

A Divided Camp: The *Istiqlalis* in Transjordan, 1920-1926

by

Ghazi Jarrar

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Abstract

This thesis sheds light on the heterogeneity of the *Istiqlal* Party in early 1920s Transjordan, and examines its effects on the politics of this new Emirate. It argues that there were diverse agendas and competing visions among members of the *Istiqlal* Party, who came to dominate the bureaucracy throughout the early 1920s. The thesis discerns two main types of *Istiqlalis*: militants and accommodationists. The former were committed to the goal of fighting the French in Syria and were engaged in anti-colonial activities. The latter were less committed to the anti-colonial struggle, and forged better ties with the colonial powers.

This thesis also discusses the relationship between the *Istiqlalis* and the native population. It reveals that the early 1920s saw the emergence of an oppositional movement against the *Istiqlalis*. At the same time, this movement endorsed and supported the anti-colonial activities of the militant *Istiqlalis*.

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Chapter One: Introduction

In November 1920, Prince Abdullah, the son of Sharif Hussein bin Ali, the leader of the anti-Ottoman Arab Revolt, arrived in Transjordan. He spent four months in the town of Maan and moved to his future capital, Amman, in March 1921.¹ Upon arriving in Amman, Abdullah embarked on a mission to set up an administration in Transjordan. For this purpose, he relied on a group of Syrian nationalists who had fled Syria in July 1920 following the French occupation. The majority of those belonged to the Arab Independence Party, *Hizb al-Istiqlal al-Arabi*, an Arab nationalist party formed in Damascus under the rule of Faysal, Abdullah's younger brother. *Al-Istiqlal* was the sister organization and the public branch of the pre-war nationalist society, *al-Jamiyya al-Arabiyya al-Fatat*, or the Young Arab Society.² The *Istiqlalis* came to play a central role in the early years of Prince Abdullah's regime in Transjordan. This was particularly true for the period between November 1920 and February 1928, after Abdullah's arrival and before Transjordan's colonial status was formalized under the Anglo-Transjordanian treaty.³ In this roughly seven-year period, the *Istiqlalis* did not only staff Abdullah's bureaucracy and military, but they also came to dominate almost all positions of power in his Emirate.

¹ Abdullah bin al-Hussein, *Mudhakkarati* (Amman: al-Ahliyyah, 1998), 178.

² For a discussion of *al-Fatat* and *al-Istiqlal* under the Faysali regime in Syria, see James Gelvin, *Divided Loyalties: Nationalism and Mass Politics in Syria at the Close of Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); and for a discussion of *al-Fatat's* prewar activities, see Eliezer Tauber, *The Arab Movements in World War I* (London: Frank Cass, 1993).

³ Tariq Tell, *The Social and Economic Origins of Monarchy in Jordan* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 71.

Despite their importance in the early years of Transjordan, the *Istiqlalis* have only received marginal attention in the historiography of Transjordan. Examining the literature on the early history of Transjordan, one observes two tendencies. First, the *Istiqlalis* are only discussed in passing, either as agents of state legitimacy or in the context of tribal relations, and colonial policies. Second, and more importantly, the *Istiqlali* bloc is almost consistently portrayed as a homogenous unit. Very few scholars have paid attention to the heterogeneous nature of the *Istiqlali* camp, and almost none explored the different agendas and projects within the camp, and how those influenced politics in Transjordan in the 1920s.

This project addresses this significant gap in the literature. Focusing on the period between Abdullah's arrival in Transjordan in November 1920, and the resignation of Ali Rida al-Rikabi's second cabinet in June 1926, it demonstrates that there were sharp divisions and competing visions within the *Istiqlali* camp in Transjordan. On the one hand, there were militant *Istiqlalis*, who were part of a wider nationalist network. Its members were engaged in anti-colonial activities in Syria, and were reluctant to acknowledge the newly formed national borders. On the other hand, there were accommodationist *Istiqlalis*, who were more interested in state-building than in fighting colonialism in Syria or elsewhere. This group loosened its ties to the nationalist network (and *Hizb al-Istiqlal*) after arriving in Transjordan, and was often on better terms with the British officials. These divisions in the *Istiqlali* camp, the project further argues, had a significant influence on Transjordan's politics in the 1920s, particularly with regards to the rise of an oppositional movement among the native population. Made up of both tribal and

urban educated elements, the Transjordanian opposition rejected the presence and the policies of all of the *Istiqlalis* in the government, but was sympathetic towards the anti-colonial cause of the militants.

This introductory chapter, first, provides a contextual background of Transjordan and the *Istiqlalis* in the 1920s. Second, it summarizes the historiography of Transjordan in the 1920s to demonstrate that the *Istiqlalis* have only been marginally treated in the literature. Last but not least, this chapter explains the parameters of the project in greater detail, and it summarizes the chapter outline.

Background: the *Istiqlalis* in Transjordan

At the end of the Great War, Occupied Enemy Territory Administration/East, or Transjordan, was under the loose control of Prince Faysal ibn al-Hussein's Arab Government, which he set up in October 1918. Under Faysal, Transjordan was divided into three administrative territories: Karak, Balqa, and Hawran (which also included parts of Syria).⁴ The Arab Government delegated officers and governors to these territories, and established a small gendarme force to maintain rule and order in the area.⁵ But weak and cash-stripped, Faysal's government was hardly able to exert its control in Transjordan.⁶ This was made worse by Britain's military withdrawal from the territories under Faysal's command on September 15, 1919.⁷

The British evacuation put Faysal and his administration under the mercy of the

⁴ Sulayman Musa, *Tasis al-Imara al-Urduniyya, 1921-1925 Dirasa Wathaqiyya* (Amman: al-Matbaa al-Urduniyya, 1971), 18.

⁵ Khayr al-Din al-Zirikli, *Aman fi Amman* (Amman: al-Ahliyya, 2009), 156.

⁶ Kamal Salibi, *The Modern History of Jordan* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 1993), 42.

⁷ Malcom B. Russell, *The First Arab State: Syrian Under Faysal, 1918-1920* (Minneapolis: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1987), 95-96.

French, who signed an agreement with Britain at San Remo in April 1920.

Solidifying the 1917 Sykes-Picot agreement between the two powers, the San Remo Treaty divided the Arab East into mandates: the territories which eventually became Syria and Lebanon were given to France, while Palestine and Transjordan fell under Britain's control.⁸ As a result of this Treaty, and having failed to reach an agreement with Faysal and his administration, French troops occupied Syria, and put an end to the Arab Government on July 24, 1920. The French occupation cut off Transjordan from northern Syria, and placed the territory under the mercy of the British decision makers.

Initially, Transjordan entered a phase of self-rule. The British, who were militarily and administratively present west of the Jordan River in Palestine, had minimal presence in Transjordan. Within the British government, opinions about what to do with Transjordan varied. In the Foreign Office, the prevailing opinion was to appoint Zayd, Sharif Hussein's youngest son, as the ruler of the territory. In Palestine, British colonial officials, most notably high commissioner Herbert Samuel, were lobbying for the incorporation of Transjordan into Palestine. For its part, the War Office in London rejected British military presence in Transjordan. The Office saw that military occupation of Transjordan was not financially or logistically possible.⁹ The final decision was to send British advisors to Transjordan in the hope of encouraging self-rule, and eventually incorporating the territory into Palestine.¹⁰

⁸ Uriel Dann, *Studies in the History of Transjordan, 1920-1949: The Making of a State* (London: Westview Press, 1984), 1.

⁹ Mary Wilson, *King Abdullah, Britain and the Making of Jordan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 45.

¹⁰ Musa, *Tasis al-Imara al-Urduniyya*, 28.

Responding to a call from 400 Transjordanian notables, Herbert Samuel travelled to the town of Salt on August 21 1920 to meet figures from the towns of Tafila, Karak, Balqa, and Jerash.¹¹ In a speech, Samuel promised the crowd to keep the French out of Transjordan, and to establish an independent administration in the territory.¹² In September, the British held another meeting with Transjordanian notables in the town of Um Qays. At Um Qays, Samuel's assistant, Major Somerset, agreed to form an Arab government, prevent Zionist immigration east of the Jordan River, grant freedom to political prisoners, and to financially support the formation of a national military force.¹³ In the aftermath of these two meetings, Transjordan fragmented into small (and mostly dysfunctional) local governments. Among other places, governments were formed in Karak (known as the Moab government), Salt, Amman, Irbid, and al-Kura.¹⁴ Despite calls for unity from the government of Irbid, the various administrations remained disunited and only nominally controlled by a central British authority in Palestine.¹⁵

In November 1920, a major turning point took place. Prince Abdullah, the second eldest son of Sharif Hussein, arrived with a small force in the city of Maan.¹⁶ Although a Jordanian city today, at the time Maan was still part of the Hijaz region. The motives behind Abdullah's departure from Mecca to Maan remain unclear.

Some have argued that it was "rooted in Arabian politics, and in particular

¹¹ Munib Madi and Sulayman Musa, *Tarikh al-Urdun fi al-Qarn al-Ishrin, 1900-1959* (Amman: Maktabat al-Muhtasib, 1959), 101.

¹² Madi and Musa, *Tarikh al-Urdun*, 103.

¹³ Ali Mahafza, *Tarikh al-Urdun al-Muasir: Ahd al-Imara, 1921-1946* (Amman: Jordan University Press, 1973), 17.

¹⁴ Madi and Musa, *Tarikh al-Urdun*, 106.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 114.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 133.

Hashemite competition with Ibn Saud for hegemony in the [Arabian] Peninsula.”¹⁷ Abdullah, who had just suffered a major military loss to Ibn Saud (and almost lost his life in the battle), might have decided to move north to put pressure on the British to support the Hashemite family in their rivalry with the Saudi family. In fact, it might not have been accidental that his departure to Maan coincided with the Cairo conference, where the British Colonial Office was negotiating with Faysal.¹⁸ Other sources indicate that Abdullah moved north after Transjordanian tribesmen and notables called on Sharif Hussein to send one of his sons to the territory.¹⁹ But regardless of his real intentions, Abdullah’s rhetoric in Maan was both inflammatory and militant. He released fiery statements promising to liberate Syria from the French and calling on Arabs to join his movement. Most famously, two weeks after his arrival in Maan, Abdullah released a public letter to “the entirety of the Syrian brothers.” The statement included the following:

...I came here with others to have the honor of joining your struggle and expel the aggressors from your beloved homeland...The colonizer came to take away your weapons, and deprive you of your manhood. I call on you to gather around me and defend the nation...²⁰

Abdullah’s anti-French rhetoric appealed to a specific group of Syrian Arabs, who were residing in Transjordan’s towns and villages at the time.²¹ These men, most of

¹⁷ Tell, *The Social and Economic Origins*, 59.

¹⁸ Philip Robins, *A History of Jordan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 19.

¹⁹ Madi and Musa, *Tarikh al-Urdun*, 132.

²⁰ Abdullah bin al-Hussein, *Mudhakkarati*, 178.

²¹ According to Walid Kazzuha, Abdullah rhetoric was both anti-French and anti-British before he left the Hijaz. He allegedly made a speech upon his departure from

whom hailed from areas north of Transjordan, had served in Syria under Faysal's short-lived administration.²² They belonged to the Arab Independence Party, *Hizb al-Istiqlal al-Arabi*. Its pre-war sister organization, *al-Jamiyya al-Arabiyya al-Fatat*, or the Young Arab Society, was the first Arabist organization to establish ties with the leader of the Sharifian Revolt, Sharif Hussein, and call for Arab separation from the Ottoman Empire. Before the breakout of the Great War (and, in fact, before the British occupation of Damascus), *al-Fatat* had a limited following.²³ The situation, however, changed after Faysal and his British allies arrived in Damascus. Due to the organization's strong ties to Faysal and his family, *al-Fatat* soon became the backbone of the new regime in Damascus. Consequently, many Syrians joined the organization, and "jumped onto the nationalist bandwagon after the war."²⁴

After France occupied Syria in July 1920, many of those who belonged to *al-Fatat* and *al-Istiqlal* had to flee the country. In fact, some, like Rashid Tulay, Ahmad Muraywid, and Khayr al-Din al-Zirikli, came to Transjordan to escape French death sentences.²⁵ While some chose to go to Palestine and Egypt, a sizeable group came to Transjordan's cities and towns. Members of *al-Istiqlal* who came to Transjordan included: Nabih al-Azm, Adel al-Azm, Adil Arslan, Awni Abd al-Hadi, Kamil al-

Medina in which he promised to drive the British into the sea, and then liberate Syria from the French; Walid Kazzuha, "The Political Evolution of Transjordan," *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 15, No. 3 (1979): 241.

²² For an exhaustive overview of Faysal I's Syria, see Malcom B. Russell, *The First Arab State: Syrian Under Faysal, 1918-1920* (Minneapolis: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1987).

²³ See Ernest Dawn. *From Ottomanism to Arabism: Essays on the Origins of Arab Nationalism* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1973).

²⁴ D. K. Fieldhouse, *Western Imperialism in the Middle East: 1914-1958* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 279.

²⁵ Tariq Tell, *The Social and Economic Origins*, 63.

Qassab, Hasan al-Hakim, Sami Sarraj, Yousef Yasin, Hilmi Abd al-Baqi, Amin al-Tamimi, Jamil Madfai, Rashid al-Madfai, Abd al-Sattar al-Sandursi, Musallam Attar, Mustafa al- Ghalayini, Mazhar Raslan, Rida al-Rikabi, Mahmud al-Faur, and Fuad Salim.²⁶ At least nine of these figures were sentenced to death in French-occupied Syria.²⁷ While the majority of the *Istiqlalis* hailed from Syria, locals also joined the party. Among these was the prominent nationalist Ali Khulqi al-Sharayri, but also Rashid al-Khizai, Mithqal al-Fayiz, Sulayman al-Sudi, Salim al-Hindawi, and Said Khayr joined the organization in the early 1920s.²⁸

Spending four months in Maan,²⁹ Abdullah corresponded with the *Istiqlalis* and called on them to join him. Excerpts from his proclamation to the Syrian people were widely distributed, and he sent a delegate to Amman to meet with the *Istiqlalis*.³⁰ Encouraged by his nationalist and militant rhetoric, *Istiqlalis* in Amman responded by sending Abdullah a high-profile delegation in February 1921.³¹ It included: Awni Abd al-Hadi, Kamil al-Qassab, Amin al-Tamimi, and Mazhar Raslan.³²

²⁶ It is important to note that some of these people were more committed to the Independence Party and *al-Fatat* than others. Some, such as Rida al-Rikabi, appear to have abandoned the Party after the fall of Faysal's government. This may explain why his name was dropped from the list that Muhammad Izzat Darwaza provides in his memoirs; Muhammad Izzat Darwaza, *Mudhakkarat: Sijil Hafil Bi Maserat al-Haraka al-Arabiya wa al-Qadiya al-Falasteniyah Khilal Qarn Min al-Zaman, 1887-1984*, Volume One (Beirut: Dar al-Gharb al-Islami, 1993), 484; Muhammad Izzat Darwaza, *Hawla al-Haraka al-Arabiya al-Haditha: Tarikh wa Mudhakkarat wa Taleqat* (Sidon: al-Matbaa al-Asriyah, 1950), 29.

²⁷ Darwaza, *Mudhakkarat*, 484.

²⁸ Madi and Musa, *Tarikh al-Urdun*, 245.

²⁹ According to Walid Kazzuha, Abdullah was marking time while Faysal was negotiating with the British in London; Walid Kazzuha "The Political Evolution of Transjordan," *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 15, No. 3 (1979): 241.

³⁰ Madi and Musa, *Tarikh al-Urdun*, 140-142.

³¹ Al-Zirikli, *Aman fi Amman*, 41.

³² *Ibid.*, 41.

Raslan had initially opposed the *Istiqlalis'* positive attitude towards Abdullah, but he eventually changed his position and joined the delegation, whose mission was to convince Abdullah to move to Amman.³³ Finally, on March 2nd 1921, Abdullah relocated to Amman.³⁴ Welcoming him to the town were many high-profile *Istiqlalis*, such as al-Qassab who publically swore allegiance to Abdullah.³⁵ Al-Zirikli, who was in Amman at the time, describes the town as bustling with hopeful visitors, who came from all across Syria to meet with the Sharifian Prince.³⁶

Upon arrival in Amman, Abdullah began the long process of creating an administration in Transjordan. In March 1921, Abdullah met with Winston Churchill, the Secretary of State for the Colonies in David Lloyd George's government. The two men agreed to form a national government in Transjordan, grant Abdullah British financial and advisory support, but still allow Transjordan to maintain administrative independence.³⁷ Two weeks later, Abdullah formed his first government, which he initially called "the Advisory Council."³⁸ Tulay, a prominent *Istiqlali*, became the head of the Council, and he appointed four Syrians, two Hijazis, a Palestinian, and only one Transjordanian.³⁹ With the exception of the two Hijazis, all of the members of the government belonged to, or were affiliated with, *al-Istiqlal*. Abdullah's reliance on the *Istiqlalis* was also evident under Tulay's second

³³ According to Khayr al-Din al-Zirikli, Muzhar Raslan was pressured by the British to send Abdullah a letter opposing his arrival in Amman, Al-Zirikli, *Aman fi Amman*, 35-41.

³⁴ Madi and Musa, *Tarikh al-Urdun*, 142.

³⁵ Al-Zirikli, *Aman fi Amman*, 66.

³⁶ Ibid., 75.

³⁷ Madi and Musa, *Tarikh al-Urdun*, 148.

³⁸ Al-Zirikli, *Aman fi Amman*, 93.

³⁹ Mahafza, *Tarikh al-Urdun al-Muasir*, 25.

government, which was formed in June 1921.⁴⁰ In August 1921, Raslan formed another government. Raslan's government was also mostly made up of Syrian *Istiqlalis*.⁴¹ His government remained in power until March 1922, when (responding to Abdullah's invitation) veteran politician Ali Rida al-Rikabi arrived in Amman and formed a government. Al-Rikabi had held prestigious positions under the Ottoman and Faysali administrations.⁴² Indeed, much like the previous governments, *Istiqlalis* dominated al-Rikabi's government.⁴³

Throughout the early 1920s, *Istiqlalis* dominated all ranks within the government, including key military and security positions. For example, Fuad Salim, a prominent *Istiqlali* officer, became the head of the Reserve Force, a sizeable police force.⁴⁴ Meanwhile, Arif Hassan was the head of the permanent Gendarme force in Transjordan.⁴⁵ For his part, Ali Khulqi became the security advisor, and the *de facto* commander of the security forces in the territory.⁴⁶ In addition, *Istiqlalis* became governors of the various districts. Notably, Raslan was the governor of Salt before the arrival of Abdullah, and Amin Tamimi became the governor of Irbid in 1921.⁴⁷ Meanwhile, Said Khayr continued to be the mayor of Amman (and a major actor)

⁴⁰ Al-Zirikli, *Aman fi Amman*, 177.

⁴¹ Madi and Musa, *Tarikh al-Urdun*, 167.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 177.

⁴³ As this thesis will explore in more detail, it is unclear whether al-Rikabi was an *Istiqlali*. In his memoirs, al-Zirikli completely dismisses al-Rikabi and strips him from any nationalist credentials. However, other sources, including Muhammad Izzat Darwaza's works, confirm that al-Rikabi joined *al-Fatat* and *al-Istiqlal* under the Faysali regime.

⁴⁴ Al-Zirikli, *Aman fi Amman*, 156.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ Madi and Musa, *Tarikh al-Urdun*, 157.

well after Abdullah's arrival.⁴⁸ The *Istiqlalis* also played a vital role in Abdullah's early foreign policy. For instance, when Abdullah left for Jerusalem to meet Churchill, his delegation included Muraywid, Tamimi, Raslan, and Ghalib al-Shaalan.⁴⁹

Over time, the British grew impatient with the anti-colonial activities of the militant *Istiqlalis*. In the summer of 1924, prominent *Istiqlalis* were accused of plotting an armed attack on French-occupied Syria. Under pressure from the British, Abdullah released a statement denouncing the *Istiqlalis*, and calling for the expulsion of Muraywid, Adil Arslan, Nabih al-Azm, Uthman Qasem, Ahmad Hilmi, and Fuad Salim.⁵⁰ In a clear break from the anti-French rhetoric of Abdullah's early years in Transjordan, the proclamation declared that "...their presence is understood as an unfriendly gesture towards our ally in Syria [France],"⁵¹ and that they had to leave for Maan and then the Hijaz.⁵² The proclamation also marked the end of a period of relative independence in Transjordan, and the introduction of much tighter British control over the territory.⁵³ The change in Abdullah's rhetoric, and the expulsion of these prominent individuals, marked the beginning of the displacement of the *Istiqlalis* from the country.

Historiography

Given their importance in these early years of Transjordan, one finds that the *Istiqlalis* have received only marginal attention in the historiography. To be sure,

⁴⁸ Tell, *The Social and Economic Origins*, 71.

⁴⁹ Madi and Musa, *Tarikh al-Urdun*, 146.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 242.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid., 320.

this is part of a wider problem in the historiography on Jordan: the relative neglect of the country's history before the creation of the state of Israel in 1948 and the arrival of the Palestinian refugees.⁵⁴ Historical accounts of pre-1948 Transjordan tend to emphasize that the Emirate is a mere "imperial artifact, an artificial entity created to accommodate an "itinerant warrior" (Abdullah I) and Britain's wider interests in the Middle East."⁵⁵ Tariq Tell denounces this tendency insofar as it has led to the marginalization of the indigenous Transjordanian voices. Upon close examination of the historiography, one finds that it is not only the indigenous Transjordanians who are marginalized: the *Istiqlali* bloc is also sidelined. In addition to the lack of in-depth analysis of the *Istiqlalis*, the bloc is almost consistently portrayed as a homogenous unit. Very few scholars have explored whether there were different agendas and projects within the *Istiqlali* camp, and, if so, what those agendas were. In most cases, scholars have portrayed the *Istiqlal* as a radical faction, all of whose affiliates aimed to liberate Syria from French colonialism. This has prevented the scholarship from sufficiently assessing the ways in which the *Istiqlal* (or the divisions within the bloc) influenced local politics in Transjordan. This section explores the place of the *Istiqlalis* in the historiography. It shows that the scholarship either simplistically portrays the *Istiqlalis* as a homogeneous unit, or (in the case of the more recent works) acknowledges that there were divisions within the *Istiqlali* camp, but does so only in passing and does not discuss these divisions.

Among the most important classical works on the history of Transjordan is Sulayman Musa and Munib Madi's *Tarikh al-Urdun Fi al-Qarn al-Ishrin, 1900-1959*.

⁵⁴ Tell, *The Social and Economic Origins*, 5.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 6.

Tell describes this work (and Sulayman Musa's works in general) as part of a "semi official" current of historiography."⁵⁶ Not only does it fail to critically assess the Jordanian state's policies, but it also adopts an apologetic tone towards the Hashemites.⁵⁷ Despite these issues, Musa and Madi's work (as Tell himself admits) has a wealth of detail about Transjordan under Mandatory rule.⁵⁸ For most of the book, the *Istiqlalis*, whom Musa and Madi refer to as "*al-wataniyyun*," or the patriotic, are discussed as though they were one homogeneous bloc.⁵⁹ For example, the authors claim that all of the *Istiqlalis* sided against Prime Minister Raslan (an *Istiqlali*) because he did not agree with their agenda of using Transjordan as a launching pad for attacking the French in Syria.⁶⁰ This homogeneous portrayal of the *Istiqlalis* is problematic, particularly because Raslan himself was affiliated with *al-Istiqlal*, but also because his cabinet was made up of *Istiqlali* officers and bureaucrats. Later on in the book, Musa and Madi describe the *Istiqlal* Party as "one of the radical Arab parties that worked towards resisting foreign occupation using arms."⁶¹ Painting a homogenous picture of the organization, they also claim that the *Istiqlalis* believed in armed revolution and rejected cooperating with foreigners.⁶² And in line with their apologetic tone towards Abdullah, the two authors justify his

⁵⁶ Ibid., 18.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Madi and Musa, *Tarikh al-Urdun*, 132.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 210.

⁶¹ Ibid., 245.

⁶² Ibid., 246.

decision to expel some of the *Istiqlalis* in August 1924 by citing massive British pressure on the Emir.⁶³

On a few occasions, Musa and Madi do hint at the fact that the *Istiqlalis* enjoyed disparate relationships with the local population. For instance, they argue that native Transjordanians categorized foreigners into two groups: “nationalists” who want to fight the colonizers, and mercenaries who are only concerned about personal gains and who blindly follow the foreigners.⁶⁴ Referring to the Idwan Rebellion, which broke out in the region of Balqa in 1923, the two authors argue that if foreigners in Transjordan were restricted to “nationalist *mujahideen* such as Tulay and Muraywid,” the Rebellion would not have occurred. It was the introduction of “mercenaries, who only cared about finding jobs for themselves” that made a number of Transjordanian urban figures rally around the (originally tribal) Idwan rebellion.⁶⁵ Despite this claim, Musa and Madi do not further explore the heterogeneity of the “foreigners” in Transjordan. They also fail to explore how the different types of *Istiqlalis* influenced politics in Transjordan. They merely (and rather simplistically) make the claim that some “foreigners” were “nationalistic” or “patriotic” while others were “mercenaries.”

Another classical work on the early history of Transjordan is Mary Wilson’s *King Abdullah, Britain, and the Making of Jordan*. Wilson’s work is among the most detailed in the field, but, as its title suggests, it is disproportionately focused towards high politics and Abdullah’s relationship towards the mandatory

⁶³ Ibid., 242.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 269.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 212.

authorities. As a result, her work is a perfect example of the tendency that Tell criticizes: the neglect of ordinary Transjordanian lives, and the disproportionate focus on Abdullah's role in founding a modern state in the territory.⁶⁶ Perhaps not surprisingly, Wilson also neglects the *Istiqlalis* and tends to discuss the group in an overly simplistic manner. Early in the book, she describes "the nationalists" who came to meet Abdullah as "all ideologically motivated to some degree. Many belonged to nationalist organizations and most had been politically active, either with Faysal in Syria or against Zionism."⁶⁷ On another occasion, Wilson describes *al-Istiqlal* as "the best organized, most widespread (with branches throughout geographical Syria and Iraq), and most radical of the post-war nationalist parties."⁶⁸ Wilson, then, adds, "its goals were two: the unification of geographical Syria into one Arab state, and independence for the states of Greater (geographical) Syria and Iraq. Foreign tutelage was rejected, as was Britain's Zionist policy in Palestine."⁶⁹ Wilson's analysis of the *Istiqlal* is simplistic in more than one way. For one thing, it is interesting that in the same paragraph that she describes the party as "radical" and disapproving of "foreign tutelage," she names Raslan as one of the figures associated with the *Istiqlal*. Raslan, according to all of the other sources, was not only moderate, but also perfectly content to cooperate with the British authorities.⁷⁰ In addition, it is unclear how Wilson concludes that all *Istiqlalis* are "ideologically motivated." This stands in contrast to how the *Istiqlali*, al-Zirikli, speaks of some of

⁶⁶ Tell, *The Social and Economic Origins*, 5- 25.

