

# PROPAGANDA, STATE POWER AND THE PRESS IN THE POST-OTTOMAN

## MIDDLE EAST

By

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(Under the Direction of Kevin Jones )

### ABSTRACT

This study explores the relationship between socio-political change in Mandatory Iraq and the transformation of European imperialism, while expanding the analytical lens through the incorporation of the colonial press. The transnational dimension of anti-colonial nationalism reveals the existence of a causal link between the evolution of British rule in India and the subsequent spread of anti-colonial nationalist sentiment into Mandatory Iraq. British officials viewed anti-colonial nationalism as an ideological contagion: if it emerged in the mandate territories it could spread elsewhere. At the front-lines of this process, the colonial press played an active role in reshaping the meaning of empire through its interactions with British officials, the Iraqi government, and the Iraqi public. Comparative analysis of the colonial press in India and Iraq reveals the agency of the colonized alongside British anxieties, while simultaneously shedding light on relations between British officials and their local intermediaries.

INDEX WORDS: Mandatory Iraq, India, Transnational, Imperialism, Colonial Press, Nationalism, Agency, Comparative Analysis

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

In 1917, Sir Charles Monro wrestled with the decision to allow a press team of Indian journalists into Amara. Allowing the Indian press into Iraq created an opportunity for Monro to contrast Ottoman backwardness with Britain's successful implementation of its colonial regime, which integrated Iraq into the British Empire, and the western geopolitical orbit in general, for the first time in its history.<sup>1</sup> From the perspective of many British officials, political unrest in Iraq threatened the status quo in India. For this reason, Monro set out to project an image of stability and prosperity. Despite these efforts many Indian nationalists viewed the extension of British imperialism into the Middle East with great suspicion, as an extension of empire anywhere threatened colonial subject peoples everywhere.<sup>2</sup>

Like many British officials, Monro acknowledged the transnational dimension of anti-colonial opposition to imperialism, writing in a 1917 telegram that he endorsed "the tour (of selected Indian journalists) on the ground that it would admit of the improved conditions of Mesopotamia being made known to the Indian public; and that it would remove the suspicion of concealment of the real facts."<sup>3</sup> For Britain as well as other European powers, the First World War called into question the profitability of traditional imperialism.<sup>4</sup> Rebranding empire as a

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<sup>1</sup> Eric Davis, *Memories of State: Politics, History and Collective Identity in Modern Iraq*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 29.

<sup>2</sup> S.P. Singh, "Indo-Arab Relations in Light of the Palestine Problem." *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* Vol. 65 (2004), 1026.

<sup>3</sup> "Tour of Indian Journalists in Mesopotamia," April 14, 1917, IOR L/PS/11/121/6069.

<sup>4</sup> Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 25.

liberal enterprise, rather than a nakedly parasitic and exploitative one, demanded the cooperation of the colonial press. For this reason, Monro ultimately allowed Indian journalists into Iraq.

The extension of the British Empire into the post-Ottoman Middle East, and the subsequent construction of the state of Iraq, represents a critical juncture in the growth and spread of anti-colonial nationalism throughout the Mandate era and beyond. The 1920 Iraqi Revolution demonstrated the capacity of the Iraqi people to resist domination and extract concessions, in the form of a territorially contiguous nation-state, from the British Empire. External political pressure, emanating from India as well as the European metropole, subjected British imperialism to a relatively intense degree of scrutiny. Many British officials, including Sir Charles Monro, who held the position of Commander in Chief of the British Army in India from 1916 to 1920, tacitly acknowledged the significance of this transnational relationship in his interactions with the colonial press. Manipulating the portrayal of British rule in the colonial press represented one possible remedy to the rising tide of anti-colonial nationalism in India and Iraq.

By 1921, the construction of ostensibly liberal political institutions and the reintroduction of a 'free' press in Iraq implied a break from traditional territorial imperialism.<sup>5</sup> A closer examination of mandatory Iraq presents an opportunity to scrutinize the relationship between liberal imperialism and the colonial press. Far from a monolithic collection of newspapers exclusively owned and operated by British officials, the colonial press reflected the interests and anxieties of an innumerable number of editors, censors, journalists and readers. In fact, many colonial newspapers openly defied British authorities. In India and Iraq, both colonial subjects and British officials relied on the press as a means of advancing their respective interests and

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<sup>5</sup> Toby Dodge, *Inventing Iraq: The Failure of Nation Building and a History Denied*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 1.

shaping political discourse. In many cases, the existing historiography of modern Iraq addresses the mandate only tangentially. Much of the relevant secondary literature, generally comprehensive in scope, addresses the mandate era briefly before quickly moving into Iraq's history following independence.<sup>6</sup> Toby Dodge's *Inventing Iraq*, Abbas Kadhimi's *Reclaiming Iraq*, and Peter Sluglett's *Britain in Iraq* stand out as exceptions for their pathbreaking contributions to the historiography of Mandatory Iraq.<sup>7</sup> Each book offers penetrating insight into the socio-political dynamics of the late-Ottoman Middle East in general, and Iraq in particular. These scholarly works contribute to the contextual foundation of Iraqi historiography while raising new questions, particularly regarding methodology, scale, and the inclusion of previously neglected primary sources.

Highlighting the increased importance of the colonial press during the mandate era, Abbas Kadhimi points out that "British administrators in Iraq recognized from the beginning the importance of mass communication for their success in ruling the country."<sup>8</sup> The construction of a generally pro-British colonial press served a utilitarian as well as an ideological end. British officials viewed the establishment of a 'free' press as a mechanism of control, a means through which members of the indigenous upper-middle and literate classes could be co-opted, while lending cosmetic credibility to the 'civilizing' mission. The relationship between the liberalization of empire and the expansion of the colonial press, particularly in Mandatory Iraq

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<sup>6</sup> Michael Eppel, *Iraq from Monarchy to Tyranny*, (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2004). Samira Haj, *The Making of Iraq 1900-1963: Capital, Power and Ideology*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997). Courtney Hunt, *The History of Iraq*, (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2005). Phebe Marr, *The Modern History of Iraq*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 2004). Charles Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

<sup>7</sup> Toby Dodge, *Inventing Iraq*.

Peter Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq: Contriving King and Country 1914-1932*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007).

Abbas Kadhimi, *Reclaiming Iraq: The 1920 Revolution and the Founding of the Modern State*, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2012).

<sup>8</sup> Abbas Kadhimi, *Reclaiming Iraq*, 162.



and late-colonial India, reflects wider transformations of European imperialism. Breaking from the existing historiography of Mandatory Iraq, this paper reexamines the implementation of the mandatory regime against the backdrop of a changing international order superficially cloaked in the rhetoric of liberal universalism. Rather than analyze India and Iraq as separate entities, united only by the existence of a common oppressor, this study places them in the transnational context of late-colonial British imperialism. The British compulsion to ‘sell’ the occupation of former Ottoman territory to Indian colonial subjects reveals the anxieties of an imperial power struggling to find its place in a post-Wilsonian world.<sup>9</sup>

The political impact of Woodrow Wilson’s Fourteen Points speech, particularly regarding the future of European imperialism, is well known and thoroughly discussed in the existing historiography of modern Iraq. Toby Dodge addresses the impact of Wilson’s commitment to liberal internationalism, remarking that “at the heart of this project was the mandate system... the creation of the Iraqi state represented a break with traditional territorial imperialism.”<sup>10</sup> Peter Sluglett likewise points out that “it became increasingly clear that any clear solution to the problem of the future of Mesopotamia had to *seem to conform* [emphasis added] to the American president’s high ideals.”<sup>11</sup> The emergence of the United States as a global power broker undoubtedly accelerated the transformation of British imperialism during the inter-war years. For British and French officials tasked with consolidating their newly won mandatory possessions, the egalitarian rhetoric of liberal universalism legitimized the imperial project while simultaneously countering Soviet claims to represent the interests of colonial subject peoples. After all, the Soviet Union made numerous overtures to colonial subjects in an effort to undercut

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<sup>9</sup> Ayesha Jalal, *Modern South Asia: History, Culture, Political Economy*, (New York: Routledge, 2004), 104.

