

IRAQ: THE OVERALL IMPACT AFTER THE ACCESSION OF KING ĠĀZĪ TO THE THRONE (1933 – 1934)*

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In the summer of 1933, King Fayṣal's health deteriorated and in September 1933 he left Iraq for medical treatment in Switzerland. He died there within a week of his arrival, suddenly and in mysterious circumstances which gave rise to speculation. He was succeeded by his son Ġāzī, a young man of twenty-one who had little interest in the political world, but whose general sympathies were broadly pan-Arab. Ġāzī ibn Fayṣal ibn al-Ḥusayn assumed the throne very young. He lacked the necessary experience to fill his father's role of political balancer.¹ Moreover, neither his training nor his temperament were suited to the task. In most respects, Ġāzī stood in contrast to his father. As a member of the younger generation with a western education, he was much less attuned to the mentality and interests of the tribal and religious leaders or to the older Ottoman-trained politicians.² Jamīl al-Midfā'ī, who succeeded Rashīd 'Ālī al-Kaylānī as prime minister in the autumn of 1933, introduced the National Defence Bill into parliament. This was passed in February 1934, setting up the machinery for conscription and for rapid expansion of the armed forces – a project dear to the hearts of most of the Sunnī Arab elite.

Key words: the untimely demise of King Fayṣal, accession of his inexperienced son, struggle for power between different political groupings, the role of the British embassy, the new king seeking his place in the establishment.

The death of King Fayṣal on 8 September 1933 raised a number of questions at the official level, as he had played a decisive role in the policy of the Iraqi state, not only in creating a political balance between British interests and domestic ambitions, but also among the Iraqi politicians themselves. King Fayṣal not only

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¹ Az-ZUBAYDĪ, Muḥammad Ḥusayn. *Al-malik Ġāzī wa murāfiqūhu* [King Ġāzī and his Companions], p. 83.

² MARR, Ph. *The Modern History of Iraq*, p. 59.

acted as the effective ruler of the state but even exceeded the powers assigned to him by the Constitution. The British officials in charge in Iraq, in their privileged position as guardians of the Constitution, “not only acquiesced in but also encouraged the king to exercise his personal influence and prerogative beyond a strict interpretation of the Constitution in order that their own control might be made more complete”.³ Thanks to his skills and experience, he could choose the appropriate men and diplomatic means to establish a connection between the real forces of Iraq (high religious leaders, important families, army officers and tribes). In this respect, his death meant, in the view of many people, an enormous loss that would inevitably hamper the progress of Iraq.⁴ He died at a time when the country needed his services more than ever before. Some politicians tried to point out his rich experience in comparison with his inexperienced heir Gāzī, as it raised fears for the country’s future.⁵

Politicians were fully aware of the fact that the new king had no knowledge or experience that would allow him to understand the moods of the people so that he could successfully replace his father in contact with the tribal chiefs. This could lead to a loss of control over the tribes. However, it could be expected that the king, given his young age and lack of experience, would not be able to influence ministers by persuasion or coercion, so the effective power would gradually go to ministers.⁶ This idea worried in particular the British representatives, because the power of Britain was enforced through the government and parliament (Majlis al-Umma) and through the king. Therefore, the British, since the foundation of the monarchy, had supported the king, given him the opportunity to exercise wide powers and encouraged him to exploit a personal influence in line with the fulfilment of their objectives.⁷ They now wanted to approach directly the government to which the decisive power had to pass. Another source of British fears lay in the fact that the young king, due to his extraordinary popularity in the military, had become self-confident and would cease consulting seasoned politicians with “proper” views when making decisions. They had already noticed that the new king was influenced by the views of the younger army officers who were continually accompanying him.

³ IRELAND, Ph. W. *Iraq. A Study in Political Development*, p. 421.

⁴ ERSKINE, S. *King Faisal of Iraq: An Authorised and Authentic Study*, p. 267.

⁵ AS-SUWAJDĪ, Tawfīq. *Mudhakkirātī. Niṣf qarn min tārīkh al-‘Irāq wa al-qaḍīya al-‘arabīya* [My Memoires. Half-Century of Iraqi History and the Arab Question], p. 269.

⁶ FO 371/16924, Francis Humphrys (Baghdad) to John Simon (FO), 14 September 1933. Quoted in FARAJ, Luṭfī Ja‘far. *Al-malik Gāzī wa dawruhu fī siyāsāt al-‘Irāq fī al-majālayni ad-dākhilī wa al-khārijī, 1933 – 1939* [King Gāzī and his Role in Iraqi Internal and External Policies], p. 65.

⁷ IRELAND, Ph. W. *Iraq. A Study in Political Development*, p. 421.