⁶⁷ Wilson, *King Abdullah, Britain and the Making of Jordan*, 48.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 62.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ Tell, *The Social and Economic Origins*, 64.

his comrades. He describes Rida al-Rikabi as opportunist and willing to cooperate with the Europeans to achieve personal aims.⁷¹ Significantly, Wilson fails to cite the sources upon which she bases her conclusions about the *Istiqlalis*.

Curiously (and much like Musa and Madi's work), Wilson does allude to the fact that there were divisions within the *Istiqlal*, but she does not expand on this fact. For example, Wilson describes Raslan as "less aggressively nationalistic than that of Tili'a's [Tulay's] cabinet."⁷² While this statement reveals that the *Istiqlal* was not necessarily homogeneous, Wilson fails to explain what she means by "less aggressively nationalistic." She also points to the fact that al-Rikabi was "a Syrian, [but] he was not one of those Syrians whose 'foreignness' was grounds for exclusion from a career in Transjordan."⁷³ She states that Harry St John Philby, the British Representative in Transjordan, pressured Abdullah to get rid of the Syrians, but not the "useful Syrians like al-Rikabi."⁷⁴ Once again, it is unclear to the reader how, or why, al-Rikabi was more acceptable to Britain than his other nationalist peers. Wilson's work, therefore, fails to sufficiently explore the heterogeneity of the *Istiqlali* bloc in Transjordan.

Maan Abu Nowar's *The Development of Trans-Jordan: 1929-1939* is another widely circulated source. Although the period that it investigates is beyond the scope of this project, the introductory chapter touches on the first eight years of the Transjordanian Emirate. Abu Nowar's work is another one of the "semi official" histories that Tell describes in his book. The author adopts a highly apologetic tone

⁷¹ Al-Zirikli, *Aman fi Amman*, 201-205.

⁷² Wilson, *King Abdullah, Britain and the Making of Jordan*, 67.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 72.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 76.

towards Abdullah. For example, he accuses al-Rikabi of conspiring with Britain against Abdullah, and praises Abdullah for always “keeping his main aim of the survival and independence of Trans-Jordan within his sights...”⁷⁵ This aspect aside, Abu Nowar hardly discusses the *Istiqlalis*’ role in the early years of Transjordan. He does, nonetheless, make the argument that the people that led Transjordan’s governments between the years 1921 and 1929 had no “political background.”⁷⁶ He then goes on to argue that all of the ministers were “Arab revolutionaries who had never held office,” and “none of them had experience in central government.”⁷⁷ To begin with, it is unclear what Abu Nowar means when he calls them “Arab revolutionaries.” One wonders if he is lumping *Istiqlalis*, such as Muraywid, who came to Transjordan to escape death sentences, with *Istiqlalis*, such as al-Rikabi, who (according to some sources)⁷⁸ cooperated with the French occupiers. But more significantly, it is unclear how Abu Nowar concludes that none of the ministers had experience in “central government.” Transjordan’s first Prime Minister, Tulay, graduated from the Royal College in Istanbul,⁷⁹ and served as the Interior Minister and the governor of the city of Aleppo under Faysal.⁸⁰ The same applies to Raslan and al-Rikabi, who held prestigious positions in Faysal’s administration. Al-Rikabi, for example, was the military governor of Damascus, and later became Faysal’s first

⁷⁵ Maan Abu Nowar, *Tarikh al-Mamlaka al-Urduniyya al-Hashimiyya: Qiyam wa Tatawur Imarat Sharq al-Urdun, 1920-1929*. Volume One (Amman: Jaridat al-Ra’i, 2000), 5.

⁷⁶ Abu Nowar, *Tarikh al-Mamlaka al-Urduniyya al-Hashimiyya*, 18.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Al-Zirikli, *Aman fi Amman*, 201-205.

⁷⁹ Darwaza, *Mudhakkarat*, 445.

⁸⁰ Al-Zirikli, *Aman fi Amman*, 87.

Prime Minister.⁸¹ Unless Abu Nowar uses a different definition for “central government,” his analysis of the *Istiqlali* ministries is not only insufficient, but also factually questionable.

Uriel Dann’s book, *Studies in the History of Transjordan, 1920-1949*, is another source that hardly touches on the *Istiqlalis* and their role in the formative years of the Emirate. Like most historical accounts of Transjordan, the book is primarily concerned with the high-politics of Abdullah’s relationship with his allies, the British authorities. Despite this, on one brief occasion, Dann indicates that he is aware that the *Istiqlalis* in Transjordan were not a homogenous group. In the section, “T.E. Lawrence in Amman,” Dann states that Lawrence, who was negotiating on behalf of Winston Churchill, could be firmer with “colourless” Raslan than he could with his predecessor, “veteran Syrian nationalist Rashid Tali [Tulay].”⁸² Dann does not make it clear what he means by “colourless,” but one can assume that he is hinting at the fact that Raslan was less ideological than Tulay. Dann’s account is, therefore, equally dismissive of the *Istiqlalis* as most of the other accounts.

Kamal Salibi’s book *The Modern History of Jordan* offers a slightly more detailed treatment of the *Istiqlalis* but seems to make rather general (and sometimes unsupported) claims. For example, Salibi claims that some *Istiqlalis* in Amman opposed Abdullah, because they preferred his brother Faysal to him.⁸³ In the same context, Salibi claims that many *Istiqlalis* were beginning to harbor “political feelings

⁸¹ Darwaza, *Mudhakkarat*, 379.

⁸² Dann, *Studies in the History of Transjordan*, 41.

⁸³ Salibi, *The Modern History of Jordan*, 85.

that were distinctly republican.”⁸⁴ These claims are undoubtedly original, but Salibi fails to refer to the sources on which he bases his conclusions. The strength of Salibi’s account is in his brief comparison of the different members of the *Istiqlal*. Most notably, he compares Tulay to Raslan by describing the latter as a “less objectionable” *Istiqlali* from the point of view of the British.⁸⁵ He also describes another *Istiqlali*, al-Rikabi, as a “native liaison between the British and the French.”⁸⁶ Al-Rikabi, according to Salibi, was politically useful because he had good ties with the British and the French. Salibi’s ability to compare and contrast the different *Istiqlalis* is certainly a refreshing break from the aforementioned literature that tends to treat them as one homogeneous group. Nonetheless, Salibi’s discussion of the issue is not only brief, but it is also based on thin evidence. It is not surprising that Tell describes Salibi’s work on Jordanian history as lacking “the scholarly depth or insight that marked his studies of Lebanese history.”⁸⁷

In recent years, a new wave of historiography emerged. These sources attempted to break away from the traditional emphasis on “high politics,” and instead shed light on other issues, including national identity, nationalism, and native Transjordanians’ role in the Emirate. Among these sources is Betty S. Anderson’s *Nationalist Voice in Jordan: The Street and the State*. The book offers a nuanced alternative to the traditional view that national identity in Jordan was defined by the ruling Hashemite elite. Anderson investigates the role of the “Arab street,” or the role of ordinary Jordanians and Palestinians in creating identity in

⁸⁴ Ibid., 85-86.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 104.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 112.

⁸⁷ Tell, *The Social and Economic Origins*, 153.

Jordan and the region.⁸⁸ Despite Anderson's nuanced approach, one finds that the book falls into the same mistakes that many of the other sources fall into when discussing the role of the *Istiqlalis* in Transjordan. Anderson states that the *Istiqlalis'* "ultimate aim was the formation of an independent Arab government, combining all the Arabs who had once lived under Ottoman rule."⁸⁹ Anderson then adds that the *Istiqlalis* in Amman "called on Transjordanians to help their fellow Arab brethren in the reconquest of Syria, rejecting the notion that Transjordan deserved to stand alone as an independent nation."⁹⁰ These statements are problematic for two main reasons. One, they assume that all of the *Istiqlalis* shared the same goal of liberating Syria from the French. This begs the question: what of *Istiqlalis*, such as al-Rikabi, who apparently had strong ties to the French occupiers? Two, her assertion that the *Istiqlalis* did not feel that Jordan deserved to stand alone as a nation contradicts the fact that many, in fact, remained in Transjordan and worked closely with the British to build a modern state in the territory.

Equally simplistically, Anderson makes the claim that the two major rebellions of the early 1920s, al-Kura and al-Idwan, were a manifestation of a growing anti-foreigner sentiment in Transjordan.⁹¹ There is certainly some truth to this claim, but more careful accounts indicate that the two rebellions took place for different reasons and under different circumstances. The rebellion in al-Kura was

⁸⁸ Betty S. Anderson, *Nationalist Voices in Jordan: The Street and the State* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005), 35.

⁸⁹ Anderson, *Nationalist Voices in Jordan*, 37.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid., 44.

connected to historic hostilities between Irbid, and the small town of al-Kura.⁹² Meanwhile, the Idwan rebellion, as Anderson herself later indicates, was primarily a result of Abdullah's favoritism towards Bani Sakhr and other unsettled tribes.⁹³ The anti-foreigner sentiment was certainly a much bigger factor in the Idwan rebellion, mostly because a number of urban Transjordanians (who were unhappy with the *Istiqlalis'* domination of the bureaucracy) joined the tribal revolt.⁹⁴ In summary, Anderson's treatment is equally as simplistic and hurried as most of the other sources.

In his recent book, *The Making of Jordan: Tribes, Colonialism, and the Modern State*, Yoav Alon refers to the *Istiqlalis* only in connection to their role in shaping Abdullah's relations with the Transjordanian tribes. More specifically, Alon describes them as "urbanite, educated, modern, and nationalist" figures, who "did not understand the political culture of the tribal population in a periphery like Transjordan."⁹⁵ He further describes them as committed to the goal of liberating Syria from the French, sometimes at the expense of heavily taxing the local population in Transjordan to raise an army.⁹⁶ Alon argues that these tendencies (particularly the heavy taxation) led to the alienation of the Transjordanian tribes. This was particularly true for the settled tribes, whom the *Istiqlalis* were able to tax more easily than their unsettled counterparts. He makes the claim that such policies contributed to the breakout of a tribal rebellion in al-Kura in northern Transjordan

⁹² Madi and Musa, *Tarikh al-Urdun*, 156.

⁹³ Anderson, *Nationalist Voices in Jordan*, 44.

⁹⁴ Yoav Alon, *The making of Jordan: tribes, colonialism and the modern state* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007), 44.

⁹⁵ Alon, *The making of Jordan*, 44.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

in 1923, and another one in Balqa in the same year. This was particularly clear in Balqa, where the rebels bitterly complained about the *Istiqlalis'* domination of the bureaucracy and their oppressive taxation regime.⁹⁷ In al-Kura, Alon argues that it was the insensitive (given the traditionally bitter relationship between al-Kura and Irbid) taxation policies of the *Istiqlali* governor of Ajlun, Amin Tamimi, which led to the breakout of the rebellion.⁹⁸ Fuad Salim, an *Istiqlali* who led the government force to pacify al-Kura, in fact, confirms this. In a journal entry, which was published as part of al-Zirikli's book *Aman fi Amman*, Salim states that he was not aware of the historic tensions between Irbid and al-Kura.⁹⁹ Regardless, Alon's argument is both convincing and original, but it paints a rather homogenous view of the *Istiqlalis* as being deeply committed to modern governance, and the goal of raising an army to regain occupied Syria.

Meanwhile, in an article titled "National Identity in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan: State Made, Still Durable," Stefanie Nanes discusses the question of legitimacy in Transjordan and mentions the *Istiqlalis'* role in passing. Like Alon, Nanes shows how the *Istiqlalis*, being adherents to modern forms of governance, were useful for the state building process.¹⁰⁰ More importantly, she argues that the *Istiqlalis* were crucial for Abdullah's "nationalist credentials."¹⁰¹ He needed to have the *Istiqlalis* to maintain legitimacy for his ambitions of territorial expansion and his

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 44-45.

⁹⁹ Al-Zirikli, *Aman fi Amman*, 159-173.

¹⁰⁰ Stefanie Nanes, "National Identity in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan" In *Nationalism in a Global Era: The Persistence of Nations*, by Mitchell Young, Eric Zuelow and Andreas Sturm, 221-239 (London: Routledge, 2007), 229.

¹⁰¹ Nanes, "National Identity in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan," 229.

promises of liberating Syria from the French. The validity of Nanes' argument aside, there is little doubt that her account lacks a careful examination of the *Istiqlalis*, and the ways in which their agenda contributed to Abdullah's legitimacy. Similar to Alon, she appears to treat the *Istiqlalis* as one homogenous group that was deeply committed to territorial expansion and the regaining of Faysal's Syria.

In his book *Colonial Effects: The Making of National Identity in Jordan*, Joseph Massad explores the role that institutions played in creating a national culture in Transjordan. The first chapter of the book makes a brief reference to the role of the *Istiqlalis* in the early years of Transjordan. Massad rather hastily declares, "...the presence of some of the *Istiqlali* nationalist leaders in the country was not opposed."¹⁰² Instead, he argues that it was the recruitment of "mercenary employees from neighboring countries" that was opposed by native Transjordan.¹⁰³ This argument clearly contradicts the more diligent analysis of Alon, who (as has previously been discussed) shows how some of the *Istiqlali* nationalists' policies contributed to the outbreak of tribal rebellions. The specifics of this debate will be discussed later on, but it is clear that Massad's brief reference to the *Istiqlalis* lacks an analysis of the ideological make-up, and what role this may have played in turning the native population against the group.

In his recent book, *A History of Jordan*, Philip Robins provides a concise well-researched history of Jordan. Robins, in his second chapter, briefly discusses the *Istiqlalis* and their role in the early years of the Emirate. Despite its brevity, his

¹⁰² Joseph Massad, *Colonial Effects: The Making of National Identity in Jordan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 28.

¹⁰³ Massad, *Colonial Effects*, 28.

discussion of the *Istiqlalis* succeeds at indicating that the group was not homogeneous. For example, he refers to Raslan as “a nationalist, though a less controversial figure” than Tulay, Transjordan’s first Prime Minister.¹⁰⁴ Later in the same chapter, Robins argues that the British wanted to “weed out” the *Istiqlalis* from the army and the bureaucracy. And while the British succeeded at expelling many *Istiqlalis*, some “like Ibrahim Hashem (who became a prestigious Transjordanian politician), would choose Abdullah’s way, placing the certainty of political position in the emirate ahead of an uncertain existence outside.”¹⁰⁵ He later refers to Ibrahim Hashim as part of a “British-inspired external elite.”¹⁰⁶ In doing this, he reiterates arguments that he makes in his 1988 Ph.D. dissertation, *The Consolidation of Hashemite Power in Jordan 1921-1946*. In the dissertation, he engages in a useful discussion in which he highlights the difference between the “Sharifian elite” and the “British-inspired external elite.” The *Istiqlalis*, as the second chapter explains in detail, belonged to the former elite. Despite his useful contribution to the categorization of the Transjordanian elites, Robins’ book and dissertation do not delve into a lengthy discussion of the divisions *within* the *Istiqlali* camp.

Tariq Tell is the scholar who explores the make-up of the *Istiqlalis* most extensively. His recent book, *The Social and Economic Origins of Monarchy in Jordan*, revisits Jordan’s history from the perspective of the Transjordanians. With regards to the founding of the Transjordanian state, Tell’s work is a refreshing break from traditional historical accounts of Transjordan, which emphasize high-politics and

¹⁰⁴ Robins, *A History of Jordan*, 21.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 22.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 46.

dismiss Transjordan prior to the arrival of the Palestinian refugees in 1948.¹⁰⁷ Expectedly, Tell also provides a more complicated story of the *Istiqlalis* in Transjordan. For example, he argues that Abdullah needed the *Istiqlalis* in his new administration because they legitimized his claim to territories beyond Transjordan, but also to help him found a modern and centralized state in a society “in the grip of tribal parochialism.”¹⁰⁸ The latter reason is a clear acknowledgement that not all the *Istiqlalis* were aiming to liberate Syria; some were looking to establish a state in Transjordan.

Tell goes on to argue that Abdullah, under British pressure, saw a need for ousting the *Istiqlalis* from Transjordan, but he could only do this through a process of promoting “softer” nationalists to power.¹⁰⁹ Tell describes the second Prime Minister, Raslan, as a “lukewarm” nationalist and he cites a local source that refers to al-Rikabi as a “political chameleon.”¹¹⁰ Reiterating the arguments in Robins’ PhD dissertation, Tell states that over time “more mercenary *Istiqlalis*” came to dominate positions in the Transjordanian government.¹¹¹ Meanwhile, in a footnote, Tell explicitly states that *Istiqlalis*, like Muraywid, who were “committed to armed struggle against the French,” were “at odds” with their counterparts that were open to compromise with the British.¹¹² In the same footnote, he claims that the local population in Transjordan regarded militant nationalists “in a different light” than their compromising counterparts. As evidence, he mentions that Transjordanian

¹⁰⁷ Tell, *The Social and Economic Origins*, 5.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 62.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 74.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 80.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 181.

activist, Mustafa Wahbi al-Tall, well known for his anti-foreigner rhetoric, named his third son after the militant *Istiqlali*, Muraywid.¹¹³ There is no doubt, therefore, that Tell provides the most sophisticated addition to the literature. His illustration of the different types of *Istiqlalis* (militant, “lukewarm”, soft, etc.) and the contrasting local attitudes towards the different *Istiqlalis* is very original. At the same time, Tell’s treatment of the issue is rather brief, and does not extend beyond the aforementioned footnote.

Project Parameters and Organization

This thesis builds upon Tell’s findings, and further complicates the prevalent understanding of the *Istiqlali* camp in Transjordan. The second chapter introduces the militant *Istiqlalis*. These nationalists were relentlessly anti-colonial, and refused to acknowledge the newly formed national borders. Hailing from rural and urban middle-class backgrounds, they were part of a wider network of militants, which Michael Provence identifies in his works.¹¹⁴ And while they disagreed amongst each other in their attitudes towards Abdullah, the militants shared the common goal of liberating Syria from the French through military means. In fact, a number of these men, such as Muraywid and Ali Khulqi, were involved in anti-French skirmishes since the spring of 1920, or before Abdullah’s arrival, and continued to be active even after his arrival.¹¹⁵ Most notably, in the summer of 1921 *Istiqlalis* were involved in an assassination attempt on French General, Henri Gouraud.¹¹⁶ Among

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ See Michael Provence, “Ottoman Modernity, Colonialism, and Insurgency in the Arab East,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 43 (2011).

¹¹⁵ Tell, *The Social and Economic Origins*, 57.

¹¹⁶ Madi and Musa, *Tarikh al-Urdun*, 169.

others, Muraywid (who was a minister in the government at the time) was accused of plotting the attack, and the French authorities requested his arrest and transfer to Syria.¹¹⁷ Militant *Istiqlalis* continued to be heavily present in Transjordan until Abdullah ordered the expulsion of a number of them in August 1924.¹¹⁸ Upon leaving Transjordan, many militant *Istiqlalis*, including the prominent Said al-As and Said Ammun, left for Syria to join the Great Revolt against the French in the years 1925-1927.¹¹⁹

The third chapter introduces the *Istiqlalis* who were at the other end of the spectrum. These were the accommodationist *Istiqlalis*, such as al-Rikabi and Khayr, who were less attached to the cause of fighting the French in Syria, and more interested in the building of a modern state in Transjordan. Harboring little intention of immediately liberating Syria from the French, the accommodationists came to dominate the government after 1923, when Abdullah appeared to abandon his promise to liberate the rest of Syria, and especially after the summer of 1924, when Abdullah and the British expelled the militants. While still part of the Sharifian, or *Istiqlali* elite (as opposed to the British-inspired external elite which came to dominate in the later years), the accommodationists were on good terms with the British, and in some cases the French. Some, like al-Rikabi, were in close

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 124.

¹¹⁹ For a detailed discussion of the Great Syrian Revolt, see Michael Provence, *The Great Syrian Revolt and the Rise of Arab Nationalism* (Austin: The University of Texas Press, 2005); and Michael Provence, "Ottoman Modernity, Colonialism, and Insurgency in the Arab East." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* (Cambridge University Press), 2011: 205-225.

contact with the French even before the fall of Faysal's state in Damascus.¹²⁰ The accommodationists tended to loosen their ties to *Hizb al-Istiqlal*, and the militant network, after arriving in Transjordan. This often created bitterness and resentment in their relationship with their militant counterparts.

The fourth chapter explores how these dynamics and divisions in the *Istiqlali* camp influenced and shaped the politics of Transjordan in the 1920s. More specifically, a native opposition movement emerged in response to the *Istiqlali* domination of the government. One strand of the native oppositional movement was made up of the settled tribes of Balqa and Ajlun. These tribes, which were mostly made up of agricultural communities, opposed the *Istiqlali* taxation policy. Made up of individuals who were educated in modern (civil and military) institutions, the *Istiqlali* elite dogmatically imposed intrusive governance and often underestimated the settled communities' quest for autonomy. This was made worse by the fact that the militant *Istiqlalis* were eager to raise money in order to form a military force that would liberate Syria. The other strand of the oppositional movement was a group of educated Transjordanians, including Mustafa Wahbi al-Tall and Awda al-Qusus. These individuals did not only oppose the *Istiqlali* policies; they also opposed their mere presence in the government, and demanded that they be replaced with locals. The two strands of the opposition joined forces during the Idwan Rebellion in September 1923 to create what Massad calls "a moment of nativism."¹²¹ While the extent of the educated elite's participation in the Rebellion is unclear, they were, to say the least, sympathetic towards the cause of Sultan al-Idwan, who protested the

¹²⁰ Russell, *The First Arab State: Syrian Under Faysal, 1918-1920*, 124.

¹²¹ Massad, *Colonial Effects*, 28.

taxation policies of the *Istiqlal*. Despite this blanket opposition towards the *Istiqlalis* in the government, the population of Transjordan actually showed signs of sympathy, and even support, towards the anti-colonial activities of the militant *Istiqlalis*. As evidence for the popularity of the radical *Istiqlalis* in Transjordan, one can look at how locals reacted to the attempted arrest of Muraywid in 1921, or the news of the arrest of the Aleppine nationalist leader Ibrahim Hananu.¹²² In both cases, large spontaneous demonstrations broke out in Amman.

A Note on Sources

This thesis relies on a range of local and regional primary sources in Arabic, henceforth underused in the historiography. These include the published diaries of King Abdullah I, Khayr al-Din al-Zirikli, Said al-As, Awda al-Qusus, and Hanna Salman al-Qusus, and the unpublished memoirs of Yousif Sulayman al-Qusus. The latter source is in the keeping of al-Qusus family in Amman. This thesis also uses a range of newspaper issues. These include articles and proclamations that Transjordnaian activists published in the Haifa-based *al-Karmil* newspaper, the Jaffa-based *Filasteen* newspaper, and the Bethlehem-based *Sawt al-Shaab*. These are available in Ali Mahafza's edited collection, *al-Fikr al-Siyasi Fi al-Urdun*. In addition, I was able to access issues of Transjordan's official newspaper, *al-Sharq al-Arabi*, at the National Library in Amman. Finally, my project uses an important body of British colonial documents. Some of these are available in Sulayman Musa's edited collection, *Tasis al-Imara al-Urduniyya*. This thesis also relies on a large body of British primary sources, which I acquired during my research visit to the National

¹²² Madi and Musa, *Tarikh al-Urdun*, 170.

Archives in London. These include monthly reports, meeting minutes, letters from British representatives in Amman, letters from the British consulate in Damascus, reports from the office of the High Commissioner in Jerusalem, and other useful documents.

Chapter Two: The Militant *Istiqlalis*

Upon the collapse of King Faysal's Arab Government in July 1920, the territory of Transjordan hosted an estimated 100 Syrian fugitives, the majority of whom belonged to the Arab nationalist party, *Hizb al-Istiqlal al-Arabi*.¹ Of these, 67 were civilian bureaucrats, 33 were military figures, and at least 9 figures were sentenced to death by the French authorities in Syria.² Despite their common background, the Syrian fugitives, or the *Istiqlalis*, had diverse agendas – a fact (as demonstrated in the introductory section) often overlooked in the literature. Seeking to complicate the prevalent understanding of the *Istiqlalis*, this chapter sheds light on one prominent group within the Syrian camp: the militant *Istiqlalis*, whose primary agenda was the liberation of French-occupied Syria. The chapter argues that the militant *Istiqlalis* in Transjordan belonged to a wider group of Arab militant nationalists, which Michael Provence identifies in his works. The *Istiqlalis* in Transjordan, much like the members of the network that Provence identifies, advocated for independence from the colonial powers. They were characterized by their anti-colonial activities, their refusal to acknowledge the newly formed national borders, and their common middle-class or rural socioeconomic backgrounds. But despite sharing the same agenda, the militant *Istiqlalis*, this chapter shows, did not always agree about what methods to use in advancing their agenda. They differed in their attitudes towards Abdullah's agreement with Britain, and in their opinions on the Emir's conditions to establishing a branch of *Hizb al-Istiqlal* in Transjordan.

¹ Mundhir Mahmud Jabir, *Sajjil: Ana Rashid Tulay: Sira wa Masir* (London: Mussasat al-Turath al-Durzi, 2008), 145.

² Jabir, *Sajjil*, 145.

In order to contextualize the analysis, this chapter begins with a discussion of the political and ideological background of *al-Istiqlal*. Demonstrating that the militant *Istiqlalis* were part of the network that Provence identifies, it then discusses the group's shared anti-colonial agenda, specifically their anti-French activities and their hostility towards Britain, and their common middle-class and rural backgrounds. Having done this, the chapter sheds light on how the militant *Istiqlalis* disagreed about how to achieve their common goal.