<sup>10</sup> Dodge, *Inventing Iraq*, 1.

<sup>11</sup> Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, 17.

the political impact of Wilson's Fourteen Points speech. Michael Goebel points out that "the birth of communism in France coincided with anti-colonialists' disappointment with Wilson's rhetoric of self-determination."<sup>12</sup> As a reaction to both Soviet posturing and Wilsonian rhetoric, the liberal transformation of European imperialism accelerated dramatically in the aftermath of the First World War.

British officials marginalized critics of imperial policy by inflating the successes of the mandate occupation while deliberately downplaying its costs. Britain's newly acquired mandatory possessions figured prominently in British public discourse related to the future of the empire. In India, widely circulated newspaper articles extolled the benefits of British colonial policy in the mandate territories. Britain officials in Iraq quickly "recognized the importance of mass communication for their success in ruling the country."<sup>13</sup> The political commentary published in *al-ʿArab* and *al-ʿIraq* reveals the topics which British officials considered open for public debate. While Abbas Kadhim argues that *al-ʿArab*, the first Arabic language national newspaper published in Iraq following the expulsion of the Ottoman Empire, "was published by the British for the British,"<sup>14</sup> it nonetheless occasionally served as a medium through which nationalist political discourse could be shaped and communicated by Iraqis.

Political commentary in Iraqi newspapers such as *The Baghdad Times*, *The Times of Mesopotamia*, *al-ʿArab* and *al-ʿIraq*, when analyzed alongside an array of widely circulated Indian newspapers, especially *The Civil & Military Gazette* and *The Hindustan Times*, reveals the significance of this transnational relationship. I carefully examine each newspaper in detail, in addition to archival selections from the British National Archives and India Office Files.

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<sup>12</sup> Michael Goebel, *Anti-Imperial Metropolis: Interwar Paris and the Seeds of Third World Nationalism*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 182.

<sup>13</sup> Kadhim, *Reclaiming Iraq*, 98.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*, 99.

Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points speech and increased access to news media recalibrated the political conditions under which the forces of European empire could maintain the existing structure of power.<sup>15</sup> The colonial press reflects the transnational dimension of British anxiety following the Wilsonian moment, as well as the agency of Iraqis eager to challenge British authority or exploit it for personal gain. This study contributes to the historiography of Mandatory Iraq by expanding the analytical lens through the incorporation of the colonial press, framing change in Iraq as part of a wider transformation of European imperialism. This transnational dimension of anti-colonial nationalism reveals the existence of a causal link between the evolution of British rule in India and the subsequent spread of anti-colonial nationalist sentiment into Mandatory Iraq. At the frontlines of this process, the colonial press played an active role in reshaping the meaning of empire through its interactions with British officials, the Iraqi government, and the Iraqi public.

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<sup>15</sup> Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, 13.

## CHAPTER TWO

### TRANSNATIONAL RESISTANCE & LATE-COLONIAL NATIONALISM

British propagandists in Iraq recognized the potential danger of transnational resistance against British imperialism; the smoldering conflict in the mandate territories threatened to trigger a wave of unrest in India at a time when Britain's presence there already faced significant resistance. Itself the product of a merger with *The Basra Times*, which was established by Major Lionel Branson on November 29th, 1914, *The Times of Mesopotamia* began circulation in 1916.<sup>16</sup> All issues included an English and Arabic translation. The front page of the first copy explicitly addresses the political orientation of the editorial board. One column proclaims that "The Times of Mesopotamia and the State of Iraq will long continue to be in the closest alliance."<sup>17</sup> The core function of *The Times of Mesopotamia* rarely extended beyond the communication and defense of policy.

*The Baghdad Times*, which began circulation on January 1, 1918, stood alone as the only English language newspaper in circulation in Baghdad throughout the duration of the mandate era. The British government established *The Baghdad Times* shortly after the expulsion of Ottoman forces from Baghdad. Percy Cox personally recruited Harry St John Philby, a proficient Arabist and veteran of the Indian Civil Service, to supervise the day to day operations of the paper and occupy the position of editor.<sup>18</sup> Philby built *The Baghdad Times* into a reliable mouthpiece for the British administration, from which policy could be publicly communicated

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<sup>16</sup> Orit Bashkin, *The Other Iraq: Pluralism and Culture in Hashemite Iraq*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 38.

<sup>17</sup> "The Times of Mesopotamia: First Daily," *The Times of Mesopotamia*, July 11, 1921.

<sup>18</sup> Kadhim, *Reclaiming Iraq*, 98.

and defended. *The Baghdad Times* offers insights into Britain's vision for the future of Iraq, as well as its understanding of the obstacles it faced in the early years of Iraq's existence as a nominally independent state.

In other cases, *The Baghdad Times* openly challenged the vernacular Arabic-language Iraqi press. One such article, published in July 1922, attacks an unnamed Iraqi newspaper for its outspoken opposition to British rule, lamenting that in the Iraqi-vernacular press, "the co-operation game is not being portrayed fairly, as regards the newspaper part of it."<sup>19</sup> Pushing back against Iraqi criticism in the Arabic language press, the article suggests that "some of us know more about your country than you do yourselves."<sup>20</sup> Printed in English exclusively, *The Baghdad Times*' intended audience probably ranged from British officials in Baghdad to members of the emergent *effendiyya* class.

In Mandatory Iraq, British officials recognized the importance of the emergent *effendiyya* class from the outset of the occupation. Frequently referred to as Iraq's new middle class, the *effendiyya* adopted western-style dress and generally had some exposure to western education.<sup>21</sup> Many members of the *effendiyya* were students, and as a result Britain recognized that "winning the hearts of the *effendiyya* was vital."<sup>22</sup> In fact, British recruitment of Iraqi intermediaries, particularly among the *effendiyya*, served two purposes. First, the enlistment of Iraqis into the political bureaucracy lent credibility to the claim of mutually beneficial Iraqi-British 'partnership.' Second, the selective inclusion of Iraqi intermediaries created space between colonizer and most of the colonized, further cementing British control while tying the interests of

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<sup>19</sup> "Plain Talk," *The Baghdad Times*, July 22, 1922.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Eppel, Michael. "The Elite, the Effendiyya, and the Growth of Nationalism and Pan-Arabism in Hashemite Iraq." *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (May 1998), 229.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, 229.

middle-upper class Iraqis with the mandatory regime. Michael Eppel makes a similar observation, arguing that “only by gaining the sympathy of the *effendiyya* and by fostering and gaining influence over the politicians who expressed the needs of the *effendiyya* could Britain rehabilitate its status as a great power.”<sup>23</sup>

At the same time, many British officials viewed members of the *effendiyya* with suspicion and contempt, considering them “tainted by training and working within corrupt (Ottoman) institutions.”<sup>24</sup> Arnold Wilson, the British Civil Commissioner in Baghdad from 1918 to 1920, even remarked that “the *effendiyya*, the ex-Turkish officer of Arab race, of good birth, had a much less satisfactory record than his more-humble minded compatriots.”<sup>25</sup> Still, Wilson conceded that “they are a valuable element in the population... it is to be hoped that the Arab State will be able in the future to draw extensively on them for its official needs.”<sup>26</sup> Cultivating pro-British sympathies within the *effendiyya* community demanded a carefully articulated defense of the pro-British Hashemite government in colonial newspapers, including Arabic language newspapers like *al-‘Iraq*.

