing resistance efforts at that time in Izmir, Cilicia, Aleppo, and the growing Turkish National Movement, he would likely have been aware of these efforts and may have seen the government in Syria as a parallel manifestation of anti-colonial agency by elite Ottoman-educated officers like himself. Nuri al-Sa‘id’s rhetoric about “saving some Arab countries” likely resonated with al-Hāshimī’s nationalist and long military education, in which he would have been inculcated to believe in himself as a savior and defender of the Ottoman nation. While wartime defeat and demobilization likely traumatized that facet of al-Hāshimī’s identity, Nuri’s discourse and the

⁷⁹ Al-Hāshimī, *Mudhakkirat Taha al-Hāshimī*, 3/17/20, 54.

⁸⁰ Al-Hāshimī, *Mudhakkirat Taha al-Hāshimī*, 3/17/20, 54.

⁸¹ Interestingly, Nuri al-Sa‘id was also one of the individuals who Yasin al-Hāshimī credited with his recruitment to join the government in Damascus in 1918.

⁸² At this point, Yasin al-Hāshimī would have still been in British captivity, so it is unlikely that Taha decided to go to Damascus in order to join Yasin.

reported presence of Ottoman-trained officer colleagues in the Damascus administration and military may have rekindled his traumatized, nationalist and patriotic military values.

After a seemingly calm spring of 1920, to judge by his memoir entries, al-Hāshimī's desperate fears of colonialism return in July with the approach of a French army marching toward Damascus. Al-Hāshimī writes on July 21, 1920, that "The situation is dangerous and might lead to the abolishment of the government and colonization of Syria."⁸³ Al-Hāshimī characterized his decision in March 1920 to accept Nuri's offer to join him and his comrades in Syria as an opportunity to "save some Arab countries from colonization." Yet his entries over the next months are without the same sense of desperation he expressed in his earlier entries about post-war negotiations and fears of partition. He does express pride by characterizing his position in the Syrian government as an opportunity to "serve the nation." Nevertheless, most of the entries document his travel to Syria and routine bureaucratic work in his eventual position as Director of Public Security.

However, this tone changes dramatically in July, with his description of a French ultimatum and demands to the Syrian government. Al-Hāshimī then writes several long entries describing his view of Faysal's acceptance of French demands, followed by the Syrian General Congress' rebuke and sacking of Faysal's cabinet, which consequently led to the eruption of uprisings by popular groups and elements of the military. Al-Hāshimī then describes a new course of action, writing on July 21, 1920, that "Dr. Ahmad Qadri arrived in the afternoon and informed me that his highness the king decided to defend, seeing the French progress, and

⁸³ Al-Hāshimī, *Mudhakkirat Taha al-Hāshimī*, 7/21/1920, 62.

against accepting the cease fire.”⁸⁴ This context and the feared confrontation with the French army provide the background for his desperate fear which “might lead to the...colonization of Syria.” Al-Hāshimī’s experience of the French advance on Damascus in July 1920 seems to prove his earlier fears of French colonialism prescient. His frustration at the inability of the Syrian government or anyone to stop the French advance is palpable and hearkens back to his earlier desperate assertions that a French mandate would mean “goodbye to the Arab world!”

Conclusion

Taha al-Hāshimī’s entries from 1919-20 demonstrate the pervasiveness of his concerns over European colonialism and imperialism in Ottoman lands. His concerns largely reflect three general trends. First, al-Hāshimī expresses suspicion and anxiety over the motives and conduct of British and French leaders during ongoing post-war negotiations. Al-Hāshimī’s specific criticism of the September 15 Accord and his portrayal of its consequences as “Goodbye to the Arab world!” offers a dramatic indictment of his views on British and French imperial interests, and also vividly contrasts with characterizations of this period as Arab liberation from Ottoman or Turkish tyranny. His perceptive insight as to the French and British leaders’ motives at the negotiations reveal much about al-Hāshimī’s understanding of international politics. Al-Hāshimī’s characterization of a French mandate as a “protectorate” provides contemporary commentary on the yet to be implemented mandate system and situates his visions of post-war occupation in the context of other colonial projects. Al-Hāshimī’s discussions of the King-Crane Commission, popular opposition to British rule in Iraq, and the idea of an American mandate, reveal further contemporary commentary on post-war events and sentiments, despite his geographic separation and prisoner of war status in Yemen, indicating that these feelings were

⁸⁴ Al-Hāshimī, *Mudhakkirat Taha al-Hāshimī*, 7/21/1920, 62.

widely-held and suggests the timely accessibility and circulation of periodicals, newspapers, personal correspondence, and possible secret communication with al-‘Ahd compatriots.⁸⁵

Second, al-Hāshimī’s intriguing comparisons of Syria to Algeria and Tunisia, as well as of Iraq to India and British colonies in Africa, demonstrate his internalization of a historically-informed education, a Hamidian era mental geography, and feelings of historical trauma based on foreign conquest. This provides a specific, individual example of general trends argued by Fortna in his *Imperial Classroom*, and by Mesut Uyar in his article “Ottoman Arab officers between Nationalism and Loyalty during the First World War.” This also provides an often-missed perspective and narrative of Ottoman officers from Arab provinces, who were just as committed to Ottoman survival as Eşref Bey and other, ostensibly “Turkish,” defenders of the empire. Al-Hāshimī’s account demonstrates that many Ottoman officers from Arab provinces did not support the Arab Revolt, and instead looked to first to Anatolia and Istanbul, not Damascus, after the war.

Third, al-Hāshimī’s framing of his decision to travel to Syria as an expression of anti-colonial resistance also demonstrates his ubiquitous fear of British and French colonialism and imperialism. Al-Hāshimī’s tangible excitement after the Syrian General Congress’ declaration of independence in March 1920 and decision to accept Nuri al-Sa‘id’s recruitment to Damascus shortly thereafter illustrates the anti-colonial appeal which the Syrian government represented *at*

⁸⁵ In his entry on 6 October, 1919, al-Hāshimī lists two newspapers or journals “al-Ahram” and “al-Muqatam,” as the source for his information on his brother’s arrival in Cairo, an event which took place on 21 September. This could indicate that it took fifteen days for circulation of media from Cairo to occupied Aden, although there could have been other potential reasons for the delay. This is a similar period of time to the delay between learning of his brother’s arrest from Istanbul, via companions who referenced learning about it in unnamed newspapers. Al-Hāshimī writes of learning of the 22 November, 1919 arrest, in his entry on 11 December, 1919, almost three weeks after the fact, seeming to indicate significant censorship and delay in the flow of politically-sensitive information from Syria to Istanbul.

that time to elite Ottoman officers from disparate Arab former provinces of the Ottoman Empire. The noticeable change in feeling toward the Damascus government, as a result of this declaration, indicates just how important the declaration was in legitimizing the movement in Syria. Al-Hāshimī's omission of other anti-occupation efforts of the time, especially in Anatolia and by groups in Aleppo and in Iraq, is perplexing. After earlier exhortations for resistance to foreign intervention and at least indirect ties to prominent resistance individuals, it is peculiar that he makes almost no reference of any of the anti-occupation events in Iraq, Anatolia, Palestine, northern Syria, and Egypt during this time period. This likely indicates that he self-censored his writings out of fear that they could incriminate him if seized while traveling.⁸⁶

Al-Hāshimī's entries fill in several gaps in scholarship of the post-war period in former Ottoman lands by providing contemporary observations from an often-lost perspective. Many accounts of participation in the Damascus government exist from individuals who participated in the Sharifian revolt or joined the government shortly after the war. These perspectives are often interwoven with the appropriation of legitimacy by Faysal's movement and therefore take it, the British support it relied on, and the erasure or de-legitimization of its Ottoman or Turkish past as a given. Al-Hāshimī's observations, however, come from the perspective of an individual who consistently opposed British and French policies. His hesitation to join the Syrian project, expressed at multiple points in his entries, which even included refusing an opportunity to leave his status as a prisoner of war months early, indicate his initial association of Faysal's government with the same European imperial and colonial efforts he dedicated his career to

⁸⁶ Another possibility is that Taha al-Hāshimī or his son later removed passages associating him with prominent Turkish or other individuals later criticized in Arab nationalist narratives. A third possibility is that al-Hāshimī's experience of the trauma of Ottoman defeat led him to dissociate from activist organizations and to tread carefully, fearful of landing himself in imperial detention as he was in Aden in 1919.

protecting the Ottoman Empire from. This idea will also be examined in the context of al-Hāshimī's manifestations of Ottoman and Arab identities in the next chapter.

Chapter 2: Taha al-Hāshimī's Coinciding Ottoman and Arab Identifications

Introduction

Taha al-Hāshimī's entries in 1919-1920 demonstrate manifestations of both Ottoman and Arab identities. Additionally, al-Hāshimī's expressions of Arab identity are not hostile to the continuity of many components of his Ottoman or Turkish identity. This is significant, because al-Hāshimī did not need to legitimize taking part in the "Arab Revolt" the way individuals such as Ja'far al-'Askari and Nuri al-Sa'id did. Instead, his continued loyalty to the Ottoman Empire, during and immediately after the war, as well as his retention of many components of his Ottoman identity, led him to negotiate his Arab identity in different ways.

Historical Background

Taha al-Hāshimī's Ottoman military career seems to illustrate a trend argued by Uyar, Rogan, Provence, and others that most Ottoman officers from the Arab provinces continued their service in the Ottoman army through the end of the war and that those Ottoman officers who joined the Sharifian "Arab Revolt" only represented a small percentage of Ottoman Arab officers. Provence argues that the Ottoman military academy education inculcated graduates with a self-image as "saviors of the nation."⁸⁷ Campos identifies a similar phenomenon, that after the 1908 revolution, "it was the Ottoman army and the CUP which were seen as the twin pillars of

⁸⁷ Provence, *Last Ottoman Generation*, 32.

revolutionary power and promise, the representatives and guardians of liberty.”⁸⁸ Provence also writes that “by 1914 Ottoman military academy graduates formed a highly educated, multilingual, cosmopolitan, corps who shared the abiding conviction that the future survival of the state properly lay in their hands.”⁸⁹

Uyar examines the extensive process of Ottoman military education which new officers would have undergone in the years leading up to the First World War. After primary school and seven years of military middle and secondary school, select students traveled to Istanbul for a three year education at the Imperial Military Academy (Harbiye), with the opportunity for the top five to ten percent of the class to subsequently attend the three year Staff College (Erkân-ı Harbiye Mektebi). According to Provence, “the staff college enrolled fewer than fifty students at any given time.”⁹⁰ Upon graduation, these officers therefore completed 10-13 years of military training.⁹¹ This lengthy process inculcated a strong sense of Ottoman nationalism and commitment in many of these officers. According to Provence, Yasin al-Hāshimī completed the Harbiye in 1902 and subsequently attended the Staff College, graduating in 1905, alongside Mustafa Kemal, one year after ‘Aziz ‘Ali al-Misri, and one year before Yusuf al-‘Azma.⁹² Taha al-Hāshimī followed Yasin’s footsteps four years later, graduating from the Harbiye in 1906 and the Staff College in 1909. This positions him four years after Mustafa Kemal, five years after ‘Aziz ‘Ali al-Misri, and three years after Yusuf al-‘Azma. The timing of Taha and Yasin al-

⁸⁸ Campos, *Ottoman Brothers*, 40.

⁸⁹ Provence, *Last Ottoman Generation*, 32.

⁹⁰ Provence, *Last Ottoman Generation*, 33.

⁹¹ Uyar, “Between Nationalism and Loyalty,” 529.

⁹² Provence, *Last Ottoman Generation*, 33.

Hāshimī's attendance at the academy and the smaller and tight-knit staff college with these other prominent individuals would prove important for both individuals' wartime and post-war careers.

Suhail al-Hāshimī, in the memoir's introduction, describes Taha al-Hāshimī's close involvement with 'Aziz 'Ali al-Misri to establish the influential secret group al-'Ahd. According to Suhail, al-Hāshimī wrote the organizing documents and established branches of the organization while "traveling to Yemen...by [way of] Beirut, Damascus, Mosul, Baghdad, and Basra, uniting and organizing branches of the group al-'Ahd which united young Arabs in the Ottoman army."⁹³ These lines argue that Taha al-Hāshimī played a pivotal role in the establishment of al-'Ahd in 1913-14. However, this complex organization changed significantly over time. According to Tauber, the organization initially advocated Arab activism within overall Ottoman suzerainty. One of the articles of the organization, according to Tauber, stated that the group's "goal is to work for internal independence for the Arab countries, so that they will remain united with the Istanbul government, as Hungary is united with Austria."⁹⁴

Tauber argues that this goal of Arab-Ottoman unity changed when al-'Ahd members in Baghdad, "prepared a pretentious programme [sic] for liberating the entire region from Ottoman rule, from Mosul in the north to the Persian Gulf in the south...a rebellion would then spread to Damascus as well."⁹⁵ Tauber dates this dramatic change in objectives to early 1915, subsequent to a meeting of a separate, also secret group of al-Fatat leaders, including the then recently-inducted Yasin al-Hāshimī, Taha al-Hāshimī's older brother.⁹⁶ The timing of this separatist plot,

⁹³ Al-Husri, introduction to *Mudhakkirat Taha al-Hāshimī*, 6.

⁹⁴ Tauber, *Emergence*, 221.