Background of *al-Istiqlal*

Hizb al-Istiqlal al-Arabi, or the Arab Independence Party, was formed in Damascus in 1919 to serve as the “public front” of the famous Arab nationalist organization, *al-Jamiyya al-Arabiyya al-Fatat*, or the Young Arab Society.³ A group of Arab exiles formed *al-Fatat* in Paris in 1911, with the stated aim of championing the rights of the Arabs living under the Ottoman Empire.⁴ The organization eventually relocated to Damascus in October 1914, where it operated in total secrecy, but attempted to use the wartime conscription efforts as an opportunity to widen its membership among Arab soldiers.⁵ *Al-Fatat* was the most prominent pre-Great War Arab nationalist organization, and the first to call for Arab independence from the Ottoman Empire. Its early call for Arab separatism, and its ties to the various European embassies made the organization a target of the Ottoman authorities,

³ Muhammad Izzat Darwaza, *Mudhakkarat: Sijil Hafil Bi Maserat al-Haraka al-Arabiya wa al-Qadiya al-Falasteniyyah Khilal Qarn Min al-Zaman, 1887–1984*, Volume One (Beirut: Dar al-Gharb al-Islami, 1993), 419.

⁴ Eliezer Tauber, *The Arab Movements in World War I* (London: Frank Cass, 1993), 6.

⁵ Tauber, *The Arab Movements*, 57.

which executed a number of its leaders during the Great War.⁶ The group's separatist ideology allowed its leaders, most notably Nasib al-Bakri of Damascus, to form early ties with the Hashemite family in the Hijaz, whose chief, Hussein bin Ali, launched the British-backed Arab Revolt against the Ottoman state in 1917.⁷ Hussein's son and the head of the Arab Revolt's Northern Army, Faysal, visited Damascus during the war and became a member of *al-Fatat*.⁸ During the War, and as the Ottoman repression campaign peaked, *al-Fatat's* leadership signed a petition giving Hussein permission to negotiate on behalf of the Arabs of the Ottoman Empire.⁹

As a result of their early ties to the Hashemite family, *al-Fatat's* members, both the military officers¹⁰ and the civilians, came to play a central role under the short-lived administration of Faysal, which he set up upon arriving in Damascus in the fall of 1918. Under Faysal's Arab regime, *al-Fatat* became closely associated with the government, which allowed the organization the role of "the leading dispenser of political patronage."¹¹ Almost every official in Faysal's regime was part of, or at least linked to, *al-Fatat*. This led to an unprecedented increase in the group's membership, which in turn convinced the veteran members of *al-Fatat* (especially

⁶ Ibid., 53.

⁷ Ibid., 26.

⁸ Ibid., 62.

⁹ Ibid., 65.

¹⁰ The majority of the Arab military officers belonged to a sister organization of *al-Jamiyah al-Arabiyah al-Fatat: Jamiyat al-Ahd*. For more on pre-war Arabist movements see D. K. Fieldhouse, *Western Imperialism in the Middle East: 1914-1958* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 22; Hasan Kayali, *Arabs and Young Turks: Ottomanism, Arabism, and Islamism in the Ottoman Empire, 1908 - 1918* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Tauber, *The Arab Movements*.

¹¹ James L. Gelvin, *Divided Loyalties: Nationalism and Mass Politics in Syria at the Close of Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 58.

those who belonged to the group before the outbreak of the Great War) to form a sister party called *Hizb al-Istiqlal al-Arabi* in February 1919.¹² *Al-Istiqlal* was supposed to accommodate new members, most of whom did not meet the “quality” that *al-Fatat’s* elitist and highly educated leadership required of its members.¹³ Izzat Darwaza, a longtime Arab nationalist and *al-Fatat* member, describes some of the new members as being “lax in their morals and nationalist spirit.”¹⁴ However, Darwaza is careful to point out that some of *al-Fatat’s* new members became leading figures in the organization. Among the prominent names that joined the movement during the Faysali period were: Nabih al-Azm, Rashid Tulay, Amin Tamimi, Mazhar Raslan, and Khayr al-Din al-Zirkli.¹⁵ *Al-Istiqlal* was primarily created to maintain the secretive nature (and perhaps exclusiveness) of *al-Fatat*; it ultimately became *al-Fatat’s* “public front” in Faysali Syria.¹⁶

After the French advancement on Damascus in July 1920 and the collapse of the Faysali administration, both *al-Fatat* and *al-Istiqlal* were barred from operating in the open. In fact, the French authorities sentenced a number of prominent *al-Fatat* figures, particularly those who were closely associated with the Faysali regime, to death. Among the people sentenced to death were: Kamil al-Qassab, Ali Khulqi al-Sharayri, Ahmad Murayiwid, Mahmud al-Faour, Fuad Salim, Rashid Tulay, Awni Abd al-Hadi, Nabih al-Azm, and Khayr al-Din al-Zirikli.¹⁷ Some *al-Istiqlal*

¹² Gelvin, *Divided Loyalties*, 59.

¹³ Darwaza, *Mudhakkarat*, 419.

¹⁴ Muhammad Izzat. Darwaza, *Hawla al-Haraka al-Arabiya al-Haditha: Tarikh wa Mudhakkarat wa Taleqat* (Sidon: al-Matbaa al-Asriyah, 1950), 76.

¹⁵ Darwaza, *Mudhakkarat*, 395.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 419.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 484.

members, most notably Faysal's Defense Minister Yousif al-Azm, died fighting French occupying forces at the Battle of Maysalun in July 1920. The vast majority of *al-Fatat* and *al-Istiqlal* members, who were sentenced to death, fled to the British-controlled territory in southern Syria, known as Transjordan. *Istiqlalis* fled to the various towns and villages of Transjordan, but a large number settled in Amman, which at the time was a small village and home to a small Circassian community.¹⁸

The Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916 had placed Transjordan under the influence of the British government, but the region was under the nominal control of the Damascus government during the Faysali era. The Faysali government appointed governors over the region, and Transjordanians sent delegates to the Syrian National Congress, a representative assembly which convened in July 1919.¹⁹ Upon the collapse of Faysal's state, Herbert Samuel, the British High Commissioner in Palestine, met with Transjordanian notables in the city of Salt. Samuel promised to protect Transjordan from French influence, and to establish an independent administration over the territory.²⁰ Subsequently, he sent a number of British advisors, who helped form local governments across Transjordan. Local governments were formed in Irbid, Salt, and Karak.²¹ Some effort was made to consolidate the various Transjordanian administrations under one united

¹⁸ Munib Madi and Sulayman Musa, *Tarikh al-Urdun fi al-Qarn al-Ishrin, 1900-1959* (Amman: Maktabat al-Muhtasib, 1959), 115.

¹⁹ For more on the Syrian Congress and Faysal's Arab Government see Gelvin, *Divided Loyalties*; Malcom B. Russell, *The First Arab State: Syria Under Faysal, 1918-1920* (Minneapolis: Bibliotecha Islamica, 1987).

²⁰ Madi and Musa, *Tarikh al-Urdun*, 103.

²¹ *Ibid.*

government, but these efforts amounted to little.²² These British-sponsored administrations remained fragmented, and in most cases lacked the manpower and resources to enforce their authority over the sparsely populated regions of Transjordan.

In November 1920, Abdullah, the son of Sharif Hussein, arrived in Maan in southern Transjordan.²³ Abdullah, who came with a small force, promised to liberate Syria, and regain his younger brother's, Faysal's, state in Damascus. He made specific calls to the Arab Government members in Transjordan, and to the members of the Syrian National Congress.²⁴ *Istiqlalis* Ghalib al-Shaalan, Fuad Salim, Muhammad Muraywid, Ahmad Muraywid, Nabih al-Azm, Awni Abd al-Hadi, Kamil al-Qassab, Amin al-Tamimi, Mazhar Raslan and Said Khayr all came to visit Abdullah in Maan at various points.²⁵ They eventually convinced Abdullah to relocate to the *Istiqlali* stronghold, Amman, where he arrived on March 2nd 1921.²⁶

The Militant *Istiqlalis*: Part of a Wider Network

In Amman, Abdullah's anti-French rhetoric was particularly appealing to the militant *Istiqlalis*. They hoped to use Abdullah's project as a much-needed opportunity to regroup and organize. Transjordan hosted a number of openly anti-French *Istiqlalis*, who were actively involved in the struggle against the colonial power. Some simply expressed support for the anti-French cause, but others, such

²² In October 1920, the Irbid government sent a letter to Salt and Karak encouraging them to reach similar agreements with the British in order to form one unified government; Madi and Musa, *Tarikh al-Urdun*, 114.

²³ Ibid., 106.

²⁴ Madi and Musa, *Tarikh al-Urdun*, 133.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid., 142.

as Ali Khulqi and Muraywid, played instrumental roles in organizing rebel movements in Hawran and elsewhere.²⁷ This section delves into the agenda of the militant *Istiqalalis*. It explores the militant *Istiqalalis*' agenda of advocating for independence from the colonial powers, and their refusal to acknowledge the newly formed national borders to show that they belonged to a wider network of Arab militants, which Michael Provence identifies in his works. Specifically, it highlights the militant's anti-French activities, hostilities towards Britain, and their rural or middle-class backgrounds, which were often correlated with attending Ottoman military schooling.

Michael Provence argues that in the interwar period there existed a group of anti-colonial militants, who crossed the "unacknowledged and illegitimate national borders" to fight the various colonial powers.²⁸ Their struggles, Provence asserts, were "locally conditioned elements of a single undifferentiated struggle" against colonialism and European penetration of the East.²⁹ Some of these anti-colonial militants, in fact, fought against colonialism in a number of different places. For example, Palestinian Izz al-Din al-Qassam fought the Italians in Libya in 1911, the French in Syria after the Great War, and the British in Palestine in the 1930s.³⁰ The origins of this movement, Provence argues, can be traced back to the Ottoman wartime conscription project, and the mass state-subsidized education program.³¹

²⁷ Tariq Tell, *The Social and Economic Origins of Monarchy in Jordan* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 57.

²⁸ Michael Provence, "Ottoman Modernity, Colonialism, and Insurgency in the Arab East," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 43 (2011): 207.

²⁹ Provence, "Ottoman Modernity," 207.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 205.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 207.

Conscription conditioned millions in the East to the ideas of Ottoman nationalism and the struggle against the colonial powers. Meanwhile, free mass education not only spread Ottoman ideas of religion, nation, and homeland, but also brought together Ottoman citizens of different backgrounds and therefore created a type of national cohesion.³² Ex-Ottoman citizens deployed these familiar ideas of nationalism, and tapped into the Ottoman-era networks created at state schools and during the War, in order to fight the colonial order that emerged after the collapse of the Ottoman state.³³ Amal Ghazal reiterates Provence's claims in her biographical discussion of Ottoman officer and Muslim reformer, Sulayman al-Baruni. She states that there existed post-Great War networks of individuals who "zigzagged the Ottoman realm, [and] defended its borders" against the colonial powers.³⁴ Individuals made a conscious decision to join these networks and "formed an intellectually and politically subversive power" which attempted to "formulate a new reality to undo the colonial one."³⁵

In his book, *The Great Syrian Revolt and the Rise of Arab Nationalism*, Provence builds on his theory to argue that the leaders of the anti-French movements in Syria, whether at the Battle of Maysalun or during the Great Syrian Revolt, could be characterized in specific socioeconomic terms. He argues that the rebels were often of rural origins, or hailed from middle-class urban backgrounds,

³² Michael Provence, *The Great Syrian Revolt and the Rise of Arab Nationalism* (Austin: The University of Texas Press, 2005), 47.

³³ Provence, "Ottoman Modernity," 207.

³⁴ Amal N. Ghazal, "An Ottoman Pasha and the End of Empire: Sulayman al-Baruni and the Networks of Islamic Reform." In *Global Muslims in the Age of Steam and Print*, edited by James L. Gelvin and Nile Green (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 40.

³⁵ Ghazal, "An Ottoman Pasha," 41.

and were graduates of the fully subsidized Ottoman military and tribal schools.³⁶ This put them in stark contrast to the urban elite, whose members were usually graduates of privately funded civil schooling or *Maktab Anbar*.³⁷ The rural and urban middle-class nationalists came to lead the struggle against the colonizers, while the urban elite stayed at home and even established ties with the French before they occupied Syria in July 1920.³⁸ In the mid 1920s, rural parts of Syria, most notably Hawran and the Alawi areas in the northwest, rose against the colonizing power, and led the Great Syrian Revolt in 1925. Meanwhile, the Damascus urban elite adopted the policy of “honorable cooperation” with the French.³⁹ The two groups, Provence asserts, were “virtually mutually exclusive.”⁴⁰

In advancing his convincing case, Provence cites the examples of *Istiqlalis* that lived in Transjordan in the 1920s, most notably Ramadan Shallash and Said al-As.⁴¹ However, the relevance of Provence’s analysis here is not merely based on his citing of these two *Istiqlalis*. Provence’s description of the ideology and background of the militant nationalists of the post-War Arab East, in fact, fits the profile of the militant *Istiqlalis* in 1920s Transjordan. Ideologically, the militant *Istiqlalis* in Transjordan showed relentless anti-colonialism, and – much like Provence’s description – did not acknowledge the colonial national boundaries. This is confirmed in the ways that British officials described the militant *Istiqlalis*. In a letter to the High Commissioner in Jerusalem, the Chief British Representative in

³⁶ Provence, *The Great Syrian Revolt*, 142.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid., 46.

³⁹ Ibid., 141.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 142.

⁴¹ Provence, “Ottoman Modernity,” 212 and 216.

Transjordan describes what he calls the “politically minded Syrian extremists,” who are linked together by the common membership of *Hizb al-Istiqlal*, as “anti-mandate, anti-British, anti-French, and anti-Zionist.”⁴² The alarmist letter goes on to warn that the “extremists” will establish themselves in Transjordan until the right moment comes when they are “able to strike successfully in any direction indicated by the circumstances.”⁴³ Their ultimate goal, the British Representative warns, is to set up an independent Syrian government over the entire region.⁴⁴ In a different letter, written a year later by a newly appointed Chief British Representative in Amman, he describes *Hizb al-Istiqlal* as “a party whose program is the amalgamation of Syria with Palestine and Transjordan and whose primary object is the removal of the French.”⁴⁵

These letters, which go on to suggest steps to curb the influence of the *Istiqlalis* in the Transjordanian government, may sound alarmist, but they are not mistaken in their description of the militant *Istiqlalis*. The militant *Istiqlalis* in Transjordan were, in fact, anti-mandate, anti-French, and in some cases anti-British. The second letter is correct to report that their ultimate goal was the removal of the French from Syria. This can be seen in the *Istiqlalis*’ involvement in various rebellions across Syria. Some of these *Istiqlalis* had already been involved in small

⁴² Report, the office of the Chief British Representative (CBR) in Transjordan to the High Commissioner (HC) in Jerusalem, December 13 1923, CO 733/52.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Report, the CBR in Transjordan to the HC in Jerusalem, August 9 1924, FO 371/10118.

anti-French movements in Hawran and Deir al-Zur,⁴⁶ and they sought to join forces with Abdullah's movement. For example, Muraywid and Ali Khulqi were said to have been instrumental in supplying the Druze with weapons and funds, and therefore igniting the Hawran Rebellion.⁴⁷ Meanwhile, upon the collapse of Faysal's Syria, Ramadan Shallash raised arms and funds in Transjordan for an anti-French rebellion in Syria. He eventually formed a force in Jerash, Transjordan, and left for Deir al-Zur.⁴⁸ For his part, Transjordan's first Prime Minister, Rashid Tulay, was heavily involved in the Hawran Rebellion. According to Khayr al-Din al-Zirikli, Tulay even refused to take his position as head of the Transjordanian government, unless Abdullah allowed him to "continue working" in the Hawran region.⁴⁹ While the exact nature of Tulay's "work" in Hawran is unclear, it is likely that he was involved in rebel activities in the region.

In addition to taking part and supporting rebellions across Syria, the militant *Istiqlalis* were linked to a number of attacks on the French in Syria, and in some cases Zionist colonies in Palestine. The earliest of these attacks were the Bani Kinana raids on Syria, and attacks on Zionist colonies in the Galilee region. While the Bani Kinana attacks were mostly carried out by Transjordanian tribesmen (the most prominent of which is Kayid Miflih al-Ubaydat who died during a raid), the attacks were said to have been encouraged by *Istiqlalis* that had fled to Transjordan after

⁴⁶ Syrian nationalist, Ramadan Shlash, met Abdullah and asked for his support to fight the French at Deir al-Zur; Jabir, *Sajjil*, 100.

⁴⁷ Tell, *The Social and Economic Origins*, 58.

⁴⁸ Jabir, *Sajjil*, 100.

⁴⁹ Khayr al-Din al-Zirikli, *Aman fi Amman: Mudhakkarat Amayn Fi Asimat Sharq al-Urdun* (Amman: al-Ahliya, 2009), 92.

the collapse of the Faysali regime.⁵⁰ The two names that were linked to these attacks were Muraywid, and Ali Khulqi.⁵¹ Notably, these raids convinced the British in Palestine of the importance of establishing a government entity in Transjordan, which perhaps explains why High Commissioner Herbert Samuel held his famous meeting with Transjordanian tribesmen in Salt shortly after the attacks in August 1920. The same *Istiqlalis* were linked to the assassination of Alaa al-Din al-Duroubi, Syria's first Prime Minister after the French occupation and a collaborator in the eyes of most militants.⁵² Al-Duroubi was killed near the city of Deraa on August 21, 1920.⁵³

The highest profile *Istiqlal*-linked attack on the French happened after Abdullah's arrival in Transjordan: the assassination attempt on Henri Gouraud, the French High Commissioner in Syria and Lebanon. On June 23 1921, twelve kilometers away from Qunaitra in Hawran, a group of 14 militants set up an ambush for General Gouraud's convoy. They killed a Syrian officer, severely wounded another, and barely missed the arm of the French General.⁵⁴ The attack sparked a relentless French campaign, in which they destroyed 6 villages in Hawran and made numerous arrests.⁵⁵ The assassination attempt was closely linked to the *Istiqlalis* in Transjordan. One of the attackers, Muhammad Khatib, was the uncle of Muraywid,

⁵⁰ Tell, *The Social and Economic Origins*, 57.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Mahmud Ubaidat, *Ahmad Muraywid (1866-1926): Qaid Thawrat al-Julan wa Janub Lubnan wa Sharq al-Urdun* (Alexandria: Bostan al-Marifah, 1997), 218.

⁵³ Ubaidat, *Ahmad Muraywid*, 218.

⁵⁴ Madi and Musa, *Tarikh al-Urdun*, 168-169.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 169.

who at the time was Transjordan's Minister of Tribal Affairs.⁵⁶ Additionally, the attackers escaped from Qunaitra to Irbid, and then Amman, where Transjordan's *Istiqlalis* warmly welcomed them. The *Istiqlalis'* clear complicity in the attack made France release a strongly worded statement to the British government in Palestine. In the letter, the French authorities accuse the Transjordanian government of plotting the attack and demand that the perpetrators get handed over; among the names that the French demanded to arrest was Muraywid.⁵⁷ Despite British pressure, the Transjordanian government, under the leadership of Mazhar Raslan, refused to hand over Muraywid and the others.⁵⁸ Days later, Peake Pasha, the head of the British forces in Transjordan, attempted to arrest Muraywid. This led to a major demonstration in Amman (organized by *Istiqlali* allies of Muraywid), and nearly resulted in an armed confrontation between the British Mobile Force and the Arab-led Gendarme.⁵⁹ This incident goes to show the amount of *Istiqlali* involvement in attacks on French Syria. It is said that the entire assassination attempt was planned in Amman, at the *Istiqlal* Party's headquarters.⁶⁰ And while there is a possibility that this is inaccurate, it is certainly difficult to deny that key *Istiqlalis* were complicit.⁶¹ The Chief British Representative in Transjordan directly accuses Muraywid in his reports to Palestine, and complains about Abdullah's refusal to cut

⁵⁶ Ibid., 168.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ali Mahafza, *Tarikh al-Urdun al-Muasir: Ahd al-Imara, 1921-1946* (Amman: Jordan University Press, 1973), 26.

⁵⁹ Madi and Musa, *Tarikh al-Urdun*, 171.

⁶⁰ Jabir, *Sajjil*, 204.

⁶¹ Ibid., 202-211.

ties with the militant *Istiqlalis*.⁶² In fact, in one report, the British Representative goes as far as to accuse Abdullah of paying £500 to Muraywid for the purpose of funding the attack on General Gouraud.⁶³

Istiqlal-linked attacks continued into the summer of 1924, when armed rebels attacked French posts in southern Syria, and killed travelers on the Deraa-Mazairib road.⁶⁴ The complicity of the *Istiqlali* figures was not as clear in this case as it was in the Gouraud assassination attempt. However, both British sources and the Syrian press pointed fingers at the *Istiqlalis*. In a telegram to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, an official from the Government of Palestine claims that he had information implicating “Syrian refugees in Trans-Jordan” in providing funds and material support to the attackers.⁶⁵ The telegram states that, “they are probably provided with funds and material from Maan and encouraged by the *Istiqlal* Party in Amman.”⁶⁶ Meanwhile, the British Representative in Transjordan indicates in a different letter that Peake Pasha’s investigation found that Muraywid and Adil Arsalan were complicit in the raids.⁶⁷ Accusations against the *Istiqlalis* were also coming from the French-sympathizing Syrian press. For example, in an article in the Syrian newspaper *Fata al-Arab*, a writer named Uthman Qasim attacks the

⁶² Report no.6, the CBR in Amman, August 1st 1921, FO 371/6373.

⁶³ “Recent Acts of Banditism on the Trans-Jordan-Syrian Frontier”, the CBR in Amman to HC in Jerusalem, August 9 1924, FO 371/10118.

⁶⁴ Madi and Musa, *Tarikh al-Urdun*, 240.

⁶⁵ Telegram no. 238, the Officer Administrating the Government of Palestine to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, August 11th 1924, FO 371/10118.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ “Recent Acts of Banditism on the Trans-Jordan-Syrian Frontier”, the CBR in Amman to HC in Jerusalem, August 9 1924, FO 371/10118.

Transjordanian government, and accuses it of supporting the attacks on Syria.⁶⁸

Despite the absence of hard evidence, one can safely conclude that the militant *Istiqlalis* in Transjordan were involved in direct attacks on French Syria until the summer of 1924. This confirms that these *Istiqlalis'* ideological profile is aligned with that of Provence's nationalists; they were committed to the anti-colonial struggle, and they did not acknowledge the newly introduced national borders.

Militant *Istiqlalis'* anti-colonial activities were not limited to the French in Syria. The militant *Istiqlalis* also expressed hostility towards Britain. In this case, their hostility took the form of resisting British interference in the affairs of Transjordan. This is particularly evident in Britain's relationship with Transjordan's first Prime Minister, Rashid Tulay. A Druze from Lebanon, Tulay joined *al-Istiqlal* during the Faysali-era, but quickly became a prominent member of the organization. Tulay held a number of important positions during the Ottoman period, including the governor of Tripoli, and he was elected to the Ottoman parliament representing the Hawran region.⁶⁹ Under Faysal, Tulay became the Interior Minister of the Arab Government.⁷⁰ Before meeting Winston Churchill in March 1921, Abdullah invited Tulay to come to Transjordan and join him on his trip to Jerusalem. Tulay, who was handed down a French death sentence, accepted the invitation, but requested that he continue engaging in rebel activities in the Hawran region.⁷¹ Having made an agreement with Churchill, Abdullah asked Tulay to form the first government. The

⁶⁸ Report, British Consulate in Damascus to Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, September 16 1924, FO 371/10118.

⁶⁹ Jabir, *Sajjil*, 38.

⁷⁰ Al-Zirikli, *Aman fi Amman*, 87.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 92.

government was made up of militant *Istiqlalis*, a number of whom were linked to anti-French activities. Tulay's first government consisted of: Shakir bin Zayd, Muraywid (*Istiqlali*), Amin Tamimi (*Istiqlali*), Mazhar Raslan (*Istiqlali*), Ali Khulqi (*Istiqlali*), Muhammad al-Shanqiti, and Hasan al-Hakim (*Istiqlali*).⁷² Throughout the duration of Tulay's governments (he formed two between April and August 1921), the cabinet resisted British interference in the country's affairs. For example, when Herbert Samuel made his first visit to Transjordan after the conception of Abdullah's government, Tulay asked that Samuel show him a copy of the speech beforehand. Upon reading Samuel's speech, Tulay asked that he omit a section of the speech that states: "Britain demands that the territory east of the Jordan does not become a center of attacking Palestine or Syria."⁷³

Tulay's rejection of British interference was not limited to symbolic gestures, such as speeches. Tulay's cabinet rejected Britain's plan of sending four representatives to Transjordan; his government insisted that Britain only send two representatives.⁷⁴ Upon intense negotiations, the British government agreed to only sending two representatives.⁷⁵ Tulay also resisted British military presence in Transjordan. Upon returning from a trip in Ajlun in northern Transjordan, the Prime Minister was surprised to see a British force at Marka, near Abdullah's residence in Amman. Tulay wrote to the British Representative, and to Abdullah, protesting the deployment of these troops. Shortly after, the British Representative in Transjordan refused to transfer the promised grant-in-aid, unless Peake became responsible for

⁷² Ibid., 94.

⁷³ Ibid., 98.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 102.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

distributing the money within the military and the government limited the size of the military to 750 soldiers.⁷⁶ Tulay flatly rejected the British offer, but Abdullah accepted the offer without notifying the cabinet. In protest, Tulay resigned from his position on August 15th 1921.⁷⁷

The British were expectedly frustrated with Tulay and his government. In a report to the British administration in Palestine, the British Representative described Abdullah's choice of ministers as "unwise" and one that "made matter worse."⁷⁸ He also complained about the *Istiqlalis'* attitude towards British interference, describing it as "an attitude of reserve, suspicion, and opposition to the British Representative."⁷⁹ The *Istiqlalis*, according to the Representative, saw any British interference (such as British control over the army) as a violation of their "independence."⁸⁰ The report's portrayal of the *Istiqlalis* is certainly accurate; militant *Istiqlalis*, such as Tulay, took every opportunity to limit British interference, and assert their independence. There is a noticeable correlation between British influence in Transjordan, and the number of militant *Istiqlalis* in the government. The militant *Istiqlalis*, in fact, disappeared after the British issued an ultimatum in August 1924 enforcing their nearly full control over the finances of Transjordan, and placing the military under direct British control.⁸¹ The first two years, which Uriel Dann calls "the independence" phase, were marked by a large number of *Istiqlalis* in

⁷⁶ Jabir, *Sajjil*, 199.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 211.