The attitude of the people was quite the opposite, since Ġāzī's accession to the throne had revived the hope that the new king would launch a new policy that would satisfy the desires of the majority to remove all signs of foreign influence and to attain quicker the country's objectives, by applying a determined policy. While still the crown prince, Ġāzī won popular admiration by solving the Assyrian problem.⁸ There were broadly optimistic expectations due to the fact that Ġāzī had come to the throne in favourable circumstances, giving him a good opportunity to set to work. The press sought to attract the attention of readers to the negative features of the previous period, to the wrongs, corruption and nepotism and placed great hopes in the new king's patriotism.⁹ The press addressed the king with pleas to care for the needs of the people. However, in the midst of popular optimism the question arose as to whether the king could withstand the unfair practices of the politicians.¹⁰ It is a fact that on learning of his father's death Ġāzī felt embarrassed as he did not have a sufficient overview of the situation and needed guidance. He therefore immediately contacted the British Ambassador Sir Francis Humphrys and told him that in the present situation he was ready to cooperate with him and with other important personalities and asked him for help. He pointed out that "if his father had been aware of his impending death, he would surely have advised him to turn primarily to him for advice and guidance".¹¹

On the basis of the king's request, the ambassador contacted Yāsīn al-Hāshimī and advised him that the government should proceed without delay in accordance with constitutional practice. The cabinet held a meeting immediately after the news of Fayṣal's death was received. Two hours later on 8 September, in a modest ceremony, Amīr Ġāzī, Fayṣal's only son was sworn in before the members of the government and the chairmen of the two chambers of the parliament, to whom he solemnly promised to protect the constitution, the independence of the country, loyalty to the homeland and the Nation. Then he was proclaimed Ġāzī I, King of Iraq.¹² The coronation was announced by 101

⁸ Al-^cUMARĪ, Khayrī Amīn. *Al-khilāf bayna al-balāṭ al-malakī wa Nūrī as-Sa^cīd* [Disagreement between the Royal Court and Nūrī as-Sa^cīd], p. 26.

⁹ Al-CHĀDIRCHĪ, Kāmil. *Mudhakkirāt Kāmil al-Chādirchī wa tārīkh al-Hizb al-waṭanī ad-dīmuqrāṭī* [Memoirs of Kāmil al-Chādirchī and the History of the Patriotic Democratic Party], p. 28.

¹⁰ Al-HĀSHIMĪ, Ṭāhā. *Mudhakkirāt Ṭāhā al-Hāshimī, 1919 – 1943* [Memoirs of Ṭāhā al-Hāshimī], p. 125.

¹¹ Quoted in FARAJ, Luṭfī Ja^cfar. *Al-malik Ġāzī wa dawruhu fī siyāsāt al-^cIrāq fī al-majālayni ad-dākhilī wa al-khārijī, 1933 – 1939* [King Ġāzī and his Role in Iraqi Internal and External Policies], p. 63.

¹² Al-HASANĪ, as-Sayyid ^cAbdarrazzāq. *Tārīkh al-wizārāt al-^cirāqīya* [The History of Iraqi Cabinets]. Vol. III, p. 322.

gunshots. Upon the king's accession on the same evening, Prime Minister Rashīd ʿĀlī al-Kaylānī tendered his resignation and the king invited him to form a new cabinet. In compliance with the constitution, members of both houses of parliament were invited to an extraordinary session because the king had to be sworn in in their presence to fulfil the constitutional conditions of the coronation.¹³

At the start of this new period, Ġāzī sought to ensure the consent of the British by emphasizing his commitment to continue his father's policy. The next day after ascending to the throne, he invited the British ambassador to the Palace and told him that he was determined to pursue his father's policy, which was based on friendship, cooperation and alliances with Britain. He expressed the hope that the death of his father would not cause riots in the country and that the ambassador would retain the same affection towards him as he had previously shown towards his father and would continue holding personal meetings with him. By declaring the adoption of his father's policy, Ġāzī attempted to indicate that he was proceeding in accordance with the opinion of political forces surrounding him, which were unified in the implementation of this policy. When, on 9 September 1933, Prime Minister Rashīd ʿĀlī al-Kaylānī took over the mandate to form a new government, he declared that "the policy of his Government would be the same as that followed by the deceased king and is based on friendship and alliances with Britain".¹⁴ The chairman of the *Patriotic Brotherhood Party* (Ḥizb al-ikhā al-waṭanī) Yāsīn al-Hāshimī – although he still disagreed with the Treaty of 1930 – openly declared after the death of Fayṣal that Iraq's policy in respect of Britain had not seen any change.¹⁵ Nūrī as-Saʿīd and Rustum Ḥaydar saw in the cabinet's composition a guarantee for the continuation of this policy. However, the *Iraqi Patriotic Party* (al-Ḥizb al-waṭanī al-ʿIrāqī) denounced the policy of the *Patriotic Brotherhood Party* as reactionary and opposed to the country's interests.¹⁶

¹³ Az-ZUBAYDĪ, Muḥammad Ḥusayn. *Al-malik Ġāzī wa murāfiqūhu* [King Ġāzī and his Companions], p. 79.