Originally named *al-‘Arab* following its establishment in 1917, *al-‘Iraq* emerged as an Iraqi-nationalist and generally pro-British successor publication in July 1920. While Gertrude Bell served as general manager of *al-‘Arab*, Razuq Ghanim eventually rose to the position of manager and editor of *al-‘Iraq*, despite his inability “to put two words in Arabic together.”<sup>27</sup> His pro-British sympathies and massive fortune, accrued following Britain’s invasion of Basra in 1914, undoubtedly accelerated his ascent. Many articles published in *al-‘Iraq* celebrate the

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<sup>23</sup> Eppel, Michael. “The Elite, the Effendiyya, and the Growth of Nationalism and Pan-Arabism in Hashemite Iraq.” *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (May 1998), 230.

<sup>24</sup> Dodge, *Inventing Iraq*, 43.

<sup>25</sup> “Notes for Central Asia Society Lecture,” April 15, 1921. CO/730/18/8648.

<sup>26</sup> “Notes for Central Asia Society Lecture,” April 15, 1921. CO/730/18/8642.

<sup>27</sup> Bashkin, *The Other Iraq*, 38.

supposedly inclusive nature of the colonial regime, its competence as a functioning government, and its willingness to acknowledge popular grievances. For example, a column published shortly before the start of the Iraqi Revolution addressed the arrival of “a delegation from Baghdad, the foundation of which is fifteen men representing the people of Baghdad to the occupying government, extends a reasonable list of demands to the royal government.”<sup>28</sup> Future columns fail to address Arnold Wilson’s subsequent rejection of all requests issued by the delegation, which fueled Iraqi resistance to the British invaders and galvanized popular support for the revolutionaries.

Other articles discuss the nature of British imperialism and Britain’s relationship with its colonial possessions. One column pointed out that “the British and Indian union is an example of the following: a union promoting the joining of two or more nations to unite under a single monarchy, so that its individual rulers are united under one larger authority which governs in accordance with the common interests of the people.”<sup>29</sup> The expulsion of Ottoman authority from Iraq, according to one article in *al-‘Iraq*, represented “the stripping of this land from the Turkish Sultan, granting it independence under British partnership and guidance.”<sup>30</sup> The ‘mutually beneficial’ aspects of British colonial rule were frequently compared to the corrupt, oriental despotism of Ottoman times. While officially promoting an Iraqi nationalist image, *al-‘Iraq* crafted its nationalist perspective in accordance with British interests, and following Faysal’s ascension, the interests of the pro-British Hashemite regime. Analyzing foreign press coverage of Mandatory Iraq further illuminates the dynamic dividing colonizer from colonized during the mandate era. More specifically, Eleanor Egan’s experience in post-Ottoman Iraq sheds some

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<sup>28</sup> “‘An Mustaqbilat al-‘Iraq,” *al-‘Iraq*, July 3, 1920.

<sup>29</sup> “Shakl al-Dawal” *al-‘Iraq*, July 6, 1920.

<sup>30</sup> “‘An Mustaqbilat al-‘Iraq,” *al-‘Iraq*, July 3, 1920.

light onto the relationship between the international press and British authorities. British authorities occasionally offered highly controlled access to certain areas as a means of advertising the successes of the colonial regime.

Even when contemplating the admittance of carefully vetted journalists from the United States, British authorities exercised extreme caution. British authorities limited “her stay to six weeks, conditioned on her understanding that she must refrain from political discussion and enquiry. Her movements will of course be subject to such restrictions General Officer Commanding, Force D, considers desirable to impose.”<sup>31</sup> Eleanor Franklin Egan, the journalist referenced in the above correspondence, wrote for the *Evening Post* in New York and was generally assumed to have a sympathetic view of the British occupation of Iraq.<sup>32</sup> In 1918, Eleanor Egan published a book which heavily drew from her experience in Iraq, titled *War in the Cradle of the World: Mesopotamia*.<sup>33</sup>

The controversy surrounding Ms. Egan’s visit sheds light on the intricate relationship linking British India to the consolidation of Britain’s occupation of Iraq, as well as the politically sensitive issue of foreign press access to Iraq during the early years of the British occupation. Further correspondence reveals that “India holds it desirable that permission (to enter Iraq) be granted to her (Ms. Egan).”<sup>34</sup> With strong recommendations from the Governor of Hong Kong and the British Ambassador to the United States, Ms. Egan gained limited access to Basra, Baghdad and Amara.<sup>35</sup> Still, British officials in Iraq were less enthusiastic about her visit. In a telegram responding to the earlier inquiry related to her visit, the General Officer of

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<sup>31</sup> “Telegram P. to Lord Willingdon Begins,” October 23, 1917. IOF/L/PS/11/121/6053.

<sup>32</sup> “Telegram P. to Lord Willingdon Begins,” October 23, 1917. IOF/L/PS/11/121/6051.

<sup>33</sup> Eleanor Egan, *The War in the Cradle of the World*, (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1918).

<sup>34</sup> “Telegram P. to Lord Willingdon Begins,” October 5, 1917. IOF/L/PS/11/121/6051.

<sup>35</sup> Egan, *War in the Cradle of the World*, 4.



Commanding Force 'D' in Baghdad claimed that "The visit of this lady to Baghdad, and to Mesopotamia generally, would not be in accordance with the interests of H.M. Government."<sup>36</sup>

Particularly in light of an "awkward incident" involving an Indian press team in May 1917, British officials greeted the prospect of her arrival with caution. In a telegram to the Secretary to the Government of India, one official lamented that "My views as expressed to the Army Commander were that I did not see why exceptions should be made for foreign journalists (referring to Ms. Egan) while English journalists are not generally permitted or desired in occupied territory."<sup>37</sup> Ms. Egan apparently recognized the controversial nature of her visit, remarking that "I knew I never could have landed in Mesopotamia at all without (Lieutenant-General) Sir Stanley Maude's consent; it had been so thoroughly impressed upon my mind that he was rigidly opposed to admitting to the zone of his military operations anyone not directly connected with the services of war."<sup>38</sup> Censorship of the press in Iraq and India, regarding in this instance the reluctant admittance of Ms. Egan to Iraq, reveals the insecure position of the British Empire during the interwar period. Many British officials seem to have anticipated her favorable characterization of the occupation, which invariably aided her efforts to gain access to Iraq. Ms. Egan's book, replete with praise for British imperialism, argues that "English influence with the Mesopotamian peoples has been the result of nothing but the honorable and generally satisfactory discharge on England's part of tremendous responsibilities."<sup>39</sup>

Indian newspapers, when granted permission to enter and report from Iraq, faced greater scrutiny. For example, the Deputy Secretary to the Government in Iraq mailed the editor of *The Bombay Chronicle*, "directing attention to an article headed 'Early Development of

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<sup>36</sup> "To the Chief of the General Staff, Simla," October 9, 1917. IOF/L/PS/11/121/6051.

<sup>37</sup> "To the Secretary to the Government of India," October 15, 1917. IOF/L/PS/11/121/6052.

<sup>38</sup> Egan, *War in the Cradle of the World*, 163.

<sup>39</sup> Egan, *War in the Cradle of the World*, 81.