⁹⁵ Tauber, *Emergence*, 223.

in early 1915, would have been almost a year after Taha al-Hāshimī arrived in Yemen, which begs the question of whether al-Hāshimī was involved in or even knew of this plot. Nevertheless, when Sharif Husayn initiated his “Arab Revolt” in 1916, neither Yasin nor Taha al-Hāshimī joined, instead remaining loyal to the Ottoman Empire. Yasin advanced to the rank of major general and served in prominent positions at Gallipoli under Mustafa Kemal, on the Russian Front, and eventually in Palestine, where he again served under Kemal.⁹⁷ Interestingly, Taha al-Hāshimī did not officially resign his Ottoman commission until 1921, even resuming duties in Istanbul after his time in Syria.⁹⁸

Mesut Uyar’s investigation of Ottoman military academy records leads him to a fascinating argument that most Ottoman army officers from Arab provinces during World War I remained loyal to the Empire throughout the war and did not participate in the Arab Revolt. Furthermore, he argues that many also joined the Turkish War of National Liberation in Anatolia. In his examination of the class of 1903, which he posits as a sample class, Uyar lists

⁹⁶ Tauber, *The Arab Movements in World War I*, 60, 115. Tauber describes two letters signed by Yasin al-Hāshimī seeking support from Ibn Sa‘ud and Sharif Husayn in 1915, asking each to assume leadership of a planned revolt. However, the planned revolt, as envisioned by Yasin and members of al-Fatat and al-‘Ahd in 1915, never came to fruition. One reason for this was the suspicion of Ottoman leaders, alerted by internal intelligence, which led to the decision to send many of the units consisting of local recruits—intended by Yasin to carry out the revolt—to Russian and Gallipoli fronts, replacing them with units from other parts of the empire.

⁹⁷ Tauber, *The Arab Movements in World War I*, 115. Tauber claims that Yasin al-Hāshimī changed his mind over support for rebellion against the Ottoman Empire, refusing to join the later Sharifian campaign when contacted by its agents in 1918 out of fears over Britain’s ultimate intentions and commitments to the leaders of the revolt, owing partly to the publication of the Sykes-Picot agreement, Balfour Declaration, and refusal to proclaim Husayn “King of the Arabs,” but rather the more restrictive “King of the Hijaz.”

⁹⁸ Al-Husrī, introduction to *Mudhakkirat Taha al-Hāshimī*, 7. It is unclear whether al-Hāshimī received a salary or pension at this point. In one entry soon after his arrival to Istanbul in 1919, al-Hāshimī mentions listening to other officers petitioning a committee or delegation for positions and salaries, but there are frustratingly few details or context.

the following statistics: ninety-five officers from Arab provinces graduated from the academy. Of those ninety-five, seventy-five were killed in action or resigned at the end of the war, while eighteen fought in the independence war and fourteen sided with the Republic of Turkey.⁹⁹ In another statistic, Uyar claims that thirty three of the 431 officers killed during the Turkish War of Independence were from Arab provinces.¹⁰⁰ These statistics are significant in the context of Taha al-Hāshimī's career for several reasons. First, the statistics about remaining in the Ottoman army throughout the war show that his continuation in Ottoman service was not an aberration, but rather more consistent with the general trend. Uyar's statistics, showing that a substantial portion, almost twenty percent, of Ottoman-Arab officers traveled to Anatolia to fight in the Turkish War of Independence also demonstrates that Taha al-Hāshimī's eventual decision to go Damascus was not a foregone conclusion. He could have followed some of his classmates and joined the resistance struggle in Anatolia.

Several examples of individuals who attempted to follow such resistance efforts are examined by Provence in detail. He describes a meeting between Mustafa Kemal, Yasin al-Hāshimī, and Yusuf al-'Azma at the end of the war, "seeking to coordinate military operations against the British and the French."¹⁰¹ In another instance, Provence argues that exiled Ottoman politician Shakib Arslan "tried to arouse Mustafa Kemal to support opposition to the Anglo-French settlement and possible reattachment of the mandate territories to Anatolia." Provence also argues that the Defense of Rights Committees were widespread and not just restricted to

⁹⁹ Uyar, "Between Nationalism and Loyalty," 538.

¹⁰⁰ Uyar, "Between Nationalism and Loyalty," 538.

¹⁰¹ Provence, *Last Ottoman Generation*, 106.

Anatolia: “As allied troops began to appear in more towns, Islamic defense committees began to form, meeting in Izmir, Adana, Kars, Aleppo and Damascus, among many other places.”¹⁰² As a specific example—and the most well-known—Provence cites Sa‘id al-‘As and Ibrahim Hananu’s resistance along the future boundary of Syria and Turkey in 1918-21.¹⁰³ Watenpaugh likewise discusses continuity of Ottoman identity in the post-war years, which he terms “the persistence of empire.” In one explicit form of continuity, Watenpaugh describes the publication of an Arabic translation of the National Pact in an Aleppine newspaper in October 1919, which called for anti-occupation resistance and cooperation based on Islamic identity.¹⁰⁴ His model of continuity is a useful parallel, but the specific geographic circumstances of his focus on Aleppo provide a different context than al-Hāshimī experienced in his journeys.

Suhail’s introduction describes Taha al-Hāshimī’s status in Aden, in 1919, as a prisoner of war, along with the rest of his army corps headquarters.¹⁰⁵ As a relatively senior ranking officer prisoner of war—he was a lieutenant colonel at this point—al-Hāshimī may have enjoyed comparatively comfortable conditions in Aden which he did not find worth discussing in his entries. The similar absence of discussion of military duties while in Istanbul in late 1919 may indicate he did not have any duties during this chaotic period of political disorder, foreign occupation, and widespread demobilization. However, his employment in Ottoman army duties with the General Staff in late 1920 to early 1921, prior to his resignation in 1921, demonstrates that he had not completely severed his ties to the Ottoman army. Another possible reason for

¹⁰² Provence, *Last Ottoman Generation*, 107.

¹⁰³ Provence, *Last Ottoman Generation*, 113.

¹⁰⁴ Watenpaugh, *Being Modern*, 165-166.

¹⁰⁵ Al-Husrī, introduction to *Mudhakkirat Taha al-Hāshimī*, 8.

omission of any discussion of Ottoman army duties is that wartime defeat and foreign occupation proved such a traumatic and shocking experience that al-Hāshimī avoided contemplating it altogether, as a mental survival or coping mechanism. Al-Hāshimī's entries following his return from Syria to Istanbul in late 1920 are similarly laconic. These periods of travel through British and French-occupied territories, at a time when many individuals suspected of potential resistance activity were arrested or exiled, likely motivated al-Hāshimī to avoid recording details he may have feared would incriminate him were his writings searched during travel.

Although al-Hāshimī does not comment on any of the significant events taking place in Anatolia in 1919-20, it is important to recognize these events for their influence on the environment in which Taha al-Hāshimī and his Ottoman officer veterans found themselves. The Turkish National Movement, Conferences at Sivas and Erzurum, Defense of Rights Committees and militant resistance, and the establishment of the Grand National Assembly coalesced and eventually drove out European occupation forces, forcing a renegotiation of the crushing 1920 Treaty of Sèvres. The reopening of negotiations led to a new agreement, the 1922-23 Treaty of Lausanne, which effectively nullified earlier European partition of Anatolia. Provence argues that the success achieved by Mustafa Kemal and the Turkish National Movement, which he characterizes in the phrase “the right of self-determination could only be taken, and was never given,” established an “Anatolian model” for other ex-Ottomans to emulate in former Ottoman lands.¹⁰⁶

He argues this example influenced similar revolts against mandate powers in Iraq, Syria, and Palestine during the 1920s and 1930s. Although many of these subsequent events took place

¹⁰⁶ Provence, *Last Ottoman Generation*, 112, 150.

after al-Hāshimī's 1919-20 entries, their roots in the Turkish National Movement, emerging in 1919, parallels his entries and journey to Syria.

Continuity of Ottoman Identity

Demonstrating a continuity of his Ottoman identity and apparent pro-Turkish sentiment during the summer of 1919, Taha al-Hāshimī refuses his brother's request to join him in Syria, preferring instead to remain a prisoner of war in Yemen. In his entry on July 29, 1919, al-

Hāshimī writes:

A telegram arrived from Captain Morley in which he informed me that my brother is appointed governor in Damascus and that my brother is seeking me and awaiting me urgently and that a steamship is preparing to travel. I answered Captain Morley by asking him to inform my brother that unfortunately I am not able to accept this proposal unless the peace treaty is concluded with Turkey. I am urging my conscience to accept this professional life, but I do not feel comfortable accepting this service at this time of discord, when there is nothing reassuring in the political atmosphere about the peace treaty.¹⁰⁷

This is a fascinating explanation for why al-Hāshimī will not join his brother in Syria. His entry the previous day says that Captain Morley showed him orders "from Egypt" allowing Taha al-Hāshimī to join Yasin.¹⁰⁸ It is remarkable, therefore, that al-Hāshimī turns down an offer to leave his current position as prisoner of war and join his brother. One explanation for his reasoning could be that he felt obligated to continue his Ottoman army duties, with his Ottoman army unit that he served with during the war, out of a sense of patriotic duty and loyalty to the Ottoman Empire. With no resolution on the peace treaty, al-Hāshimī may have anticipated a continuation of service after the post-war negotiations. Furthermore, al-Hāshimī may have been troubled with the idea of joining a movement clearly associated with the Arab Revolt against the Ottoman

¹⁰⁷ Al-Hāshimī, *Mudhakkirat Taha al-Hāshimī*, 7/29/1919, 44.

¹⁰⁸ Al-Hāshimī, *Mudhakkirat Taha al-Hāshimī*, 7/28/1919, 43.

Empire which he still served. In his eyes, joining the Sharifian government in Damascus may have been little different than joining the Arab Revolt itself, just later than most. Al-Hāshimī's decision to remain an Ottoman army prisoner of war, rather than join the Sharifian government in Damascus, is a powerful statement about the continuity of al-Hāshimī's Ottoman identity, even amidst his other entries demonstrating his interest in the "Arab nation" and other manifestations of Arab identity.

Al-Hāshimī also manifests continuity of his Ottoman identity in a different manner, during his appeal for an Islamic revival to return "Muslims"—apparently invoking the entire community—to a place of political and military preeminence. This demonstrates the salience of the Islamic component of his Ottoman identity. While Islamic identity was not exclusive to Ottoman identity, its eminent role for many Ottoman thinkers justifies this argument that this discourse was partly a continuation of al-Hāshimī's Ottoman identity. In his entry on September 23, 1919, al-Hāshimī proposes six specific principles for an Islamic revival, arguing that "if everything is put into place the return to preeminence is neither impossible nor difficult." Each principle is followed with a verse from the Qur'an or a hadith to support his argument. Additionally, his plan is prefaced by a paragraph in which al-Hāshimī writes that "Muslims don't need the things which other nations rely on to survive and advance, except the things they [Muslims] have inherited from their ancestors which are the cornerstones and building blocks of [their] civilization."¹⁰⁹

Al-Hāshimī's plan demonstrates the strength of Islam in shaping his Ottoman identity. Both Campos and Kayalı argue that specific mobilizations of Islamic discourse influenced late

¹⁰⁹ Al-Hāshimī, *Mudhakkirat Taha al-Hāshimī*, 9/23/1919, 47.

Ottoman identity at this time. First, Campos cites several examples of eminent scholars and thinkers who connected Islamic modernism to public discourse about Ottoman identity. She argues that Ruhi al-Khalidi and Abd al-Rahman al-Kawakibi each used Qur'an and hadith examples in political commentary and discourse about Ottomanism and the role of Islam.¹¹⁰ Al-Hāshimī's similar structure in this entry and his appeal to principles of Islamic modernism, emphasizing early Islamic principles, demonstrates that al-Hāshimī may have been influenced by these thinkers. If he wasn't quoting them directly, he may have been reproducing or echoing their discursive techniques.¹¹¹ Furthermore, al-Hāshimī's mobilization of Islam resonates with Kayalı's argument that Sultan Abdulhamid II deliberately utilized the idea and institution of the caliphate to centralize power and authority.¹¹² According to Kayalı, this state mobilization increased and began to "turn to Islamism as the ideological underpinning that would safeguard the unity and continuity of what was left of the empire."¹¹³ In addition to the state-centered use of Islamic identity, Kayalı also notes the rise of an Islamic modernism movement after the Tanzimat era, led by Muhammad 'Abduh's salafīyyah movement.¹¹⁴ Kayalı positions this movement as partly a reaction to both secularization policies and perception of western

¹¹⁰ Campos, *Ottoman Brothers*, 46-48. Campos' discussion of pan-Islamist, anticolonial thinkers associated with Jamal al-Din al-Afghani also echoes many of the sentiments expressed by Taha al-Hāshimī in this entry.

¹¹¹ Al-Hāshimī's appeal for Islamic action to effect political change contrasts with Sati' al-Husrī's apparently secular visions for Ottomanism and Arabism, demonstrating the contested nature of these movements. Cleveland argues that al-Husrī had "no faith whatsoever in the ability or desirability of religion to provide the basis around which society should organize," Cleveland, 177.

¹¹² Kayalı, *Arabs and Young Turks*, 31.

¹¹³ Kayalı, *Arabs and Young Turks*, 15.