⁷⁸ Report no.6, the CBR in Amman, August 1st 1921, FO 371/6373.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ Madi and Musa, *Tarikh al-Urdun*, 264.

government.⁸² But as British influence over Transjordan's finances, military, and bureaucracy increased, the militant *Istiqlalis* left the government. For example, Raslan was chosen to form a government after the resignation of Tulay's cabinet in August 1921. Raslan, as the next chapter will discuss, was an accommodationist *Istiqlali*; among other things, he was much less resistant to British influence in the territory. One British report praises him for "putting things in order," but also mildly condemns him for "sympathizing with the Syrian exiles."⁸³ The language of the report makes it clear that Raslan was not a perfect choice, but he was much better than the "undesirable Syrians,"⁸⁴ or the militant *Istiqlalis*, like Tulay. Raslan's cabinet still included some militants, such as Muraywid, but there were fewer of them.⁸⁵ Muraywid was also appointed in the next government formed in March 1922 and led by Ali Rida al-Rikabi.⁸⁶ His name, much like the names of the other militants, disappeared from the next governments.

Many of the militant *Istiqlalis* who left Transjordan chose to join the Great Syrian Revolt, which broke out in 1925. This point further demonstrates the militants' commitment to the anti-colonial struggle, and it also speaks directly to Michael Provence's thesis that a class (and network) of militant nationalists formed the core of the Great Syrian Revolt.⁸⁷ The fact that a large number of militant *Istiqlalis* left Transjordan to join the Revolt suggests that they belonged to the same

⁸² Uriel Dann, *Studies in the History of Transjordan, 1920-1949: The Making of a State*. (London: Westview Press, 1984).

⁸³ Report no.7, the CBR in Amman, September 1st 1921, FO 371/6373.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Madi and Musa, *Tarikh al-Urdun*, 168.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 178.

⁸⁷ Provence, *The Great Syrian Revolt*, 47.

group of nationalists that Provence speaks of in his works. More significantly, Provence characterizes the core militants of the Great Syrian Revolt as rural, or urban middle-class, educated in subsidized Ottoman military schools, and of humble means compared to the upper classes in Damascus.⁸⁸ These characteristics do, in fact, apply to the militant *Istiqlalis* in Transjordan: the majority of them were of rural background or from urban middle-class families, and graduates of Ottoman military schools. For example, Rashid Tulay hailed from a Druze village in Mount Lebanon and was the first in his family to leave and seek higher education.⁸⁹ Having attended a village school, Tulay eventually left his home village and attended the Tribal School in Istanbul.⁹⁰ The Tribal School, which was an Ottoman initiative aimed at securing rural support for the state, was fully subsidized and its curriculum emphasized military training and discipline.⁹¹ Ramadan Shallash, another *Istiqlali* in Transjordan, also attended the Tribal School before becoming a Bedouin chief.⁹² Another example that perfectly fits Provence's profile is militant Muraywid, who was born in Jabata al-Khashab, a village in the Hawran region.⁹³ Muraywid had a military background, and became an early adherent to the Sharif Hussein's Arab Revolt.⁹⁴ Demonstrating his humble background, elitist Izzat Darwaza condescendingly describes him as "moderately cultured, but intelligent."⁹⁵

Meanwhile, Said al-As, who served as police constable in Amman in the early 1920s,

⁸⁸ Ibid., 149.

⁸⁹ Jabir, *Sajjil*, 32.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 33.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid., 34.

⁹³ Ubaidat, *Ahmad Muraywid*, 20.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 20–26.

⁹⁵ Darwaza, *Mudhakkarat*, 371.

was born to a middle-class family in Hama.⁹⁶ Al-As received military schooling, and fought for the Ottomans during the Great War.⁹⁷ And while this topic suffers from a shortage of credible sources, Fuad Salim and Khayr al-Din al-Zrikli were also likely to be of humble middle-class backgrounds. There is, in conclusion, an obvious correlation between Provence's description of the Great Revolt nationalists, and the militant *Istiqlalis* in early 1920s Transjordan. They were both part of the same network of militant nationalists in the post-Ottoman period Arab East.

Not Quite Uniform: Disagreements Among the Militant *Istiqlalis*

The militant *Istiqlalis* shared a common agenda of anti-colonialism, and hailed from similar socio-economic backgrounds. However, speaking to the heterogeneity of the *Istiqlali* camp, there were divisions even within the group, particularly regarding the methods they employed to achieve their anti-colonial goals. These differences, this section demonstrates, were exposed during two pivotal moments: the Abdullah-Churchill agreement of March 1921 and the registration of *al-Istiqlal* as an official party in Transjordan.

The agreement between Abdullah and Churchill in March 1921 became a contentious topic among the *Istiqlalis*, and revealed that there were major differences within the group. When Abdullah left for Jerusalem to meet with Churchill, he made sure that his entourage included a number of militant *Istiqlalis*; Muraywid, Tulay, Awni Abd al-Hadi, Amin Tamimi, and Ghaleb al-Shaalan were part of the Prince's entourage.⁹⁸ It remains unclear why Abdullah chose to include such

⁹⁶ Provence, "Ottoman Modernity," 206.

⁹⁷ Provence, *The Great Syrian Revolt*, 133.

⁹⁸ Madi and Musa, *Tarikh al-Urdun*, 146.

individuals in his entourage, particularly when he knew that any agreement that he reached with Churchill was likely not going to live up to the militant aims of these *Istiqlalis*. It is likely that Abdullah chose to include such high profile militants because they gave his meeting with Churchill much-needed legitimacy in the eyes of the population of Transjordan and Greater Syria.⁹⁹ Abdullah and Churchill eventually agreed to form a temporary, six-month trial period, government in Transjordan, to have British advisors in Amman, and to ensure that the Palestinian and Syrian borders with Transjordan remain secure and calm.¹⁰⁰ The last component must have been particularly objectionable to the *Istiqlalis* who accompanied Abdullah, especially those who were engaged in anti-French activities across the Syrian border. It is perhaps for this reason that Abdullah met Churchill in secret and did not disclose the details of the agreement to his entourage.¹⁰¹

Within the militant *Istiqlali* camp, Abdullah's agreement with Churchill was divisive. Some, such as Nabulsi *Istiqlali* Awni Abd al-Hadi, abandoned Abdullah as soon as he signed the agreement. Abd al-Hadi was present at the meeting with Churchill, and he claims to have heard Churchill say to Abdullah, "I warn you from allowing any person from attacking France...France remains Britain's ally, and we refuse any attack on it."¹⁰² Sami Sarraj, another *Istiqlali*, reflected on the issue saying, "one wonders why these nationalist leaders accept positions in this Emirate [Transjordan] after the goal of establishing it became clear...these goals diverge

⁹⁹ See Stefanie Nanes, "National Identity in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan." In *Nationalism in a Global Era: The Persistence of Nations*, by Mitchell Young, Eric Zuelow and Andreas Sturm (London: Routledge, 2007), 221-239.

¹⁰⁰ Al-Zirikli, *Aman fi Amman*, 88-89.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 91.

¹⁰² Jabir, *Sajjil*, 165.

completely from the goals of the nationalists.”¹⁰³ Sarraj is not clear about what goals he is talking about, but it is likely that he is referring to Abdullah’s promises to put an end to attacks on the French in Syria.

While *Istiqlalis*, like Abd al-Hadi and Sarraj, abandoned Abdullah’s project altogether, other militant *Istiqlalis* chose a more pragmatic path; they decided to continue working with Abdullah, and deploy his project to achieve their own militant goals. The most notable of these was Rashid Tulay. Some suggest that Abdullah deceived Tulay before he asked him to form the first government; Abdullah allegedly told his Prime Minister that Churchill promised to return Syria from the French within 6 months.¹⁰⁴ He allegedly said to him that if Britain were not successful at removing France from Syria, they were going to allow the *Istiqlalis* to launch a military campaign.¹⁰⁵ But while Abdullah might have been intentionally deceptive, it is more likely that Tulay actually saw Abdullah’s agreement with Churchill as an opportunity. He hoped to use Abdullah’s provisional government to levy taxes and use British aid to form a force that would liberate Syria.¹⁰⁶ It should, therefore, not come as a surprise that British documents reveal that even after becoming Prime Minister, Tulay continued to correspond with rebels in the Hawran region, encouraging them to join Abdullah’s struggle.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰³ Ibid., 169.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 168.

¹⁰⁵ Al-Zirikli, *Aman fi Amman*, 92.

¹⁰⁶ Jabir, *Sajjil*, 169.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 161.

One British report rightly describes the likes of Tulay as looking “upon Transjordan as a jumping-off board in their designs against the French.”¹⁰⁸ The same report complains about a ceremony that the militant *Istiqlalis* held in commemoration of the fall of Damascus. Apparently, the attendees praised Britain, and threatened the French for what they had done to Faysal’s state. Someone at the meeting even suggested that they would be celebrating the next Eid in Damascus.¹⁰⁹ This rhetoric perfectly embodies the attitude of these pragmatic militant *Istiqlalis*; they were willing to work with (or even praise) Britain, as long as they felt that this would help them achieve their main goal of fighting France. It is, therefore, not a surprise that the militant *Istiqlalis* started to abandon Abdullah as his intention of preventing attacks on Syria became clearer. His intentions became clearest in the summer of 1924, when – under pressure from the British – Abdullah stepped up his rhetoric against the Transjordanian-linked attacks on French Syria. He released a statement ordering Adil Arslan, Muraywid, and other militants to leave the country.¹¹⁰ The statement says, “The nations that were mandated to help the Arabs are Britain and France. We must cooperate with these nations, and show integrity and wisdom.”¹¹¹ The statement concludes with, “I will personally remove every person who shows hostility to the respectable French government.”¹¹² Upon the

¹⁰⁸ Report no.6, the CBR in Amman, August 1st 1921, FO 371/6373.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ Madi and Musa, *Tarikh al-Urdun*, 242.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 243.

release of this openly pro-French statement at the end of August 1924, the aforementioned militant *Istiqlalis* left Transjordan for the Hijaz.¹¹³

Another divisive issue among the militant *Istiqlalis* was the debate surrounding the registration of *Hizb al-Istiqlal* in Transjordan. After the formation of the first Transjordanian government, Tulay sought to establish an official branch of *Hizb al-Istiqlal* in the country. When he approached Abdullah about the matter, the Emir approved but required one condition: *al-Istiqlal* was not to take part in the “administrative affairs” of the country.¹¹⁴ Abdullah’s condition, which Tulay brought up at a meeting of the *Istiqlalis*, proved to be divisive. The pragmatists in the party, notably Tulay and Khalid Hakim, argued that they should accept the Emir’s condition, and officially register *al-Istiqlal* in Transjordan. Hakim argued that Abdullah’s condition was merely a symbolic gesture; there is no way that the government could stop *al-Istiqlal* from intervening in its administrative affairs.¹¹⁵ However, others preferred that they reject Abdullah’s condition, and remain an unofficial party.¹¹⁶ While they eventually decided to side with pragmatists, this issue (much like the *Istiqlalis*’ position towards the Churchill agreement) demonstrates that there were divisions even within the militant *Istiqlali* camp.

Conclusion

The fall of Faysal’s government in July 1920 forced many of the members of *Hizb al-Istiqlal al-Arabi* to relocate to the territory of Transjordan, where they came

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Al-Zirikli, *Aman fi Amman*, 152.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Khayr al-Din al-Zirikli does not specify who these people are; al-Zirikli, *Aman fi Amman*.

to play an important role in Prince Abdullah's administration. While the *Istiqlalis* in Transjordan varied in their ideologies, one branch of militant nationalists emerged as an important player. The militant *Istiqlalis*, many of whom received death sentences from the French in Syria, were involved in anti-French activities, demonstrated hostility towards the British, and came to play a part in the Great Syrian Revolt of 1925. These militants held different views about Abdullah's relationship with Britain, and about the status of *Hizb al-Istiqlal* in Transjordan, but they were all markedly anti-colonial, and they did not acknowledge the newly formed national borders. These characteristics, as well as the fact that the majority of the militant *Istiqlalis* hailed from rural and middle-class backgrounds, meant that the group belonged to a wider network of anti-colonial nationalists in the Arab East, which Michael Provence identifies in his works. It is, therefore, not surprising that many of the militant *Istiqlalis* left Transjordan to join their fellow militant nationalists in their struggle against France during the Great Syrian Revolt of 1925.

Chapter Three: The Accommodationist *Istiqlalis*

Members of *Hizb al-Istiqlal al-Arabi* who came to Transjordan in the 1920s were not all militants who were relentlessly anti-colonial and did not acknowledge the newly established national borders. This chapter argues that there was another identifiable group among the *Istiqlalis* in 1920s Transjordan: the accommodationist *Istiqlalis*. In contrast with the militant *Istiqlalis*, the accommodationists were less attached to the cause of fighting the French in Syria, and more committed to Prince Abdullah's project of building a state in Transjordan. This made them more likely to spend more time in Transjordan, even when Abdullah clearly abandoned his promises to liberate Syria from the French. To begin with, this chapter introduces the group and situates it in wider categories that historians of Transjordan have devised; it shows that they belonged to what Philip Robins terms the "Sharifian elite" and not the "British-inspired external elite." The former was a group of Arab nationalists who had served under Faysal's Arab regime, and in some cases took part in the Arab Revolt. The latter were mostly Palestinian officials without any nationalist credentials, who were merely appointed by the British authorities in Palestine. Highlighting the ways in which they differed from the militants, this chapter demonstrates that the accommodationist *Istiqlalis* loosened their ties to *Hizb al-Istiqlal* after they arrived in Transjordan, were usually on negative terms with the militants, and were on better terms with the British.

Background: Introducing and Situating the Accommodationist *Istiqlalis*

As indicated in the previous chapters, Abdullah travelled to Transjordan offering big promises. On his way to Maan in southern Transjordan, he is said to

have made statements that denounced the two colonial powers in the region: France and Britain.¹ In his famous Maan proclamation to the Syrian people, which he issued sometime between November 1920 and March 1921, Abdullah says, “how do you accept that the Umayyad capital is a French colony?! If you have come to terms with that, the [Arab] Peninsula has not...Our goal is saving you and uprooting the aggressors.”² However, not long after he arrived in Amman, on March 2nd 1921, things started to change. Days after, he received a letter from his father asking him to travel to Jerusalem to negotiate with Winston Churchill, Britain’s Secretary of State for the Colonies at the time.³ He is said to have received the letter during a meeting with nationalists in Amman, where he read it out loud and allegedly said, “negotiate about what? We did not come here to play politics!”⁴ His comment, much like his aforementioned proclamation, did not amount to more than rhetoric. At the end of the month, Abdullah met Churchill, and agreed to form a British-sponsored administrative entity in Transjordan, whereby the Emir formed a cabinet, and (with the help of British advisors and financial aid) became responsible for the local affairs of the territory. In a clear break from his anti-French promises to the Syrian nationalists that resided in Transjordan at the time, Abdullah agreed to maintain security at the borders, and prevent attacks on the French in Syria.⁵ After he signed

¹ While Abdullah’s anti-French rhetoric is evident, there is not the same amount of evidence for his anti-British rhetoric. Tariq Tell is among few scholars who claim that Abdullah’s rhetoric was anti-British; Tariq Tell, *The Social and Economic Origins of Monarchy in Jordan* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 60.

² Abdullah bin al-Hussein, *Mudhakkirati* (Amman: al-Ahliyyah, 1998), 177.

³ Khayr al-Din al-Zirikli, *Aman fi Amman: Mudhakkarat Amayn Fi Asimat Sharq al-Urdun* (Amman: al-Ahliya, 2009), 84.

⁴ Al-Zirikli, *Aman fi Amman*, 84.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 89.

the agreement, Abdullah's rhetoric also started to change. In a speech that he made on May 25th 1923, Abdullah called Britain, "the ally of the Arabs."⁶ Perhaps more disturbingly for the militant nationalists, he began to abandon his anti-French stances. In the wake of a raid on French Syria, he released a statement denouncing nationalist individuals in Transjordan saying that "...their presence is understood as an unfriendly plot towards our ally in Syria."⁷

As discussed in the second chapter, Abdullah's abandonment of his anti-French plans, as well as Britain's mounting pressure, led many militant nationalists to leave Transjordan. The biggest blow to the militants came in the summer of 1924, when the British authorities expelled and exiled a number of *Istiqlalis*, including the prominent Fuad Salim and Ahmad Muraywid.⁸ Abdullah and his British allies, however, eased the majority of the militant *Istiqlalis* out of office by replacing them with more moderate nationalists, or accommodationist *Istiqlalis*.⁹ The latter were figures (usually Syrians, but sometimes Palestinians) who were less committed to the cause of liberating Syria from the French, and therefore less resistant to Abdullah's friendly stances towards the colonial powers in the region. The earliest instance of Abdullah's policy of replacing a militant with an accommodationist was the appointment of Mazhar Raslan as Prime Minister in August 1921. Raslan's ideology is discussed in greater detail in later sections, but it suffices here to state that his cabinets were "less aggressively nationalistic than that of the Tili'a [Raslan's

⁶ Munib Madi and Sulayman Musa, *Tarikh al-Urdun fi al-Qarn al-Ishrin, 1900-1959* (Amman: Maktabat al-Muhtasib, 1959), 204.

⁷ Madi and Musa, *Tarikh al-Urdun*, 242.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Tell, *The Social and Economic Origins*, 64.

militant predecessor] cabinet.”¹⁰ Raslan, unlike the militants, was not attached to the cause of fighting the French in Syria, and therefore more in line with the clauses of Abdullah’s agreement with Churchill. This perhaps explains why the British welcomed his appointment; the Chief British Representative in Amman praises him in a report saying, “Mazhar Bey Raslan must be credited with making an honest attempt to keep things in order.”¹¹

Another prominent accommodationist was Ali Rida al-Rikabi, who formed a government in March 1922, and another one in March 1924.¹² Al-Rikabi, who had been a high-ranking Ottoman officer, and later the military governor and Prime Minister of Faysal’s Arab Government, came to be known during the Faysali era for his moderate policies towards the colonial powers, and his opposition to armed struggle. In a December 1923 letter to Herbert Samuel, the British Representative in Amman complained about the activities of “politically minded Syrian extremists in Transjordan” and claimed that only al-Rikabi (thanks to his “strong personality”) was able to control their activities.¹³ In fact, Percy Cox, who later became the British Representative in Amman, made the distribution of Britain’s grant-in-aid conditional upon al-Rikabi’s re-appointment as a Prime Minister in March 1924.¹⁴ In addition to Raslan and al-Rikabi, Ibrahim Hashim was another accommodationist

¹⁰ Mary Wilson, *King Abdullah, Britain and the Making of Jordan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 67.

¹¹ Report no.7, the Chief British Representative (CBR) in Amman, September 1st 1921, FO 371/6373.

¹² Madi and Musa, *Tarikh al-Urdun*, 234.

¹³ Report, the office of the CBR in Transjordan to the High Commissioner (HC) in Jerusalem, December 13th 1923, CO 733/52.

¹⁴ Philip Robins, “The Consolidation of Hashemite Power in Jordan 1921-1946” (Ph.D. Diss. University of Exeter, 1988), 147.

Istiqlali. When the British decided to crack down on the *Istiqlalis* in the summer of 1924, Hashim chose to stay in Transjordan. He could only do that, however, after he promised to disassociate himself from the *Istiqlal* Party, and its goal of liberating Syria from the French.¹⁵ Awda Abu Tayeh and Said Khayr, two Transjordanians who joined *al-Istiqlal*, were also accommodationist *Istiqlalis*. Abu Tayeh was an influential Transjordanian tribesman, who hailed from the Huwaytat tribe and played an important role during Sharif Hussein's Arab Revolt against the Ottomans.¹⁶ Khayr, of Syrian origin, was an important figure in Amman and the Balqa region prior to the arrival of Abdullah. Abu Tayeh and Khayr played a role in convincing Sharif Hussein to send one of his sons to Transjordan after the collapse of Faysal's government.¹⁷ They also visited Abdullah in Maan, and facilitated his journey to Amman.¹⁸ The two men joined *al-Istiqlal* in the early 1920s (Abu Tayeh may have joined *al-Jamiyya al-Arabiyya al-Fatat* earlier, during the Arab Revolt), but they remained in Transjordan even after the British expelled the militants in the summer of 1924.¹⁹

Prior to discussing the specific characteristics of the accommodationists, it is important to situate the accommodationist *Istiqlalis* within wider political categories that scholars of Transjordan have introduced. Philip Robins identifies two groups that dominated Transjordan's bureaucracy in its early years. Borrowing

¹⁵ Wilson, *King Abdullah*, 78.

¹⁶ Madi and Musa, *Tarikh al-Urdun*, 133.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 132.

¹⁸ Qidri Qalaji, *Al-Thawra al-Arabiyya al-Kobra (1916-1925): Jeel al-Fida Yawman Bi Yawm Ma Kamil al-Asma wa al-Wathaiq wa al-Adwar* (Beirut: Sharikat al-Matboat, 1993), 419.

¹⁹ Madi and Musa, *Tarikh al-Urdun*, 132.

from Hanna Batatu's categorization of the Hashemite Iraq elite, Robins terms the first of the two groups the "Sharifian elite." This, like the one that Batatu identifies in Iraq, was made up of Sunni nationalists who had joined the cause of Arabism, and Sharif Hussein's revolt in some cases, prior to the establishment of the Mandate system in the Arab East.²⁰ This group, Robin argues, dominated the upper ranks of the Transjordanian state since its conception, and until 1924.²¹ The other group was the "British-inspired external elite."²² This group came to dominate official positions in Transjordan after 1924, and it was mostly comprised of British and Palestinian figures. Unlike the Sharifian elite, members of the British-inspired elite had not joined the cause of Arabism, and had no ties to Sharif Hussein's Arab Revolt or to Faysal's Arab Government. They were, in fact, appointed to official positions by the mandatory power to displace the Sharifian elite, and serve colonial interests. Munib Madi and Sulayman Musa make a similar argument when they say that foreigners in early Transjordan could be divided into two groups: genuine nationalists, and "mercenaries."²³ While the former was made up of *Istiqlalis* with nationalist backgrounds (often people who had served under the Arab Government, or engaged in anti-French attacks), the latter was primarily made up of Palestinians who worked for the British government and lacked the same nationalist credentials. Tariq Tell echoes this categorization when he says that Hassan Khalid Abu al-Huda, Transjordan's fourth Prime Minister, began a pattern of giving key posts to

²⁰ Robins, "The Consolidation," 166.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 167.

²² *Ibid.*, 175.

²³ Madi and Musa, *Tarikh al-Urdun*, 269.

seconded officials from the British government of Palestine.²⁴ All of these scholars agree that this pattern started after the expulsion of the militant *Istiqlalis* in the summer of 1924, but peaked after Abu al-Huda replaced al-Rikabi in June 1926. Robins calls Abu al-Huda the “first British man,” and identifies his appointment as the beginning of the shift away from the Sharifian elite to a British-inspired elite.²⁵

The accommodationist *Istiqlalis* belonged to the first group: the Sharifian elite. They were individuals with nationalist backgrounds, who had served under Faysal’s Arab Government, and in some cases had been supporters of Sharif Hussein’s revolt. At the same time, the accommodationists were less committed to the cause of fighting the French in Syria than their more militant Sharifian counterparts. For example, al-Rikabi was involved with the Arabist society, *al-Jamiyya al-Arabiyya al-Fatat*, before Faysal’s arrival in Damascus.²⁶ Meanwhile, Raslan and Hashim were both members of nationalist circles, and they played considerable roles in Faysal’s Arab Government. They, therefore, could not be considered as part of the British-inspired elite, which did not serve under Faysal, and was not part of the pre-war Arabist societies; the British-inspired elite was merely made up of officials working for the British administration in Palestine. At the same time, the accommodationist *Istiqlalis* were distinguishably different from

²⁴ Tell, *The Social and Economic Origins*, 74.

²⁵ It is unclear whether Hassan Khalid Abu al-Huda should be considered a member of the “British-inspired external elite.” Unlike most members of the British-elite, Abu al-Huda was a Syrian from Aleppo. And while the British-elite came to dominate Transjordan under his reign, it is unclear what sort of background he came from, particularly whether he was affiliated with the nationalist and *Istiqlali* circles; Robins, “The Consolidation,” 175-176.

²⁶ Eliezer Tauber, *The Arab Movements in World War I* (London: Frank Cass, 1993), 116.

their militant counterparts; they did not share the same interest in fighting France in Syria. This, combined with the fact that the British used them to displace the militant *Istiqlalis* from government posts in Transjordan, is what earned them Tell's hybrid label, "the more mercenary *Istiqlalis*."²⁷ Having introduced and situated the accommodationist *Istiqlalis*, the rest of this chapter highlights three ways that the group differed from the militant *Istiqlalis*.

Accommodationist Ties to *Hizb al-Istiqlal*

The accommodationist *Istiqlalis*, as explained in the previous section, had ties to *Hizb al-Istiqlal* and to the Arab nationalist movement during the Faysali regime; some were even early supporters of Sharif Hussein's Arab Revolt. A careful reading, however, shows that the accommodationists tended to loosen (and in some cases cut) their ties to the organization after the collapse of Faysal's Arab Government and their arrival in Transjordan. This is perhaps not surprising given that the accommodationists were less ideologically committed to the nationalist movement than the militants. While it is unclear when exactly most accommodationists cut ties with the organization, Ibrahim Hashim and the native Transjordanian *Istiqlalis* appeared to distance themselves from the organization in the summer of 1924, after the British expelled the militant *Istiqlalis* from Transjordan. The rest of this section highlights this trend, and it also shows how the various accommodationists differed in their commitment patterns to *al-Istiqlal*.

In August 1921, Mazhar Raslan replaced Rashid Tulay to become Transjordan's second Prime Minister. This bureaucrat held a number of positions

²⁷ Tell, *The Social and Economic Origins*, 80.

during the Ottoman period, and became a prominent participant in Faysal's Arab regime.²⁸ Raslan was a member of the Syrian National Congress, which convened in Damascus in July 1919, and eventually declared Faysal the King of an independent Syria.²⁹ The Faysali government appointed Raslan as the governor of Salt, the largest town in Transjordan at the time.³⁰ He remained in this position after the collapse of Faysal's kingdom in July 1920, and formed a British-sponsored local administration, known as the Salt Government, after Herbert Samuel's famous meeting with Transjordanian tribesmen and politicians in August 1920.³¹ Raslan's participation in the Arab regime is difficult to overlook, but the extent of his commitment in *al-Istiqlal* is much less clear. The majority of the secondary sources suggest that Raslan was part of *Hizb al-Istiqlal*. Tell and Mary Wilson both confirm that Raslan was an *Istiqlali*.³² Meanwhile, Robins also suggests that Raslan was a member of *al-Istiqlal*.³³ This, however, is disputed in the memoirs of the *Istiqlali* Khayr al-Din al-Zirikli. According to al-Zirikli, Abdullah asked the *Istiqlalis* about Raslan, the head of the Salt government at the time, and none of the people that he asked knew whether the man was a member of *Hizb al-Istiqlal* or not. Al-Zirikli, along with other *Istiqlalis*, left for Salt to meet Raslan, and came to the conclusion that "Mazhar had no relations with *Hizb al-Istiqlal*."³⁴ Al-Zirikli describes Raslan as just "one of the remnants of the

²⁸ D. K. Fieldhouse, *Western Imperialism in the Middle East: 1914-1958* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 266.