Mesopotamia'...it is in direct contravention of the order of the Secretary of State. I am to request that you explain why, in view of these express instructions, the article was allowed to appear."<sup>40</sup>

The editor of *The Bombay Chronicle* mentions the widespread public interest among Indians in the fate of post-Ottoman Iraq, stating that "It seems clear from this that the Secretary of State did not place a complete embargo on the discussion of the future of Mesopotamia in the Indian press...it would hardly be in the public interest if the Indian press, representing a public which is equally, if not more strongly, interested in the future of Mesopotamia [emphasis added] were to be forbidden from taking part in such discussion."<sup>41</sup>

The spread of anti-British sentiment from India to Iraq drew the attention of British authorities throughout the mandate era.<sup>42</sup> British officials closely monitored the activities of the Khilafat Movement, a predominately Muslim-Indian anti-British mass organization which emerged 1919 as a reaction to the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire. Some Khilafat leaders, including Abdul Bari, traveled from India to Iraq to win the support of Iraqi Shi'a leaders following Britain's bombing of Shi'a holy sites in Najaf.<sup>43</sup> The disproportionate representation of India's Muslim community within the security forces further compounded British sensitivity related to the activities of the Khilafat Movement.<sup>44</sup>

Both private colonial correspondence and public political commentary in the colonial press confirms British anxieties related to the spread of anti-colonial nationalism to and from India during the mandate era, linking the colonial experience of ordinary Iraqis to Indians halfway around the world. One driver behind interwar unrest in India, the dissolution of the

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<sup>40</sup> "To the Editor of The Bombay Chronicle," August 20, 1917. IOF/L/PS/11/121/6057.

<sup>41</sup> "To the Deputy Secretary to Government: Political Department," August 20, 1917. IOF/L/PS/11/121/6057.

<sup>42</sup> "To the Editor of The Bombay Chronicle," August 20, 1917. IOF/L/PS/11/121/6057.

<sup>43</sup> Gail Minault, *The Khilafat Movement: Religious Symbolism and Political Mobilization in India*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 130.

<sup>44</sup> Nile Green, *Islam and the Army in Colonial India: Sepoy Religion in the Service of Empire*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 5.

Ottoman Empire and the abolition of the Caliphate, stoked British fears while simultaneously unifying many Hindu and Muslim Indians against the Raj.<sup>45</sup> Deeply troubled by allegations of Turkish support for a revolution in India, many British officials directed their suspicions at the Kemalists.<sup>46</sup> The Deputy Commissioner of Police in Baghdad references the threat of anti-British newspapers originating in Turkey and eventually surfacing in India and Iraq, remarking that “a few copies of a vernacular newspaper from Delhi, called Hurriyat, found their way to Mesopotamia. This paper contained very bold criticisms of government, but it has apparently been suppressed.”<sup>47</sup> Frequent references to post-Ottoman Turkey and its future nonetheless made headlines in Iraqi newspapers, where geographic proximity to the former seat of the Caliphate accentuated the political sensitivity of the issue.

During the Greco-Turkish War, editorial columns in *al-‘Iraq* regularly reference developments on the battlefield, particularly in the weeks prior to the decisive Battle of Sakarya.<sup>48</sup> In *The Times of Mesopotamia*, one column stresses Indian concern related to Turkey’s future, stating that “Mr. Sastri, one of the Indian representatives, urged that in any arrangements that might be made for the future of the Turkish Empire, the statesmen of the United Kingdom must remember that they must show as much chivalry and tenderness as might be expected from a mighty victor.”<sup>49</sup> This reference to the Premiers Conference in London and the question of Turkey in a bi-lingual Iraqi newspaper suggests at least some Iraqi public interest in British relations with Turkey. Other articles in *The Times of Mesopotamia*, particularly those covering the issue of Turkey’s future, strike a more defiant tone.

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<sup>45</sup> Jalal, *Modern South Asia*, 112.

<sup>46</sup> “Extracts from the Mesopotamian Police Abstract of Intelligence,” December 19, 1920. C0/7389.

<sup>47</sup> “Mesopotamian Police: Abstract of Intelligence,” September 25, 1920. IOF/L/PS/10/839/5714.

<sup>48</sup> “al-Halah fil Anadhul,” *al-‘Iraq*, August 27, 1921.

<sup>49</sup> “India’s Future in the British Empire: Mr. Sastri’s Striking Speech at Premiers Conference,” *The Times of Mesopotamia*, June 23, 1921.

In a scathing rebuke of the Indian Khilafat Movement, one columnist argued that “the Islamic Movement is not the cause of the riots in the Mohammedan districts. The growing defiance of authority in India cannot be arrested by political or constitutional concessions... In fact, the Ghandi movement is the present cause of these troubles. Let us by all means follow a policy friendly to Turkey, but let us not delude ourselves into attempting to placate implacable enemies.”<sup>50</sup> Largely due to low-literacy rates, many rural Iraqis probably remained oblivious or indifferent to Indian political unrest as described by the colonial press.<sup>51</sup> Nevertheless, references to these crises in the Arabic language Iraqi press suggests some public interest in Britain’s relationship with India as well as Turkey. Two years later, the issue remained unresolved. In a special report issued in the aftermath of continued political unrest in India, a columnist writing for *The Times of Mesopotamia* warns of future unrest “unless the British cabinet reverses their anti-Turkish and pro-Greek policy.”<sup>52</sup> This suggests deeply rooted opposition to British support for Greece in India and Iraq. More specifically, this article unearths the ideological common ground linking colonial subjects in both places, likely grounded in transnational Muslim solidarity against perceived Christian aggression directed at Turkey.

British support for Greece in the Greco-Turkish War galvanized popular opposition to British rule in India and Iraq. In India, Britain’s unwavering support for Greece contributed, at least initially, to the rise of the Khilafat Movement. While pro-British newspapers in India attempted to undercut Muslim-Indian political support for their Arab co-religionists, the Central Khilafat Committee of India instructed Iraqi nationalists, like Yusef al-Suwaidi, to continue to express “the hope that Muslims would always remain united to defend Islam against the white

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<sup>50</sup> “Complications in India: Powers of Government Must be Reasserted,” *The Times of Mesopotamia*, March 10, 1922.

<sup>51</sup> Bashkin, *The Other Iraq*, 50.

<sup>52</sup> “Mr. Montagu’s Mistake: Lamentations in the Indian Press,” *The Times of Mesopotamia*, March 12, 1922.

nations.”<sup>53</sup> According to one eyewitness account, Indian Muslims felt increasingly disillusioned with British rule, particularly in light of Britain’s recourse to violence in Iraq and interference with the Muslim holy sites in the Arabian peninsula.

While detained by British police in Baghdad, Abdul Qadir ibn-Sayyid Ahmad, an Indian pilgrim, testified that “In India, every man woman and child is weeping today and praying to God. Everyone is saying that Holy Arabia has been taken by the British. The British have occupied Mecca and Medina, have insulted the Ka‘bah, and have demolished the four holy minarets of Mecca. But never mind, they cannot kill Islam.”<sup>54</sup> Indian conscripts sympathized with local Iraqis, and in one instance during the 1920 Iraqi revolt, “a detachment near Qayyarah under a Sikh officer refused to fire on raiding Arabs.”<sup>55</sup> Another intelligence abstract points out that “disaffection among Indian soldiers (in Iraq) is on the increase...30 Indian soldiers recently deserted in Zakho.”<sup>56</sup> Similar incidents underscore the transnational solidarity of Britain’s colonial subjects. Even prior to the implementation of the mandate system in Iraq, British officials feared the prospect of a transnational Islamic rebellion against their rule in India. During the First World War, British officials only managed to defuse the threat of an Ottoman sponsored jihad after securing the loyalty of Sharif Husain.<sup>57</sup>

Following the defeat of the Ottoman Empire, British officials feared a revival of Islamist unrest in the mandate territories and India as a reaction to the collapse of the caliphate. A telegram to the Secretary of the Government of India, sent from a British consular official in the Persian Gulf, warns that “all Mohammedans in the world hang together in this matter, and recent

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<sup>53</sup> “Mesopotamian Police: Abstract of Intelligence,” October 4, 1920. IOF/L/PS/10/839/5699.

<sup>54</sup> “Mesopotamian Police: Abstract of Intelligence,” October 4, 1920. IOF/L/PS/10/839/5708-09.