¹¹⁴ Kayalı, *Arabs and Young Turks*, 23.

dominance. It is difficult to tell whether al-Hāshimī's espousal of Islamic identity is more of an effect of state mobilization of religion or the modernist movements. His lengthy military education in the Ottoman system would have likely led him to internalize these values from a state-focused perspective, as discussed by Uyar. From another angle, al-Hāshimī's appeal may have been influenced by the then-recent Erzurum and Sivas Conferences, during which Mustafa Kemal and others argued for resistance to occupation in Anatolia and Arab lands, based partly on an appeal to shared Islamic culture and beliefs. This effort is discussed by Provence, who discusses leaflets found in Syria, reportedly from Mustafa Kemal's movement, appealing for reconciliation and collaboration in the name of cooperation to expel occupation forces. One leaflet Provence mentions contains the exhortation that "We wish to join together the parts [of the Ottoman state] against Wilson's principles."¹¹⁵

Expressions of Arab Identity in Imagined Futures

Al-Hāshimī also expresses Arab identity in plans to affect future change when he discusses a plan for "progress" of "the Arab nation." In his entry on 5 August, 1919, six weeks prior to his plan for an Islamic revival, Taha al-Hāshimī provocatively muses that "if one wanted the Arab nation to progress, it would not be difficult," and follows this assertion by articulating a plan to achieve this "progress."¹¹⁶ This plan consisted of opening a translation office and printing press for translating French philosophical and other literary works into Arabic and providing them at a low price for the public. Interestingly, al-Hāshimī also stipulates that the translations should not skip any portions of the works which might be offensive. Although he doesn't specify who discusses offending, he is likely implying Islamic scholars. Al-Hāshimī closes this entry by

¹¹⁵ Provence, *Last Ottoman Generation*, 112.

¹¹⁶ Al-Hāshimī, *Mudhakkirat Taha al-Hāshimī*, 8/5/1919, 44.

asserting that if he were competent in basic Arabic grammar and foreign languages, he would find such employment “a rewarding way to spend his days.”¹¹⁷

By insisting that making French and other European texts available to the public would enable the attainment of “progress” for the “Arab nation” as a whole, al-Hāshimī illustrates much about his educational background and social status. In casually making this claim, he equates European education, literature, and learning with human progress and “modernity.” While he defines “progress” in European terms, he still frames it in the context of a singular, seemingly monolithic, “Arab nation,” reminiscent of Benedict Anderson’s *Imagined Communities*. This universal “Arab nation” is also an imagining invoked by Sāti‘ al-Husrī. Cleveland argues that al-Husrī “refused to place himself solely within a Syrian or Iraqi context, choosing to identify with a larger Arab nation.”¹¹⁸

Separately, al-Hāshimī’s plan to translate texts into Arabic, rather than the Ottoman Turkish he would have used in his military duties, education, and years in Istanbul, indicates he was envisioning a future in Arab lands. His focus on language also demonstrates a similarity with Sāti‘ al-Husrī’s recognition of the power of a “national language” for state-driven nationalism efforts.¹¹⁹ Al-Hāshimī’s emphasis on French texts as a source of modernity recalls Campos’ argument that Ottoman elites, after the 1908 revolution, saw themselves as bearing the

¹¹⁷ Al-Hāshimī, *Mudhakkirat Taha al-Hāshimī*, 8/5/1919, 44. This is an perplexing remark, as his education and the fact that he was reading a book on French philosophy seems to indicate proficiency in at least Arabic, Ottoman Turkish, and French. It could indicate that he was musing a hypothetical situation for other individuals to take part in this program.

¹¹⁸ Cleveland, *Making*, 70.

¹¹⁹ Cleveland, *Making*, 20.

French Revolution ideals of “Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity.”¹²⁰ This could explain one aspect of his link between French texts, philosophy, and the idea of progress. On another note, the agency al-Hāshimī expresses in his imagining that he could personally bring about this progress through this imagined program is equally demonstrative of his self-image as an elite, national leader and guardian of the Arab nation’s future. This privileged self-image is reminiscent of Gelvin’s argument that intellectuals in Faysal’s government in Damascus portrayed themselves as technocratic experts, enlightened by advanced education, in order to create and legitimize for themselves an elevated role within society, above their fellow citizens.¹²¹ Al-Hāshimī’s imagining of progress for the Arab nation, rather than for the Ottoman Empire or Turkish nation, and discussion of translating works into Arabic, rather than Ottoman Turkish, is a clear manifestation of Arab identity.

In a slightly different context than his seemingly pan-Arab ideas discussed above, al-Hāshimī’s discussion of infrastructure development in Syria in late 1919, before his decision to travel to Syria, reveals another manifestation of his Arab identity. It also indicates he may have contemplated travel to Syria long before his final decision to do so, five months later. During Taha al-Hāshimī’s shipboard writings in October 1919, as he travels from Aden to Istanbul, al-Hāshimī emphasizes the importance of “opening primary and secondary schools” and argues that there should be “a school in every village.” Curiously, this follows his remarks that “the capital of Syria does not need a lot of institutes,” because “the benefits” will “come from outside, not

¹²⁰ Campos, *Ottoman Brothers*, 34.

¹²¹ Gelvin, *Divided Loyalties*, 205.

the center.”¹²² First, it is remarkable that that al-Hāshimī contemplates these developments for Syria in late 1919, even though he does signal any intent to actually travel to Syria until apparently recruited by Nuri al-Sa‘id five months later. Second, it is interesting that he focuses specifically on Syria, rather than the seemingly pan-Arab “Arab nation” he references in his entry on the translation office. This focus on Syria does indicate an increasing emphasis on Arab identity, and possible conflation of Arab identity with the Syrian government. Such conflation could indicate he saw Greater Syria as one of the few Arab lands remaining free of substantial European occupation at that time. It could also indicate he was beginning to internalize Faysal’s government’s rhetorical appropriation of authority and legitimacy.

Additionally, al-Hāshimī’s emphasis on centralization and education as a form of national mobilization and instrument of “progress” is reminiscent of both his own educational experiences in the Ottoman system and his sentiment about knowledge and learning as keys to “progress.” This recalls Fortna’s description of a worldwide movement he calls the “Age of Education.”¹²³ Fortna describes the Ottoman government’s perspective that the national project of education was a mechanism of centralization and standardization, as well as a “panacea to save the fatherland.”¹²⁴ Similar emphasis on the role of education in the state’s salvation is evident in Sāti‘ al-Husri’s views, when he argues early in his career that “The Ottomanism of the

¹²² Al-Hāshimī, *Mudhakkirat Taha al-Hāshimī*, 10/15/19, 50. Interestingly, al-Hāshimī also mentions that there is no need for a law school or medical school in Damascus, as students could be sent abroad for specialized education in those fields. Russell, however, writes that a law school re-opened in Damascus in the fall of 1919, and a medical school was reestablished as well (Russell, *Syria under Faysal*, 51-52).

¹²³ Fortna, *Imperial Classroom*, 27.

¹²⁴ Fortna, *Imperial Classroom*, 31.

future will be provided in the schools of today.”¹²⁵ Additionally, Russell argues that Faysal’s administration and “the Arab nationalists” made education a major priority, despite limited government resources.¹²⁶ Finally, al-Hāshimī’s positioning of himself as architect of these development policies demonstrates his assumed agency as inculcated during his “savior of the nation” military education and training.

Watenpaugh provides a similar model of elites claiming or asserting their privileged position in his argument that after the 1908 Revolution, Ottoman “New Men” members of the middle class recognized “the possibility of changing their society and their role in it to such a degree and in such a fashion as to make it, in the way they understood the concept, modern.”¹²⁷ Furthermore, Watenpaugh describes this group as individuals who “imagine[d] connecting the ideas being expressed, discussed, and debated” in public discourse “to what they would have considered the actual material and moral progress of their community.”¹²⁸ Al-Hāshimī’s emphasis on “progress” and his own envisioning of plans to achieve it demonstrate an attitude similar to that described by Watenpaugh. His personal social mobility through the government-run military education system likely made him more “elite” than “middle class,” as Watenpaugh argues. Overall, al-Hāshimī’s application in these entries of his own, past Ottoman experience, with imagined Arab and Syrian futures, demonstrates both continuity of salient aspects of Ottoman identity, as well as a distinctly Arab or specifically Syrian imagined future.

¹²⁵ Cleveland, *Making*, 39.

¹²⁶ Russell, *Syria under Faysal*, 51.

¹²⁷ Watenpaugh, *Being Modern*, 4.

¹²⁸ Watenpaugh, *Being Modern*, 3-4.

Absence of Anti-Turkish Rhetoric

Another continuity of al-Hāshimī's Ottoman identity is his seemingly-neutral use of the term "Turkish," without apparent pejorative context or anti-Turkish rhetoric. This also demonstrates the existence of an Arab identity not predicated upon erasure or criticism of an Ottoman other. Al-Hāshimī occasionally uses the classification "Turkish" during his entries, including one typical example on October 17, 1919, when he writes that "the steamship arrived in Jeddah and waiting for three hours. It picked up thirty-five Turkish soldiers and residents [of Jeddah]."¹²⁹ Al-Hāshimī's "Turkish" classification in this context devoid of any depreciatory tenor and is presented as a descriptive term. This differs from other memoirist or historian characterizations of the Turkish or Ottoman administration.¹³⁰ While Ja'far al-'Askari does not use the term Turkish, he does repeatedly mobilize anti-Ottoman rhetoric in his memoirs in order to justify his narrative of the Arab Revolt and legitimize his participation therein.¹³¹ Ihsan Turjman repeatedly criticizes Turkish governance and Turkish officers in his diary entries from 1915 Jerusalem. Laila Parsons notes Fawzi al-Qawuqji's descriptions of Turkish discrimination against Arab cadets during his time at the Imperial Military Academy, as well as some of his

¹²⁹ Al-Hāshimī, *Mudhakkirat Taha al-Hāshimī*, 10/17/1919, 50.

¹³⁰ As an example of this trend, Tamari argues that "an anti-Ottoman rewriting of history took place...both on the Turkish side...and on the Arab side...the erasure replaced four centuries...with what was known in Arabic discourse as "the days of the Turks": four miserable years of tyranny symbolized by the military dictatorship of Ahmad Jamal Pasha in Syria." Tamari, *Year of the Locust*, 11.

¹³¹ Al-Askari, *A Soldier's Story*, 15. As an example, Ja'far dedicates a section of his memoir to "Corrupt Ottoman administration in Iraq," in which he disparages that "Poverty was rife, due largely to the government's mismanagement, negligence, and complacency. In common with autocrats before and since, Sultan Abdulhamid never put himself to the trouble of considering the welfare of his people. He was interested only in the preservation of his life and the enhancement of his wealth, power and influence at the expense of his alienated subjects, whom he treated as if they were his worst enemies."

critiques of Turkish commanders in the Ottoman army during World War I.¹³² Al-Hāshimī's entries, recorded much earlier than those of Fawzi al-Qawuqji and Ja'far al-'Askari, do not contain the same projection back of the later preeminence of Arab identity and narrative tropes of Ottoman or Turkish oppression. His difference from Ihsan Turjman's anti-Turkish rhetoric is likely explained by al-Hāshimī's position as an elite Ottoman military officer, in contrast to Ihsan's status and experience as a conscripted soldier suffering and observing the devastation and deprivations of the war first hand, and amidst the circles of Arab activists like Khalil Sakakini. Al-Hāshimī's general lack of anti-Turkish rhetoric entries seems to demonstrate that he retained an Ottoman identity that was at least neutral to post-war Turkey and Turkish identity.

This absence of anti-Turkish discourse is even more pronounced in al-Hāshimī's portrayal of the events of Jamal Pasha's wartime executions in Syria. By presenting these events as the actions of one person, without conflating it to an indictment of Ottoman rule in general, al-Hāshimī demonstrates continuity of Ottoman identity and an Arab identity not predicated upon one of the common rhetorical justifications for Arab activism. Al-Hāshimī writes that he and a colleague

visited 'Ali Fu'ad Bey...He mentioned to us wrongs and shameful secrets and wounds [inflicted by] Jamal Pasha...and [that] he witnessed the hangings...Jamal didn't accept the request [to stop the executions] of the head of the war office Shukrī Bey and didn't accept the request of Rū'ūf Bey, chief of staff of the navy, and didn't accept [the] request of the others. He was persistent on the executions and calling therefore that he wanted to turn attention [toward] Turkey and newspapers of the world [to] Syria because he didn't receive publicity [for] the famous events which occurred in the Dardanelles and famous bombardment there...These executions [were] of courageous heroes...no death scared them and no hangings terrorized them God have mercy on them all.¹³³

¹³² Parsons, "Micro-narrative," 90-91, Parsons, *The Commander*, 10, 18, 28.

¹³³ Al-Hāshimī, *Mudhakkirat Taha al-Hāshimī*, 1/3/1920, 53.

Absent in this long entry—one of his longest from 1919-21—is any anti-Turkish or anti-Ottoman sentiment. There is no rhetoric about Turkish oppression, or any conflation of Jamal Pasha’s wartime rule in Syria with larger Turkish or Ottoman governance, as noted by Kayalı, Gelvin, and other scholars, and as mobilized in Arab Revolt memoirs by individuals such as Ja‘far al-‘Askari, who uses a second-hand account of this event to justify his decision to join the Sharifian Revolt.¹³⁴ Al-Hāshimī does not use this account as an opportunity to legitimize the Arab activism, or to demonize the Ottoman Empire and a Turkish “other.”¹³⁵

Instead, al-Hāshimī presents ‘Ali Fu‘ad’s account as a description of the actions of one individual, in a position of power, acting out of jealousy about not receiving credit for the victory at the Dardanelles (Gallipoli). Additionally, neither al-Hāshimī nor ‘Ali Fu‘ad use the term “martyr” nor Arab in this description, although he does characterize the executed individuals as heroes. This brief characterization does hint at Arab identity, though one not predicated on a delegitimization of Ottoman rule and allows for a reconciliation of both Arab and Ottoman identity.