²⁹ Qalaji, *Al-Thawra al-Arabiya al-Kobra*, 304.

³⁰ Madi and Musa, *Tarikh al-Urdun*, 115.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Tell, *The Social and Economic Origins*, 64.

³³ Robins, "The Consolidation," 175.

³⁴ Al-Zirikli, *Aman fi Amman*, 38.

Arab Government in Syria.”³⁵ Al-Zirikli was an important figure in *al-Istiqlal* during the Faysali-era and in Transjordan; his assertion that Raslan was not a member of *al-Istiqlal* should not be taken lightly. At the same time, it is worth noting that al-Zirikli, and the other *Istiqlalis*, were initially unsure about whether Raslan was a member of *Istiqlal*, and needed to meet him to conclude that he was not. This could suggest that al-Zirikli did not know every person who was a member of the organization, and it is not clear what he specifically meant when he said that Raslan had “no relations” to *al-Istiqlal*. Was Raslan never part of *al-Istiqlal*? Or did he lose ties after the collapse of Faysal’s government? Given that the other sources suggest that Raslan was an *Istiqlali*, and that most high-ranking officials under Faysal were (almost by default)³⁶ members of *al-Istiqlal*, it is safe to assume that Raslan had some ties to *al-Istiqlal*. He perhaps was a member of the organization before the collapse of the Faysali regime, but he never was part of the core group of nationalists with whom al-Zirikli would have identified.³⁷ It is clear, however, that Raslan’s ties to *al-Istiqlal* after the fall of the Arab Government were much looser than those of the militant *Istiqlalis*, such as al-Zirikli himself.

Ali Rida al-Rikabi, Transjordan’s third Prime Minister, also appeared to loosen, if not cut, his ties to *Hizb al-Istiqlal* after the collapse of Faysal’s

³⁵ Ibid., 36; Curiously, Zirikli does not have an entry about Raslan in his exhaustive encyclopedia, *al-Aalam: Qamus Tarajim Li Ashar al-Rijal wa al-Nisa Min al-Arab wa al-Mustaribeen wa al-Mustashriqeen*.

³⁶ See James L. Gelvin, *Divided Loyalties: Nationalism and Mass Politics in Syria at the Close of Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

³⁷ It is interesting to note that after Muzahar Raslan went back to Syria in 1924, the French authorities implicated him in the Great Syrian Revolt. He was exiled until the amnesty of 1928. While the French implication may have been based on thin evidence, it perhaps indicates that Raslan maintained at least some ties with the militant nationalists; Fieldhouse, *Western Imperialism*, 266.

administration. Al-Rikabi was from a middle-class family in Damascus, and he was a graduate of Ottoman military schooling.³⁸ Al-Rikabi rose in the ranks to become a corps commander in the Ottoman military; this made him an attractive candidate for the Arabist organization, *al-Jamiyya al-Arabiyya al-Fatat* to recruit.³⁹ He joined *al-Fatat* shortly after it relocated to Damascus in October 1914, and consequently became an influential member.⁴⁰ Al-Rikabi, along with other prominent Damascene figures, corresponded with Sharif Hussein throughout the war, and delegated him to negotiate on behalf of the Arab people.⁴¹ In March 1915, al-Rikabi met Faysal and gave him all of his personal seals as a sign of his loyalty. As the highest-ranking Damascene officer, the Ottomans assigned al-Rikabi the task of defending Damascus against the British forces. He, however, put minimal effort into fortifying the city, and immediately surrendered to the occupying army.⁴² Upon Faysal's arrival in the city, al-Rikabi was appointed as the military governor, and later became Faysal's Prime Minister in October 1919.⁴³ More importantly, al-Rikabi played a significant role in *al-Fatat* during the Faysali era. He was part of the administrative committee of the organization, and he became the head of the Arab Club, an organization affiliated with *al-Fatat*.⁴⁴ It is, therefore, clear that, unlike Raslan, al-Rikabi had a long and well-documented history in *al-Istiqlal's* sister organization, *al-Fatat*. A quick reading of al-Rikabi's history shows that he was entrenched in this early

³⁸ Mundhir Mahmud Jabir, *Sajjil: Ana Rashid Tulay: Sira wa Masir* (London: Mussasat al-Turath al-Durzi, 2008), 56.

³⁹ Tauber, *The Arab Movements*, 116.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 57.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 61.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 231.

⁴³ Qalaji, *Al-Thawra al-Arabiya al-Kobra*, 259.

⁴⁴ Gelvin, *Divided Loyalties*, 70.

Arabist organization, and disputes J.K. Fieldhouse's description of al-Rikabi as one of those "who jumped onto the nationalist bandwagon."⁴⁵

Despite al-Rikabi's long history in *al-Fatat*, he appeared to have acquired a different reputation by the time he arrived in Transjordan in March 1922.⁴⁶ Even though all the members of *al-Fatat* were automatically part of the sister organization, *al-Istiqlal*, nearly none of the sources on Transjordan in the early 1920s refer to al-Rikabi as an *Istiqlali*. Al-Zirikli calls him "one of the men of the throne in Syria:" probably implying that he was one of France's men in Syria.⁴⁷ Al-Zirikli goes on to describe al-Rikabi's intrigues against *al-Istiqlal* in Transjordan; he allegedly created a party called *Um al-Qura* for the sole purpose of dividing *al-Istiqlal*.⁴⁸ Al-Zirikli also accuses al-Rikabi of spying to tarnish the reputation of nationalists in Transjordan. He claims that al-Rikabi's biggest "crime" in Transjordan was ruining the *Istiqlalis'* relationship with Abdullah. The British documents confirm al-Zirikli's assertion that al-Rikabi was not affiliated with *Hizb al-Istiqlali* by the time he arrived in Transjordan, and that he even worked against the organization and its members. For example, in a December 1923 letter to the Government of Palestine, the British Representative in Amman reports that the "extremist" Syrians, or the militant *Istiqlalis*, were under control during al-Rikabi's administration.⁴⁹ Another letter from August 1924 commends al-Rikabi for the

⁴⁵ Fieldhouse, *Western Imperialism*, 279.

⁴⁶ Al-Zirikli, *Aman fi Amman*, 204.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 201.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 209.

⁴⁹ Report, the office of the CBR in Transjordan to the HC in Jerusalem, December 13th 1923, CO 733/52.

“energetic action” that he was taking against extremist, anti-French, individuals (likely *Istiqlalis*) in Transjordan.⁵⁰

The discrepancy between al-Rikabi’s past as an influential member of *al-Fatat* in Syria, and the role that he played against the nationalists in Transjordan is certainly curious. What could possibly turn a seemingly committed nationalist against his comrades in *al-Istiqlal*? The truth is that al-Rikabi had never been an ideologically committed nationalist, and many accused him of being an opportunist who used his position in *al-Fatat* and *al-Istiqlal* to advance his own agenda. Izzat Darwaza, a prominent nationalist, asserts that al-Rikabi had always been half-heartedly committed to the ideals of *al-Istiqlal*, particularly the organization’s demand for immediate independence.⁵¹ In fact, al-Rikabi is said to have used his position within the administrative committee of *al-Fatat* to influence the party’s position, and approve negotiations with the French.⁵² This made prominent nationalist, Kamil al-Qassab, accuse the committee of “slackness” and “neglect of national interests.”⁵³ Al-Rikabi apparently even tried to manipulate the elections in order to gain approval for Faysal’s accord with France.⁵⁴ Known as the Faysal-Clemenceau accord, the proposed agreement was highly unpopular in nationalist circles, because it limited Syria’s sovereignty by giving up parts of the country to

⁵⁰ Report, the CBR in Transjordan to the HC in Jerusalem, August 9th 1924, FO 371/10118.

⁵¹ Muhammad Izzat Darwaza, *Mudhakkarat: Sijil Hafil Bi Maserat al-Haraka al-Arabiya wa al-Qadiya al-Falasteniyyah Khilal Qarn Min al-Zaman, 1887–1984*, Volume One (Beirut: Dar al-Gharb al-Islami, 1993), 380.

⁵² Gelvin, *Divided Loyalties*, 62.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

France.⁵⁵ In a speech that he gave in Damascus in May 1919, al-Rikabi denounced the militant nationalists, whom he called the *mushaghibin*, or the trouble makers.⁵⁶ It is also telling that as popular pressure mounted and a French assault looked more imminent, Faysal chose to replace al-Rikabi's government with a more "defensive," or more aggressive one towards France. It was led by Hashim al-Atassi in May 1920.⁵⁷ Known as the "moderate sheikhs," al-Rikabi and his cabinet were seen as being too soft towards France. However, the major turning point in al-Rikabi's relationship with *al-Istiqlal* was not his moderate stance towards negotiating with France as an official; it was his personal relationship with the French. Despite the important role that al-Rikabi played under the Faysali regime, the French did not punish him as they did with the relatively less prominent *Istiqlalis*. Tellingly, al-Rikabi was not handed a death sentence, and he was allowed to stay in Damascus; he even ran in the representative council elections that followed the French invasion, and did not leave for Transjordan until March 1922, almost two years after the militant *Istiqlalis* were forced to leave.⁵⁸ According to Darwaza, this was because he was a friend of the French, and he had made contacts with them even before the collapse of Faysal's regime in July 1920.⁵⁹ In fact, the British authorities also believed that al-Rikabi was "...possibly bought by the French."⁶⁰ In light of the bitterness that the militant *Istiqlalis* (some of whom had escaped death sentences in

⁵⁵ Ibid., 36.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 216.

⁵⁷ Malcom B. Russell, *The First Arab State: Syria Under Faysal, 1918-1920* (Minneapolis: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1987), 150.

⁵⁸ Report, British Consulate in Damascus to the CBR in Amman, August 23rd 1924, FO 371/10118.

⁵⁹ Darwaza, *Mudhakkarat*, 379.

⁶⁰ Wilson, *King Abdullah*, 73.

Syria) harbored towards France, it makes sense to see why they no longer considered al-Rikabi an *Istiqlali*. Further, his relationship with the French, which stands in total contrast with that of the militant *Istiqlalis'* anti-French leanings, deems it unlikely that al-Rikabi maintained ties with *Hizb al-Istiqlal* after the collapse of Faysal's regime in July 1920.

While it is unclear at what point exactly Raslan and al-Rikabi cut their ties to *al-Istiqlal*, other accommodationist *Istiqlalis* had a more dramatic and well-documented exit from the organization. The best example here is Ibrahim Hashim, a Palestinian *Istiqlali* who held a number of important positions in Transjordan and eventually became the Prime Minister in 1933. Hashim was an important participant in the Faysali regime; he was appointed to a number of high-ranking administrative positions.⁶¹ In the summer of 1924, he was given the choice of losing his position as a minister in Transjordan, or cutting ties to *al-Istiqlal*. Hashim chose to cut ties with the organization, and therefore kept his job.⁶² Meanwhile, native Transjordanian *Istiqlalis* who stayed in Transjordan after the summer of 1924, when the British authorities expelled the militants from the country, probably also cut their ties to the organization. These include two prominent figures: Said Khayr, who was the mayor of Amman at the time, and Awda abu-Tayeh, a prominent Transjordanian tribesman and an early supporter of the Arab Revolt.⁶³ Ali Khulqi al-Sharayri, a prominent *Istiqlali* from Irbid in northern Transjordan and a minister in

⁶¹ Khayr al-Din al-Zirikli, *Al-Aalam: Qamus Tarajim Li Ashar al-Rijal wa al-Nisa Min al-Arab wa al-Mustaribeen wa al-Mustashriqeen* (Beirut: Dar al-Ilm lil Malayin, 2002), 73.

⁶² Wilson, *King Abdullah*, 78.

⁶³ Madi and Musa, *Tarikh al-Urdun*, 245.

several early cabinets, remained in the country even after the summer 1924. It is difficult to conclude whether Ali Khulqi completely cut ties with *al-Istiqlal*, but it is likely that he did given that he remained in Transjordan. In fact, an August 1921 letter from the British Representative in Irbid to the Representative in Amman suggests that Ali Khulqi had been working against militant *Istiqlalis* for a long time. In the letter, the Irbid Representative calls on the government to back Ali Khulqi's "anti-political offenders movement."⁶⁴ Given his ties to the Transjordanian opposition, Ali Khulqi's stance is treated in greater depth in the next chapter. It suffices here to state that he, much like Raslan, al-Rikabi, Hashim and the other Transjordanian *Istiqlalis*, appeared to have loosened and eventually cut ties with *al-Istiqlal* after the collapse of Faysal's Arab Government. With the exception of Hashim, who had a well-documented exit from the organization, the exact points that these men cut ties with the organization remain unclear.

Accommodationists' Relations with the Militants

The accommodationist *Istiqlalis'* relationships with their militant counterparts were often marked with bitterness and tribulations, which in most cases worsened with time; this is particularly clear in the case of Raslan. At the beginning of his time in Transjordan, Raslan was on working terms with the militants; this can be seen in the individuals whom he selected to be ministers in his two cabinets, his first in mid-August 1921 and his second in February 1923.⁶⁵ His first cabinet included two militant *Istiqlali* figures, Ghaleb al-Shaalan and Ahmad

⁶⁴ Political Report, the Chief Representative in Irbid to CBR in Amman, August 17th 1921, FO 371/6373.

⁶⁵ Abdullah bin al-Hussein, *Mudhakkarati*, 196.

Muraywid; and his second cabinet had two militant *Istiqlalis*, Ahmad Hilmi, and Ibrahim Hashim (who had not cut ties with *al-Istiqlal* at that point).⁶⁶ While this is not necessarily evidence of good relations, Raslan's hiring of these militants is certainly a sign that they were on, at least, working terms. In fact, a careful reading of the events that took place while Raslan was in power suggests that he sometimes had good relations with the militants. In June 1921, an armed gang attacked French High Commissioner, General Henri Gouraud, in the Qunaitra region. Fifteen armed men attacked the convoy, and narrowly missed the General.⁶⁷ The perpetrators, many of whom were directly linked to the militant *Istiqlalis*, escaped to Transjordan. The French authorities consequently put pressure on the British officials in Palestine to hand over the perpetrators. Herbert Samuel, in fact, sent a letter to the Transjordanian government listing the names of the individuals whom the French were looking for. Raslan, who was the Prime Minister at the time, refused to hand them over citing the fact that a government cannot demand the extradition of political criminals from another government, and arguing that the majority of the names that France demanded were in fact innocent.⁶⁸ In his memoirs, al-Zirikli states that Raslan "took an honorable stance; he managed to overcome the [close] relationship between Transjordan and [the British in] Palestine, and respond in the way that independent governments would respond."⁶⁹ Raslan's stance in this particular event could be indicative of good relations with the militants, but it could also be a result of the overwhelming pressure from *Istiqlalis* in Transjordan. With

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Al-Zirikli, *Aman fi Amman*, 219.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 221.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 220.

the presence of so many militant *Istiqlalis* in Transjordan (many of whom were still in the government, or very close to it, and continued to be until the summer of 1924), Raslan may have felt that he had no choice but to choose to reject France's demand. In fact, a British report from September 1923 accuses Raslan of being "incapable of dealing with the volume of intrigue which was being directed against him."⁷⁰ Another report from the same month suggests that Raslan is "quite unable to cope with the task of government and should be relieved of office soon."⁷¹ It is likely that the root of these negative British reviews is Raslan's susceptibility to pressure from the militant *Istiqlalis*.

The truth is that Raslan's relationship with the militant *Istiqlalis* probably extended beyond just indirect pressure. He attended, along with militant Tulay, a commemoration service for the one-year anniversary of the fall of Damascus to the French.⁷² The event took place despite the efforts of the British Representative in Amman to halt the event.⁷³ Raslan's presence at the commemoration event with his militant counterparts was unlikely to be an isolated case; he, at least during his early years in Transjordan, was on friendly terms with militant *Istiqlalis*. In fact, a British document from September 1921 (shortly after Raslan became Prime Minister) praises his effort to curb the influence of the militant *Istiqlalis*, but also warns that, "being a Syrian," Raslan was "sympathizing with the Syrian exiles."⁷⁴

⁷⁰ Report, the CBR in Amman to the HC in Jerusalem, September 17th 1923, CO 733/50.

⁷¹ Memo, the CBR in Amman to the HC in Jerusalem, September 3rd 1923, CO 733/49.

⁷² Report no.6, the CBR in Amman, August 1st 1921, FO 371/6373.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Report no.7, the CBR in Amman, September 1st 1921, FO 371/6373.

Raslan's relationship with the militants, however, seemed to have gotten progressively worse after he became Prime Minister in August 1921. Unlike his predecessor, Tulay, Raslan was not interested in forming a force to liberate Syria from the French. He may have been able to initially convince the militant *Istiqlalis* that he had similar aims, but his reluctance to take any real steps (coupled with his friendly relationship with the British) eventually made the militants distrust him.⁷⁵ In fact, when Transjordanian tribesman, Sultan al-Idwan, launched a revolt against the state in 1923, the *Istiqlalis* met to decide whether to side with Raslan's government or with the rebels.⁷⁶ They ultimately decided to take the side of the government, but the mere fact that they contemplated taking the rebels' side is telling: Raslan had let them down, and they did not have good relations with him. This probably made it easier for Abdullah to fire Raslan, and appoint Hassan Khalid Abu al-Huda in September 1923.⁷⁷

While Raslan's relationship with the militant *Istiqlalis* went from workable to contentious, Rida al-Rikabi had a comparatively worse relationship with the militants in Transjordan. His first cabinet, which he formed in March 1922, did include *Istiqlalis*, such as Ahmad Muraywid, Ahmad Hilmi, and Ibrahim Hashim.⁷⁸ This suggests that he may have been on working terms with the militants, but these names, with the exception of Hashim (who cut ties with *al-Istiqlal* shortly after), were dropped in the next cabinet that he formed in March 1924.⁷⁹ As discussed

⁷⁵ Wilson, *King Abdullah*, 67.

⁷⁶ Madi and Musa, *Tarikh al-Urdun*, 214.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 178.

⁷⁹ Abdullah bin al-Hussein, *Mudhakkarati*, 209.

earlier, al-Zirikli was not fond of al-Rikabi. Hinting at al-Rikabi's greedy character, al-Zirikli states bitterly that the Prime Minister requested a salary of 100 pounds, despite the fact that his predecessor only received 45 pounds.⁸⁰ More interestingly, al-Zirikli mockingly describes how al-Rikabi shed tears after meeting "his [militant] brothers" in Transjordan for the first time after the fall of the Arab Government.⁸¹ Al-Zirikli's mocking tone suggests that al-Rikabi merely faked his attachment to the militant *Istiqlalis*; he did not actually have good relations with them. Al-Rikabi, after all, did not share the militant *Istiqlalis*' goal of liberating Syria from the French by force. As discussed earlier, al-Rikabi, even in the Faysali era, had been a cautious politician who favored negotiations with the colonial power. His efforts to influence the executive committee of *al-Fatat* and make it approve the Faysal-Clemenceau agreement earned him many enemies within the nationalist movement.⁸² This perhaps explains al-Zirikli's negative attitude towards al-Rikabi and his policies. The contentious relationship is, in fact, confirmed in British documents, which praise al-Rikabi's efforts in controlling the "extremist" Syrians in Transjordan.⁸³ It was, after all, under al-Rikabi's government that the British expelled the militant *Istiqlalis* in the summer of 1924. Indeed, one of al-Rikabi's most enduring legacies was the neutralization of the militant *Istiqlalis*, and their removal from power in

⁸⁰ Al-Zirikli, *Aman fi Amman*, 205.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Gelvin, *Divided Loyalties*, 61-62.

⁸³ Report, the office of the CBR in Transjordan to the HC in Jerusalem, December 13th 1923, CO 733/52.

Transjordan.⁸⁴ This goes to show that, ultimately, al-Rikabi's relationship with the militants, much like Raslan's, worsened over time.

Accommodationists' Ties with the British

Given their lack of interest in fighting France and their greater commitment to Abdullah's project in Transjordan, it is perhaps not surprising that the accommodationist *Istiqlalis* had stronger ties to Britain. After all, as the previous section has shown, the militant *Istiqlalis'* anti-French activities were a cause of tension in their relationship with British officials. This section discusses the accommodationists' ties with Britain, and shows how they were indeed friendly – to the extent that British officials sometimes chose to oppose Abdullah in order to take the side of the accommodationist *Istiqlalis*.

Raslan's ties with Britain are a good example of the positive relationship between the accommodationists and the British. This could be seen in the amount of power and leverage that British officials appeared to have over him. For example, when Abdullah was still in Maan preparing for his journey to Amman, and while the militant *Istiqlalis* were eagerly welcoming him (thinking that his promises to liberate Syria were genuine), Raslan, as the governor of Salt at the time, sent Abdullah a hostile letter. The letter states, "We have heard that you plan to visit Transjordan. If this visit was for the sole purpose of tourism, we will welcome you. But if you are visiting for political purposes, our [Salt] government will take measure to prevent you from coming."⁸⁵ Abdullah, who responded defiantly to this letter, states in his memoirs that Raslan later came to greet him and eventually

⁸⁴ Robins, "The Consolidation," 136.

⁸⁵ Abdullah bin al-Hussein, *Mudhakkarati*, 180.

became “[his] brother and one of the most honest men of Transjordan.”⁸⁶ Raslan’s odd letter was allegedly written and sent to Abdullah as a result of British pressure.⁸⁷ In fact, al-Zirikli suggests that Raslan did not write the letter; the High British Commissioner wrote it and asked Raslan to sign it.⁸⁸ The extent of Britain’s influence on Raslan is difficult to determine (for one, Abdullah does not think that the British wrote the letter on his behalf), but regardless of the amount of leverage they had, it is clear that Raslan had strong ties with Britain even before Abdullah arrived in Transjordan.

As Transjordan’s Prime Minister, Raslan continued to be friendly towards Britain. After he took power, Raslan accepted Britain’s demands to create a military force (known as the Mobile Force) and placed it under direct British leadership. He also did not oppose British military presence in Amman, or greater British influence over the financial affairs of the Emirate.⁸⁹ Raslan’s predecessor, Tulay, had rejected all of these British demands before he resigned.⁹⁰ Even symbolically, Transjordan’s relationship with Britain improved under Raslan. He ordered his officials to start referring to the British Representative as “His Excellency the Honorable Chief Representative of Great Britain.” Under Tulay, the Representative was addressed as “the Honorable British Representative.”⁹¹ Britain’s heightened influence in Transjordan under Raslan was partly a result of greater British interest in the

⁸⁶ Ibid., 181.

⁸⁷ Al-Zirikli, *Aman fi Amman*, 36.

⁸⁸ The Commissioner and other British officials in Palestine were weary of Abdullah’s anti-French at the time. Their position, of course, changed after Abdullah signed the agreement with Churchill; Al-Zirikli, *Aman fi Amman*, 36.

⁸⁹ Jabir, *Sajjil*, 219.

⁹⁰ Al-Zirikli, *Aman fi Amman*, 185.

⁹¹ Jabir, *Sajjil*, 218.

territory, but it was also the product of Raslan's strong ties with the colonial power; these enabled Britain to increase its influence over the newly formed Emirate.

Raslan's successor, al-Rikabi, was on even better terms with them. Known for his efforts to control militant nationalists in Faysal's Syria, al-Rikabi's appointment was endorsed, and even encouraged, by British officials.⁹² Mary Wilson claims that the British mistrusted al-Rikabi because he was "corrupt and possibly bought by the French," but they still welcomed his appointment because he was a "useful Syrian" who could curb the influence of the militants in Transjordan.⁹³ Wilson may be right in saying that some British officials were not personally fond of al-Rikabi, but a careful analysis of the situation shows that Britain's overall policy was to support the Prime Minister, even at the cost of disenfranchising Abdullah. During his first term as Prime Minister (May 1922 until February 1923), al-Rikabi is said to have "inspired Abdullah with some awe."⁹⁴ This had largely to do with personal disagreements, but al-Rikabi's independence and strict style of leadership (what Uriel Dann terms "the Ottoman soldier's way of ruling men")⁹⁵ clashed with Abdullah's desire to personally manage the affairs of the country. In fact, al-Rikabi is said to have resigned in February 1923 because of a personal disagreement he had with Abdullah.⁹⁶ But despite being aware of the dynamics between the two men, the British Representative in Amman insisted that Abdullah reappoint al-Rikabi in

⁹² Darwaza, *Mudhakkarat*, 381.

⁹³ Wilson, *King Abdullah*, 76.

⁹⁴ Uriel Dann, *Studies in the History of Transjordan, 1920-1949: The Making of a State*. (London: Westview Press, 1984), 51.

⁹⁵ Dann, *Studies*, 51.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 66-67.

March 1924.⁹⁷ The Representative made al-Rikabi's appointment a condition for provisioning Transjordan's grant-in-aid.⁹⁸ This step, which certainly was not welcomed by (and probably irritated) Abdullah, speaks of the level of trust that the British officials had in al-Rikabi.

In his second term as Prime Minister, al-Rikabi was the victim of aggressive criticism in the (pro-France) Syrian press. One piece in *Suriyya al-Jadida* accuses him of approving the armed attacks on Syria, which took place in the summer of 1924. The author asks rhetorically, "Does he [Rikabi] approve now of the same policy he used to criticize when he was in Damascus?"⁹⁹ Another article by someone called Osman Kasim claims that al-Rikabi planned the attacks on Syria as part of a "program" between himself and "the colonizers [probably meaning the British]."¹⁰⁰ Meanwhile, an article by Adib Safadi directly accuses al-Rikabi of plotting the 1924 attacks on Syria.¹⁰¹ It is not clear what sparked these attacks on al-Rikabi in the Syrian press, but it seems as though the French authorities were convinced that al-Rikabi played a role in the attacks on Syria in the summer of 1924. What is most interesting here is the way the British officials responded to these attacks. In an August 1924 report, the British Representative in Amman praises al-Rikabi's efforts in preventing anti-French activities in Transjordan, and states, "It is I think

⁹⁷ Robins, "The Consolidation," 147.

⁹⁸ Dann, *Studies*, 86.

⁹⁹ "Translation: *Suriyyah El Jedidah*, The Bands of Transjordan," August 7th 1924, FO 371/10118.