¹⁴ The members of the new government were: Rashīd ʿĀlī al-Kaylānī, prime minister, Ḥikmat Sulaymān, interior minister, Yāsīn al-Hāshimī, finance minister, Muḥammad Zakī al-Baṣrī, justice minister, Nūrī as-Saʿīd, foreign affairs minister, Rustum Ḥaydar, economy and communications minister, Jalāl Bābān, defence minister and as-Sayyid ʿAbdalmahdī, education minister. In AL-ḤASANĪ, as-Sayyid ʿAbdarrazzāq. *Tārīkh al-ʿIrāq as-siyāsī al-ḥadīth* [The Modern Political History of Iraq]. Vol. III, pp. 95–96.

¹⁵ BATATU, H. *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq: A Study of Iraq's Old Landed and Commercial Classes and of its Communists, Ba'athists and Free Officers*, p. 202.

¹⁶ KHADDURI, Majid. *Independent Iraq. A Study in Iraqi Politics from 1932 to 1958*, p. 45.

Following Fayṣal's death, there appeared to be a consensus among the leading figures that represented the main forces in political life in favour of the continuation of the previous policy. Even Jaʿfar al-ʿAskarī and Nūrī as-Saʿīd appreciated the change in the policy of Yāsīn al-Hāshimī, so that Jaʿfar al-ʿAskarī could report to the Foreign Office that since his visit to London in June and July 1933,¹⁷ Yāsīn al-Hāshimī already held more moderate views, and that now he and Nūrī as-Saʿīd hoped to win him over to their policy based on deeper cooperation and alliances with the British government. A statement by the king that he identified with this policy was understandably made for the sake of ensuring the cooperation of these forces at a time when he had little experience and failed to manage matters without their assistance.

The king's assurance of the continuation of his father's policy, the statement delivered by the Prime Minister as well as the expression of Yāsīn al-Hāshimī gave the British ambassador some optimism for the future of the continuation of the relations between Britain and Iraq. The British hoped that once Ġāzī recognized the extent of his responsibility for the state and became aware of the necessity to cooperate with the British, and once the die-hard patriots in Iraq understood the need for British guidance and assistance, it would be clear to Ġāzī that British advice and guidance was indispensable for Iraq.¹⁸ Therefore the ambassador persuaded the king during their regular meetings that Iraq needed a policy of peace, stability, progress and sincere relations. He warned him that it would be dangerous to entrust the government to blind patriots, and those who preached Arab unity. The ambassador did not forget to make use of the services of the king's uncle, the ruler of Jordan, Emir ʿAbdallāh, to give him guidance. He used the fact that king Fayṣal himself had already advised his son to take advice on important issues relating to matters of policy and governance directly from his uncle Emir ʿAbdallāh, the ruler of Transjordan. During Emir's visit to Baghdad on 14 September 1933 for Fayṣal's funeral, the British Ambassador spoke to him about the difficulties facing King Ġāzī, and therefore his need for sincere advice and guidance. So, before leaving Iraq, he gave his nephew Ġāzī the following advice: "Dear son you have the fruits of your father's work and it is up to you to continue his work and plans. He left you reliable men and loyal friends you can count on You know that Britain helped your grandfather against the Turks, and your father in building Iraq, and

¹⁷ Al-HASANĪ, as-Sayyid ʿAbdarrazzāq. *Tārīkh al-wizārāt al-ʿirāqīya* [The History of Iraqi Cabinets]. Vol. III, p. 246.

¹⁸ TARBUSH, Mohammad. *The Role of the Military in Politics: A Case Study of Iraq to 1941*, p. 102.

assisted me in building Jordan. I ask you to turn to the British ambassador for advice.”¹⁹

During the first days of his reign, Ġāzī conscientiously adhered to British counsels. He met the ambassador on a regular basis and during the meetings assured him that he was acting on his advice. He expressed the wish that their relationship should remain as it had been during his father’s reign. He tried to win the ambassador over to support some projects. The ambassador promised him that the al-Ḥabbānīya project and two railway bridges would be built on the river Tigris in the shortest possible time.²⁰ That is to say that these projects met British military objectives. Incidentally, the first month of the king’s reign left the impression at the British embassy that “Ġāzī has something of the charm of his father and has the ability to express an opinion, so that for the future we could expect his behaviour to be responsible. The British leaders have acquired the belief that the king Ġāzī communicates well, is clever and looks older than he is”.²¹

It could be expected that the second government of Rashīd ʿĀlī al-Kaylānī, which was formed on 9 September 1933,²² would be cohesive and stronger once the members of the *Patriotic Brotherhood Party*, who formed the majority, had expressed their willingness to continue the policy of Fayṣal, based on respect for relations with Britain, but ministers looking at the boy-king and his lack of knowledge and experience – he was not yet twenty-one – expected the power to pass to them. Therefore, they firmly adhered to their functions and competed with each other to wield the most power. The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Nūrī as-Saʿīd, quickly came to the conclusion that the marriage of the king with Miss Niʿmat,²³ the youngest of Yāsīn al-Ḥāshimī’s daughters, was an attempt by her

¹⁹ FARAJ, Luṭfī Jaʿfar. *Al-malik Ġāzī wa dawruhu fī siyāsat al-ʿIrāq fī al-majālayni ad-dākhilī wa al-khārijī, 1933 – 1939* [King Ġāzī and his Role in Iraqi Internal and External Policies], p. 65.