¹³⁴ Ja‘far al-Askari presents a different narrative of learning about these events and mobilizing the narrative to legitimize participation in the Arab Revolt: “I learned too from unimpeachable sources of the various Arab secret societies...which had been uncovered by Jamal Pasha and the CUP men. Many members of these societies had been arrested, savagely humiliated and subjected to the most inhumane and outrageous torture. I made up my mind there and then to seek revenge, and to make every effort to join the Sharif of Makkah [sic] at the earliest possible opportunity.” Al-Askari, *A Soldier’s Story*, 105.

¹³⁵ Gelvin, *Divided Loyalties*, 178. Gelvin argues that the narrative of the martyrs became a linchpin of Faysal’s government’s fragile legitimacy, especially in the context of their revolt against Ottoman rule. Gelvin describes reinforcement of this narrative through the use of public ceremonies held by Faysal in October 1918, immediately following the occupation of Damascus, and in May 1920, against the backdrop of populist challenge and looming foreign intervention.

Rhetorical Internalization of Syrian Identity

In his entry in Damascus, on May 7, 1920, al-Hāshimī expresses his Arab identity when he discusses serving “the homeland.” This seems to illustrate that, to al-Hāshimī, Syria has become representative of a larger Arab nation. In his entry he writes that “Many visitors [came by] and most of them [are my] brothers. As for Munawwer’s situation [(al-Hāshimī’s spouse)], I am very worried. Sometimes she approaches me and other times she withdraws from me, and I am uncertain between service to the homeland (*al-watan*) and the way which I should proceed to fulfil and satisfy her [Munawwer].”¹³⁶

Al-Hāshimī’s characterization of working in the Syrian government as service to the homeland is interesting. First, if al-Hāshimī is talking about “the homeland,” and he was born in Baghdad, is he referring to Iraq or Syria or a larger Arab community when he mentions serving the homeland? Al-Hāshimī may have viewed the Damascus administration as representing a larger, imagined Arab homeland. This is supported by Campos’ discussion of the increased use of the term *watan* in public discourse, primarily in newspapers, following the 1908 Revolution. She argues that the meaning of *watan* changed significantly at this time, from its past association to a “place of origin or family” to a newer meaning of a “territorial incarnation of political and social contract of rights and duties.”¹³⁷ Thus, al-Hāshimī’s imagining of a Syrian or larger Arab

¹³⁶ Al-Hāshimī, *Mudhakkirat Taha al-Hāshimī*, 5/7/1920, 57.

¹³⁷ Campos, *Ottoman Brothers*, 68. Campos discusses a change in meaning of the term *watan*, partly as a result of works by Namık Kemal, to expand from where someone was born to “the *watan* is the whole of the lands where their flag flutters and where their army defends and where their hearts beat,” Campos, 68, 79, quoting from the Cairo newspaper “The Crescent,” or *Al-Hilāl*, October 1, 1908.

political entity may reflect a transformation of earlier Ottomanism into a new physical context and location.¹³⁸

Another possibility is that al-Hāshimī may have been contemplating joining one of the groups of Iraqi officers leaving for Iraq, in preparation for the later anti-British revolt. If this were the case, his “service to the homeland” could actually be referring to thoughts of relocating to Iraq, the land of his birth. However, this explanation is problematic, as there are no other indications of interest in traveling to Iraq at this time and he turns down a request by “the brothers” to travel to Iraq later that month. Al-Hāshimī’s rhetorical use of the term “service to the homeland” to describe his anticipated assignment with the Syrian government most likely illustrates the frame in which he wanted to characterize employment in the Syrian administration.

In a similar manifestation of al-Hāshimī’s Arab identity, he refers to his final appointment to a position in the Syrian government as an opportunity to defend “the nation.” In his entry on May 20, 1920, al-Hāshimī expresses his satisfaction at being appointed to a position in the government by Yusuf al-‘Azma, saying “I am able to sacrifice and take pains in the training, instruction, and preparation for war and defense of the nation (*umma*).”¹³⁹ Al-Hāshimī’s use of the term *umma* here is interesting, as it recalls his earlier use of the term *umma al-arabiya*, as used in his entry about the translation office. It could mean that he wanted to characterize his appointment along similar rhetorical lines and insinuate that he was serving not just Syria, but the larger nation of Arab peoples. Or, his exclusion of “Arab” from “Arab nation” could indicate that he was being more specific and just focusing on Syria. However, if that were the case, he

¹³⁸ Cleveland, *Making*, 70. This demonstrates a parallel with Sati‘ al-Huri here, who Cleveland argues reimagined principles of Turkism and Ottomanism in a new, Arab setting.

¹³⁹ Al-Hāshimī, *Mudhakkirat Taha al-Hāshimī*, 5/20/1920, 59.

could just write “Syria,” as he does in other circumstances.¹⁴⁰ Nevertheless, his self-identification of his appointment as in the “defense of the nation” is a significant contrast to his earlier characterization of his brother’s appointment in Syria as “in the service of the Sharif.” Therefore, participation in the Syrian government, at least for al-Hāshimī, was no longer associated solely with the rebellious Hijazi government, but with a legitimate state worthy of his service.

Interestingly, Campos discusses a changed use of the term *umma* after the 1908 Revolution, particularly in works by Suleiman al-Bustani, to show the “shift in the legitimacy of political power from the ruler to the nation.”¹⁴¹ Campos argues that mobilization of the term *umma*, as a “nation-people” in public discourse, led individuals to a new conception of the Ottoman people and community as the primary “actor in history,” rather than the sultan.¹⁴² Therefore, al-Hāshimī’s invocation of this *umma*, albeit in an implied Arab or Syrian context, may also represent a subtle continuity of Ottoman identity, as argued by Campos. Al-Hāshimī’s description of his new position in Syria as in “defense of the nation” marks the both change and continuity his Arab and Ottoman identities. In a way, he positions himself as just as committed to the cause of Syrian or Arab independence as he was to “Turkey” when his conscience prevented him from leaving Aden in the summer of 1919. Therefore, elements of his Ottoman military education and self-image as “savior of the nation” continue and comprise a strong facet of his post-war, identity, albeit in an Arab or Syrian context.

¹⁴⁰ As mentioned above, al-Hāshimī’s conflation of Syrian and Arab may also indicate an implicit characterization that Syria was the last autonomous, non-European occupied Arab land.

¹⁴¹ Campos, *Ottoman Brothers*, 48.

¹⁴² Campos, *Ottoman Brothers*, 48.

Conclusion

Taha al-Hāshimī's fluctuating exhibitions of Ottoman and Arab identities are evident in several specific instances, providing a unique, first-person account of a trend only alluded to in broader terms in revisionist scholarship, and contrasting with earlier narratives of transition or progression between mutually-exclusive, if not mutually-hostile, identities. Examples of these identities are presented in chronological order, as they appear in al-Hāshimī's writing, in order to illustrate their alternating nature and lack of simple trajectory.

Al-Hāshimī manifests Ottoman identity in his refusal to abandon his army unit in Yemen in captivity at the end of the war. By arguing that his conscience would not let him join the Syrian government, which he characterized at that time as "in the service of the Sharif," al-Hāshimī implies that joining the government associated with revolt against the Empire would compromise his feelings of loyalty to that Empire. Other possibilities include anticipating an opportunity to continue service after the war or to join resistance efforts in Anatolia, or al-Hāshimī may have been pragmatically concerned about the prospect of joining the government in Syria in the shadow of anticipated occupation, in which case he may have just wanted to wait and see the resolution of the post-war negotiations before traveling to Syria. Regardless of his motives—of which there may have been several, these entries provide a new, first-hand perspective of post-war actions which contrasts with accounts of individuals deserting the Ottoman army and returning home, or flocking to Damascus to join the new administration.

Taha al-Hāshimī's appeal for an Islamic revival further exhibited Ottoman identity, suggesting adoption and continuation of 1908 Revolution-era public discourse from Islamic modernist movement thinkers, as well as Hamidian era mobilization of religion as a force for

imperial unity and centralization, which al-Hāshimī would have experienced during his military academy education. It also supports the possibility that al-Hāshimī was aware of and inspired by calls made by Mustafa Kemal and others at the Erzurum and Sivas Conferences for cooperation among Ottoman Muslims. While Provence acknowledges the spread of this messaging throughout former Ottoman Arab provinces in Syria, this suggests that such messaging may have reached prisoners in Yemen. A comparison of al-Hāshimī's discourse with that used by Mustafa Kemal and the newspapers and leaflets discussing the Turkish National Movement could provide further evidence of such links. Additionally, since Campos' temporal focus on Ottomanism does not extend to the years covered in al-Hāshimī's entries, these entries provide a unique account of the salience of Ottoman identity, even at the apparent end of Empire.

Meanwhile, al-Hāshimī's Arab identity is apparent in his discussion of envisioned futures of a broader "Arab nation," as well as in his contemplated future of Syria. It is significant that al-Hāshimī's translation office plan takes place in the context of translating works into Arabic, implying an Arab, rather than Ottoman Turkish future. Furthermore, his situating this plan in support of "the Arab nation" implies a larger group. At a time of such uncertainty, this may have been vague or fluid by nature. Moreover, this plan's ultimate goal of "progress" reveals al-Hāshimī's equating knowledge and learning with human progress. Al-Hāshimī's additional schemes for "developing" Syria indicate that this was another form of carving out a position in society as a custodian and architect of modernity. As an individual educated in such topics, al-Hāshimī appears to position himself as a custodian of this "modernity," carving out and legitimizing a role for himself in post-war society. However, al-Hāshimī's status as an elite military officer contrasts with the Aleppine "middle class," "civil society" individuals and

Damascene or Palestinian “cultured” intellectuals to whom Watenpaugh and Gelvin, respectively, attribute such modernizing practices.

Third, al-Hāshimī’s absence of anti-Turkish rhetoric, despite multiple opportunities, also demonstrates a degree of Ottoman identity. While he uses the term Turk or Turkish, it is never in a pejorative or “othering” sense, in contrast to works by his contemporaries that criticize Turkish oppression, tyranny, backwardness, and other tropes. This is especially noticeable when comparing al-Hāshimī’s discussion of Jamal Pasha’s wartime executions in Syria to accounts by avowed Arab nationalists and individuals who participated in the Arab Revolt.

Finally, al-Hāshimī’s characterizations of employment in Syria indicate a manifestation of Arab identity in the scope of a broader, imagined Arab nation.¹⁴³ This hearkens back to his earlier rhetoric of progress of the Arab nation, and appears to be a self-positioning as a defender of that larger body, even though the administration al-Hāshimī found employment in was one he earlier called Hijazi and Sharifian. Thus, al-Hāshimī appears to have found a mechanism for legitimizing his decision to join a group who rose to power based on a revolt against the Ottoman state he technically still served. By looking at this group in a new light, al-Hāshimī appears to reconcile the tensions inherent in joining his former enemies. The timing of this decision, after the Syrian declaration of independence and ostensible end of ties with Britain, suggests the importance of dissociating the Syrian government from European dependence and allegiance.

Intriguingly, these manifestations of Ottoman and Arab identity do not follow a simple progression from one to the other—as if one had gradually become more dominant, while the

¹⁴³ His change from characterizing the Damascus government as “in the service of the Sharif” or “Hijazi” is strikingly different than the “service to the homeland” and “defense of the nation” rhetoric he uses after his arrival in Syria and participation in the government. This characterization will be further examined below.

other faded away. Such findings might be expected in a narrative of seemingly straight-forward transition from Ottoman to Arab identity, nationalism, political activism, and historical periodization. Such a simply-framed transition, or “conversion,” is evident in other works, like Cleveland’s account of Sāti‘ al-Husrī, and others, written with the benefit of hindsight, and in defense of the Arab Revolt. Instead, al-Hāshimī’s Ottoman and Arab identities seemingly alternate back and forth at different times. Al-Hāshimī demonstrates an Arab identity in imaginings of a wider Arab nation in August 1919, and then also in May 1920. However, he also demonstrates pragmatism and Ottoman identity by staying with his army unit in Yemen in July 1919, and then exhibits it again in January 1920 when he refrains from employing anti-Turkish rhetoric while relating Jamal Pasha’s executions in Syria. Therefore, these entries demonstrate that the navigation of identity, when recorded at the time, is extremely complicated, open-ended, confusing, messy, often a reflection of pragmatic circumstantial calculations, and cannot—and should not—be captured in, or projected onto, a deterministic progression.

Chapter 3: Rival Nationalist Groups Strive for Authority and Legitimacy in Syria

Introduction

Almost by accident, Taha al-Hāshimī’s memoir entries provide a dramatic, first-hand account which demonstrates that political authority in post-war Syria was contested amongst a multitude of nationalist groups, associations, networks, individuals and popular movements. It is “almost by accident” because it requires reading through al-Hāshimī’s elitist discourse, which is dismissive of popular movements. Despite the universalizing claims and rhetoric espoused by Faysal’s government, as well as that movement’s privileged position in later scholarship, al-Hāshimī’s entries demonstrate that it did not monopolize power and authority among the people

of Syria. Instead, these entries exhibit three aspects of this contest for political authority. First, al-Hāshimī's entries recognize that despite its universalizing claims, Faysal's government's Hijazi origins were apparent to contemporary viewers and represented a foreign appropriation of local authority. Second, al-Hāshimī's entries reveal the presence of a significant number of Iraqi officers occupying senior leadership positions in Faysal's administration, further undermining local legitimacy and stoking unpopularity among local Syrians. Third, and most interestingly, al-Hāshimī's entries acknowledge the widespread, coordinated activities and mass mobilization of popular committee nationalist groups outside the control of Faysal's government.