<sup>55</sup> “Mesopotamian Police: Abstract of Intelligence,” October 4, 1920. IOF/L/PS/10/839/5708.

<sup>56</sup> “Extract from Mesopotamian Abstract of Intelligence,” December 25, 1920, CO/7390.

<sup>57</sup> Dodge, *Inventing Iraq*, 45.

trouble in India and Egypt were premature outbreaks of what will be a universal movement should the destruction of the Turkish Empire be legislated for.”<sup>58</sup> These concerns were not altogether misplaced, as suggested in an intelligence briefing documenting a speech related to British affairs in post-Ottoman Iraq. Delivered by an unknown speaker in Bareilly, India, the speech reveals “the attitude which is commonly adopted by Indian Muslims towards affairs in this country (Iraq).”<sup>59</sup> This speech, which characterizes anti-British activism as a religious obligation for Muslims in Iraq and India, concludes by suggesting that “the British government intends to enlist soldiers in Mesopotamia and to use them against us, just as the Indian soldiers have been used to conquer Mesopotamia.”<sup>60</sup>

In many cases, British policy and Iraqi public opinion proved irreconcilably opposed to one another. British support for the Zionist project enflamed Iraqi popular resentment, presenting the colonial press with an exceptionally difficult task. Reacting to Iraqi mistrust, pro-British newspapers such as *The Baghdad Times*, *The Times of Mesopotamia* and *al-‘Iraq* softened the image of British rule in Iraq while simultaneously downplaying British responsibility for the political calamity unfolding in Mandatory Palestine. *The Baghdad Times* responded in July 1922, with one column addressing Britain’s commitment to “the declaration of November 1917, which is insusceptible to change.”<sup>61</sup> This article uncritically regurgitates British policy in occupied Palestine as outlined in the Churchill Whitepaper, issued one month prior to the publication of this article.<sup>62</sup> In an effort to relieve the concerns of Iraqi readers, many of whom sympathized with the Palestinian Arab population, *The Baghdad Times* reminds its readership that Britain

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<sup>58</sup> “Letter to the Secretary of the Government of India,” May 14, 1919. IOF/L/PS/11/153/6538.

<sup>59</sup> “Police Abstract of Intelligence,” February 7, 1920. IOF/L/PS/10/839/5808.

<sup>60</sup> “Police Abstract of Intelligence,” February 7, 1920. IOF/L/PS/10/839/5809.

<sup>61</sup> “British Policy in Palestine: Official White Paper, Declaration of 1917 Reaffirmed,” *The Baghdad Times*, July 4, 1922.

<sup>62</sup> Benny Morris, *Righteous Victims: A History of the Zionist-Arab Conflict*, (New York: Knopf Press, 1999), 104.

“does not contemplate the disappearance or subordination of the Arab population, language or culture.”<sup>63</sup>

Editorial columns in *al-‘Iraq* attempt to straddle the line between anti-Zionism and outright opposition to British policy. One columnist responds favorably to King Faysal’s decision to “protect the Jews of Iraq from the sort of tragedies and pogroms which struck them in Russia,”<sup>64</sup> while others condemn Jewish immigration to Palestine as “an insult to the dignity of Arabs in Iraq, Palestine and everywhere in the world.”<sup>65</sup> By highlighting Faysal’s commitment to the protection of Iraqi Jews, the article attempts to undercut arguments promulgating the necessity of Zionist colonization in Palestine. In *The Baghdad Times*, one front-page column even suggests that “the British government has always contemplated that the status of all citizens of Palestine should be Palestinian, and that the special position assigned to the Zionist organization does not imply any administrative function.”<sup>66</sup>

Comparing the English and Arabic columns of *The Times of Mesopotamia* provides an interesting case of stylistic contrast, despite the significant narrative overlaps linking both versions. For example, an English language column written by a Jewish correspondent in Jaffa alleges that “Arab disorders have been weakly handled by the police...the High Commissioners statement (issued in response to alleged acts of violent resistance perpetrated by Palestinians) represents a whittling down to nothing of the Balfour Declaration. A casual visitor from Mars would see nothing but a sermon guaranteeing perpetual Jewish peril. There is not a word of candid censure of crime as a political weapon.”<sup>67</sup> The suggestion that British officials ever

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<sup>63</sup> “British Policy in Palestine: Official White Paper, Declaration of 1917 Reaffirmed,” *The Baghdad Times*, July 4, 1922.

<sup>64</sup> “Anba Filistin Khatimat Jilsat al-Mutamir,” *al-‘Iraq*, September 30, 1920.

<sup>65</sup> “Mudhu’ al-Hijrah” *al-‘Iraq*, January 1, 1922.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>66</sup> “The Palestine Mandate: The Position of the Jews, an Explanation by the Mandatory Power,” *The Baghdad Times*, July 6, 1922.

<sup>67</sup> “The Crisis in Palestine Today,” *The Times of Mesopotamia*, July 10, 1922.

considered a ‘whittling down to nothing of the Balfour Declaration’ represents an exercise in hyperbole, although the author of this particular column likely remained oblivious to this. The publication of this column in an Iraqi newspaper, however, suggests a conscious effort on the part of British officials to advertise their own deferential attitude towards the Palestinians in an effort to appeal to Iraqis.

An Arabic language column discussing the crisis in Palestine highlights the benign, and even benevolent nature of British policy as related to the issue of Zionist colonization. The column states that “we must go back to the observation of Mister Churchill. He said that the only reason for concern in Palestine are protests related to the Zionists and those who want (to be) rid of us. But in truth, this situation improves our standing, because we do not have the ability to manage Palestine.”<sup>68</sup> The article suggests that “as long as the Zionists seek political compromise, as opposed to control over high-ranking British officials, no one in Palestine has anything to fear.”<sup>69</sup> Efforts to contain Iraqi political dissent, particularly related to the conflict in Mandatory Palestine, are a ubiquitous feature of many Iraqi newspapers. Despite stylistic differences, both English and Arabic language editorial columns in *The Times of Mesopotamia* go to great lengths to distinguish anti-Zionism from outright opposition to British policy.

Many Iraqi intellectuals utilized the press as a vehicle for communicating Wilsonian aspirations, advancing their own interests, and challenging British imperialism. Iraqi critiques of British imperialism were frequently articulated within the framework of Wilson’s liberal-democratic ideal and occasionally referenced in Arabic language newspapers.<sup>70</sup> This public discourse reveals the agency of the colonized alongside British anxieties, while simultaneously

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<sup>68</sup> “Filistin,” *al-Awqat al-‘Iraq*, July 25, 1922.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> a’Jumhuriyah am Malukiyah?” *al-‘Iraq*, June 27, 1921.



shedding light on the relations between British officials, the Iraqi government, and to a limited extent, the Iraqi public. Presumably reflecting popular opinion, many Arabic newspapers argued for the implementation of a democratic regime, both before, during and after the consolidation of the Hashemite government.<sup>71</sup> After excoriating *al-Dijla*, a vernacular newspaper known for its criticism of the mandatory regime, Gertrude Bell dismissed the fact that “one of the subjects that even the best of them are fond of expatiating upon is the crying need for democracy in Iraq, you find it on every page. I let them run on, knowing full well that Faisal intends to be king in fact, and not merely in name.”<sup>72</sup> In fact, British officials remained sensitive to foreign press coverage related to Iraq throughout the duration of the mandatory period.

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<sup>71</sup> Orit Bashkin, *The Other Iraq*, 21.