²⁰ FO 371/16903, Francis Humphrys (Baghdad) to FO, 26 September 1933. Quoted in FARAJ, Luṭfī Jaʿfar. *Al-malik Ġāzī wa dawruhu fī siyāsat al-ʿIrāq fī al-majālayni ad-dākhilī wa al-khārijī, 1933 – 1939* [King Ġāzī and his Role in Iraqi Internal and External Policies], p. 66.

²¹ AL-ḤĀSHIMĪ, Ṭāhā. *Mudhakkirāt Ṭāhā al-Ḥāshimī, 1919 – 1943* [Memoirs of Ṭāhā al-Ḥāshimī], p. 132.

²² The cabinet consisted of the same ministers as the former one. In AL-ḤASANĪ, as-Sayyid ʿAbdarrazzāq. *Tārīkh al-ʿIrāq as-siyāsī al-ḥadīth* [The History of Iraqi Cabinets]. Vol. III, pp. 99–100.

²³ AZ-ZUBAYDĪ, Muḥammad Ḥusayn. *Al-malik Ġāzī wa murāfiqūhu* [King Ġāzī and his Companions], p. 85.

father to concentrate more power in his hands.²⁴ Together with Jaʿfar al-ʿAskarī and Nājī Shawkat, he immediately contacted the ex-king of al-Ĥijāz ʿAlī ibn al-Ḥusayn and his son Emir ʿAbdalilāh to speed up King Ġāzī’s engagement with his cousin ʿĀliya bint ʿAlī, the daughter of the ex-king ʿAlī, and arranged it for as early as 18 September 1933.²⁵ However, the leaders of the *Patriotic Brotherhood Party* demanded from the king the dissolution of parliament (*majlis an-nuwwāb*) in order to be able to make new choices, which would give them a majority in the house. This move angered the faction composed of Nūrī as-Saʿīd, Rustum Ḥaydar and Jaʿfar al-ʿAskarī, and so suddenly the king’s attitude to the issue of the renewing of parliament became important for maintaining the balance of political forces in the country.²⁶

King Ġāzī became afraid that the dissolution of the parliament would lead to the reinforcement of the *Patriotic Brotherhood Party* in the chamber and the removal of other politicians loyal to the Royal Court (al-Balāṭ al-malakī), whom he branded as “governmental support”, because he realized that their participation in any cabinet was inevitable for the country’s interests.²⁷ It seems that the rumours in several newspapers published after Fayṣal’s death that the leaders of the *Patriotic Brotherhood Party*, Yāsīn al-Ḥashimī, Rashīd ʿĀlī al-Kaylānī and Ḥikmat Sulaymān, inclined to dictatorship, resulted in the king not wanting them to have too much power in their hands. Nonetheless, the king hesitated and, before coming to a decision on the matter, led negotiations with a number of politicians.²⁸

The king saw that the British and their supporters were warning him against dissolving the house, as this would entail giving wide-ranging power to the leaders of the *Patriotic Brotherhood Party* and could pose a threat to the throne. He found that even the British ambassador was of the opinion that the *Patriotic Brotherhood Party* was seeking to oust other political forces and that the presence of “governmental support” was necessary in the country’s interests. He also remembered that his uncle Emir ʿAbdallāh had advised him not to dissolve

²⁴ SHAWKAT, Nājī. *Sīra wa dhikrayāt thamānīna ʿāman, 1894 – 1974* [Biography and Recollections through Eighty Years]. Vol. I, p. 248–249; Al-ʿUMARĪ, Khayrī Amīn. *Al-khilāf bayna al-balāṭ al-malakī wa Nūrī as-Saʿīd* [Disagreement between the Royal Court and Nūrī as-Saʿīd], p. 43.

²⁵ SHĪR MUḤAMMAD, Suʿād Raʿūf. *Nūrī as-Saʿīd wa dawruhu fī siyāsa al-ʿirāqīya, 1932 – 1945* [Nūrī as-Saʿīd and his role in Iraqi Politics], p. 18.

²⁶ SHAWKAT, Nājī. *Sīra wa dhikrayāt thamānīna ʿāman, 1894 – 1974* [Biography and Recollections through Eighty Years]. Vol. I, p. 245.

²⁷ Al-ʿUMARĪ, Khayrī Amīn. *Al-khilāf bayna al-balāṭ al-malakī wa Nūrī as-Saʿīd* [Disagreement between the Royal Court and Nūrī as-Saʿīd], p. 40–41.