Historical Background

In order to understand the background of this chapter's arguments, it is necessary to examine the political environment in Damascus in further detail than addressed above. As outsiders trying to appropriate power from local notables, and using foreign resources in the process, Gelvin argues that Faysal's government had lost much of its legitimacy by the end of 1919. He writes "for a year after the end of World War I nationalist elites...had arrogated political power to themselves. In exchange they professed an ability to create effective institutions of government, guide the nation to independence, and guarantee security and prosperity. By fall 1919 they had realized none of these goals."¹⁴⁴ Provence also notes the contested nature of Faysal's rule and the hostility it engendered from many traditional elites in Damascus which his rule undermined or sought to replace.¹⁴⁵ He further contends that opponents consisted of multiple groups, some of which "saw Faysal as a traitor against the Ottoman caliphate, some worried that he and his officer followers would upset the status of the former

¹⁴⁴ Gelvin, *Divided Loyalties*, 86.

¹⁴⁵ Provence, *Last Ottoman Generation*, 107.

Ottoman leading families in politics and economic life, and some considered him a stooge of the British with poor nationalist credibility.”¹⁴⁶ It was in this context of the increasingly unpopular and foreign-dependent government that al-Hāshimī refused to travel to Syria in 1919, despite his brother’s proposition.

Also fueling resentment against the new government were simmering conflicts between Iraqi and Syrian members of the Sharifian campaign. Tauber attributes this agitation first to a feeling of discrimination by Iraqi officers, who dominated positions in the revolt armies and appeared to occupy most senior positions, relegating Syrian officers to lower ranks.¹⁴⁷ Additionally, Yasin al-Hāshimī’s demobilization of the Sharifian revolt army in 1919 and subsequent formation of a new Syrian army, consisting largely of Iraqis from the revolt army and ex-Ottoman Syrians who did not participate in the revolt, also fueled animosity toward Iraqis.¹⁴⁸ Interestingly, Tauber also notes the economic factor of military employment during a time of demobilization. Accordingly, these former military officers from Iraq and Syria were both competing for a limited number of positions and salaries in the new army.¹⁴⁹

Provence further divides the group of Iraqi ex-Ottoman officers into two major groups. The first, including Nuri al-Sa‘id, Ja‘far al-‘Askari, ‘Ali Jawdat al-Ayyubi, and Jamil al-Midfa‘i, worked closely in support of Faysal in Damascus and generally supported collaboration with the British. The other group was “led by” Yasin and Taha al-Hāshimī, and was comprised of

¹⁴⁶ Provence, *Last Ottoman Generation*, 107.

¹⁴⁷ Tauber, *Formation*, 173.

¹⁴⁸ Tauber, *Formation*, 174.

¹⁴⁹ Tauber, *Formation*, 175.

“Ottoman loyalists” which later, in Iraq, “led opposition to the King and Great Britain.”¹⁵⁰ Based on this reasoning, Provence attributes their source of disagreement to wartime participation in the Arab revolt versus loyalty to the Ottoman Empire. In a different vein, Tauber recognizes opposition between Yasin, Nuri, and Ja‘far, but provides a different argument for the source of the opposition. He attributes this split primarily to attempts by Yasin al-Hāshimī to consolidate power, but also acknowledges Yasin, Ja‘far, and Nuri’s different stances toward Britain.¹⁵¹

In addition to Faysal’s government, an alternate form of political organization began to emerge in late 1919, partly out of widespread frustration with the apparent failures of Faysal’s government, and partly out of a desire by traditional Damascene political authorities, who lost power following the replacement of Ottoman government, to regain power. These interests converged in the establishment of a Higher National Committee, formed after self-run, extra-governmental elections in Damascus in November 1919, and followed by promulgation of a charter, goals, organization, and the spread of these groups to other cities.¹⁵² Gelvin argues that the committees “commanded popular support because they integrated a variety of pre-existing, informal networks that bound together individuals within their quarters and villages into a formal structure that was congruent with daily practice.”¹⁵³ He also credits the rise in popularity of these

¹⁵⁰ Provence, *Last Ottoman Generation*, 94.

¹⁵¹ Tauber, *Formation*, 182-3.

¹⁵² Gelvin, *Divided Loyalties*, 99.

¹⁵³ Gelvin, *Divided Loyalties*, 113.

groups with growing frustration with political organizations al-Fatat, the Arab Club, and the Arab government.¹⁵⁴

Despite the popular grievances and actions behind the rise of this popular activism, Tauber argues that the Higher National Committee's establishment was seen differently by foreign officials, as a power grab by Yasin al-Hāshimī against Faysal. Tauber characterizes Yasin al-Hāshimī's popularity and influence as "exceed[ing] that of Faysal, certainly within the army," and therefore leading to fears that he would take over the government or control Faysal.¹⁵⁵ Tauber also references French interception of correspondence in September 1919 by Yasin al-Hāshimī to Druze and Bedouin leaders, urging them to attack French forces in cities along the coast.¹⁵⁶ Finally, Tauber describes an announcement by the "Committee of National Defence" to conscript 12,000 men for the Syrian army in late September as an action which led British officials to pressure Yasin al-Hāshimī to stop mobilization.¹⁵⁷ Further tension led to Yasin's arrest by British authorities in November 1919, which resulted in widespread demonstrations.¹⁵⁸ According to Gelvin, these demonstrations illustrate an increase in mass mobilization, popular political activism, and the rising influence of popular committees outside the control of Faysal's government. Gelvin argues that these demonstrations were coordinated by popular committees and were far more successful than government-organized protests.¹⁵⁹ In

¹⁵⁴ Gelvin, *Divided Loyalties*, 52.

¹⁵⁵ Tauber, *Formation*, 198.

¹⁵⁶ Tauber, *Formation*, 193.

¹⁵⁷ Tauber, *Formation*, 193.

¹⁵⁸ Tauber, *Formation*, 198.

parallel to this unrest and disapproval expressed by popular committee demonstrations following his arrest, a similar outpouring of public activism, this time in the form of supportive rallies, accompanied Yasin's release in May, 1920, almost six months after his detention.

Against the backdrop of power struggle between Faysal's government, the Syrian General Congress, and popular committees coordinating through the Higher National Committee, the Syrian General Congress declared Syrian independence on March 8, 1920. Most works contend this was done against Faysal's will, partly in rebuke for his perceived concessions during European negotiations, and in order to forestall the feared proclamation of a French mandate. Regardless, Faysal accepted the coronation as King of Syria and his brother, 'Abdullah, was likewise crowned King of Iraq the same day, by a conference of Iraqis in Damascus.¹⁶⁰ Significantly, it was only nine days after these declarations that al-Hāshimī had his fateful meeting with Nuri al-Sa'īd in Istanbul, which led to his decision to travel to Syria.

Al-Hāshimī finally departed Istanbul and arrived in Damascus in May 1920. By this point, European negotiators at the San Remo Conference, in April, had announced their decisions to award France a mandate for Syria. Less than two months later, in July 1920, al-Hāshimī was present in Damascus to record increasing tensions and the feared French invasion. He noted the call for a massive mobilization to defend Syria on July 12, followed two days later by a French ultimatum to the Syrian government to demobilize and accept the mandate, among other

¹⁵⁹ Gelvin, *Divided Loyalties*, 278.

¹⁶⁰ Provence, *Last Ottoman Generation*, 114.

terms.¹⁶¹ This ultimatum led to a crisis in the government, as Faysal initially accepted the terms, leading the congress to overthrow his cabinet in protest. In addition to opposition by the congress, a widespread insurrection erupted in Damascus, organized through the popular committees and Higher National Committee, as will be discussed below. Following the continued advance of the French army, in spite of Faysal's initial acceptance of French demands, Faysal reversed course on July 21 and ordered the disbanded army to remobilize. As a result, a hastily-gathered, desperate group of Syrian army soldiers and patriotic volunteers from Damascus mobilized under the leadership of Yusuf al-'Azma and met the French army at the fateful Battle of Maysalun on July 24, 1920. Al-Hāshimī records these events from his vantage point in Damascus, as will be seen below.

A “Hijazi” Government in Damascus

In his writings, al-Hāshimī repeatedly acknowledges the non-Syrian origins of Faysal's government in Syria. In one entry, he characterizes the administration as “Sharifian.” This characterization begins with the first entry in al-Hāshimī's memoirs, when he writes on June 26, 1919, about receiving a letter from his brother, Yasin. From this letter, Taha learns of Yasin's appointment in Syria of the position of “Head of the Military Council,” and characterizes the position as “in the service of the Sharif.”¹⁶² Thus, from the beginning of his portrayal of the Damascus government, Taha al-Hāshimī emphasizes its foreign roots in the Arabian Peninsula, rather than emphasizing its claims to serve a Syrian or larger, imagined Arab nation.¹⁶³ This

¹⁶¹ These demands included demobilization of the army, establishment of French military bases, acceptance of French occupation in several different regions, usage of a French currency, and French use of the railroad.

¹⁶² Al-Hāshimī, *Mudhakkirat Taha al-Hāshimī*, 6/26/1919, 43.

characterization supports Gelvin's argument that the group of military officers who based their legitimacy and authority on the Arab Revolt represented "outsiders" to Syrian society. Gelvin argues that this group, allied with some elite Syrian intellectuals, was generally opposed by groups of Damascene notables whose traditional power they attempted to supplant.¹⁶⁴ Al-Hāshimī's characterization of Faysal's government in Damascus in 1919 and Yasin's role in it as "in the service of the Sharif" complicates the portrayal of that government as truly "Syrian." Instead, it hints at the multitude of groups and entities vying for and claiming political authority.

Al-Hāshimī makes another indirect allusion to the Hijazi nature of the government in Syria upon his arrival in Beirut, en route to Damascus in May 1920. In his entry on May 5, 1920, al-Hāshimī writes that upon arriving in Beirut, he "met with [Salah al-Din al-]Sabbagh and saw him in the uniform of the Hijazi government."¹⁶⁵ Al-Hāshimī's use of the term "Hijazi" rather than "Arab" or "Syrian," is a fascinating distinction and similar to the one he made almost a year earlier about "in the service of the Sharif." By referring to the government al-Sabbagh worked in (and which he himself was planning to join) as "Hijazi," al-Hāshimī was again acknowledging the fact that Faysal, and those working with him, came to Damascus from the Arabian Peninsula and had no authentic claim to local origin or authority in Syria, despite calling themselves the Syrian government. If al-Hāshimī made this observation, it is likely that the population of Syria did as well. Furthermore, the timing of this remark, after the declaration of independence by the Syrian General Congress, and shortly before his remarks embracing the Syrian government as

¹⁶³ Interestingly, this is a rhetorical shift which al-Hāshimī will mobilize in a later entry and will be examined in a separate chapter.

¹⁶⁴ Gelvin, *Divided Loyalties*, 198.

¹⁶⁵ Al-Hāshimī, *Mudhakkirat Taha al-Hāshimī*, 5/5/1920, 56.

“the homeland,” demonstrates the continued salience of his perceptions of the government’s Hijazi origins. These entries provide a unique, first-hand account of broader arguments argued by Gelvin, Khoury, and Provence, that many Syrians viewed Faysal’s administration and his Sharifian-revolt officials as non-Syrians who appropriated rule in Damascus by force and claimed political authority—as well as representation of Arab lands of the Ottoman empire at the post-war conference in Paris. Al-Hāshimī’s positionality as a non-Damascene further suggests that opposition, or at least skepticism, to Faysal was not solely an issue local to Damascus, but one which concerned broader Arab sentiment as well.

Iraqi Composition of the “Syrian” Government

Taha al-Hāshimī’s frequent associations of specific, senior Iraqi ex-Ottoman army officers with Faysal’s government further support characterizations of that government as outsider in origin and composition. He writes on June 26, 1919, that his brother Yasin has informed him “Ja‘far al-‘Askari and Nuri al-Sa‘id undertook the effort of offering him service after the truce and he [Yasin] is staying in Syria” as a result.¹⁶⁶ Taha al-Hāshimī mentions another prominent Iraqi officer by name when he describes meeting with Salah al-Din al-Sabbagh upon his arrival in Beirut in May, 1920. Finally, al-Hāshimī discusses being received by prominent Iraqi general Ja‘far al-‘Askari and Faysal’s brother, Zayd, prior to his audience with Faysal.¹⁶⁷ These first-hand observations confirm a trend argued by Provence and Tauber, that a substantial proportion of government positions in Faysal’s administration were occupied by

¹⁶⁶ Al-Hāshimī, *Mudhakkirat Taha al-Hāshimī*, 6/26/1919 43.

¹⁶⁷ Uyar, “Between Nationalism and Loyalty,” 541, lists Salah al-Din al-Sabbagh along with Jafar al-Askari, Mavlud Mukhlis, Ali Jawdat al-Ayyubi, Ibrahim al-Husseni, and Cemil al-Madfai as “nearly all of the prominent commanders of Sharif Hussein were former prisoners of war.”