¹⁰⁰ Report, British Consulate in Damascus to Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, September 16th 1924, FO 371/10118.

¹⁰¹ Report, British Consulate in Damascus to Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, September 6th 1924, FO 371/10118.

unfortunate that this press campaign against him is allowed.”¹⁰² Meanwhile, the British Consul in Damascus sent a letter to Jerusalem in August 1924 and another one in September 1924 stating that he defended the reputation of al-Rikabi to the French governor of Damascus. He states, “I urged that it was most unlikely that Rikabi Pasha would encourage raids...”¹⁰³ The Consul, along with the British Representative in Amman (who was on a trip to Damascus), met a high-ranking French official and argued for al-Rikabi’s innocence. They told the official all about al-Rikabi’s achievements as Prime Minister, including the partial suppression of the “Arab tribal judicial system,” and the introduction of strict financial controls.¹⁰⁴ The amount of effort, and perhaps political capital, that the British officials spent defending al-Rikabi, and boosting his reputation, is noteworthy. It is certainly interesting that they did not exert the same effort (or perhaps spend the same amount of political capital) defending Rashid Tulay. Being an accommodationist *Istiqlali*, al-Rikabi was clearly on much better terms with Britain than his militant counterparts.

Conclusion

After Abdullah signed an agreement with Churchill in March 1921, he became legally bound to curbing militant activities in the territory, and gradually abandoned his anti-French rhetoric. This meant that Abdullah needed to replace the militant *Istiqlalis*, who had been dominating Transjordan’s bureaucracy in the early

¹⁰² Report, the CBR in Transjordan to the HC in Jerusalem, August 9th 1924, FO 371/10118.

¹⁰³ Report, British Consulate in Damascus to the CBR in Amman, August 23rd 1924, FO 371/10118.

¹⁰⁴ Report, British Consulate in Damascus to Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, September 6th 1924, FO 371/10118.

1920s and whose main goal was liberating Syria from the French. Abdullah, and his British allies, initially did this by appointing a different type of *Istiqlalis*: the accommodationists. These were *Istiqlalis* who were relatively less committed to the goal of liberating Syria, and more committed to Abdullah's project in Transjordan. The accommodationist *Istiqlalis*, it must be emphasized, were still part of what Philip Robins calls the "Sharifian elite." Unlike the "British-inspired external elite" that dominated in the later years, the accommodationists had nationalist backgrounds and played important roles in Faysal's Arab Government.

In contrast to the militants, the accommodationist *Istiqlalis* appeared to loosen their ties to *Hizb al-Istiqlal* after they arrived in Transjordan. This, as well as their lack of commitment to liberating Syria, meant that their relationship with the militant *Istiqlalis* worsened over time. The accommodationists' usefulness in sidelining the militants allowed them to enjoy relatively good relations with Britain. In some cases, British officials backed the accommodationist *Istiqlalis* at the expense of irritating Abdullah.

Chapter Four: The *Istiqlalis* and the Native Transjordanians

By the end of 1923, Abdullah had hired a total of 39 cabinet ministers in Transjordan. Of these, only two were from Transjordan; the rest hailed from other places in Greater Syria and the Hijaz.¹ As the previous chapters have demonstrated, members of this “external elite”² that dominated the early Transjordanian bureaucracy were usually affiliated with *Hizb al-Istiqlal*. Building on the previous chapters’ discussion of the differences between the militant and accommodationist *Istiqlalis*, this chapter explores the relationship between the *Istiqlalis* and the local, or native, population of Transjordan in the early 1920s. It argues that wide segments of the local population rejected the presence of the *Istiqlalis* (militants and accommodationists) in Transjordan’s government and protested the policies that they implemented, but sympathized with, and in some cases supported, the anti-colonial activities of some of the militant *Istiqlalis*. The somewhat paradoxical stance of the Transjordanian opposition is, the chapter argues, a result of genuine sympathy towards anti-colonialism among its ranks, coupled with a belief that Transjordanians were capable of engaging in anti-colonialism on their own.

The chapter first explains why Abdullah chose to exclude the local population from the government, and subsequently introduces the two different strands of the

¹ Philip Robins, “The Consolidation of Hashemite Power in Jordan 1921-1946” (Ph.D. Diss. University of Exeter, 1988), 177.

² In his PhD dissertation, Philip Robins is careful to refer to them as “external” rather than “foreign” because of the historical setting of the early 1920s. Under the Ottoman Empire, people were free to move around regardless of their place of origin, and the new national borders were still “alien to the experience of the inhabitants of the area affected.” He, therefore, concludes that labeling Syrians in Transjordan as foreigners is “plainly to misunderstand the attitudes of the day and to be guilty of using Eurocentric nation-state paradigm in nomenclature, at odds with the time.” Robins, “The Consolidation,” 165.

Transjordanian opposition to the *Istiqlali*-dominated government in the early 1920s: the settled tribes of Balqa and Ajlun, and a small number of educated Transjordanian activist figures. The chapter first discusses the Kura Rebellion of 1921, which was an important case of a settled tribal opposition movement to the *Istiqlalis*. Having discussed the educated elite's opposition to the *Istiqlalis*, the chapter explores the 1923 Idwan Rebellion, a unique moment when the two strands of the opposition, the settled tribes and the educated elite, came together. Finally, the chapter highlights instances when the native population of Transjordan showed sympathy towards the militant *Istiqlalis'* anti-colonial activities.

Explaining the *Istiqlali* Domination and Introducing the Transjordanian Opposition

The *Istiqlali* domination of the Transjordanian bureaucracy in the early 1920s meant the exclusion of the native Transjordanians from government positions. After all, there were very few Transjordanian members of *Hizb al-Istiqlal*: some local leaders, including Mithqal al-Fayiz, Rashid al-Khizai, and Said Khayr joined, but Ali Khulqi al-Sharayri was the only prominent Transjordanian *Istiqlali* who also held a number of ministerial positions in the early 1920s.³ The reasons for this *Istiqlali* domination are unclear; some, such as Stefanie Nanes, claim that their appointment was necessary to legitimize Abdullah's project in Transjordan and his claim over Greater Syria.⁴ Others have argued that Abdullah needed the *Istiqlalis'*

³ Munib Madi and Sulayman Musa, *Tarikh al-Urdun fi al-Qarn al-Ishrin, 1900-1959* (Amman: Maktabat al-Muhtasib, 1959), 245.

⁴ See Stefanie Nanes, "National Identity in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan." In *Nationalism in a Global Era: The Persistence of Nations*, by Mitchell Young, Eric Zuelow and Andreas Sturm (London: Routledge, 2007), 221-239.

administrative skills to create a modern state. After all, many of the *Istiqlalis* had administrative and military experience from the Ottoman and Faysali regimes, and their skills were needed in Transjordan where the local population was “in the grip of tribal parochialism.”⁵ The lack of a strong state since the collapse of the Ottoman Empire had re-ignited tribal and traditional forms of governance, and given the lack of expertise in Transjordan, only the *Istiqlalis*, with their modern education and administrative skills, could re-impose a centralized state. Robins disputes this claim; he points to local figures, such as Rufayfan al-Majali the governor of Karak in 1921, to show that there were competent Transjordanians who could have staffed Abdullah’s bureaucracy. He also analyzes the composition of the local governments that were formed after the collapse of the Faysali regime to show that less educated traditional leaders were capable of running the territory, and that the British authorities did not have any issues trusting their abilities.⁶ The actual reason, Robin argues, for excluding the local Transjordanian population was “the confluent interests of the Amir and the Syrians in depriving any other group.”⁷ Abdullah, being a “benevolent despot,” did not want to share substantive power. The lack of a social base of support for the *Istiqlalis* put “the Amir in a strong position in relation to them,” and therefore made them an attractive ally.⁸ Meanwhile, the *Istiqlalis*, as the previous chapters have shown, joined Abdullah for different reasons: the militants did not acknowledge the newly imposed national borders, but were still keen on

⁵ Tariq Tell, *The Social and Economic Origins of Monarchy in Jordan* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 62.

⁶ Robins, “The Consolidation,” 176.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 177.

⁸ *Ibid.*

using Transjordan as a base to attack the French in Syria. For their part, the accommodationists were glad to find employment in Abdullah's bureaucracy, even when he abandoned the goal of liberating Syria from the French occupation and the British removed the militants from government in the summer of 1924.

The *Istiqlali* domination, as Robins illustrates, should be seen in light of Abdullah's (and, of course, the *Istiqlalis'*) desire to dominate power in Transjordan. This created a backlash among the local inhabitants of Transjordanian, who justifiably felt excluded from positions of power. It is, in fact, interesting to draw parallels between the situation in Transjordan in the early 1920s and Syria under Prince Faysal, where, as James Gelvin illustrates, the emerging elite (many of whom were non-Syrian military officers) "failed to articulate an inclusive vision of the Syria of the future that would resonate with a majority of the Syrian population."⁹ The Faysali elite was, therefore, challenged "by the Syrian nativists who resented the interference by 'foreigners' in Syrian affairs."¹⁰ Similarly in Transjordan, an emerging elite failed to create an inclusive environment for the native population. In response to this elite (some of whom, including Rashid Tulay and Ali Rida al-Rikabi, had also been part of the Faysali elite), a growing nativist Transjordanian movement crystalized in opposition to the "non native others."¹¹ And while in Faysal's Syria the nativist challenge took the form of the relatively coherent popular committees,¹² the

⁹ James L. Gelvin, *Divided Loyalties: Nationalism and Mass Politics in Syria at the Close of Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 207.

¹⁰ Gelvin, *Divided Loyalties*, 220.

¹¹ Joseph Massad, *Colonial Effects: The Making of National Identity in Jordan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 11.

¹² In these committees, Syrians articulated an organic and distinctly Syrian nationalism, which was ultimately responding to the elitist nationalism of Faysal's

Transjordanian opposition to the *Istiqlalis* was divided into two distinct groups: the settled tribes of Balqa and Ajlun, and a group of educated Transjordanian activists.

Farming communities inhabited the regions of Balqa and Ajlun in the northern part of Transjordan. The villages in these areas were often under the influence of powerful tribal leaders, who were conscious of preserving an important degree of autonomy from centralized states, whether it was the Ottoman state or Faysal's Arab Government. The policies of Abdullah's *Istiqlali*-dominated administration in the 1920s turned these tribal chiefdoms, or confederacies, into a strong opposition force. The *Istiqlalis*, who "adhered to modern precept of good government, which included such notions as intrusive government control, and equality of citizens," were allowed a free hand with the settled farming communities.¹³ Focused on building a modern state (and in the case of the militant *Istiqlalis*, on forming a force to liberate Syria), they ended up taxing these communities heavily, and they did not respect (or perhaps did not have a full understanding of) their "local quest for autonomy."¹⁴ This put the settled tribes in a contrasting position to that of their rivals, the nomadic Bedouin tribes of Transjordan, whose affairs were under the direct control of Abdullah. Described in a British report as "the Hijazi form of government,"¹⁵ Abdullah's policy was based on building alliances with the nomadic tribes. In doing this, Abdullah gave the nomadic

elite. For a comprehensive discussion of the popular committees, see Gelvin, *Divided Loyalties*.

¹³ Yoav Alon, *The making of Jordan: Tribes, Colonialism and the Modern State* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007), 44.

¹⁴ Alon, *The making of Jordan*, 44.

¹⁵ Report no.6, the Chief British Representative (CBR) in Amman, August 1st 1921, FO 371/6373.

tribes a great deal of autonomy, and collected almost no taxes from them, primarily because he was conscious of their ability to stage a coup against his regime. After all, nomadic tribes, such as Bani Sakhr, were able to mobilize thousands of armed fighters. Furthermore, Abdullah needed to use the nomadic tribes' military power to defend his territory from external attacks.¹⁶ The Bani Sakhr tribe played an integral role in defending Transjordan from the invading Wahhabi forces of Ibn Saud in the summer of 1922 and again in the summer of 1924, when a force of almost 4,000 warriors attacked Transjordan.¹⁷ The relative autonomy of the nomadic tribes, and their much lighter tax burden, made the settled tribes of Ajlun and Balqa grow resentful towards Abdullah and his *Istiqlali* administration. The issue was made worse by Abdullah's blatant intervention on behalf of the nomadic tribes. For example, Abdullah was called to solve a land dispute between a Christian Balqawi family and Mithqal al-Fayiz, the tribal chief of one of the most powerful nomadic tribes. Even though the latter had little claim to the land, Abdullah delayed the ruling for as long as possible, thus allowing al-Fayiz to benefit from the land, before he referred the matter to the courts.¹⁸

In addition to the settled tribes, 1920s Transjordan saw the emergence of another strand of opposition to the *Istiqlalis*: the educated elite. This group included Karaki judge, Awda al-Qusus; Mustafa Wahbi al-Tall, a famous poet and the governor of Wadi al-Sir; Shams al-Din Sami, a leading member of the Circassian community in Amman; Adib Wahba, a Salti notable; Muhammad Saleh al-Najdawi,

¹⁶ Yoav Alon, "The Balqa Revolt: Tribes and Early State-Building in Transjordan," *Die Welt des Islams* 46 (2006): 20.

¹⁷ Alon, *The making of Jordan*, 52.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 43.

the head of the gendarme force in Karak; and (arguably) Ali Khulqi al-Sharayri, an ex-*Istiqlali* from Irbid.¹⁹ These educated professionals, who were described in a British report as “intelligent and more or less patriotic,”²⁰ championed the slogan, “Transjordan for the Transjordanians.”²¹ They grew resentful towards the *Istiqlali* monopolization of government jobs, and demanded greater local representation in the government and in a representative assembly.²² Four of these figures (Qusus, Tell, Sami, and Najdawi) were imprisoned and exiled to Jeddah during the Idwan Rebellion, which will be discussed later on.²³ While the extent of their participation in the rebellion remains unclear, they were nevertheless supportive of the rebels, to say the least.

Having introduced the two standards of opposition to the *Istiqlalis*, the rest of this chapter moves on to discussing the different instances in which they expressed their rejection of the *Istiqlalis* in greater detail. It, first, discusses the Kura Rebellion, a case in which the first strand of the opposition, the settled tribes, rebelled against the policies of the *Istiqlali* government. It then discusses the second strand of the opposition, the educated elite, and the different ways in which it articulated its rejection of the *Istiqlalis*. Next, it explores the Idwan Rebellion, a unique moment when the two strands of the opposition joined forces. Finally, the chapter delves into

¹⁹ Awda al-Qusus, *Mudhakkarat (1877-1943) wa Thalath Ajza min al-Wathaiq al-Urduniyya*, Edited and prefaced by Nayif George al-Qusus and Ghassan Salamah al-Halasa (Amman: al-Maktaba al-Wataniyya, 2006), 378.

²⁰ Report, the CBR in Amman to the High Commissioner (HC) in Jerusalem, September 17th 1923, CO 733/50.

²¹ Massad, *Colonial Effects*, 28.

²² Monthly Report on Trans-Jordan, the CBR in Amman, September 1923, CO 733/50.

²³ Awda al-Qusus, *Mudhakkarat*, 378.

how the opposition sympathized with the anti-colonial activities of the militant *Istiqlalis*.

The Kura Rebellion: Tribal Opposition to the *Istiqlalis*

The earliest sign of tribal rejection of *Istiqlali* policies came in the form of a bloody rebellion in the northern town of al-Kura. This agrarian community in the Ajlun region was traditionally under the control of the powerful tribe, al-Shurayda. The tribe had long sought autonomy, particularly from the town of Irbid with which they had deep-rooted hostilities.²⁴ According to Munib Madi and Sulayman Musa, this hostility dates back to “Turkish rule” when the government was based in Irbid.²⁵ Irbid, in other words, came to represent centralized governance, which the autonomy-seeking al-Shuraydas despised. According to other sources, even at its height, the Ottoman state respected “al-Shurayda’s unique tribal position” in al-Kura, and was careful to give the region a level of autonomy.²⁶ Tellingly, after the collapse of Ottoman rule, al-Kura enjoyed full autonomy. In fact, during the “self-rule” era in Transjordan, or when the British encouraged small governments to form across the territory, al-Kura refused to join the Irbid government. It, instead, formed its own administration under the leadership of al-Shuraydas.²⁷

Upon the formation of the Transjordanian government in April 1921, it became quickly apparent that the *Istiqlali* cabinet did not fully understand (and perhaps did not care about) al-Kura’s historic quest for autonomy, and the extent to which al-Shuraydas were willing to go to preserve their power and stature. Ignoring

²⁴ Madi and Musa, *Tarikh al-Urdun*, 156.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Alon, *The making of Jordan*, 45.

²⁷ Madi and Musa, *Tarikh al-Urdun*, 156.

the hostilities between the two regions, the government placed al-Kura under the direct control of the Irbid governorate. Amin Tamimi, a Palestinian *Istiqlali*, was appointed as the governor of Irbid.²⁸ He was not new to the Ajlun region; he had held positions in the region during the Ottoman era.²⁹ Despite his experience in the region, Tamimi did not take into account his sensitive position as the governor of Irbid, and proceeded to impose intrusive governance on al-Kura by attempting to collect taxes from the region. The villagers refused to pay, citing the fact that they had already paid their taxes that year.³⁰ The governor also failed to realize the size of the armed force under the command of al-Shuraydas, and the extent to which they were willing to use it to preserve their autonomy. Tamimi reacted with “excessive clumsiness” when he sent a force of 150 men to subjugate al-Kura and collect its taxes.³¹ This led to a bloody encounter with nearly one thousand armed villagers, and resulted in the death of 15 to 20 soldiers.³² Fuad Salim, an *Istiqlali* who headed the force that was sent to pacify the region, describes a meeting with Tamimi (hours before he was dispatched to al-Kura) in which the latter said that the region was “in a state of rebellion, but not a general one.”³³ He goes on to say:

It seemed to Amin [al-Tamimi] that the situation was nearly solved, and that the possibility of an armed rebellion breaking out is slim. As for me, I was not

²⁸ Ibid., 157.

²⁹ Saad Abu Diyah, *Safhat Matwiya Min Tarikh al-Urdun: Hawadith wa Mawadee Motafariqa Min Tarikh al-Urdun Fi al-Qarn al-Madi wa al-Hadir* (Amman: Dar al-Bashir, 1998), 182.

³⁰ Alon, *The making of Jordan*, 45.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ Khayr al-Din al-Zirikli, *Aman fi Amman: Mudhakkarat Amayn Fi Asimat Sharq al-Urdun* (Amman: al-Ahliya, 2009), 164.

aware of the historic situation in al-Kura, in terms of the intentions of its people and their stance [referring to the historic hostilities between al-Kura and Irbid]...³⁴

Salim's lack of local knowledge, and Tamimi's failure to understand the seriousness of the situation highlight the nature of the problems *Istiqlalis* had with the settled tribes of Transjordan. They lacked the knowledge and the ability to fully assess the local response to their decisions. In the words of Yoav Alon, the *Istiqlalis* as "urbanite educated, modern and nationalist Arabs [...] did not understand the political culture of the tribal population in a periphery like Transjordan."³⁵ Tamimi hailed from urban Nablus in Palestine, and had extensive experience in Ottoman civil administration.³⁶ Meanwhile, Salim was an urban Syrian, and had expansive experience in the Ottoman military. Both men, in other words, were of urban background and adhered to the ideals of modern governance, which emphasized intrusive administration, orderly tax payments, and equality of citizens before the law.³⁷ It is, therefore, not a surprise that they did not understand al-Kura's desire for autonomy, which even the much-stronger Ottoman state used to respect. The situation was made worse by the fact that the *Istiqlali* administration at the time was eager to raise taxes, and form a military force to liberate Syria from the French. This created an added sense of urgency for tax collection in agricultural areas, like the Kura region. In the negotiations that followed the rebellion, Kulayb al-Shurayda, the leader of the rebellion, admitted that he was not rebelling against Abdullah or

³⁴ Al-Zirikli, *Aman fi Amman*, 165.

³⁵ Alon, *The making of Jordan*, 44.

³⁶ Abu Diyah, *Safhat Matwiya*, 181.

³⁷ Alon, *The making of Jordan*, 44.

the British; he was simply opposed to being placed under the Irbid governor. In other words, he wanted an arrangement in which he reported directly to Amman, and one that recognized the relative autonomy of al-Kura.³⁸ But dogmatically applying the precepts of good governance and eager to collect taxes, the *Istiqlalis* failed to see or take into consideration al-Shurayda's simple demand and underestimated the force that he commanded. Their misunderstanding of the situation not only led to a major defeat in al-Kura, but it also constituted a major setback for the process of imposing modern governance in Transjordan, which was the main goal of their policy in the region. After the defeat at al-Kura, the small Reserve Force was deemed ineffective, which in turn negatively affected its prestige (and that of the entire government) all across Transjordan.³⁹

The Educated Elite: Articulating their Rejection of the *Istiqlalis*

While the Kura incident may be interpreted as a direct response to a misguided *Istiqlali* policy, others in Transjordan were expressing their opposition to the mere presence of *Istiqlalis* in government. This is primarily because they saw the *Istiqlalis* as "foreigners" who took jobs away from "*abnaa al-mantiqa*," or the local population. The Transjordanian educated elite articulated this type of rejection to the *Istiqlalis* in the government more coherently and clearly than any other group in the Emirate. This group of educated and professional Transjordanians, which a British report calls "the effendis,"⁴⁰ vocalized their opinions in newspaper articles and journal entries. Perhaps the most famous in the group was Mustafa Wahbi al-

³⁸ Ibid., 45.

³⁹ Madi and Musa, *Tarikh al-Urdun*, 163.

⁴⁰ Monthly Report on Trans-Jordan, the CBR in Amman, September 1923, CO 733/50.

Tall, who became one of Transjordan's most famous poets. Known as *Arar*, al-Tall attended the famous *Anbar* school in Damascus, and eventually became a lawyer in Transjordan.⁴¹ In Transjordan, he held a number of positions, including district officer of Wadi al-Sir near Amman during the early 1920s.⁴² Upon the establishment of the Transjordanian state, al-Tall became a regular contributor to the Haifa-based *al-Karmil* newspaper, in which he expressed his protest towards the *Istiqlali* domination of the government. For example, on July 25th 1925, he wrote a piece in which he harshly criticizes "*al-Fiaa al-Dala*," or the "deviant ones." He describes a very extravagant lifestyle that this group leads: "...their clothing is a direct copy of the most trendy fashion, and their speeches are literally translated from what the kids of Ankara say."⁴³ He, then, goes on to warn people of the "French propaganda" that they spread, whereby they claim that the only thing that could protect Transjordan is a return to Syria.⁴⁴ Towards the end of the article, al-Tall warns people from this group, and calls on the authorities to hold them accountable for the positions that they held (and even sue them for the way that they treated the local population of Transjordan).

In another *al-Karmil* article, which he wrote in March of 1927, al-Tall reiterates his previous points, and calls on the Mandatory authorities to stop bringing employees from other places. He describes the Transjordanian government

⁴¹ Yaqoub Al-Awdat (al-Badawi al-Mulatham), *Arar: Shair al-Urdun* (Amman: al-Ahliya Lil Nashr, 2009), 29-32.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Mustafa Wahbi al-Tall, "Hashiya Ala Naba," *al-Karmil Newspaper*, July 25th 1925 in Ali Mahafza, *al-Fikr al-Siyasi Fi al-Urdun: Wathaiq wa Nusous 1916-1946* (Amman: Markaz al-Kutub al-Urduni, 1990), 172.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

as a “milking cow government.”⁴⁵ While al-Tall never explicitly names the *Istiqlalis*, it is rather clear that they were the target of his attacks. After all, it was the militant *Istiqlalis* who were advocating for a “return to Syria.” Championing the slogan “Transjordan for the Transjordanians,” al-Tall strongly advocated for a greater representation of the local population in the government. In an article that he wrote upon the resignation of Ali Rida al-Rikabi in June 1926, al-Tall offers an interesting assessment of al-Rikabi’s premiership: he describes the man as being “the best individual to head the government,” but “in terms of actions, al-Rikabi is similar to Hassan Khalid [the previous Prime Minister].”⁴⁶ He explains this by citing the fact that the government has not worked towards the “wellbeing of the country,” partly because of the “vagueness” of its colonial status with Britain, but primarily because of the lack of local representation.⁴⁷ He goes on to advocate for an elected assembly and “responsible” governance. He warns that a failure to include the local population in the decision-making could lead to a revolution in Transjordan.⁴⁸

Another high-profile member of the Transjordanian educated elite and a vocal voice against the *Istiqlali* domination was Awda al-Qusus, who hailed from the southern town of Karak. Al-Qusus was a graduate of missionary schooling, and attended law school in Beirut. He was one of Transjordan’s first judges, and eventually became Transjordan’s first Christian government minister in 1929. However, in the early 1920s, al-Qusus was a prominent opposition figure, and a

⁴⁵ Ibid., 199.

⁴⁶ Al-Tall, “Sharq al-Urdun Bi Monasabat Iqalat al-Rikabi,” *al-Karmil Newspaper*, June 27th 1926 in Mahafza, *al-Fikr al-Siyasi*, 191.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 192.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 191.

vocal critic of the *Istiqlali* elite. In his recently published memoirs, he describes the first Transjordanian cabinet by saying, “not even one opinion from the local population was taken into account.” The first government, he adds, did not appoint locals, except to fill low-paying jobs.⁴⁹ Unlike al-Tall (perhaps due to the fact that he is writing in his memoirs, as opposed to publishing in a newspaper), al-Qusus engages in personal attacks on the *Istiqlalis* in Transjordan. He says that when “the Syrians” formed *Hizb al-Istiqlal*, their first clause was “the sacrifice of Transjordan and its people for the purpose of Syria.”⁵⁰ He goes on to describe the *Istiqlalis* as having “bad intentions” and only catering to their own benefits. He accuses them of registering fake volunteers who were allegedly preparing to invade Syria, but instead simply collecting the money that the government paid them.⁵¹ Al-Qusus goes further; he accuses the *Istiqlalis* of stealing items from Transjordan and Syria only to sell them at the opposite side of the border.⁵² Al-Qusus also criticizes the way the *Istiqlalis* handled government finances. He claims that they mismanaged their finances to the extent that government employees did not receive their salaries for up to five months.⁵³ There is no reason to dispute his claim, because he was a government employee himself; in October 1921, he was offered a position as a judge in the newly formed bureaucracy.⁵⁴ In response to the *Istiqlali* domination and mismanagement of the finances, al-Qusus claims, the local population began to organize to demand their rights. They approached Abdullah, but “the Emir was busy

⁴⁹ Awda al-Qusus, *Mudhakkarat*, 127.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 129.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

planning to invade Syria.”⁵⁵ Al-Qusus’ memoirs, much like al-Tall’s newspaper articles, are valuable evidence of the educated elite’s clear articulation of its rejection of the *Istiqlali* elite and its policies.