²⁸ Al-ʾAYYŪBĪ, ʿAlī Jawdat. *Dhikrajāt ʿAlī Jawdat al-ʾAyyūbī* [Recollections of ʿAlī Jawdat al-ʾAyyūbī], p. 178.

the parliament in any case, because it would lead to the need for new elections, and produce party struggles. Concerning the King's possible decision on the question of Parliament, tensions also arose between the Chief of the Royal dīwān, °Alī Jawdat al-Ayyūbī, and the leaders of the *Patriotic Brotherhood Party*. At this time, the king came to believe that the dissolution of Parliament ought to be rejected: he met with the members of the government and justified his refusal of the dissolution by saying that Iraq in this difficult situation necessarily needed peace and security and that he wanted to avoid riots. In addition, he tried to persuade them that the existing chamber was not in contradiction with the present government.²⁹

However, the king failed to convince the leaders of the *Patriotic Brotherhood Party* with these arguments, so Hikmat Sulajmān, the Minister of the Interior, and Muḥammad Zakī, the Minister of Justice, resigned in protest. To maintain the party's solidarity, the Prime Minister Rashīd °Ālī al-Kaylānī presented his resignation on 28 October 1933 and it was immediately accepted.³⁰ Since the king did not want to alienate all the leaders of the *Patriotic Brotherhood Party*, he invited the chairman of the party, Yāsīn al-Hāshimī, to form a government, on condition that he would not request the dissolution of the house. However, the prime minister designate stood firmly and insisted that he would not proceed unless the king dissolved the parliament and granted him the right to choose the ministers.³¹ At this point, the king decided to designate an independent person, acceptable to different groups, to form a government. After consulting °Alī Jawdat al-Ayyūbī, the chief of the Royal Dīwān, and Taḥsīn Qadrī, the chief of the protocol, on 9 November 1933 he finally invited Jamīl al-Midfā'ī to form the government.³² This decision showed that the king did not take into account the wishes of Ambassador Francis Humphrys to nominate either Nūrī as-Sa'īd or Nājī Shawkat.

²⁹ PENROSE, E., PENROSE, E. F. *Iraq: International Relations and National Development*, p. 85.

³⁰ KHADDURI, Majid. *Independent Iraq. A Study in Iraqi Politics from 1932 to 1958*, p. 45.

³¹ Al-°UMARĪ, Khayrī Amīn. *Al-chilāf bajna al-balāṭ al-malakī wa Nūrī as-Sa'īd* [Disagreement between the Royal Court and Nūrī as-Sa'īd], p. 40; FARAJ, Luṭfī Ja'far. *Al-malik Gāzī wa dawruhu fī siyāsāt al-°Irāq fī al-majālayni ad-dākhilī wa al-khārijī, 1933 – 1939* [King Gāzī and his Role in Iraqi Internal and External Policies], p. 69.

³² Members of the new government were: Jamīl al-Midfā'ī, prime minister, Nājī Shawkat, interior minister, Naṣrat al-Fārisī, finance minister, Jamāl Bābān, justice minister, Rustum Ḥaydar, economy and communications minister, Šāliḥ Jabr, education minister, Nūrī as-Sa'īd, foreign affairs minister and acting defence minister. In AL-ḤASANĪ, as-Sayyid °Abdarrazzāq. *Tārīkh al-°Irāq as-siyāsī al-ḥadīth* [The History of Iraqi Cabinets], pp. 102–103.

The rejection of the Government's proposal for the dissolution of the house was a timely warning for politicians, since it revealed from the beginning of his reign the king's political personality. By not allowing the executive power represented by government to weaken his constitutional powers, King Ghāzī disappointed the hopes of many political leaders who were expecting that his young age and lack of experience would make him a malleable tool in their hands. Moreover, his rejection of Yāsīn al-Hāshimī's terms for accepting the premiership and the subsequent nomination of Jamīl al-Midfā'ī, indicated that in this issue the king tried to stay above the wishes of political groupings as well as British desires.³³ The cabinet of Jamīl al-Midfā'ī was the first of a series to be formed on purely personal rather than partisan lines.

Ghāzī's policy aiming to change the theoretical constitutional powers of the king into real ones were highlighted after the creation of the first government of Jamīl al-Midfā'ī, when he attempted to make his theoretical powers factual, i.e. not only to reign but also to rule.³⁴ The Constitution of Iraq stated: "The king is the head of the state and the supreme commander of the armed forces and his powers include the selection of a prime minister, the appointment of senators, the approval of contracts and laws, the decision on the procedure of election and the opening of parliament's session (majlis al-umma) or its interruption, revocation or dissolution. He confirms death sentences or repeals them, declares the state of emergency, declares a general amnesty, declares war. During the parliamentary recesses, decrees are issued to maintain order or to respond to a general threat or the payment of sudden expenses. When we look at these powers we find that they are theoretical, because the king should apply them in accordance with the Royal Decrees, which are issued on a proposal from a minister or ministers, and with the agreement of the prime minister.³⁵ So the king must agree with the solutions as proposed by the minister or ministers concerned and must also avoid personal intervention in political affairs and remain completely impartial in general matters."³⁶

It is known that King Fayṣal had a significant impact on the policy of the Iraqi state, but he could not apply this impact against British interests or in opposition to their policy. Compliance with British policy and the effort to

³³ FARAJ, Luṭfī Ja'far. *Al-malik Ghāzī wa dawruhu fī siyāsāt al-ʿIrāq fī al-majālayni ad-dākhilī wa al-khārijī, 1933 – 1939* [King Ghāzī and his Role in Iraqi Internal and External Policies], p. 69.