Iraqis. These observations also provide first-hand validation of Gelvin's argument that Faysal's government of "outsiders" was just one element of many attempting to consolidate political authority. While supporting Tauber's description of the significant number of Iraqi officers in Syria, it contests his assertion that the influence of this group ended with the departure of most of them to Dayr al-Zur and Iraq in early 1920.¹⁶⁸ Rather, al-Hāshimī's entries show that many of these prominent Iraqis were still in position in the late spring and early summer of 1920.

Beyond the senior Iraqi officers al-Hāshimī mentions by name in Faysal's Damascus administration, he also indicates the presence of a larger, more shadowy group. Part of Nuri al-Sa'id's exhortations for al-Hāshimī to join him in Syria on March 17, 1920, include his phrase that "the brothers are waiting for my [al-Hāshimī's] coming."¹⁶⁹ Al-Hāshimī mentions this group again when describing his arrival and reception in Damascus on May 7, 1920. He writes "Many visitors [came by] and most of them [are my] brothers."¹⁷⁰ Al-Hāshimī uses the term "the brothers" one last time, in an entry on May 12, 1920, when he writes that "I understood from discussions with the brothers that the group does not want to take an interest in me and does not want to support me for the job."¹⁷¹

Although vague, we can speculate that these "brothers" are referring to other Iraqi Ottoman officers, if not specifically to the secret group al-'Ahd. Al-Hāshimī's repeated association with Rashīd al-Khawja, who Tauber describes as an al-'Ahd representative in

¹⁶⁸ Tauber, *Formation*, 177.

¹⁶⁹ Al-Hāshimī, *Mudhakkirat Taha al-Hāshimī*, 3/17/1920, 54.

¹⁷⁰ Al-Hāshimī, *Mudhakkirat Taha al-Hāshimī*, 5/7/1920, 57.

¹⁷¹ Al-Hāshimī, *Mudhakkirat Taha al-Hāshimī*, 5/12/1920, 58.

Istanbul, supports this speculation.¹⁷² By this point, according to Tauber, the al-‘Ahd group had split into Iraqi and Syrian branches, and the group associated with Nuri would have been the Iraqi group.¹⁷³ Al-Hāshimī’s Iraqi origins and association of the group with Nuri al-Sa‘id and Rashīd al-Khawja would suggest that he affiliated with the al-‘Ahd al-Iraqi faction, but it is impossible to know for sure.¹⁷⁴ Al-Hāshimī’s second mention of the brothers is also vague, but appears to be referring to the same group. This is interesting, as by this point a significant number of the Iraqi officers had departed for Iraq. However, Ja‘far, Nuri, and others’ continued presence indicate that not all the senior Iraqis had departed. Al-Hāshimī’s apparent opposition from “the brothers” in his third mention of them is interesting, and occurs subsequent to al-Hāshimī’s rebuke by Faysal. That appears to demonstrate that the group was anxious to avoid crossing Faysal’s intentions, or that al-Hāshimī may have faced some opposition from some of his fellow Iraqi officers, in spite of other instances of support. It is also possible that al-Hāshimī’s use of a vague term such as “the brothers” was a technique of self-censorship, in order to avoid recording sensitive names or details in his diaries. Nevertheless, these entries likely refer to the secret al-‘Ahd group and suggest the presence of a shadowy, but nonetheless

¹⁷² Tauber, *Formation*, p. 185. This is important, as it had been almost seven years since al-Hāshimī’s role in establishing the group with ‘Aziz ‘Ali al-Misri, with no distinctive acknowledgement of al-Hāshimī’s role in the group since then.

¹⁷³ Tauber, *Formation*, p. 177.

¹⁷⁴ Al-Husrī, *Mudhakkirat Taha al-Hāshimī*, 6. Tauber argues Rashīd al-Khawja, whom al-Hāshimī repeatedly notes meeting in Istanbul, undertook the trip which brought him to Istanbul in August 1919 in order “to regularize the relationship between the Arab and Turkish governments. The intention was to reach an agreement on joint action to liberate Cilicia, Syria and Iraq. The results of the negotiations were presented to Faisal’s brother, Zayd...and later to Faisal himself, but nothing came of them” (Tauber, “Nationalist Attitudes,” 900).

influential, network of ex-Ottoman officers, hinting at some of the political undercurrents at work in Damascus politics in the spring and summer of 1920.

In addition to frequent encounters with Iraqi ex-Ottoman officers during the course of travels and administrative duties, al-Hāshimī's narration of a delegation traveling to Iraq under 'Abdullah in May 1920 offers further evidence of the presence of an active Iraqi network in the Damascus administration. Al-Hāshimī writes on May 18, 1920, that an individual "informed me in the evening that the Iraqi Conference decided to send me with Rashīd al-Khawja [and] delegates to accompany his highness the King of Iraq ['Abdullah] in negotiations with the English and [they are] seeking you to accompany it."¹⁷⁵ This would have been in the aftermath of Britain's just-announced mandate for Iraq, at the April 1920 San Remo Conference. While not explicitly clear, al-Hāshimī's entry implies that he wasn't at this "conference" of Iraqis and was only notified afterwards. This may indicate that he was not in any sort of inner circle with Nuri, Ja'far, and others. Perhaps that inner circle included "the brothers" who notified him that they didn't support him for a job after Faysal's rebuke. Also of note, at this point al-Hāshimī did not yet have a position with the Damascus government, owing to Faysal's rejection, so it is notable that he refused this request and preferred the uncertainty of remaining in Damascus, unemployed, rather than traveling to Baghdad and his homeland.

¹⁷⁵ Al-Hāshimī, *Mudhakkirat Taha al-Hāshimī*, 5/18/1920, 59. Interestingly, Tauber discusses an episode in which a large number of Iraqi ex-Ottoman officers in al-'Ahd al-Iraq departed for Dayr al-Zur after the declaration of independence in 1920. Tauber argues this was also after the announcement of a British mandate for Iraq at San Remo and was done out of a desire to mobilize a nationalist movement in Iraq. According to Tauber, this marked the end of this large contingent of Iraqi Sharifians' influence in the Damascus administration (Tauber, *Formation*, 206-207).

Like al-Hāshimī's other entries describing the complex political landscape in Damascus, this entry acknowledges first the continued presence of an Iraqi group in Damascus in mid-May 1920, two months after the joint declaration of independence by both the Syrian General Congress and the Iraqi Conference. Second, the delegation with then-King 'Abdullah—according to the Syrian General Congress and Iraqi Conference's declarations in Damascus—represents a significant expression of opposition to the San Remo Conference's pronouncement of the British mandate for Iraq.¹⁷⁶ The fact that this movement began in Damascus suggests the continued presence of Iraqi activists, challenging Tauber's assertion that most of the Iraqi officers left Syria in early 1920.

Differences within the Senior Ranks of the “Arab” Government

Taha al-Hāshimī's description of his meeting with Faysal in May 1920 reveals differences between senior ranking government officials and the factions and nationalist movements in Damascus. According to al-Hāshimī's entry on May 8, 1920:

[Faysal] said we have heard your name for long[,] but were not able to see you. I responded that circumstances prevented me from undertaking the duty and he asked where were you? I said I was staying in Istanbul for five months. He [Faysal] said to me do we need you? And he added by saying this[,] that [since] I was not present in the time of need [therefore there is] no need for me now. I was silent.¹⁷⁷

This rebuke seems a surprise after al-Hāshimī's encouraging recruitment by Nuri al-Sa'īd and seemingly warm welcome from Ja'far al-'Askari and Faysal's younger brother Zayd. With the

¹⁷⁶ Provence, *Last Ottoman Generation*, 114. Provence stresses the anti-colonial context of the Congresses and the intent to precede the San Remo Conference's anticipated declarations of the mandates for Syria and Iraq.

¹⁷⁷ Al-Hāshimī, *Mudhakkirat Taha al-Hāshimī*, 5/8/1920, 57.

reassurance and apparent support of one of Faysal's closest advisers, al-Hāshimī must have expected Faysal to support him as well. However, this did not prove to be the case.

This rejection by Faysal, after the invitation to Syria and anticipated support from “the brothers,” indicates the presence of different undercurrents and factions within the government in Damascus. Faysal's reproach appears to shadow al-Hāshimī as he hunts for a government position. Al-Hāshimī writes on May 12 that the army inspector refused to provide him a job.¹⁷⁸ Next, on May 17, al-Hāshimī writes that he decided not to accept the job of Director of Public Security, due to what Faysal said earlier. This apparent stain of Faysal's opposition appears to limit al-Hāshimī's options. These challenges indicate al-Hāshimī found himself trying to navigate a complex web of government factionalism. Taha al-Hāshimī's brother Yasin's rumored opposition to Faysal may have caused Faysal concern, or al-Hāshimī's Ottoman loyalties during and immediately after the war may have been viewed as a problem by officers who joined the Sharifian Revolt. Regardless, his later employment by a prominent Syrian nationalist hints at a nuanced political atmosphere. This provides a new, personal example of the general depictions by Gelvin, Khoury, and Provence, of political factionalism in Damascus at this time..

Despite his rejection by King Faysal, Taha al-Hāshimī finds support and eventual employment from a fellow Ottoman army loyalist and veteran who, while a part of Faysal's government, represented a significantly different group of local Syrian nationalists, owing to his family's prominence in Damascene politics.¹⁷⁹ Taha al-Hāshimī first mentions Yusuf al-‘Azma

¹⁷⁸ Al-Hāshimī, *Mudhakkirat Taha al-Hāshimī*, 5/12/1920, 57.

¹⁷⁹ Philip Khoury discusses the ‘Azma family repeatedly in his analysis of prominent Damascene family politics in his book *Urban Notables*. He writes “with vast landholdings and valuable urban real estate...and a series of high administrative posts, the ‘Azms acquired the

in an entry on 14 May 1920, when he writes that he has heard “Yusuf al-‘Azma is supporting my direction. I was appointed as an officer in [the] Gendarmes [because, as] Mohi al-Din informed me, Yusuf al-‘Azma supported my appointment.”¹⁸⁰ Almost a week later, al-Hāshimī writes:

Yusuf al-‘Azma, the Minister of War, assigned me commander in Hawran [though he] apologized that it was a small command in terms of numbers. This is the first time I am appointed to command a group [in which] I am able to exert efforts in training and disciplining for war and defense of the nation. I thanked Yusuf al-‘Azma for thinking of me for this mission.¹⁸¹

This patronage by al-‘Azma, despite King Faysal and “the brothers”’ recent rebukes, indicates that al-‘Azma may have represented a different, more local faction of Damascene elite politicians, though still within the general aegis of Faysal’s government. Gelvin generally positions al-‘Azma within the circle of Faysal’s government and elite Syrian nationalist allies. Tauber, while describing al-‘Azma’s later opposition to Faysal and Yasin al-Hāshimī’s decision to concede to the French, nevertheless also positions him within Faysal’s circle. Provence, however, emphasizes Yusuf al-‘Azma’s Damascene origins and family ties and argues that he played somewhat of an intermediary role between Faysal’s government and the Damascus elites, who saw him differently than most of Faysal’s outsiders.¹⁸² Al-Hāshimī’s entries about Yusuf al-‘Azma do not indicate the existence of a completely different political group, as will be seen

reputation of the most socially prestigious family and one of the three most politically influential families in Damascus” (Khoury, *Urban Notables*, 36-37).

¹⁸⁰ Al-Hāshimī, *Mudhakkirat Taha al-Hāshimī*, 5/14/1920, 58.

¹⁸¹ Al-Hāshimī, *Mudhakkirat Taha al-Hāshimī*, 5/20/1920, 59.

¹⁸² Provence, *Last Ottoman Generation*, 91, 107. Provence describes Yusuf al-‘Azma as “a rarity among Ottoman officers since he came from a prominent notable family of Damascus, rather than from the modest background more common among officers” (107). Provence also describes al-‘Azma as a member of the “large, cultured, multi-religious elite families who expected to exert their influence on local and regional politics as they had done as Ottoman provincial elites” (90-91).

below with the popular committees, but they do suggest that Yusuf al-‘Azma may have represented a group of Syrian nationalist elites willing to act independent of Faysal, while still being important allies and providing Faysal’s government a degree of local legitimacy.

An even more dramatic divide erupted in July 1920, between Faysal’s government and nationalists in the Syrian General Congress, during the tense debates over the threat of French invasion. Al-Hāshimī describes the Syrian General Congress’ dramatic reproach of Faysal’s government in an entry on 19 July, 1920, when he writes “the congress decided to sack the ministry which accepted the French terms.”¹⁸³ This move by the Congress effectively admonished Faysal and his ministers for accommodating French demands. In many ways, this action was the culmination of months of frustration and animosity by Syrian nationalists at Faysal’s seemingly repeated appeasement throughout negotiations in Europe.

The Syrian General Congress was not the only group to rebuke Faysal at this point. Al-Hāshimī’s observations of the popular uprisings the next day demonstrate the presence of other powerful opposition groups and movements of nationalist activism. It is possible to “read against the grain” of al-Hāshimī’s elitist observations to identify some of the popular movements which Gelvin focuses on in *Divided Loyalties*. Al-Hāshimī’s descriptions of conflict within the government demonstrates that although Faysal’s government claimed a monopoly on political authority, there were many other groups, including groups within the Syrian General Congress, which contested it.