Alongside al-Tall and al-Qusus, were other, perhaps less vocal, voices who articulated their rejection of al-*Istiqlali*. Among these was Abd al-Qadir al-Tall, who published an open letter to Abdullah in *al-Karmil* on February 21st 1925. In the article, Abd al-Qadir reiterates the demands of “leaders and sheikhs” of establishing a legislative assembly, providing more jobs to the local population, and abolishing *Um al-Qura* Party (the context and background of this demand is unclear).⁵⁶ Abd al-Qadir complains bitterly about Abdullah’s rejection of these demands, and his pursuing of the individuals that vocalized them. Abd al-Qadir himself was allegedly removed from Amman, imprisoned, and humiliated. He adds that he was not the only one to receive this treatment; Saleh al-Tall, another high-profile Transjordanian figure, was also imprisoned for voicing an opinion against the government of Irbid.⁵⁷ Abd al-Qadir concludes by saying, “Your Highness [Abdullah], I am not exaggerating when I say that such actions [pursuing political activists] are intended to make people silent and submissive.”⁵⁸ Other members of the educated elite include Awda al-Qusus’ cousin, Yousif Sulayman al-Qusus, who was also a judge by profession.⁵⁹ While there is not much that shows Yousif’s views, his memoirs

⁵⁵ Ibid., 130.

⁵⁶ Abd al-Qadir al-Tall, “Kitab Maftouh Ila Somo al-Amir Abdullah al-Moatham,” *al-Karmil Newspaper*, February 11th 1925 in Mahafza, *al-Fikr al-Siyasi*, 163.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 164.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 165.

⁵⁹ Yousif Sulayman al-Qusus (Abu Fawzi), *Mudhakkarat (1896-1982)*, Edited by Nayif George al-Qusus (Manuscript in the keeping of al-Qusus family in Amman), 34.

clearly articulate his resentment towards the *Istiqlali* elite. For example, he claims to have gone to Amman in 1924 seeking an employment position in the ministry of justice. His request was denied, and the position that he sought went to a foreigner from Nablus. Yousif blames his rejection on *Istiqlali* minister Ibrahim Hashem, whom he accuses of harboring prejudice against locals, particularly Christians.⁶⁰ The extent to which his claims are justified is, of course, unclear. Another important member of the Transjordanian opposition was Muhammad Saleh al-Najdawi, who was born in Salt and received a military education in Istanbul. Najdawi was appointed as the head of the Transjordanian gendarme force in Salt and Amman.⁶¹ Shams al-Din Sami, a member of the Circassian community, was also an important opposition figure in the early 1920s. Unfortunately, al-Najdawi and Sami did not articulate their views in memoirs or newspaper articles, thus making it more difficult to determine their political views.

While all of the activists mentioned above were never part of the *Istiqlali* elite or *Hizb al-Istiqlal*, Ali Khulqi al-Sharayri was. Ali Khulqi, who hailed from Irbid, received military education in Istanbul and then joined the Ottoman Army. He quickly rose in the ranks, and engaged in the Ottoman campaigns in the Balkans, Yemen, and Libya.⁶² In the Great War, Ali Khulqi fought in both Suez and Iraq before the British captured him in Baghdad. After he was captured, Ali Khulqi left for the Hijaz and joined Sharif Hussein's Arab Revolt against the Ottoman state. This gained him credibility, and placed him at the core of the nationalist elite around Faysal

⁶⁰ Yousif Sulayman al-Qusus, *Mudhakkarat*, 114.

⁶¹ Awda al-Qusus, *Mudhakkarat*, 378.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 14.

when he formed his Arab Government in Damascus. After the collapse of Faysal's regime, Ali Khulqi returned to Irbid, where he organized, along with fellow *Istiqlalis*, an armed rebellion against the French.⁶³ After the famous meeting with Major Somerset on September 2nd 1920 at Um Qays in northern Transjordan, Ali Khulqi formed a British-sponsored government in Irbid.⁶⁴ But in the spring of 1921, Ali Khulqi was among the first people to join Abdullah's administration. He was part of the first government, and was made responsible for security and policing.⁶⁵ Ali Khulqi, according to Robins, was made part of the first cabinet not because he was a Transjordanian, but because he was an *Istiqlali* with "nationalist credentials."⁶⁶ In fact, a close reading of Ali Khulqi's behavior as a cabinet minister suggests that he was in-line with the militant *Istiqlalis'* policies of limiting British influence in Transjordan. For example, he is said to have tried to divert funds away from Frederick Peake, the British military advisor to Abdullah. Ali Khulqi saw Peake's plan of expanding the Reserve Force (which eventually became the Arab Legion, Transjordan's official army force) as a threat to the region's independence.⁶⁷ It is perhaps for this reason that Ali Khulqi was removed from office in the summer of 1921: one British report from October of the same year went as far as to accuse him of plotting a "Revolution."⁶⁸ Ali Khulqi responded to these allegations in an article in the Jaffa-based *Filasteen* Newspaper, in which he says that leaving an official

⁶³ Tell, *The Social and Economic Origins*, 57.

⁶⁴ Abu Diyah, *Safhat Matwiya*, 250.

⁶⁵ Awda al-Qusus, *Mudhakkarat*, 15.

⁶⁶ Robins, "The Consolidation," 173.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 180.

⁶⁸ Report, British Consulate in Damascus to Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, October 8th 1921, FO 371/6373.

position does not necessarily mean that there is a “conflict.” He even praises Abdullah in the article, and describes his regime as the “last hope” for Arabs.⁶⁹

At one point, however, Ali Khulqi seemed to have left the *Istiqlali* camp and started to work against it. This also coincided with what appears to be Ali Khulqi’s joining of the Transjordanian opposition camp, and his endorsement of their demands of the removal of the *Istiqlal*, and the expansion of local representation. A letter from the British Representative in Irbid in August 1921 describes Ali Khulqi as working against the “Political Refugee Movement” of *Istiqlali* Ahmad Muraywid, even though the two men were both plotting attacks against the French in Syria less than a year before.⁷⁰ Meanwhile, a British report from September 1921 accuses Ali Khulqi of making friends with the French in Syria – something that the militant *Istiqlalis* would have seen as unthinkable and outrageous. The report explains the man’s behavior as being intended to embarrass Abdullah and his *Istiqlali* government.⁷¹ Furthermore, Bertram Thomas, a British officer in Transjordan, alleges in a September 1923 report that Al Khuqi was part of the same “National Party” that advocated for the slogan, “Transjordan for the Transjordanians.”⁷² This claim is difficult to verify; after all, while the other members of this “National Party” were exiled to the Hijaz in the fall of 1923, Ali Khulqi was re-appointed as a cabinet minister in Hassan Khalid Abu al-Huda’s government in September 1923. This

⁶⁹ Ali Khulqi al-Sharayri, “Risalat Ali Khulqi Pasha Ila Jaridat Filasteen Hawla Mawqifih Min al-Ahdath Fi Imarat al-Sharq al-Arabi,” *Filasteen Newspaper*, August 3rd 1921 in Mahafza, *al-Fikr al-Siyasi*, 81.

⁷⁰ Political Report, the Chief Representative in Irbid to CBR in Amman, August 17th 1921, FO 371/6373.

⁷¹ Report no.7, the CBR in Amman, September 1st 1921, FO 371/6373.

⁷² Awda al-Qusus, *Mudhakkarat*, 15.

perhaps suggests that he was not as entrenched in the opposition camp as al-Tall or al-Qusus were, but he certainly was at least sympathetic. Prior to accepting the government position, Ali Khulqi put forth four conditions, which sound similar to the demands of the Transjordanian opposition. He demanded that the government reduces its spending and “pays attention to the economic condition of the country;” that it revisits the way in which it collects taxes; that it prioritizes the appointment of locals over foreigners; and that it invests more in education, health, and infrastructure.⁷³ The fact that Ali Khulqi’s demands sound similar to those of the Transjordanian opposition (and yet, he was not exiled like al-Tall and al-Qusus) may suggest that he became a bridge between his former comrades in *al-Istiqlal*, who were still present in Abu al-Huda’s cabinet, and the Transjordanian opposition. This made him a unique, and perhaps particularly influential, member of the educated elite.

It is important to note that some tribal leaders articulated the same concerns as the educated elite. For example, on February 27, 1927, the Haifa-based *al-Karmil* newspaper published a petition to the head of the Transjordanian government signed by “the people of Ajlun and Karak” in which they: demand an elected council, complain about high taxation, and cite the lack of local representation as a main cause for the Kura Rebellion.⁷⁴ The petitioners go further to say that they do not recognize “any law” that violates “the rights of their country,” which they describe

⁷³ Abu Diyah, *Safhat Matwiya*, 267.

⁷⁴ The People of Karak and Ajlun, “Arida Ila Rais al-Nazar Fi Sharq al-Urdun,” *al-Karmil Newspaper*, February 27th 1927 in Mahafza, *al-Fikr al-Siyasi*, 197.

as “natural and legitimate.”⁷⁵ While this petition is likely to have been written by Transjordanian tribal leaders, who were genuinely expressing their dissatisfaction with their under-representation in the government, members of the educated elite probably played a role in agitating the petitioners. This is especially true for Mustafa Wahbi al-Tall, who explicitly states in a June 1926 article that he has personally written, or at least influenced, every piece in *al-Karmil* on Transjordan.⁷⁶ Beyond this petition, and al-Tall’s possible role in influencing it, there seems to have been a wider movement among tribal elements in Transjordan against the *Istiqlalis*. According to a British report from June 1921, a number of tribal leaders met in Amman to express to Abdullah their displeasure with the “Syrian” monopolization of the government.⁷⁷ Another report from September of the same year describes a meeting of Sheikhs (probably the same one as the aforementioned), where a number of tribal sheikhs told Abdullah that they “did not really care about Hananu, [a famous leader of an anti-French campaign in Aleppo] or any Syrian.”⁷⁸ While the nature of this meeting remains unclear, it may be seen as evidence that some tribal elements did not only oppose *Istiqlali* policies; they also rejected the mere presence of “Syrians,” or foreigners, at the helm. However, the educated elite, like in the case of the petition in *al-Karmil*, probably influenced these tribal elements, and encouraged them to voice their opposition. The next section discusses the Idwan

⁷⁵ Ibid., 198.

⁷⁶ Al-Tall, “Sharq al-Urdun Bi Monasabat Iqalat al-Rikabi,” *al-Karmil Newspaper*, June 27th 1926 in Mahafza, *al-Fikr al-Siyasi*, 189.

⁷⁷ Robins, “The Consolidation,” 188-189.

⁷⁸ “Anti-British Demonstration at Amman”, the CBR in Amman to Civil Secretary in Jerusalem, September 20th 1921, FO 371/6373.

Rebellion, an instance when this type of cooperation between the educated elite and the tribal opposition (especially, the settled tribes) came to the surface.

The Idwan Rebellion: the Coming Together of the Two Strands

Perhaps the most important event for the Transjordanian oppositional movement against the *Istiqlalis* was the Idwan Rebellion of September 1923. This is because the Rebellion was a unique moment when the two strands of the opposition, the settled tribes and the educated elite, came together to support the same cause. In the words of Joseph Massad, the joining of the two strands created “a sense of native unity against outside usurpers and a unity of purpose aimed at giving Transjordanians their legitimate rights of ruling themselves.”⁷⁹ He even describes the rebellion as Transjordan’s “moment of nativism.”⁸⁰ Despite this unity, a close reading of the Idwan Rebellion reveals that the settled tribes and the educated elite joined the Rebellion for different reasons. The settled tribes, dominated by al-Idwan, were opposed to the *Istiqlali’s* policies in government, which weakened them vis-à-vis their traditional rivals, and introduced heavy taxation. Meanwhile, the educated elite, as was explained above, was opposed to the mere presence of the *Istiqlalis* in the government and the lack of local representation.

The tribal chief of the Idwan, Sultan al-Idwan, was the *de facto* head of the Balqa Alliance, a confederacy of settled or semi-settled tribes whose livelihood

⁷⁹ Massad, *Colonial Effects*, 29.

⁸⁰ Massad does not explain the reasons for using the term “nativism”, and perhaps does not address the full implications of the term. It is likely that he chooses the term to express the Transjordanian unity (tribal and urban opposition) against the foreigners in the government; Massad, *Colonial Effects*, 29.

depended on land cultivation and husbandry.⁸¹ For Idwan and their settled tribal allies, the advent of Abdullah's administration changed the balance of power unfavorably.⁸² This is primarily because they felt weaker vis-à-vis their traditional rivals, the nomadic Bani Sakhr. As mentioned earlier, Bani Sakhr's military capabilities had made them an important ally for Abdullah in the early years of the Emirate. In return for relying on their military power to defend Transjordan from the Wahabi attacks, Abdullah personally dealt with their affairs and gave them a great deal of autonomy, and collected very little tax from them.⁸³ He also personally intervened to settle land disputes in favor of Bani Sakhr. Meanwhile, the Idwan tribe, like the other settled tribes in Ajlun and Irbid, bore the brunt of the *Istiqlali's* heavy taxation policies. They effectively became the "milk-cows" of the new regime: not only did the *Istiqlali* administration tax them at a much higher rate than the nomadic tribes, they also demanded that they pay taxes retrospectively, for the years between the collapse of the Faysali regime and before the arrival of Abdullah.⁸⁴ The *Istiqlalis*, as mentioned in the discussion about the Kura Rebellion, adhered to modern intrusive governance, and lacked the local knowledge to fully appreciate the quest of the Transjordanian tribes for autonomy. In addition, the militant *Istiqlalis*, led by Prime Minister Rashid Tulay, were eager to form a military force that would liberate Syria from the French. This had two consequences: one, the militants had an incentive to tax Transjordanians heavily in order to form the needed military force. Two, the militant *Istiqlalis'* preoccupation with liberating

⁸¹ Alon, "The Balqa Revolt," 14.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 11.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 21.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 24.

Syria meant that they were less concerned about the welfare of the local population. As one British report described, for the militants Transjordan was “a jumping-off board in their designs against the French.”⁸⁵

The rebellion itself started with a relatively minor dispute in August 1923. The Idwan and Ajarma settled tribes refused to host the camels of Bani Sakhr at the wells of Hisban, which is an area that had been disputed between the two sides. Wanting to avoid the breakout of an armed conflict between the two sides, Abdullah sent a force to the area. But given the Prince’s well-known favoritism towards Bani Sakhr and his obvious alliance with the nomadic tribe, Sultan al-Idwan interpreted Abdullah’s move as a gesture of support for Bani Sakhr.⁸⁶ In response, on September 3rd, Sultan al-Idwan led an armed demonstration to Abdullah’s camp in Amman, where he presented the Emir with a list of demands, which were primarily centered on the desire for a lower tax rate for the settled tribes of Balqa. For his part, Abdullah promised to consider the demands, and to pay Sultan a visit.⁸⁷ Subsequently, a new government was formed under Hassan Khalid Abu al-Huda, who appointed Ali Khulqi as a minister, as a gesture to include local voices. The new cabinet also appeared to have internalized Sultan’s demands; it promised to improve public security, attend to the economic situation, reduce salaries and expenses, reform tax distribution, and appoint more locals to the government.⁸⁸ But at the same time that it made these promises, members of the cabinet convinced Abdullah to not visit Sultan, and the government moved to arrest Idwan’s urban

⁸⁵ Report no.6, the CBR in Amman, August 1st 1921, FO 371/6373.

⁸⁶ Alon, “The Balqa Revolt,” 28.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 29.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 30.

allies (al-Qusus, al-Tall, al-Najdawi, and Sami).⁸⁹ This turned Idwan's movement into a full-fledged rebellion against the Transjordanian state. On September 15, Sultan al-Idwan led 300 horsemen and 500 warriors to Amman, where they occupied a police station, cut telegraph lines, and blocked the Jerusalem-Amman road. The next day, the Arab Legion, supported by two British armored vehicles, defeated al-Idwan and his supporters within thirty minutes. Sultan al-Idwan and his sons fled to southern Syria.⁹⁰

Idwan's decision to confront the state despite the asymmetrical balance of power is certainly curious. It may have been the case that he thought that the British would not intervene against his movement. This is partly because Sultan had forged strong ties with the British even prior to Abdullah's arrival in Transjordan. He is said to have sent an armed escort for Herbert Samuel when he came to Transjordan in August 1920. Al-Idwan also eagerly participated in the British-sponsored local government in Salt; Sultan's son, Majid, was a representative in the local council of Salt.⁹¹ Mary Wilson and Maan Abu Nowar suggest that Sultan was not simply basing his judgment on his established ties with the British. The two historians suggest that the rebellion was, in fact, partly incited by the British in Amman, who had vested interest in removing the *Istiqlali* elite.⁹² Yoav Alon, however, doubts this claim and proposes that Sultan was merely misled by the British Representative in Amman, John Philby, into thinking that the British forces would not intervene against his

⁸⁹ Ibid., 31.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 33.

⁹¹ Ibid., 16.

⁹² Mary Wilson, *King Abdullah, Britain and the Making of Jordan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 78.

movement.⁹³ Indeed, a close reading of British documents shows that Alon's assessment is correct. In his August 1923 monthly report, John Philby explains the goals of the Idwan movement by highlighting their call for the "removal of the Syrian coterie." In the same report, he criticizes the "government's defiance" and their refusal to engage with Sultan's movement.⁹⁴ Philby reiterates the same points in the September 1923 monthly report in which he says "the will of the people must be allowed to prevail unless British money and British force are to be available for an administration that would disregard it altogether."⁹⁵ Meanwhile, in a letter from the office of the High Commissioner in Jerusalem to London, a British official describes Sultan al-Idwan's movement as having "justifiable complaints."⁹⁶ The letter, which was sent after the crackdown on the rebellion, says that the Transjordanian government must take steps to address "any legitimate grievances which the offending tribes may be suffering."⁹⁷ But while it is clear that the British officials were sympathetic towards the demands of the movement, they were certainly not tolerant of an armed rebellion against the state. One day before the outbreak of the Rebellion, Philby sent a letter to Jerusalem requesting the help of the Royal Air Force. The letter describes the severity of the situation, and states that the movement "must be dealt with severely if permanent peace and security are to be restored."⁹⁸

⁹³ Alon, "The Balqa Revolt," 31.

⁹⁴ Monthly Report on Trans-Jordan, the CBR in Amman, August 1923, CO 733/49.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Report, HC in Jerusalem to Secretary of State for the Colonies, September 21st 1923, CO 733/49.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Report, CBR in Amman, September 14th 1923, CO 733/49.

Perhaps more interestingly, Sultan may have also been misled by members of the *Istiqlali* elite in Amman. This is rooted in the divide between the militant and the accommodationist *Istiqlalis*. At the time of the rebellion, Mazahar Raslan was the head of the government. As an accommodationist, Raslan was not interested in forming a military force to liberate Syria. This expectedly frustrated his militant counterparts, who wanted the government to form an anti-French force. Militant frustration with Raslan seems to have grown so much to the point that some contemplated siding with Idwan's movement in order to undermine the Prime Minister. According to Awda al-Qusus, the *Istiqlalis* sent al-Idwan information to help him plot an attack on the Emir's residence. He claims that they did this because they wanted to replace the Emir with Ahmad Muraywid, a militant *Istiqlali*.⁹⁹ While the latter claim is probably far-fetched, it is certainly possible that some militants shared information with the rebels. According to Musa and Madi, the *Istiqlalis* met in Amman to discuss their stance towards the Idwan Rebellion. Their stance was particularly important because Frederick Peake was away, and the Reserve Force was effectively under the command of *Istiqlali* Fuad Salim.¹⁰⁰ On the one hand, they shared the rebels' rejection of Raslan. On the other hand, they knew that the success of the rebellion could mean that they will be replaced with a native administration. The group ultimately decided to side against the rebels; Fuad Salim and other militant officers were at the forefront of the force that suppressed the rebellion on

⁹⁹ Awda al-Qusus, *Mudhakkarat*, 130-133.

¹⁰⁰ Madi and Musa, *Tarikh al-Urdun*, 214.

September 15.¹⁰¹ However, the uncertainty surrounding the stance of the *Istiqlalis* may have encouraged al-Idwan to choose to rebel against the state.

Among the reasons that the militant *Istiqlalis* chose to reject the rebellion of 1923 was certainly the presence of the Transjordanian educated elite among the ranks of the rebels. These educated Transjordanians, as explained above, did not simply oppose the policies of the *Istiqlalis*; they also opposed their mere presence in the government, which must have made the militants feel threatened. To be sure, the exact role of the educated elite in the rebellion remains unclear. In his memoirs, al-Qusus discusses his role in the rebellion by simply stating, “the original inhabitants of Transjordan began to organize.”¹⁰² Meanwhile, Mustafa Wahbi al-Tall briefly alludes to the issue in an article that he wrote four years after the rebellion stating, “we complained [about the *Istiqlali* domination] in 1923, and you [the government] responded with bullets.”¹⁰³ But despite their vague role in the rebellion, the members of the educated elite paid a big price. Upon the appointment of Abu al-Huda, the government quickly decided to arrest and exile al-Qusus, al-Tall, al-Najdawi, and Sami.¹⁰⁴ In his memoirs, al-Qusus describes the arrest and the subsequent exile to the Hijaz in detail. They were beaten, poorly fed, and were coerced into writing confessions. The government accused the group of forming a secret society, which aimed to bring down the current government and replace it

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 217.

¹⁰² Awda al-Qusus, *Mudhakkarat*, 130.

¹⁰³ Al-Tall, “Kitab Maftouh Ila Dar al-Itimad al-Baritani Fi Sharq al-Urdun,” *Sawt al-Shaab Newspaper*, March 30th 1927 in Mahafza, *al-Fikr al-Siyasi*, 199.

¹⁰⁴ In his monthly report for September 1923, Philby describes this decision as “a foolish act on the part of the Amir.” Monthly Report on Trans-Jordan, the CBR in Amman, September 1923, CO 733/50.

with a local one.¹⁰⁵ Indeed, it remains unclear whether the group had such aims. Al-Qusus' memoirs say little about whether the allegations were true or not; however, he does say that he was coerced, under the threat of violence, into admitting that he hired Sultan al-Idwan to execute his plan of bringing down the regime.¹⁰⁶ But regardless of the actual role of the educated elite in the Idwan Rebellion, it is clear that they were, at least, sympathetic towards Sultan's movement. Their support, as Alon puts it, "elevated his movement from a localized tribal affair into a general popular protest against the non-native government and into an outcry for a complete reform of the Emirate."¹⁰⁷

Sympathizing with the Militants' Cause

Despite their opposition to the *Istiqlalis'* monopolization of the government and the policies that they implemented, the native population of Transjordan showed sympathy for the anti-colonial, particularly anti-French, activities of the militant *Istiqlalis*. This sympathy was evident soon after the collapse of Faysal's government in Syria in July 1920, when Transjordanian tribes not only supported the anti-colonial cause, but also joined it. This section sheds light on various instances when Transjordanian solidarity and support for anti-colonialism was evident. It argues that while the Transjordanian opposition shared the militant *Istiqlalis'* anti-colonial sentiment, it believed that it could perform this role on its own.

¹⁰⁵ Awda al-Qusus, *Mudhakkarat*, 134.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 141.

¹⁰⁷ Alon, "The Balqa Revolt," 29.

Ahmad Muraywid, a well-known militant *Istiqlali* who hailed from the Golan Heights region, organized an armed rebellion with the support of the Transjordanian tribes of Ajlun.¹⁰⁸ As part of the rebellion, the Transjordanian Bani Kinana tribe raided Zionist settlements in the Galilee. In one attack, British forces in Palestine killed the chief of the Bani Kinana, Kayid al-Ubaydat.¹⁰⁹ Later on, in August 1921, rebels in the Hawran region assassinated Syria's first Prime Minister under the French regime, which led to a major French revenge campaign in the area. Transjordan's reaction to the campaign, as illustrated below, is telling, and shows the extent to which the inhabitants sympathized with the anti-colonial cause. Encouraged by Ahmad Muraywid, tribal chief of the Hadid tribes in Balqa, Minwir al-Hadid, mobilized nearly 400 horsemen to send to Hawran.¹¹⁰ Days later, tribal leaders Rashid al-Khizai and Turki Kayid al-Ubaydat also decided to lend their support. Meanwhile, urban figures, such as Abd al-Rahman al-Rushaydat, Mustafa Hijazi, and Abd al-Qadir al-Tall, also lent their support to the Hawran rebels.¹¹¹ Transjordanian forces ended up clashing with French forces in southern Damascus in the summer of 1920.¹¹²

The same spirit of solidarity with the anti-colonial cause could be seen in the proceedings of the Um Qays meeting of September 1920. Tribal hostilities had prevented the leaders of the Ajlun region from attending the famous Salt meeting with Herbert Samuel in August 1920. Therefore, Samuel sent his deputy, Major

¹⁰⁸ Tell, *The Social and Economic Origins*, 57.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Mahmud Ubaidat, *Ahmad Muraywid (1866-1926): Qaid Thawrat al-Julan wa Janub Lubnan wa Sharq al-Urdun* (Alexandria: Bostan al-Marifah, 1997), 219.

¹¹¹ Ubaidat, *Ahmad Muraywid*, 220.

¹¹² Ibid., 221.

Somerset, to meet with the regional leaders and tribesmen of Ajlun, who demanded an Arab administration and a degree of autonomy from the British government in Palestine. Importantly, the leaders demanded the incorporation of parts of Hawran into the Ajlun governing district. But perhaps more significantly, they demanded the right to protect “political criminals” seeking refuge in the territory.¹¹³ Here, they were certainly referring to the militant *Istiqlalis*, who were escaping death sentences from the French authorities. The latter demand was partly a result of the presence of militant *Istiqlalis*, including Muraywid and Ali Khulqi, at the meeting, but it was certainly also a reflection of the spirit of the Hawran Rebellion, in which the Transjordanians sympathized and supported the anti-colonial cause of the *Istiqlalis*.