<sup>72</sup> Gertrude Bell to Sir Hugh Bell, August 14, 1921, Gertrude Bell Archive, [http://gertrudebell.ncl.ac.uk/letter\\_details.php?letter\\_id=498](http://gertrudebell.ncl.ac.uk/letter_details.php?letter_id=498)

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE VIEW FROM DELHI: PALESTINE, IRAQ AND THE EXPANSION OF EMPIRE

The placement of Iraq in Indian public discourse, as related to the expansion of British imperialism during the inter-war years, can only be understood through an analysis of Iraq in the Indian press during the mandate era and beyond. Isolating a specific historical moment, such as the Indian response to Iraq's Rashid Ali coup in 1941, offers some insight into the phenomenon of transnational, anti-colonial resistance. In India, Britain's largest and most strategically valuable colonial possession, popular resistance to the Raj spread rapidly during the inter-war years.<sup>73</sup> The First World War and Britain's subsequent occupation of former Ottoman territory exacerbated this tension. British propagandists in India, as well as Indians who wished to maintain the status quo, frequently portrayed British interference in Arab affairs in a positive light. During the interwar years the pro-British *Civil and Military Gazette* redoubled its campaign to discredit anti-colonial nationalist groups while simultaneously praising Britain's commitment to the maintenance of its colonial possessions.<sup>74</sup>

Founded in Muslim majority Lahore in 1872, *The Civil and Military Gazette* operated as a mouthpiece for the British administration throughout the duration of its existence.<sup>75</sup> Rudyard Kipling joined *The Civil and Military Gazette* as an associate editor in 1882, offering his services to the propaganda wing of the British Government in India. Beginning in 1885, the paper

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<sup>73</sup> Mrinalini Sinha, "Refashioning Mother India: Feminism and Nationalism in Late Colonial India." *Feminist Studies*. Vol. 26, No. 3, (Autumn, 2000), 623.

<sup>74</sup> "Anti-Imperialists Conference: Revolt Urged Among 'Enslaved Colonial Races.'" *The Civil and Military Gazette*, July 22, 1929.

<sup>75</sup> Amrit Kaur Basra, "The Punjab Press and the Indian National Congress: A Case Study of The Tribune and The Civil and Military Gazette." *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*. Vol. 52 (1991), pp. 819.

attempted to sow sectarian distrust of the Indian National Congress. *The Civil and Military Gazette* frequently characterized the Indian National Congress as the political arm of Hindu nationalist subversives in effort to discredit it in the eyes of Muslim Indians. Hindu preponderance in the Indian National Congress aroused the suspicion of many Indian Muslims, and British officials exploited communal distrust as a means of weakening indigenous opposition to the Raj.<sup>76</sup> The inflexibility of British officials in India exacerbated tensions between the Raj and the general population.

This tension reverberated from Delhi and into the newly conquered territories of the post-Ottoman Middle East. Britain initially delegated the responsibility of pacifying Iraq to officials drawn from the Government in India, including Arnold Wilson.<sup>77</sup> Despite longstanding economic ties linking India to southern Iraq, this was a disastrous miscalculation.<sup>78</sup> Toby Dodge states that as a result of having been “cut off from the post-war European turmoil and insulated from the effects of Wilson’s liberal rhetoric... an inability to escape the constraints of the old imperialist model was heavily present in the Indian Political Service.”<sup>79</sup> The ramifications of this political inflexibility would not become apparent until the Iraqi uprising of 1920, which indirectly cost Britain over forty million pounds and required the mobilization of nearly 65,000 thousand British troops.<sup>80</sup> The heavy financial, human and political cost of the 1920 revolt thoroughly discredited India Office policy in Iraq and the British officials associated with it.<sup>81</sup> Opposition to British imperialism gathered momentum in Palestine as well, primarily due to the

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<sup>76</sup> Jalal, *Modern South Asia*, 117.

<sup>77</sup> Dodge, *Inventing Iraq*, 8.

<sup>78</sup> Batatu, *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq: A Study of Iraq’s Old Landed and Commerical Classes and of its Communists, Ba’thists, and Free Officers*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), 16

<sup>79</sup> Dodge, *Inventing Iraq*, 7.

<sup>80</sup> Abbas, *Reclaiming Iraq*, pp. 1.

<sup>81</sup> Marr, *The Modern History of Iraq*, 24.

large influx of Jewish immigrants from eastern Europe. British support for the Zionist project angered many Indian Muslims, although opposition to Zionism was by no means limited to the Muslim community.<sup>82</sup> Jawaharlal Nehru personified the multi-confessional character of Indian opposition to Zionism during the inter-war years. According to S.P. Singh, Nehru believed that “no one could sympathize with the Zionist movement aimed at the establishment of a Jewish home under the protection of British imperialism.”<sup>83</sup> In the contemporary colonial press, the characterization of events in Palestine and Iraq reflect the same anxieties expressed by colonial officials, particularly in regards to the future of the British empire.

Discourse on colonialism in *The Civil and Military Gazette*, *The Hindustan Times*, and *The Star of India* sheds light on the relationship between British officials and their colonial intermediaries, while revealing the ideological and practical utility of the press as a mechanism for advancing British interests. *The Civil and Military Gazette* and *The Star of India* frame British policies in Palestine and Iraq as manifestations of Britain’s generally positive relationship with the Muslim world in general, and Indian Muslims in particular. Cultivating support for British policies within the Indian Muslim community also served the purpose of undercutting cross-communal support for the Indian National Congress.<sup>84</sup> Unrest in Mandatory Palestine and Iraq, even after the latter gained partial independence in 1932, directly impacted the stability of Britain’s other colonial possessions, most notably India. As Gail Minault points out, “events in the Middle East and India thus reinforced each other.”<sup>85</sup> In India, dividing civil society along communal lines rendered it weak and therefore vulnerable to the repressive machinery of state

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<sup>82</sup> S.P. Singh “Indo-Arab Relations in Light of the Palestine Problem.” *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* Vol. 65 (2004), 1026. <http://www.jstor.org.proxy-remote.galib.uga.edu/stable/44144811>

<sup>83</sup> S.P. Singh, “Indo-Arab Relations in Light of the Palestine Problem,” 1026.

<sup>84</sup> Amrit Kaur Basra. “The Punjab Press and the Indian National Congress: A Case Study of The Tribune and The Civil and Military Gazette,” *The Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, 820.

<sup>85</sup> Gail Minault, *The Khilafat Movement*, 11.

power, which rested firmly in the grip of the British government. These efforts persisted well into the twentieth century, as nationalist sentiment gained currency among Indians of all religious backgrounds.

A September 1929 commentary piece weighing the consequences of Jawaharlal Nehru's election to the Presidentship of the Lahore Congress, criticized the Congress' "inability to see much beyond the Hindu standpoint."<sup>86</sup> Other examples are more explicit in their denunciations of the Indian National Congress. A July 1929 editorial heaps blame on the Hindu press for inciting anti-Muslim violence while simultaneously refuting allegations of the "Government's favouritism towards Mohamedans."<sup>87</sup> *The Civil and Military Gazette* even tried to link Hindu nationalists to the Soviet Union. A July 1929 op-ed piece states that "the Hindus want power, and to this end work through the so-called communist labour leaders of the Kamgar Union, who want to dominate the Muslim labourers, and through them the Muslim community."<sup>88</sup> Appeals to communal anxiety posed a direct threat to the cause of Indian nationalism.<sup>89</sup> As such, they are a ubiquitous fixture of *The Civil and Military Gazette*, which generally enjoyed the support of the British Government in India and primarily addressed Muslim readers.

While many articles in *The Civil and Military Gazette* framed the Indian National Congress as a subversive element contaminated by its supposedly anti-Muslim orientation, other articles extol the benevolence of British authorities in their interactions with the Indian Muslim community. For example, a column published in October 1929 highlights the government's commitment to extending educational opportunities to Indian Muslims in Punjab. The author of

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<sup>86</sup> "Congress Presidentship and the Attitude of Mr. Ghandi." *The Civil and Military Gazette*, September 28, 1929.