¹⁸³ Al-Hāshimī, *Mudhakkirat Taha al-Hāshimī*, 7/19/1920, 61.

Acknowledgement of Popular Committee Activities

In multiple entries, al-Hāshimī acknowledges activities of non-elite, popular political activists. These actions are explored in further detail by James Gelvin, who examines the phenomenon of newly-formed, extra-governmental popular committees and an alternate power structure which challenged Faysal’s authority. Al-Hāshimī writes that he learns of his brother’s arrest in Syria when he is informed by two separate individuals in Istanbul who saw and read about demonstrations in Aleppo protesting the arrest. On December 11, 1919, al-Hāshimī writes that the first individual knew the arrest was true “Because he saw the demonstrations of the people of Aleppo and read the news in the newspaper.” Confirming this news, another individual informed him that the arrest was true after “he removed the newspaper from his pocket and I read the news of the demonstrations in Aleppo.”¹⁸⁴

Months later, al-Hāshimī describes widespread rallies celebrating the release of his brother and their return by train to Damascus on May 16, 1920, saying “it was a bright reception and it showed the loyalty of the people of Damascus to my brother.”¹⁸⁵ Yasin al-Hāshimī’s detention by British occupation forces, while Faysal was in Europe for negotiations, generated widespread popular backlash by Syrians against the occupation. The fact that British administrators were responsible for Yasin’s detention and that Faysal was in Europe at the time suggests the protests and later supportive demonstrations were likely organized outside the aegis of the generally carefully pro-British, Faysal government. Similarly, the description by al-Hāshimī of supportive rallies and public demonstrations accompanying the release of his brother

¹⁸⁴ Al-Hāshimī, *Mudhakkirat Taha al-Hāshimī*, 12/11/1919, 52. Frustratingly, al-Hāshimī does not mention the name of either newspaper in this entry.

¹⁸⁵ Al-Hāshimī, *Mudhakkirat Taha al-Hāshimī*, 5/16/1920, 58.

Yasin in May, 1920, is another indicator of the activities of popular committees, at that point operating under loose direction from the ascendant nationalist group, the Higher National Committee. Gelvin offers evidence from newspapers, memoirs, and interviews to provide a detailed analysis of the details of these episodes of popular activism and the growing political importance of lower-class merchants, ulama, and disenfranchised notables.¹⁸⁶ Thus, reading against the grain of al-Hāshimī's elitist descriptions, which are dismissive enough of the common Syrians taking part in these demonstrations to omit any mention of their organization or political agency, can nonetheless enable corroboration of Gelvin's revisionist postulations of the existence of mass political movements in Syria at this time.

Taha al-Hāshimī's documentation of the public reaction to the government's handling of the French ultimatum offers a more vivid glimpse of the popular committees and their mobilization of demonstrations and an insurrection following the government's decision to accept the French ultimatum. In his entry on July 20, 1920, al-Hāshimī writes that "A number of soldiers left the al-Barāmka barracks with their weapons raised and ready to fight on the pretext that the government had surrendered to the French...they [the soldiers] passed Victory Street and passed the guards of the site, who instead of repelling them joined them."¹⁸⁷ This passage contends that the soldiers, upset with the government's decision, decided to take matters into their own hands, opposing Faysal's decision of appeasement. The guards' willingness to join the rebellious soldiers is a further indication of the unpopularity of the administration's choice and of individual willingness to defy the government. Although al-Hāshimī doesn't mention specific

¹⁸⁶ Gelvin, *Divided Loyalties*, 115-117.

¹⁸⁷ Al-Hāshimī, *Mudhakkirat Taha al-Hāshimī*, 7/20/1920, 61.

organizations, his description of the insurrectionists' general strategy in securing weapons, freeing political prisoners—which would have included Higher National Committee leader Kamil al-Qassab, and opposing appeasement indicates an organized episode of coordinated political activism and collective agency. This entry thus confirms Gelvin's account of these events, although his argument that the insurrection was organized and led specifically by Syrian nationalist popular committees can only be implied.

While acknowledging the activities of groups in opposition to the government, al-Hāshimī's disdain toward them demonstrates an internalization of the elitist self-image and his background as a highly-trained and disciplined officer. Nevertheless, by reading his entries critically, it is possible to further identify the activities and agency of these popular committee-organized groups. Taha al-Hāshimī demonstrates this disregard for the activists in his comments, following the government's acceptance of the French ultimatum, that “their [the insurrectionists] yearning for disorder increased the crowds.”¹⁸⁸ This group of revolutionaries then “attacked the citadel which the gendarmes defended and attacked the weapons depot.”¹⁸⁹ Later, al-Hāshimī continues his elitist criticism when he writes on July 22, 1920, that

The greatest sin against the homeland was committed by those fanatics who aroused longing in the soldiers on 20 July to join the people and incited them to disorder in these critical times of the French advance, and weakened the army...if this fanaticism hadn't occurred...maybe our movement [would be] orderly and [there would be] security constant all around.¹⁹⁰

Instead of attributing the groups' actions to popular committee mobilization, al-Hāshimī dismisses them as unruly mobs and fanatics. His characterization of these actions as a “yearning

¹⁸⁸ Al-Hāshimī, *Mudhakkirat Taha al-Hāshimī*, 7/20/1920, 61.

¹⁸⁹ Al-Hāshimī, *Mudhakkirat Taha al-Hāshimī*, 7/20/1920, 61.

¹⁹⁰ Al-Hāshimī, *Mudhakkirat Taha al-Hāshimī*, 7/22/20, 62.

for disorder” erases and enframes the popular opposition and mobilization, rather than acknowledging its actions as legitimate and coordinated activism.¹⁹¹ His critique of “disorder” among the rebels also clearly reveals the viewpoint of a professional military officer who valued discipline.

However, a closer examination of the actions of these groups does demonstrate a level of planning and coordination, even if not to al-Hāshimī’s standards. The group he discusses seized weapons, apparently to resist the French, and also freed prisoners from the citadel. At this point, those prisoners would have included prominent Higher National Committee leader Kamil al-Qassab, further supporting the idea that the insurrection was coordinated by representatives of the Higher National Committee and popular committees. Additionally, rather than criticizing the French for their imminent invasion, Taha al-Hāshimī blames the popular movement for disrupting the government’s attempts to organize a defense. His reproach for the popular groups’ opposition to the government’s handling of the French ultimatum shows that multiple groups within the government and the popular insurrectionists could both advocate opposition to the French while nonetheless opposing one another.

These entries recording popular insurrection and mass mobilization, while written from an elite perspective dismissive of the movement’s legitimacy and political agency, nonetheless acknowledge a vital and widespread expression of political activism and nationalism. They corroborate Gelvin’s revisionist argument of popular committee-led mass politics in Syria in 1920 and add a vital additional narrative of political activism for this episode which was long dominated by the elitist narrative represented by Taha al-Hāshimī and his peers.

¹⁹¹ This narrative is similar to many which Toby Dodge describes in his book *Inventing Iraq*, on how British colonial administrators in Iraq dismissed expressions of anti-British sentiment as tribal unrest and banditry.

Conclusion

Taha al-Hāshimī's observations provide a new illustration of the multitude of factions, groups, and organizations competing for political authority in Damascus in 1919-20. These direct and indirect comments address the foreign origins and composition of Faysal's government in Damascus, alluding to it in different instances as "Hijazi" and "in the service of the Sharif." Such characterization offers critical, first-hand evidence confirming broader arguments made by Khoury, Gelvin, Tauber, and Provence. Al-Hāshimī's observations of disagreement between Faysal and some of his closest advisers also reveal the fractured and competing alliances in the Damascus government. Also significant is al-Hāshimī's further identification of a network of former Ottoman Iraqi officers who held many Syrian governmental positions. While he does not mention conflict between these individuals and the Syrian officers, as argued by Tauber in *The Formation of Modern Syria and Iraq*, he also arrived later than many of the Syrian-Iraqi tensions described in that work. Nevertheless, his acknowledgement of multiple groups of Iraqis in the Syrian administration supports the argument that the Syrian government was heavily comprised of non-Syrians.

Al-Hāshimī's silence on events of the Iraqi revolt of mid-1920, the earlier rebellion in Dayr al-Zur that January, and overall involvement in the al-'Ahd organization he seemingly helped found is puzzling. It may indicate that he had knowledge of these events and might have participated in the organizations activities, but self-censored his writings out of fear of compromising himself. Or it may indicate that he was not in the inner circles of al-'Ahd planning and was not as aware of these events as might be assumed. However, his multiple references to companionship with al-'Ahd representative Rashīd al-Khawja and occasional mention of "the brothers" would suggest otherwise. Still, the tone of his descriptions of "the brothers" in a few

entries—notably the ones about the delegation to Iraq and about lack of support for him for a job—seem to indicate that he may have only been on the fringe of the group. Al-Hāshimī’s eventual support from Yusuf al-‘Azma also indicates he wasn’t getting the support he desired from his Iraqi compatriots.

In addition to these nuanced relationships between elite actors, al-Hāshimī’s observations of popular demonstrations illustrate the existence and strength of non-elite, popular political action. Al-Hāshimī first discusses this activism indirectly, through observations of news and a second hand account of demonstrations against the detention of his brother, Yasin, by British officials. Months later, he observes similar demonstrations rejoicing at the release of his brother. Finally, he observes the actions of revolutionaries in the wake of the French ultimatum. These descriptions of popular political agency confirm revisionist arguments, exemplified by Gelvin, of extensive mass political mobilization through structures outside of Faysal’s administration. While Khoury and Tauber also mention these events and link them to the Higher National Committee, they focus on the elite leadership of these events, rather than popular agency. As such, they perpetuate al-Hāshimī’s elitist rhetoric which dismisses these groups as “mobs” and “fanatics,” rather than acknowledging them as legitimate political activists.

Conclusion

At first glance, the first section of Taha al-Hāshimī’s memoir, spanning his entries from 1919-20, might be characterized as the personal recordings and observations of his journeys—both literal and figurative—from Ottoman army duties in Yemen, to Istanbul, then service in Faysal’s government in Damascus in 1920, and back to Istanbul after French occupation. This section initially appears as but a preface to the emergence of an eminent Iraqi Arab nationalist,

serving to narrate an important transition from Ottoman to Arab identity, similar to that of al-Hāshimī's contemporary, Sāti' al-Husrī. The brevity of this section, from 1919-20, and of many of its terse entries, almost encourages the reader to skim past it in search of longer, more detailed, and possibly more interesting-seeming entries involving mandate, monarchy, and revolutionary Iraq. In a book review from 1970, one author writes "The memoirs cover the period between 1919 and 1943 but emphasize the years 1936-1941. The coverage of the years before and after this period is brief and concerned chiefly with personal matters of little substance."¹⁹² However, to minimize the importance of that initial section of the memoirs misses a vital rendering of the navigation of a period of intense uncertainty and dynamic change. Al-Hāshimī's recorded speculations about the future illuminate a range of imagined potentials which peel back the narrow confines imposed by hindsight.

Analyzing al-Hāshimī's experiences from 1919-20 with the benefit of hindsight can easily lead to mischaracterizations, especially if expressed through the trope of a singular journey or transition. Such a portrayal implies, among other things, that al-Hāshimī had an intended destination in mind when he began writing in Aden in the summer of 1919—as if he intended to ultimately return to Istanbul, Damascus, or Baghdad. Such a narrative irresponsibly oversimplifies his daily navigations of the fraught world in which he lived. It also repackages and enframes his spatial, temporal, and figurative transition from Ottoman army officer in Yemen to public servant in "Arab" Damascus as a representation or symbol for the seemingly-similar transition of Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire to "Arab" identity and nationalism. As shown by a closer reading of al-Hāshimī's entries, however, an oversimplified narrative erases much of the complexity, uncertainty, and the non-linear nature of the circumstances in

¹⁹² Al-Qazzaz, "Review," 245.

which al-Hāshimī lived, as well as other potential actions al-Hāshimī could have taken, and the associated reasons he did not.

This closer reading, if done while consciously attempting to excise the influence of hindsight, allows readers to grasp a multitude of imagined futures which al-Hāshimī saw and attempted to understand, navigate, and sometimes effect, influence, prevent, or precipitate. If al-Hāshimī's visions of the future formed a corridor of unopened doors through which he could have walked, and which he attempted to anticipate the outcome ahead of time, historical accounts often only look at the doors through which he ultimately decided to enter.

Acknowledging the other actions al-Hāshimī could have taken, or been forced to take, and the reasons involved in such decision-making, while risking an endless foray into the realm of the counterfactual, does encourage us to recognize—rather than marginalize or dismiss—the importance of times of historical transition, disruption, and liminality.