³⁴ Al-Qānūn al-asāsī al-ʿIrāqī [The Iraqi Constitution (of 21 March 1925)]. In AL-HASANĪ, as-Sayyid ʿAbdarrazzāq. *Tārīkh al-wizārāt al-ʿirāqīya* [The History of Iraqi Cabinets], Vol. I, Appendix 4, pp. 339–354.

³⁵ The article 27 of the same constitution.

³⁶ ʿAZĪZ, Muḥammad. *An-niẓām as-siyāsī fī al-ʿIrāq* [Political system in Iraq], p. 196.

maintain a balance between Iraqi and British requirements provided space for his constitutional powers towards the state institutions that had been *de facto* controlled by British advisers and officials. The situation changed after the accession of the new king who wanted to be independent in the exercise of his constitutional powers and wanted to become the real supreme commander of the Army in order to promote patriotic and national objectives in compliance with his wishes. However, this endeavour was perceived negatively by the British, therefore they began to support the political forces striving for power while maintaining good British-Iraqi relations that were intended to limit the royal powers to theoretical ones, i.e. the king has immunity and is not responsible; the ministers are responsible for running State affairs and for measures relating to the work of ministries, and therefore the king must agree with the decisions of the executive power.³⁷

When the king refused the request of the leaders of the *Patriotic Brotherhood Party* to dissolve parliament and appointed Jamīl al-Midfāʿī to the premiership, expecting his cooperation, indications appeared that he was attempting to use his constitutional powers, regardless of British interests. The British ambassador was not mistaken in his opinion of the king when he wrote that since his accession to the throne he relies on Jamīl al-Midfāʿī, which effectively controls the others. After Jamīl al-Midfāʿī formed his first government, the king ascertained that, should the need arise, he could rely on the premier. Subsequently, he left the running of state affairs to ministers and officials coming from the Royal Court (“governmental support”), and focused his attention on the country’s military preparation, meeting in this way the national aspirations that considered a strong army to be the basis for the accomplishment of patriotic and national targets.³⁸

The founding of the leftist *Baghdad Club* in late 1933 encouraged debate and attracted people from widely varying backgrounds.³⁹ Some were associated with the *Workers’ Federation in Iraq* (Ittiḥād al-ʿummāl fī al-ʿIrāq) which organised a strike at the British-owned electric power company in Baghdad on 5 December 1933.⁴⁰ The strike was suppressed by the government as a result, but

³⁷ CHADDŪRĪ, Majīd. *Mu’assasāt al-ʿIrāq ad-dustūrīya wa al-idārīya wa al-qaḍā’īya* [Constitutional, administrative and judicial institutes in Iraq], p. 24.

³⁸ FARAJ, Luṭfī Jaʿfar. *Al-malik Ġāzī wa dawruhu fī siyāsāt al-ʿIrāq fī al-majālayni ad-dākhilī wa al-khārijī, 1933 – 1939* [King Ġāzī and his Role in Iraqi Internal and External Policies], p. 71.

³⁹ BASHKIN, Orit. *The Other Iraq. Pluralism and Culture in Hashemite Iraq*, pp. 68–69.

⁴⁰ On 11 May 1932 the *Artisans’ Association* and the *Association of mechanical workers* (Jamīʿyat ʿummāl al-mīkānik) were amalgamated and a new trade union

many of those generally sympathetic to the idea of organised labour gravitated to the circles of the *Ahālī group*.⁴¹ Equally drawn to the group was Jaʿfar Abū at-Timman, whose own party, the *Iraqi Patriotic Party* (al-Ḥizb al-waṭanī al-ʿIrāqī), was disintegrating. Sympathetic to the idea of social reform, he was also attracted by the emphasis the group placed on patriotism (waṭanīya – suggesting specifically Iraqi loyalties) over nationalism (qawmīya – suggesting loyalty to the ideal of an Arab nation).⁴² Many former members of the *Patriotic Brotherhood Party* also saw in the group a sympathetic audience for their own criticisms of the *status quo*. However, from the ranks of the *Iraqi Patriotic Party* under its leader Jaʿfar Abū at-Timman emerged men who furnished leadership to three basic oppositional currents. First the tradition-conscious pan-Arab reformism of the *Muthannā Club* (Nādī al-Muthannā) and the *Independence Party*; secondly, the left-wing *Ahālī group*, the *Association of People’s Reform* (Jamʿiyat al-iṣlāḥ ash-shaʿbī)⁴³ and the *Patriotic Democratic Party*, and thirdly, the revolutionary current which found expression in communist groupings like the *Association Against Imperialism* (Jamʿiya ʿidda-l-istiʿmār).⁴⁴

King Ġāzī identified himself with the national and patriotic desires seeking to create conditions to strengthen the ability to defend the country both materially and morally and was fully committed to working to achieve this goal. The years 1934 – 1936 were extremely hard as the patriotic effort to strengthen the Iraqi army met with strong opposition.⁴⁵ The majority of army officers had been aware that to achieve the liberation of the homeland and the unity of the Arab nation was a national and patriotic duty.⁴⁶ This responsibility rested in the first place on the shoulders of the Iraqi army, as well as the task of terminating

organization was established, called *Workers’ Federation of Iraq*. In AḤMAD, Ibrāhīm Khalīl, ḤUMAJDĪ, Jaʿfar ʿAbbās. *Tārīkh al-ʿIrāq al-muʿāṣir* [The Contemporary History of Iraq], p. 80.