Transjordanian solidarity with the anti-French activities did not end at the Um Qays meeting. The Syrian nationalist Ibrahim Hananu, who had led an armed struggle against the French in northern Syria, arrived in Amman on July 31st 1921. Wanting to reach Egypt, Hananu asked Abdullah to guarantee his safety as he traveled to Palestine. Abdullah requested that the Chief British Representative in Amman produce documentation that would ensure that Hananu did not get arrested in Palestine. While it is not clear what sort of documentation the Representative produced, Hananu, who was wanted by the French authorities in Syria, was arrested upon arriving in Jerusalem.¹¹⁴ As soon as the news of his arrest reached Amman, a big demonstration broke out. The demonstrators were so furious that they almost

¹¹³ Ali Mahafza, *Tarikh al-Urdun al-Muasir: Ahd al-Imara, 1921-1946* (Amman: Jordan University Press, 1973), 17.

¹¹⁴ Madi and Musa, *Tarikh al-Urdun*, 175.

killed Fredrick Peake.¹¹⁵ The *Istiqlalis* in Amman were not the only ones to lead the demonstration; Awda Abu Tayeh, a prominent Transjordanian tribal leader, was at the forefront of the protestors. And while British sources claim that the *Istiqlalis* “worked up the feeling” to provoke the protest,¹¹⁶ it was native figures, such as Muhammad Saleh al-Najdawi and Ali Khulqi who were arrested and accused of incitement.¹¹⁷

A similar event took place when the British forces tried to arrest Ahmad Muraywid after the assassination attempt on French General Henri Gouraud in June 1921. As discussed in the earlier chapters, the French authorities accused Muraywid of plotting the attacks and demanded that the government of Transjordan hand him over. Upon receiving the request, Fredrick Peake assembled a force to arrest the man. When the news of Peake’s intentions spread, a massive demonstration broke out in Amman. The protests, much like the one that followed Hanannu’s arrest, were led by Transjordanian figures. These included Said Khayr, Mithqal al-Fayiz, Haditha al-Khuraysha, and Sayil al-Shahwan.¹¹⁸ The situation got so tense that a battle nearly broke out between Peake’s forces and the protestors supported by *Istiqlali* officers. Later on, in September 1921, Peake wrote a report about the incident, in which he attributed his failure to arrest Muraywid to the fact that he was backed by the Sheikhs of Irbid.¹¹⁹ Regardless of where exactly Muraywid’s support came from, this

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 176.

¹¹⁶ Report, the HC to Secretary of State for the Colonies, September 5th 1921, FO 371/6373.

¹¹⁷ Madi and Musa, *Tarikh al-Urdun*, 176.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 171.

¹¹⁹ Sulayman Musa, *Tasis al-Imara al-Urduniyya, 1921-1925 Dirasa Wathaqiyya* (Amman: al-Matbaa al-Urduniyya, 1971), 146.

incident is clear evidence that the population of Transjordan did not only tolerate rebel activity against colonial France, but it also welcomed and supported it.

Members of the Transjordanian educated elite were also sympathetic towards the anti colonial cause, and in some cases formed personal relationships with militant *Istiqbalis*. The best example of this is Mustafa Wahbi al-Tall. He is said to have been a close friend of the militant *Istiqbalis*, Said Ammun and Ahmad Muraywid.¹²⁰ In fact, according to Tariq Tell, he named two of his sons after Muraywid and Ammun, both of whom were killed during the Great Syrian Revolt.¹²¹ Upon the death of Muraywid in 1926, al-Tall published a lengthy eulogy in *al-Karmil*. In it, he describes Muraywid as “an example of how one should love his country and serve his people.”¹²² He later adds,

...You fought against the French in the plains of Hawla and the Golan. They sentenced you to death, and you mobilized people in Transjordan to pay back. You also exhausted the British, who chased you in Irbid, Salt, and Amman...Finally, you returned to Syria, where you were eager to fight for your freedom...¹²³

Meanwhile, in northern Transjordan, upon learning that Muraywid had died, tribal leader of the Kuforsum region, Turki al-Ubaydat, announced three days of mourning for “the son of Kuforsum and the loyal son of Arabism.”¹²⁴ The reaction to Muraywid’s death is representative of Transjordan’s somewhat paradoxical attitude

¹²⁰ Al-Awdat, *Arar*, 297.

¹²¹ Tell, *The Social and Economic Origins*, 181.

¹²² Al-Tall, “Masra al-Sayid Ahmad Murawyid,” *al-Karmil Newspaper*, June 20th 1926 in Mahafza, *al-Fikr al-Siyasi*, 188.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ubaidat, *Ahmad Muraywid*, 399.

towards the *Istiqlalis*: they opposed their presence in government, but sympathized and supported their anti-colonial activities.

It seems to be the case that Transjordanians shared with the *Istiqlalis* opposition for colonial powers but believed that they were capable of resisting and opposing colonialism on their own. They did not need foreigners, such as the *Istiqlalis*, to engage in anti-colonialism on their behalf; it was a role that they could play themselves. This is why the population of Transjordan did not welcome *Istiqlali* penetration of their government, but at the same time blessed and supported their rebel activities against the French in Syria. There is more evidence of this in the later years, when the Transjordanian opposition began to organize. In April 1927, a number of local figures came together to form what many historians consider the first Transjordanian party, *Hizb al-Shaab*, or the People's Party.¹²⁵ Made up of tribal and urban figures who participated in the Idwan Rebellion of 1923, the People's Party was openly opposed to the presence of foreigners in the government (*Istiqlalis* and other non-Transjordanians), while they also adopted an anti-colonial language and demanded greater Transjordanian independence from Britain.¹²⁶ More importantly the Party publically expressed its support for the anti-French activities in Syria, and promised to join the Syrian rebels if there was a need for that. This was particularly true during the Great Syrian Revolt of 1925, which was spearheaded by the Druze community in Syria and by nationalist figures, including militant *Istiqlali*

¹²⁵ Tell, *The Social and Economic Origins*, 80.

¹²⁶ Among other things, the Party protested the government's concession to the Zionist Pinhas Rutenberg's for a hydroelectric power station in Yarmouk, and it demanded the revising of the relationship with Britain in such a way that Transjordan is given more sovereignty; Tell, *The Social and Economic Origins*, 80.

figures who had lived in Transjordan. In May 1927, the People's Party issued a petition in which they called on the Emir to do something about the French violations in Syria. The petition states, "The Syrian territories, south and north, are one nation." It then says, "France should know that the brave people of Transjordan would not have abandoned their brothers in Syria if your highness [Prince Abdullah] did not instruct them to do so."¹²⁷ Following previous French attacks on Transjordan,¹²⁸ the petition finally goes on to warn the French from attacking again: "if they [the French] violate our neutrality and harass the people of this country, they can expect us to retaliate."¹²⁹ The language of this petition is an example of the Transjordanian opposition's attitude: its members endorsed and supported those who engaged in anti-colonial activities, even though they had rebelled against these same people when they were in the government a few years earlier. Equally important, they warned France that they were capable of taking on the role of fighting colonialism on their own if necessary.

Conclusion

Abdullah's almost-complete reliance on members of *Hizb al-Istiqlal* in the early 1920s faced an expected opposition from many segments of society. The settled tribes of Ajlun and Balqa suffered from the *Istiqlalis'* aggressive taxation policies, which were a result of their dogmatic adherence to intrusive governance and the militants' desire to form a military force to liberate Syria. Meanwhile, a

¹²⁷ Hizb al-Shaab, "Taasis al-Hizb," *al-Karmil Newspaper*, April 14th 1927 in Mahafza, *al-Fikr al-Siyasi*, 213.

¹²⁸ According to the same petition, the French entered Transjordan and attacked its villages at least three times during the Great Syrian Revolt. The French were probably pursuing fleeing Syrian rebels; *Ibid.*, 212-213.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 213.

small, but vocal, group of educated Transjordanians emerged as a strong oppositional voice not only to the exclusionary policies of the *Istiqlalis*, but also to their mere presence in the government. Transjordan's "moment of nativism"¹³⁰ came in September 1923, when Sultan al-Idwan, representing the settled tribes of Balqa, joined forces with members of the educated elite, who were exiled and humiliated in the aftermath of the short-lived rebellion.

Despite the government's harsh crackdown on the Idwan Rebellion, Transjordan's "moment of nativism," or the spirit of native unity against foreigners, did not fade away. A few years later, the rebels regrouped to form Transjordan's first political party, *Hizb al-Shaab*, or the People's Party. The People's Party echoed the anti-foreigner spirit of the Idwan Rebellion, while also supporting the anti-colonial cause and those who championed it. In some cases, most notably the Great Syrian Revolt, the People's Party full-heartedly endorsed the anti-colonial struggle of the same militant *Istiqlalis* that they had rebelled against in September 1923. In fact, this duality between anti-foreigners sentiment and genuine support for anti-colonialism goes beyond the 1920s: it is a common theme in the history of the Jordanian oppositional movement, which had to grapple with multiple waves of refugees throughout the 20th and 21st centuries.

¹³⁰ Massad, *Colonial Effects*, 21.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

Jordan has received less attention in the scholarship than the other Arab nation-states. The issue is more pronounced with Jordan's history before 1948, the year the creation of Israel displaced hundreds of thousands of Palestinians into Jordan.¹ Prior to 1948, Jordan is portrayed as a mere colonial artifact conceived by Abdullah and the British. Tariq Tell remarks that this disproportionate focus on high politics has led to the dismissal of the native population of Transjordan, and the near complete neglect of the society east of the Jordan River.² Building upon Tell's remarks, the introduction of this thesis showed that the focus on high politics has also led to the superficial treatment of the *Istiqlali* element in the early 1920s. Despite their great significance, members of the Arabist organization, *Hizb al-Istiqlal*, have received little attention in the scholarship, usually only in passing. Furthermore, when they are addressed in the literature, with only some exceptions, the *Istiqlalis* are painted as a homogeneous group with a uniform vision and agenda. Relying on the existing scholarship, memoirs and journals of important actors, British colonial documents, and on newspaper publications from the period, this thesis has complicated the homogeneous understanding of the *Istiqlalis* in the scholarship, and has used this more complex portrayal of the group to explore the relationship between the *Istiqlalis* and the population of Transjordan.

In an attempt to express the diversity within the *Istiqlali* camp, this thesis has devised two main sub-categories: the militant and the accommodationist *Istiqlalis*.

¹ Tariq Tell, *The Social and Economic Origins of Monarchy in Jordan* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 5-6.

² Tell, *The Social and Economic Origins*, 5- 19.

The militant *Istiqlalis*, who were discussed in the second chapter, were the members of the group whose main agenda was the liberation of Syria from the French. These were characterized by their engagement in anti-colonial activities, and their refusal to acknowledge the newly formed national borders. Even after arriving in Transjordan, the militants supported and took part in anti-French activities. Most famously, in the fall of 1920, Ali Khulqi al-Sharayri and Ahmad Muraywid organized an anti-French rebellion in southern Syria, and encouraged Transjordanians to participate. Later on, in June 1921, *Istiqlalis* were accused of planning the assassination attempt on General Henri Gouraud. The second chapter highlighted another important point about the militant *Istiqlalis*: they were part of a wider network of Arab nationalists. Members of this network, as Michael Provence illustrates, hailed from middle-class or rural backgrounds, and attended the Ottoman Empire's state-funded military schools and were later mobilized by the state's wartime conscription projects.³ This common Ottoman experience served to solidify and maintain their network even after the collapse of the Empire. Like the militants in Transjordan, they were known for engaging in anti-colonial activities across the newly formed national borders, which they never recognized or even acknowledged. The militant *Istiqlalis* in Transjordan, it must be emphasized, were not a uniform group in and of themselves. They disagreed amongst each other about how to approach Abdullah's warm relationship with Britain, and about whether to establish an official branch of *Hizb al-Istiqlal* in Transjordan. The disagreements

³ Michael Provence, "Ottoman Modernity, Colonialism, and Insurgency in the Arab East," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 43 (2011): 207.

even within the militant camp go to illustrate the degree to which the *Istiqlalis* were heterogeneous.

Over time, Abdullah's rhetoric vis-à-vis the militant *Istiqlalis* changed. Having signed the March 1921 agreement with Churchill in Jerusalem, Abdullah was obliged to maintain the security of Transjordan's borders with Syria. However, the attacks on southern Syria from Transjordan continued, and to Abdullah's embarrassment, the French and the British accused some of his militant ministers of aiding and supporting rebel activity. Abdullah's allies, the British, put an increasing amount of pressure on the Emir to abandon the militants. Having little choice but to follow their wishes, Abdullah's rhetoric soon began to change. In 1923, he publicly denounced rebel activities, and (in a clear break from the language that he used in late 1920) he started to refer to the French in Syria as his allies.⁴ The major turning point took place in the summer of 1924, when, after a sizable attack on Syria, Abdullah and the British exiled a number of high-profile militant *Istiqlalis* from Transjordan.⁵ This trend was certainly unacceptable from the perspective of the militants: even those who were not physically removed from Transjordan began to feel disillusioned and gradually abandoned Abdullah's project.

The departure of the militants marked the rise of another faction among the *Istiqlalis*: the accommodationists. The accommodationists were *Istiqlalis* who were less committed to fighting the French in Syria, and more committed to building a state in Transjordan. As explained in the third chapter, the accommodationists

⁴ Munib Madi and Sulayman Musa, *Tarikh al-Urdun fi al-Qarn al-Ishrin, 1900-1959* (Amman: Maktabat al-Muhtasib, 1959), 242.

⁵ Madi and Musa, *Tarikh al-Urdun*, 242.

ought not to be confused with the British-inspired external elite. The latter was a predominantly Palestinian British-imposed elite, which came to dominate the bureaucracy in the late 1920s. Its members, in sharp contrast to the accommodationist *Istiqlalis*, had no nationalist credentials: they did not serve under Faysal's administration or participate in the Arab Revolt during the Great War.⁶ The accommodationists tended to loosen their ties to *Hizb al-Istiqlal* after they arrived in Transjordan, which in some cases cost them their friendship with the militant *Istiqlalis*. Perhaps more importantly, the accommodationists often were on better terms with the British, and in some cases, such as Rida al-Rikabi, they were also on good terms with the French in Syria. The appointment of this type of *Istiqlalis* was a deliberate policy by the British and the Emir, because it allowed them to replace the undesirable militant *Istiqlalis*. At the same time, some militant *Istiqlalis* made the personal choice to abandon the goal of liberating Syria from France, thus aligning themselves with the accommodationists. Ibrahim Hashim, for example, denounced the militant *Istiqlalis* in the summer of 1924 in order to keep his ministerial position.⁷ Meanwhile, others, including Ali Khulqi and Said Khayr, seem to have cut ties with the organization gradually over time.

Having complicated the prevalent understanding of the *Istiqlalis* in Transjordan, the fourth chapter explored the relationship between the group and the native population of Transjordan. The chapter discussed the reasons that Abdullah chose to appoint *Istiqlalis*, and not Transjordanians, to his bureaucracy in

⁶ Robins, "The Consolidation," 167.

⁷ Mary Wilson, *King Abdullah, Britain and the Making of Jordan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 78.

the early 1920s. Many scholars have argued that he chose the *Istiqlalis* because they possessed the expertise of building a modern state, unlike the comparatively less educated population of Transjordan. However, Philip Robins puts forward a more compelling theory: Abdullah relied on the *Istiqlalis* because they lacked a support base in Transjordan, which put the Prince in a strong position in relation to them. This, in turn, made them easier to control and manipulate than an administration dominated by native Transjordanians.⁸ Perhaps unsurprisingly, an oppositional force among the native population emerged in response to the *Istiqlalis*. This opposition had two main strands: the settled, or agricultural, tribes of Ajlun and Balqa, and an urban educated elite. The tribal strand of the opposition protested and complained about the *Istiqlalis*' policy of imposing modern and intrusive forms of governance. Dogmatically applying the percepts of a modern state and looking to finance a liberation force against the French, the *Istiqlalis* imposed an aggressive taxation policy on these agricultural communities, some of which had enjoyed a lengthy break from the policies of central states since the collapse of the Ottoman regime. The *Istiqlalis*' inability to appreciate (or unwillingness to take into account) these communities' quest for autonomy led to a major rebellion in the northern region of al-Kura in May 1921, and another one in Balqa in September 1923. The Balqa Rebellion, Yoav Alon emphasizes, was also the result of the Transjordanian state's favoritism towards the nomadic tribes. The nomads were allowed a large

⁸ Robins, "The Consolidation," 177.

extent of autonomy, which empowered them vis-à-vis the settled tribes of Ajlun and especially Balqa.⁹

The other strand of the Transjordanian opposition, the educated elite, did not only oppose the policies of the *Istiqlalis*: they opposed their mere presence in the government. Made up of educated and experienced individuals, it is perhaps not a surprise that the members of the Transjordanian educated elite felt resentful towards the *Istiqlalis*' (who, at the end of the day, were Syrian foreigners) domination of the government. Mustafa Wahbi al-Tall, an important member of this group, dubbed the expression "Transjordan for the Transjordanians." He, and the other members of the educated elite, articulated their opposition towards the *Istiqlalis* in newspaper articles, usually in the Haifa-based *al-Karmil*, and in their memoirs and journals, including the important memoirs of Awda al-Qusus. Al-Tall, al-Qusus, and other urban activists joined forces with the tribal opposition during the Idwan Rebellion, during which they were arrested and exiled to the Hijaz. The extent of the urban activists' participation in the Rebellion remains unclear, but scholars agree that opposition to the *Istiqlalis* created a moment of unity between the urban-based and the tribal oppositional forces.

Despite their opposition to the *Istiqlalis* in the government, the same Transjordanian urban activists and settled tribes sympathized with the anti-colonial activities of the militant *Istiqlalis*. This sympathy manifested itself in a number of ways: these included Transjordan's tribes' participation in the Hawran Rebellion, the popular agitation that followed the arrest of Ibrahim Hananu and Ahmad

⁹ Yoav Alon, *The Making of Jordan: Tribes, Colonialism and the Modern State* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007), 44.

Murraywid, and the writings of al-Tall, in which he praised the militant members of *al-Istiqlal*. This seemingly paradoxical attitude, the fourth chapter proposed, stems from Transjordanians' support for the struggle against colonialism, and their desire to play that role on their own. They felt that they did not need foreigners, like the *Istiqlalis*, to perform it on their behalf. This explains why they supported anti-colonialism, and the principle behind it, wherever it existed. However, they did not feel that the *Istiqlalis* needed to perform it on their behalf and dominate the Transjordanian government while doing so. The same attitude, in fact, continued into the late 1920s, when the Transjordanian opposition organized under *Hizb al-Shaab*, the People's Party. *Hizb al-Shaab* maintained the slogan of "Transjordan for the Transjordanians" and protested foreigners' domination of the government, yet it endorsed the anti-colonial activities of the militant *Istiqlalis*.

The findings of this thesis have a significance that goes beyond just the time period under examination. In terms of the characterization of the *Istiqlalis*, it is rather telling to see where the members of the two camps, the militants and the accommodationists, ended up beyond the period under study. Confirming this thesis' conclusion that they did not acknowledge the national borders, many of the militants ended up leaving Transjordan to join the Great Syrian Revolt (1925-1927). Among those who joined the anti-French Revolt were Rashid Tulay, Ahmad Murraywid, Fuad Salim, Said al-As, and Said Ammun. Rashid Tulay, the first Prime Minister of Transjordan, died fighting the French in Syria in September 1926.¹⁰ For his part, Murraywid went back to Syria after he spent some time in exile in the Hijaz.

¹⁰ Mundhir Mahmud Jabir, *Sajjil: Ana Rashid Tulay: Sira wa Masir* (London: Mussasat al-Turath al-Durzi, 2008), 28.

He died under heavy French aerial bombing of his home-village of Jabata al-Khashab in May 1926.¹¹ The French authorities allegedly put Muraywid's corpse on display in Damascus. Salim, who was also exiled from Transjordan, spent some time in the Hijaz and eventually joined the Great Syria Revolt, where he, too, died. Salim was killed by a French mortar shell in the southern town of Majdal.¹² Meanwhile, al-As' career became perhaps the best embodiment of the militant *Istiqlalis'* refusal to acknowledge the national borders and their relentless commitment to fighting colonialism. Al-As took part in the Great Syrian Revolt, but unlike many of his comrades, he survived. He eventually became involved in the anti-colonial movement in Palestine, where he joined the Great Arab Revolt in 1936. He died in a Royal Air Force (RAF) attack on his battalion in late 1936.¹³ The ideology of al-As and the other militant *Istiqlalis* allowed them to take part, and perhaps even shape, the anti-colonial struggle in places outside of Transjordan.

For their part, the accommodationist *Istiqlalis* came to play much quieter, but in some regards also influential, roles. Living up to their characterization in the third chapter as being on good terms with the British and the French, the accommodationists did not participate in anti-colonial struggles in Syria or elsewhere around the Arab East. Ali Rida al-Rikabi went back to Damascus after his

¹¹ Mahmud Ubaidat, *Ahmad Muraywid (1866-1926): Qaid Thawrat al-Julan wa Janub Lubnan wa Sharq al-Urdun* (Alexandria: Bostan al-Marifah, 1997), 310.

¹² Said Al-Turk, *Safha Min al-Ayyam al-Hamra: Mudhakkarat al-Qaid Said al-As 1889-1936* (Beirut: al-Moasasa al-Arabiyyah Lil Dirasah wa al-Nashr, 1988), 237.

¹³ Provence, "Ottoman Modernity," 106.

tenure in Transjordan, where he lived quietly and died in 1942.¹⁴ The mere fact that the French authorities allowed him to live quietly in Damascus confirms his lack of enthusiasm for anti-colonialism. Ali Khulqi al-Sharayri also lived a rather quiet life in Transjordan for the remainder of his days. Holding only a few government jobs, Ali Khulqi is said to have spent his days farming until he died in June 1960.¹⁵

Ibrahim Hashim probably had the most colorful career of all the other accommodationist *Istiqlalis*. Having disavowed *Hizb al-Istiqlal* in the summer of 1924, he was appointed Prime Minister of Transjordan in November 1933 and again in March 1945.¹⁶ Hashim, who remained loyal to the British and the Hashemite family until the end, died during an ill-fated trip to Iraq, when Abd al-Karim Qasem staged a bloody coup against the royal family. Hashim, much like the other accommodationist *Istiqlalis*, remained on good terms with the colonial powers until the end of his life. This perhaps explains why they lived quieter and more peaceful lives than their militant counterparts, many of whom gave their lives to the anti-colonial cause.

Perhaps the findings with the most significant contemporary legacy are those of the fourth chapter. The anti-*Istiqlali* sentiment of the Transjordanian opposition is part of a common theme in Jordanian history: indigenous Jordanians' anti-foreigner sentiment. Throughout its short history, Jordan has received several

¹⁴ Khayr al-Din al-Zirikli, *Al-Aalam: Qamus Tarajim Li Ashar al-Rijal wa al-Nisa Min al-Arab wa al-Mustaribeen wa al-Mustashriqeen* (Beirut: Dar al-Ilm lil Malayin, 2002).

¹⁵ Awda al-Qusus, *Mudhakkarat (1877-1943) wa Thalath Ajza min al-Wathaiq al-Urduniyya*, Edited and prefaced by Nayif George al-Qusus and Ghassan Salamah al-Halasa (Amman: al-Maktaba al-Wataniyya, 2006), 15.

¹⁶ Abdullah bin al-Hussein, *Mudhakkarati* (Amman: al-Ahliyyah, 1998), 224.

waves of refugees. The first of these was the arrival of the *Istiqbalis* in the early 1920s, but much bigger ones took place in 1948 and 1967, when Palestinian refugees came to Jordan to escape Israeli violence. Each of these waves brought to the native Transjordanians an added threat of foreigners competing with them over governmental positions and economic opportunities. In response, Jordanians labored throughout the twentieth century to devise an exclusivist Jordanian nationalism. In doing so, they sometimes appropriated the spirit and narrative of the Idwan Rebellion, which they saw as the first moment of national unity against “outside usurpers.”¹⁷ The anti-foreigner spirit of the Idwan Rebellion, and Mustafa Wahbi al-Tall’s slogan “Transjordan for the Transjordanians,” continue to be appropriated by Jordanian nationalists today, who feel marginalized by foreigners – whether it be Palestinian refugees, Iraqi refugees from the Gulf wars, or even the Syrian refugees who arrived in Jordan in the last five years.

Meanwhile, the chapter’s other finding, indigenous support for anti-colonialism, is a common theme in the history of the Jordanian oppositional movement. This could be seen in the rhetoric of Jordanian nationalists throughout the 20th century and even in more recent times. For example, during the 2013 parliamentary elections, a number of East Bank¹⁸ Jordanians, including high profile Nahid Hattar and Alaa al-Fazaa, formed a faction, which adopted a platform that perfectly embodied the 1920s duality of supporting anti-colonialism, and at the same time rejecting foreigner domination of the Jordanian state. Running under the

¹⁷ Joseph Massad, *Colonial Effects: The Making of National Identity in Jordan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 29.

¹⁸ This expression implies that they were indigenous Jordanians, not of Palestinian or other foreign origins.

name of *Abnaa al-Harathin*, or the Children of the Farmers, this faction's platform explicitly rejected the Jordanian government's policy of extending citizenship to the Palestinians of the West Bank, and denounced a proposal that would have allowed Jordanian women to pass down citizenship to their children. They saw the latter proposal as a window for more Palestinians to gain citizenship and political rights in Jordan. Raising the slogan, "our nation is not for sale or barter," the faction also completely rejected any type of political union with the West Bank¹⁹ and (although more implicitly) protested the rising percentage of Jordanians of Palestinian origin in the government. At the same time that the faction expressed this rejection of foreigner presence, particularly Palestinian presence, in the government, it adopted a markedly anti-colonial and Arab nationalist language. For example, it called for the revival of Jordan's "Arab identity," aggressively attacked the government's warm diplomatic relations with Israel and the West, and completely denounced the policy of economic and cultural "normalization" with Israel.²⁰ And, much like the Transjordanian opposition in the early 1920s, the Children of the Farmers supported all efforts of fighting colonialism and Zionism in the region, even if they were carried out by the same Palestinian factions, such as Hamas, which they rejected in Jordan. While the Children of the Farmers faction did not fare well in the elections (partly because the electoral bylaws were set up in a way that disadvantaged non-tribal factions), their message resonated with many Jordanians.

¹⁹ The idea of a "confederation" between the West Bank and Jordan had been circulating as an American-proposed solution to the Palestinian Question.

²⁰ Nahid Hattar, "Nidaa Min Nahid Hattar: Limatha Qaimat Abnaa al-Harathin," *Khabar JO*, January 21, 2013, accessed March 15, 2016. <http://www.khabarjo.net/?p=11813#.VugtEa6rR-U>.

Their brand of Jordanian nationalism is unlikely to fade away; it represents, as this thesis has shown, a long tradition, which can be traced all the way back to the spirit of the first generation of Jordanian opposition figures.

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