<sup>87</sup> "Cause of Bombay Riots: Alleged Favouritism To Mohamedans." *The Civil and Military Gazette*, July 13, 1929.

<sup>88</sup> "Hindu Mentality: Alleged Cause of Bombay Riots & Mahasabha Communists." *The Civil and Military Gazette*, July 14, 1929.

<sup>89</sup> Gyanendra Pandey, *The Construction of Communalism in Late Colonial North India*, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006).

this column, Dr. Shaf'at A. Khan, asserts that "Muslim India possesses an organic unity which other communities in the country lack... but in the realm of secondary education, we are truly backward."<sup>90</sup> This article, like many others, subtly promotes dependence on British authorities for basic services, in this case secondary education. Other articles advertise the benefits of liberal democracy for minority populations, presumably addressing Muslim anxieties related to a future majority Hindu Indian state.<sup>91</sup>

Newspapers catering to a predominately Hindu readership generally approached the issue of communal cooperation, at least in the context of the anti-British struggle for *Swaraj*, or independence, with cautious skepticism. *The Hindustan Times*, a self-proclaimed nationalist newspaper based in Delhi, quickly rose to prominence following its establishment in 1924. *The Hindustan Times*, unlike *The Civil and Military Gazette*, characterized the struggle of the Indian National Congress in favorable terms. The paper enjoyed the support of Mahatma Ghandi, who clearly and unequivocally sympathized with Muslim Indians and the struggle of the Khilafat Movement.<sup>92</sup> In fact, Mahatma Ghandi "performed the opening ceremony of *The Hindustan Times* and gave the paper his blessings."<sup>93</sup>

Nearly two decades before Rashid Ali's attempted coup d'état in Iraq, the rise of the Khilafat Movement foreshadowed the emergence and potential power of an Indian opposition block unencumbered by inter-communal hostility. Still, while Ghandi argued for continued "co-operation with our Mussalman brethren in their attempt to save the Turkish Empire,"<sup>94</sup> columnists writing for *The Hindustan Times* continued to doubt the long-term viability of any

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<sup>90</sup> Khan, Shaf'at A. "Muslim Educational Problems: Punjab Must Give the Lead." *The Civil and Military Gazette*, October 4, 1929.

<sup>91</sup> "India of the Future: What Democracy Really Means." *The Civil and Military Gazette*, October 26, 1929.

<sup>92</sup> Jalal, *Modern South Asia*, 112.

<sup>93</sup> "Hindu-Muslim Problem." *The Hindustan Times*, September 27, 1924.

<sup>94</sup> Jalal, *Modern South Asia*, 113.

cross-communal alliance between Muslim Indians and their Hindu countrymen. For example, a September 1924 article points out that “the Hindu-Muslim union of the non-cooperation days was not natural. It was an unnatural union. It rested not upon mutual good-will and the consciousness of the righteousness of the common cause, but upon the hatred of the foreigner.”<sup>95</sup>

Suspicion of the Indian Muslim community notwithstanding, *The Hindustan Times* viewed the justification for the expansion of British Empire into formerly Ottoman territory with skepticism. Referencing the boundary dispute between Turkey and Mandatory Iraq, one columnist points out that “The claim for the Mosul Vilayet which Turkey is putting forward before the League of Nations does not seem to stand much chance for success. The League is so much under the sway of Great Britain that any appeal to it can only be an international farce.”<sup>96</sup> Despite issuing periodic criticism of cross-communal non-cooperation, *The Hindustan Times* continued to advertise its opposition to British rule and its dissatisfaction with the treatment of Indian Muslims.

In fact, some columnists even sympathized with the Khilafat Movement. While discussing the seizure of the Hijaz by Ibn Saud in 1924, one columnist remarked that “The Khilafat workers are most anxious today to travel to the Hedjaz...If Britain does not harbor any hostility towards Islam, passports should freely be given to Mussalmans to proceed to various parts of Arabia and to remove the embargo placed upon many who wish to travel there.”<sup>97</sup> The reluctance of British officials to grant passports for Indian Muslims, or visas for travel to formerly Ottoman territory, reveals the extent to which relations deteriorated between British officials and their Muslim Indian intermediaries. It may also reflect Britain’s awkward placement

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<sup>95</sup> “Communal Problem.” *The Hindustan Times*, September 27, 1924.

<sup>96</sup> “Mosul Negotiations.” *The Hindustan Times*, September 28, 1924.

<sup>97</sup> “Indian Delegation Refused Passport.” *The Hindustan Times*, October 7, 1924.

between Ibn Saud and the Hashemites. As noted by Gertrude Bell, both families enjoyed varying degrees of British support but nonetheless viewed one another with extreme distrust.<sup>98</sup> While *The Hindustan Times* frequently published criticism of the British government and its relationship to Indian Muslims, *The Civil and Military Gazette* maintained a stridently pro-British, although not necessarily pro-Hashemite orientation throughout the 1920s.

The termination of the British Mandate in 1932 failed to quell anti-British sentiment within Iraq. Less than ten years later, in April 1941, Rashid Ali and his supporters sought the removal of British influence from Iraq once and for all. By 1941 British hegemony in Iraq faced internal and external threats. Rashid Ali's coup d'état in Iraq, which received material support from Nazi Germany and lukewarm political support from the Soviet Union, threatened British interests in the region and British prestige in the colonies.<sup>99</sup> Additionally, Iraqi nationalist aspirations and enthusiastic support for the anti-British coup reached beyond Rashid Ali and the Four Colonels who marched on Baghdad in support of his revolution. As Hanna Batatu makes clear, "These events, which marked the beginning of the 1941 movement, created unusual excitement...the leadership realized that the popular enthusiasm for the new regime was genuine."<sup>100</sup> The Rashid Ali movement horrified Britain, particularly considering his efforts to gain diplomatic recognition, and thus international legitimacy for his new government, from the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany.

The pro-British colonial press in India responded to the Rashid Ali movement accordingly, portraying Rashid Ali and his co-conspirators as enthusiastic Nazi sympathizers disconnected from the Iraqi people. While Rashid Ali's revolutionary government did seek

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<sup>98</sup> Gertrude Bell to Lieutenant Colonel Frank Balfour, December 17, 1921, Gertrude Bell Archive, [http://gertrudebell.ncl.ac.uk/letter\\_details.php?letter\\_id=529](http://gertrudebell.ncl.ac.uk/letter_details.php?letter_id=529)

<sup>99</sup> Batatu, *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq*, 456.

<sup>100</sup> Batatu, *The Old Social Classes and Revolutionary Movements in Iraq*, 453.



diplomatic recognition and material assistance from Nazi Germany, “its need for friends, wherever they could be found and irrespective of their ideological complexion, was great and urgent.”<sup>101</sup> In late-colonial India, *The Civil and Military Gazette* did not stand alone in its direct targeting of Muslim readers in an effort to shape the image of British imperialism. *The Star of India*, which proudly branded itself as “Calcutta’s only evening paper and the only Muslim daily,”<sup>102</sup> forcefully repudiated criticism of British policies in Palestine as well as Iraq as late as 1941. Newspaper articles from 1941 illustrate Britain’s commitment to defending its policies even after the termination of the mandate and the emergence of a new crisis in the Second World War. Britain responded to the coup d’état with an invasion of Iraq in May 1941, which *The Star of India* praised as an example of Britain’s commitment to international law and “the terms of the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty.”<sup>103</sup> By May 3<sup>rd</sup> 1941, the day after British forces landed in Basra in an effort to dislodge Rashid Ali’s government, *The Star of India* scrambled to provide political cover for the British intervention by delegitimizing the new regime. Downplaying the extent to which public opinion backed Rashid Ali in Iraq, a front-page bulletin suggests that Rashid Ali’s revolution “is purely a military revolt, although some of the student element, as usual in oriental countries, is in the thick of it.”<sup>104</sup>

Other articles contrast friendly Anglo-Iraqi relations with France’s souring position in Mandatory Syria. In a column published the day before the British invasion of Iraq, Sirdar Iqbal Ali Shah suggests that while British politicians accepted the responsibility of the mandatory regime, “not all French politicians of the time cared to remember that the fundamental ground for

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<sup>101</sup> “Iraq Warned Against Pro—Nazi Policy: Indian Press Comments.” *The Star of India*, May 6, 1941.