This work examined three critical characteristics of Taha al-Hāshimī's memoir entries from 1919-20. First, al-Hāshimī's entries demonstrate the pervasive existence of fears of European colonialism and imperialism in his imaginings of the future, especially in the specific context of the post-war negotiations, Versailles Peace Treaty, King-Crane Commission, and September 15 Accord. Al-Hāshimī first illustrates his perceptive insight of British and French imperial motives, intent to partition occupied Ottoman territories, and attempts to manipulate the negotiations and mandate system. Al-Hāshimī argues that the British "hid their victim Iraq" from the King-Crane Commission, in order to prevent local, anti-British sentiment from reaching the delegation and peace negotiations. Al-Hāshimī also calls out the mandate system, arguing that a French mandate for Syria should more accurately be called a protectorate. This skepticism, insight, and fear of European motives led al-Hāshimī to envision futures framed in the context of

comparisons to other examples of French and British colonialism and imperialism. Therefore, when imagining the effects of a French mandate for Syria, al-Hāshimī argues that it will lead to Syria becoming “as Algeria and Tunisia.” Al-Hāshimī fears French mandate rule in Syria could thus recreate the nearly ninety-year, apparently open-ended colonization, settlement, and annexation of Algeria by France. If not the settlement of Algeria, then it could lead to the nearly fifty-year indirect rule of Tunisia, a French protectorate. It is therefore no surprise that he characterizes this vision, compounded by widespread occupations of remaining Arab lands, by the desperate cry that this would mean a “goodbye to the Arab world!” In light of these fears of the future, it is no surprise, then, that he frames his decision to join the administration in Syria as an “opportunity to save some Arab countries from colonialism.” Each of these examples of observations of the negotiations, historical comparisons, and framing of his decision as activism and resistance thus demonstrate the importance and pervasiveness of al-Hāshimī’s fears of European colonialism and imperialism.

These expressions provide valuable, first-hand evidence that confirms several broader trends argued in recent scholarship. Al-Hāshimī’s geographic comparisons vividly illustrate Rogan’s argument that World War I in the Ottoman Empire should be viewed in the context of a longer period of continuing and devastating warfare throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Al-Hāshimī’s pervasive emphasis on French and British imperial and colonial actions also exemplify Provence’s assertion to reframe post World War I, anti-occupation revolts in a broader context of an international network of Ottoman-trained leaders resisting occupation, rather than compartmentalized, regionally-specific, national events. Intriguingly, al-Hāshimī’s entries are reminiscent of sentiments found by Fortna in his examination of Eşref Bey’s self-image and identity as a “committed” and “self-sacrificing

officer,” dedicated to saving the Empire from foreign conquest. How that identity responded to, navigated through, or attempted to exert agency over competing nationalist movements and foreign occupation was the subject of later chapters.

Second, al-Hāshimī’s alternating and sometimes simultaneous expressions of Ottoman and Arab identity provide a vivid and unique example of the idea that some individuals, especially dedicated Ottoman officers, identified as both Ottoman and Arab, and that the two were not mutually exclusive. Al-Hāshimī expresses his Ottoman identity when deciding to stay in Yemen with his Ottoman army unit as a prisoner of war, rather than accepting his brother’s British-sanctioned offer to travel to Damascus and join the government al-Hāshimī characterizes as “Sharifian.” In his argument that his conscience is preventing him from accepting the offer, al-Hāshimī expresses Ottoman identity and the tension he associates with the rebellion against the Empire he still served. Al-Hāshimī also expresses Ottoman identity when he appeals for an Islamic reawakening to restore Muslims, as a collective people, to a place of power and prestige. While mobilization of Islamic identity was also an important feature of many Arab movements, it is likely that his Islamic identity was shaped both by state-centered, late-Hamidian educational efforts in the military education system and the values it inculcated in graduates, as well as a personal awareness of wider public discourse by Islamic modernists such as Rida, al-Khalidi, and al-Kawakibi, who commented on political and social issues through Islamic discourse. Based on the timing of this appeal for an Islamic revival, it is also possible that he was influenced by Mustafa Kemal and the Turkish National Movement’s rhetoric, appeal for Islamic unity, and resistance to foreign occupation during the summer and fall of 1919.

While grappling with these expressions of Ottoman identity, al-Hāshimī also demonstrates Arab identity when he contemplates the future of “the Arab nation,” imagining a

project to translate European intellectual works into Arabic—rather than Ottoman Turkish—and make them available to the general public, clearly associating scholarly learning with progress in an Arab context. Furthermore, al-Hāshimī’s specific plans for infrastructure development and centralization efforts in Syria indicate propensities for future participation in the Syrian state and his self-image as an architect of modernization.

Alternating back to al-Hāshimī’s Ottoman identification, his persistent refusal to engage in anti-Turkish rhetoric or invoke anti-Turkish tropes further demonstrates continuity of his Ottoman identity. Finally, his changed rhetoric describing his service in the Damascene government as “service to the homeland” and “defense of the nation,” indicates that al-Hāshimī began to frame the Damascus administration as Syrian or Arab, rather than his previous emphasis on its Hijazi or Sharifian origins. Interestingly, it also demonstrates connection to a component of Ottoman identity, as argued by Campos, albeit in an Arab context. This fluctuating identity complicates deterministic narratives of progression and transition and demonstrates that individuals can exhibit multiple identities, or components thereof, simultaneously or in a seemingly alternating manner, Arab or Syrian in one instance, and Ottoman in the next. In addition to providing a fascinating account to the study of identity in general, this work suggests that al-Hāshimī’s memoirs also offer a unique and complex additional perspective to this specific historical context, long dominated by traditional Arab Revolt and Arab activist memoirs, classic narratives of Arab nationalism, and accounts of Ottoman to Arab periodization and transition. Where Eşref Bey and Mehmet Fasih’s accounts display commitment to Ottoman ideals, and Ja‘far al-‘Askari and Ihsan Turjman’s writings reveal staunch pro-Arab sentiments and denigration of a Turkish “other,” al-Hāshimī seems to straddle both camps simultaneously.

Third, al-Hāshimī's entries demonstrate the existence of a multitude of competing nationalist movements in Syria in 1919-20. Al-Hāshimī's early labeling of Faysal's administration as "in the service of the Sharif" and "Hijazi" alludes to the outside origins of the ostensibly Syrian or universalizing Arab government. Additionally, al-Hāshimī observes different divisions within Faysal's administration, evident in the different welcomes he experiences from Nuri al-Sa'id, Ja'far al-'Askari, King Faysal, and Yusuf al-'Azma. This is even more evident in al-Hāshimī's recognition of the significant presence of Iraqi Ottoman officers in Damascus and their participation in Faysal's administration. Beyond the other groups of elite political actors, al-Hāshimī also recognizes the dynamic role of popular political activism in Syria at that time. Although he dismisses these events as the actions of "fanatics" and disorderly "mobs," he inadvertently also acknowledges their power, widespread appeal, effectiveness, and coordination in his narration of demonstrations supporting his brother, Yasin, and narration of the post-French ultimatum insurrection in Damascus. Since al-Hāshimī refuses to directly admit these groups' legitimacy, it requires examination of other scholarship, particularly James Gelvin's *Divided Loyalties*, to further develop the details of these groups, their mobilization under the Higher National Committee, and the degree of popular organization and participation. Nevertheless, al-Hāshimī's observations confirm Gelvin's account of that popular activism.

Future Scholarship

This work posits a number of avenues for future research. First, it argues that it is worthwhile to investigate time periods traditionally viewed as liminal, transitional, or unimportant, especially along the margins of historical periodization. This invites a reexamination of assumptions, models, and narratives of complete disruption, seemingly binary transition, and "progression." This is especially important in the field of identity, as al-Hāshimī's

entries demonstrate the continued performance of Ottoman identification simultaneous to or alternating with performance of Arab identification. This work also invites an examination of imagined futures, especially during these times of apparent liminality. Examining contemporary imaginings of what individuals feared or hoped might happen can be a provocative insight into their identity, background, worldview, assumptions of agency, and environment.

In the context of these general themes for future research, a number of specific questions come to mind. These include: do al-Hāshimī's later entries, in the latter 1920s and 1930s, still demonstrate a lack of anti-Turkish or anti-Ottoman sentiment? How did that change over time? Does al-Hāshimī address or reflect on his Ottoman past, and how does that compare with the construction of a national history in Iraq? What new futures does he imagine in the 1920s and 1930s? After his early critiques of Britain, how does al-Hāshimī react to Nuri al-Sa'īd, Ja'far al-'Askari, and King Faysal's close ties with Britain in Iraq?

As far as al-Hāshimī's earlier years, what role did Taha al-Hāshimī play in the secret society al-'Ahd, between the time when he established branches in Arab provinces and the time when members of those branches adopted an agenda for a separatist revolt against the Ottoman Empire? Tauber's argument that the organization did not adopt the separatist agenda until almost a year after al-Hāshimī departed for Yemen begs the question of how involved al-Hāshimī was with such separatism, especially in light of his lack of participation in the Sharifian Revolt. Yasin al-Hāshimī's early support for separatism, followed by eventual opposition makes this interesting to ponder. Could answers to these questions exist in Ottoman archives or records in Yemen, Damascus, Baghdad, or any of the other cities in which al-Hāshimī established al-'Ahd branches? In addition to Ottoman or Arab records, do more detailed French or British records of these organizations exist in Paris or London?

Additionally, why did the apparently stellar young officer, Taha al-Hāshimī, go to seemingly-remote Yemen before World War I? Did he volunteer for the assignment, as argued by his son, or was he sent there as a form of punishment, possibly in light of his association with ‘Aziz ‘Ali al-Misri? What other memoirs or biographies of Ottoman officers, especially those from Arab provinces, exist who served in Yemen at this time? How did they characterize their service? How connected to the rest of the Ottoman Empire were prisoners of war in the ostensibly remote region of Yemen and Aden? Al-Hāshimī mentions receiving letters, cables, reading newspapers, and browsing booksellers’ shops during his time in Aden as a prisoner. How “normal” was this and how affected was he and others by censorship efforts? In spite of this censorship, how did al-Hāshimī remain aware of developments in European negotiations? Did he interact with British officials? Did his knowledge of French allow him to read European periodicals?

Another interesting line of inquiry provoked by this work asks to what extent did Ottoman officers from Arab provinces view Faysal’s government as the result of an illegitimate revolt against the Ottoman Empire and how did individuals negotiate these feelings? Were such sentiments suppressed or censored out of political expediency? Do examples exist of individuals who refused to go to Syria after the war, citing this as a reason? What influence did the Syrian General Congress’ declaration of independence in March 1920 have on the perceptions of Faysal’s legitimacy as an Ottoman rebel? Did counter-narratives emerge criticizing Ottoman officers from Arab provinces who did not join the Sharifian revolt, like al-Hāshimī? On a separate, but related topic, do memoirs or biographical works exist of Ottoman officers from the Arab provinces who joined the Turkish National Movement in Anatolia? Mesut Uyar mentions statistics in Ottoman military academy records, but no names.

Another period of limited commentary, despite proximity to significant events, invites the question of what ties, if any, did al-Hāshimī have to the Ottoman army or government while in Istanbul in late 1919-20? How does the apparent retention of his Ottoman army commission through his time in Syria compare to other Ottoman officers of that time? Was his delayed resignation more a product of disruption in the bureaucracy amidst occupation and demobilization, or did al-Hāshimī continue to execute Ottoman army duties, such as those described in his son's introduction describing his activities in late 1920-21?

Does al-Hāshimī, in his six-principle plan for an Islamic reawakening, specifically draw on particular authors or thinkers of that time, or are the specifics of his plan original? How does this plan compare to the Erzurum and Sivas Conference appeals and leaflets distributed in Syria by Mustafa Kemal and the Turkish National Movement, which Provence references? Would similarities indicate that al-Hāshimī was aware of Anatolian entreaties, or simply a shared background and public discourse? Regarding his imaginings of Syrian development and centralization, why does al-Hāshimī discuss Syria's educational, health, transportation, and communications systems? In his discussions on education, why does he advocate sending students to medical school in Bulgaria and students to law school in Europe, generally? What are his ties with Bulgaria, especially after its involvement in the Balkan Wars?

Al-Hāshimī appears to speak approvingly or at least in neutral tones of Nuri al-Sa'īd and Ja'far al-'Askari, despite their participation in the Arab Revolt. He also does not directly criticize King Faysal, even after recording his rebuke. What other conflicts between ex-Ottoman officers and members of the Syrian government are apparent in different memoir accounts by these individuals? Which narratives of this era dominate among different audiences? Who invokes which narrative and why? For instance, Provence argues that many Syrians are taught that Yusuf

al-‘Azma participated in the Arab Revolt, rather than remaining loyal to the Ottoman Empire. What can we learn by comparing accounts written by individuals who remained loyal to the Ottoman Empire and those who took part in the Arab Revolt? At what points do different narratives become more salient and why?

Al-Hāshimī’s silence is almost deafening on so many issues and events which occurred in 1919-20, but which he does not address. Despite referencing a delegation traveling to Iraq in May 1920 with ‘Abdullah, he makes no mention of the widespread Iraqi revolt, which began that same month, expanded through the summer, and was only finally suppressed in the fall. Al-Hāshimī’s family ties through his sister in Baghdad, al-‘Ahd’s network, and consumption of periodicals indicates he must have known about the events. Yet he does not mention them at all. Al-Hāshimī also does not mention the Nabi Musa Riots in Jerusalem in April 1920, or the issue of Zionism which was documented in many interviews of the King-Crane Commission at the time. Finally, as referenced in the analysis above, al-Hāshimī does not directly address the Turkish National Movement, fellow Staff College graduate Mustafa Kemal, the Turkish National Assembly, or any of the events which Provence argues formed “the Anatolian model” of resistance and self-determination by force of arms. Are these omissions the mark of an individual who wanted to avoid compromising himself in the event his writings were seized during travel? Do they reflect later editing and removal by al-Hāshimī or his son, in fear of publishing incendiary material which would discredit his reputation? Could it be that they reflect ambivalence on these issues? Or do they reflect issues so painfully traumatic that he dissociated from all thought and suppressed all reflection of them as a survival mechanism? Or, as is more likely, to what extent are the omissions a combination of some or all of these different factors?

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