⁴¹ SORBY, K. R. A Premature Attempt at Liberal Democracy in Iraqi Politics (1930 – 1937). In *Asian and African Studies*, 2014, Vol. 23, No. 2, pp. 205–225.

⁴² ʿABDADDARRĀJĪ, ʿAbdarrazzāq. *Jaʿfar Abū at-Timman wa dawruhu fī al-ḥaraka al-waṭanīya, fī al-ʿIrāq, 1908 – 1945* [Jaʿfar abū at-Timman and his Role in the National Movement in Iraq], pp. 371–373.

⁴³ Al-ʿAKKĀM, ʿAbdalmīr Hādī. *Tārīkh Ḥizb al-istiqlāl al-ʿirāqī 1946 – 1958* [The History of the Iraqi Independence Party, 1946 – 1958], p. 14.

⁴⁴ BATATU, Hanna. *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq*, p. 297.

⁴⁵ Al-KHAṬṬĀB, Rajāʾ Ḥusayn. *Taʾsīs al-jaysh al-ʿirāqī wa taṭawwur dawrihi as-siyasī, 1921 – 1941* [The Establishment of the Iraqi Army and the Development of its Political Role], p. 115.

⁴⁶ MARDĀN, Jamāl Muṣṭafā. *Mulūk al-ʿIrāq* [The kings of Iraq], p. 64.

foreign domination and introducing necessary reforms to safeguard law and order. The activities in the field of public education and spreading national consciousness were mainly aimed at the Scout association (Jam'īyat al-Jawwāl) and the Muthannā club (Nādī al-Muthannā).⁴⁷ The Scout association called for strengthening the country's military capabilities for the objectives of national liberation, and the Muthannā club tried to breathe the spirit of Arabdom into the youth, strengthen national cohesion and increase its moral and societal standards.⁴⁸ As King Ġāzī was interested in both, building the armed forces and the upbringing of youth, the nationalists saw in him the natural leader in efforts of national liberation.

Ġāzī's accession to the throne of Iraq signalled a shift in the role of the army. Idolised for its successes against the Assyrians in 1933, the army was now to be used by politicians to suppress tribal revolts which were incited from Baghdad.⁴⁹ King Ġāzī sought to consolidate relations with the officers of the Iraqi army and tried to remove the formalities that hampered their relations with him as the commander in chief of the Iraqi armed forces. The king participated regularly in the inspection of military units, heeded the celebration of major anniversaries and watched military exercises. In addition, he met with officers at the palace and allowed them direct contact if necessary to inform him of the shortcomings that needed to be removed. He did not want his meetings with the officers to take the form of official meetings between subordinate and superior; he communicated with them in a friendly manner and allowed them to express their feelings, problems and needs. The officers from remote garrisons were allowed to inform him about their problems in writing.⁵⁰

The issue of the enlargement of the Iraqi army, the modernisation of arms and the increase of the army's readiness in order to perform its role in the struggle for full independence and national liberation were the main aspirations of army officers who felt that the British did not respond to these desires and the presence of British military mission officers in units was considered a humiliating constraint. They saw that the king sympathized with them and sought to support them, in particular, when the British continued to reject their demands: they refused to agree with the draft law on the defence of the

⁴⁷ BASHKIN, Orit. *The Other Iraq. Pluralism and Culture in Hashemite Iraq*, p. 54.

⁴⁸ WIEN, P. *Iraqi Arab Nationalism, Authoritarian, totalitarian, and pro/fascist inclinations, 1932 – 1941*, p. 31.

⁴⁹ SIMON, R. S. *Iraq Between the Two World Wars; the Creation and Implementation of a Nationalist Ideology*, p. 116.

⁵⁰ FARAJ, Luṭfī Ja'far. *Al-malik Ġāzī wa dawruhu fī siyāsat al-ʿIrāq fī al-majālayni ad-dākhilī wa al-khārijī, 1933 – 1939* [King Ġāzī and his Role in Iraqi Internal and External Policies], p. 72.

homeland and expressed their dissatisfaction that an atmosphere was spreading in the army that indicated the growing hostility against all the British.⁵¹

King Ġāzī markedly helped the Iraqi army: he followed various activities of the military and used every opportunity to promote the development of soldiers' skills. The king became a succour to officers who came into conflict with the British military mission officers and he supported their attitudes and demands. He asked them not to take into account the orders of British officers.⁵² He intervened in the exchange of some commanding officers when he was convinced of their competence, and thus opposed the wishes of the minister of defence and the British officers and provoked their anger. We could mention the removal of the commander of the Iraqi air force Muḥammad ʿAlī Jawād and his replacement by the cavalry colonel Ibrāhīm Ḥamdī ar-Rāwī. After the king's intervention, the next day the former commander returned to his post. The king's support for the army officers forced the British and the ministry of defence to get used to the fact that it was not possible to make transfers within the military without the consent of the king.