<sup>102</sup> *The Star of India*, May 1941.

<sup>103</sup> “British Intention to Land Troops in Basra: Iraqi Objection.” *The Star of India*, May 1, 1941.

<sup>104</sup> “Purely Military Revolt Under Rebel Leader,” *The Star of India*, May 3, 1941.

a mandate was to prepare the Levantine states for independence.”<sup>105</sup> Sirdar Iqbal Ali Shah, perhaps preparing his Indian readers for imminent British military action in Iraq, observes that “whether England continues to hold the minds of the Muslims-which she undoubtedly does today-depends upon the actions of England alone.”<sup>106</sup> Reacting to events in Iraq, *The Star of India* roundly condemned the coup d’état and offered its support for Britain’s May 1941 invasion. By May 6<sup>th</sup>, a column titled “Indian Press Comments” highlights the condemnation of Rashid Ali’s coup in other pro-British Indian newspapers.<sup>107</sup> Criticism of the Rashid Ali movement, in this case advertised through press digests published in *The Star of India*, served the express purpose of delegitimizing the coup d’état while discouraging sympathy for its leaders.

For example, the self-described Lahore-Muslim paper, *Ehsan* remarked that “no Muslim country can have any sympathy with Germany and we should like to warn the people of Iraq of the grave consequences of Germans setting foot on their soil.”<sup>108</sup> *Ehsan* continued with a direct comparison to the situation in India, stating that “on the pretext of helping Iraq, Germany can create a situation fraught with the gravest possibilities for Muslim countries and India.”<sup>109</sup> *The Star of India* also referenced a series of articles condemning the coup in other Indian newspapers, including *The Madras Mail*, *The Pioneer*, *The Indian Express* and *The Times of India*.<sup>110</sup> Roundly condemned as an illegal usurpation of Iraq’s legitimate government, Rashid Ali’s coup met fierce criticism in the Indian press during and after the short Anglo-Iraq War in 1941. The reaction of the contemporary colonial press in India to the Iraqi revolution of 1941 reflects

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<sup>105</sup> Sirdar Iqbal Ali Shah, “Muslim Political Influence in the World Today: The Palestinian Panorama.” *The Star of India*, May 2, 1941.

<sup>106</sup> Sirdar Iqbal Ali Shah, “Muslim Political Influence in the World Today.” *The Star of India*, May 2, 1941.

<sup>107</sup> “Iraq Warned Against Pro-Nazi Policy: Indian Press Comments.” *The Star of India*, May 6, 1941.

<sup>108</sup> “Iraq Warned Against Pro-Nazi Policy: Indian Press Comments.” *The Star of India*, May 6, 1941.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

Britain's awareness of the transnational appeal of anti-colonial nationalism. Contemporary newspaper coverage of the Rashid Ali movement also reveals the agency of Indian journalists, many of whom saw events in Iraq as an opportunity to criticize British rule or advertise their loyalty to it. Rashid Ali's act of defiance represented a direct threat to the status quo in Iraq and India, where nationalists increasingly viewed Ali as the representative of an oppressed subject population eager to break free from British imperialism at all costs. British authorities in Iraq viewed Rashid Ali's supporters with extreme suspicion, especially in the months after British forces deposed Rashid Ali and restored the monarchy.

For example, an August 1941 intelligence report states that "it is disappointing that Rashid Ali and his gilded associates have not yet been brought to trial. Their sentence and the confiscation of their property will do much to dispel any hope of their triumphant return."<sup>111</sup> The same report highlights the role of the pro-British Iraqi press, stating that "the local press continues excellently in its substance and effect. Several visitors confirmed that the pamphlets distributed in Hillah and Diwaniyah had a very satisfactory reception...the distribution of pamphlets for propaganda purpose has accordingly been increased."<sup>112</sup> While only a momentary crescendo in the transnational campaign of anti-colonial resistance to British imperialism, Rashid Ali's coup highlighted Britain's longstanding legitimacy gap in the Middle East, particularly within the territories formerly governed under the auspices of the mandate. The framing of these events in the pro-British Indian press reveals the anxieties of a colonial regime struggling to legitimize itself in the eyes of an increasingly restless subject population.

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<sup>111</sup> "Report for Period Ending August 21, 1941," FO 838/1.

<sup>112</sup> "Report for Period Ending August 21, 1941," FO/838/1.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### CONCLUSION

The existence of a ‘free’ press signaled the successful implementation of a regime cloaked in the trappings of liberal universalism. Rebranding empire as a liberal and egalitarian enterprise demanded active participation from the colonial press, in addition to the suppression of independent voices.<sup>113</sup> Abbas Kadhimi points out that while British sponsorship of some Iraqi newspapers “helped many social and literary causes and gave voice to Iraqi writers and poets...they served as media for the British and participated as outlets for their propaganda.”<sup>114</sup> British authorities, or their local intermediaries, used the press to marginalize political dissidents, sow sectarian distrust and sell the benevolence of British imperialism.

At the same time, many Iraqi intellectuals utilized the press as a vehicle for communicating Wilsonian aspirations, advancing their own interests, and challenging British imperialism. Many articulated their grievances within the framework of Wilson’s liberal-democratic ideal. In other cases, aspiring collaborators utilized the press as a means of demonstrating loyalty to the mandatory regime. Occasionally published in colonial newspapers, these examples reveal the agency of the colonized alongside British anxieties, while simultaneously shedding light on the relations between British officials and their Iraqi intermediaries. After all, British officials viewed anti-colonial nationalism as an ideological contagion: if it emerged in the mandate territories it could spread elsewhere, including India.

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<sup>113</sup> Kadhimi, *Reclaiming Iraq*, 100.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid*, 100.

Arnold Wilson expressed this concern in explicit terms, remarking that “I think both in Palestine and Mesopotamia, and therefore in Syria, anarchy in the Arabic speaking countries on a scale which has not been witnessed in centuries... this anarchy, which would spread rapidly, would before long need greater forces to prevent its spread to India.”<sup>115</sup> Containing the spread of anti-colonial nationalism, or at least trying to exert discursive control over its expression in the press, remained a priority for the mandatory regime throughout the duration of its existence. At the frontlines of this process, the colonial press played an active role in reshaping the meaning of empire through its interactions with British officials, the Iraqi government and the Iraqi public.

The burden of rebranding traditional imperialism, a political necessity in the aftermath of the First World War, fell to the colonial press. Woodrow Wilson’s Fourteen Points speech and increased access to news media recalibrated the political conditions under which imperialism could operate.<sup>116</sup> Indian and Iraqi newspapers reflect the transnational dimension of British anxiety following the Wilsonian moment. Instability in Palestine and Iraq could not so easily be contained, particularly in moments of extreme tension such as the 1941 Rashid Ali coup d’état or the repression of the 1920 Iraqi Revolution. The political fallout of these events reverberated around the globe, revealing the interconnectedness of the late-colonial struggle for independence.

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<sup>115</sup> “Notes for Central Asia Society Lecture,” April 15, 1921. CO/730/18/8650.

<sup>116</sup> Sluglett, *Britain in Iraq*, 13.

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