King Ġāzī was interested in all parts of the army: infantry, cavalry, artillery and mechanized units, but he devoted special attention to the air force and the pilots themselves considered the period of Ġāzī's reign of as the "golden age of the Iraqi air force". From the beginning of his reign, he was convinced that the air force had become the most important weapon of states and that each state must strive to enlarge its air fleet. He saw a good example in the growth of the French air force, which had about 2,500 planes. Ġāzī himself was an excellent pilot, his love of flying was well-known and he enjoyed participating in aerial shows and performing in new models of planes.⁵³ Iraqi pilots did not have their own airport, so they had to practice along with the pilots of the RAF, who had modern planes. Iraqis had to practise on obsolete machines, making them understandably angry.

What the Iraqi budget allocated for the air force was not enough for such developments as the king desired, and he did not have the necessary means, so he supported pilots at least morally. In 1933, he therefore successfully initiated the establishment of the Association of Iraqi Aviation (Jamʿīyat aṭ-ṭayarān al-

⁵¹ Al-KHAṬṬĀB, Rajā' Ḥusayn. *Ta'sīs al-jaysh al-ʿirāqī wa taṭawwur dawrihi as-sijāsī min 1921 – 1941* [The Establishment of the Iraqi Army and the Development of its Political Role], p. 125.

⁵² Quoted in FARAJ, Luṭfī Jaʿfar. *Al-malik Ghāzī wa dawruhu fī siyāsāt al-ʿIrāq fī al-majālayni ad-dākhilī wa al-khārijī, 1933 – 1939* [King Ġāzī and his Role in Iraqi Internal and External Policies], p. 74.

⁵³ ʿAZĪZ, Ḥifẓī. *Tārīkh al-qūwa al-džawwīya al-ʿirāqīya, 1927 – 1938* [The History of the Iraqi air force], pp. 55 and 63.

‘irāqīya) which opened branches at several locations in Iraq in order to collect contributions from various sources for the development of aviation and encouraged officials to join it. The king generously contributed to this Association and encouraged the members of the Royal court to contribute too.⁵⁴

King Ġāzī was convinced that the military preparation of Iraqis would not take place only by their interest in the military, but also by spreading the military spirit among the young and guiding them. He focused on the development of the young generation’s physical fitness and on strengthening its discipline, solidarity and audacity.⁵⁵ The king regularly attended openings of youth festivals and encouraged their clubs; he supported them, helped them materially and rewarded them with gifts and decorations. He was considered the main sponsor of the sports movement in the country and many clubs turned to him with the request to accept its honorary presidency. He devoted special attention to the Scout movement (al-Ḥaraka al-kashfīya) and became the greatest defender of Iraqi scouts when, on 21 March 1934, he opened the General Scout Assembly (al-Ijtimā‘ al-kashfī al-‘āmm) which was arranged in honour of his birthday and on this occasion he wore the scout uniform and gave a patriotic speech.

The objectives of the Scout Movement in Iraq were limited to ensuring that young people became accustomed to accurate observation, occupational discipline, reliance on their own management skills and cooperation with others in the exercise of their activities. The king encouraged the leading cadres of the Scout movement to develop it and make it available to the majority of school pupils and students and explained that the movement must sow patriotic and national sentiments in the young. Therefore, the Scout movement during the reign of Ġāzī became a movement of national and military training. The king followed the Scout movement in European countries and saw that it was one of the important factors in educating youth to devotion and sacrifice for homeland. He understood the movement as a backup of the army, and so in 1934, he instructed the chief of Physical Education to provide him with a brief report on the possibility of preparing 25,000 well trained scouts. The report, however, showed the king that it did not take into account two points: 1) the inclusion of girls in the Scout movement, 2) the expansion of schools and the increase in the number of students in the coming years. The king found that when both points

⁵⁴ FARAJ, Luṭfī Ja‘far. *Al-malik Ghāzī wa dawruhu fī siyāsāt al-‘Irāq fī al-majālayni ad-dākhilī wa al-khārijī, 1933 – 1939* [King Ġāzī and his Role in Iraqi Internal and External Policies], p. 76.

⁵⁵ AL-ḤUṢRĪ, Sāṭi‘, Abū Khaldūn. *Mudhakkirātī fī al-‘Irāq* [My Memoirs in Iraq]. Vol. II (1927 – 1941), p. 380.

were taken into account, it was easily possible to prepare 25,000 scouts out of school students.

The most important point, according to the king, was the establishment of the Association of Scouts (Jam'īyat kashshāfa) under his auspices, officially to the Royal court and managed by the ministry of education. The most important event for the direction of youth military preparation during the reign of Ġāzī was the establishment of the Futūwa youth organisation (Nizām al-Futūwa) by Law no 50/1935,⁵⁶ in particular through the efforts of the national forces and in particular the efforts of the Arab Scout Association (Jam'īyat al-jawwāl al-^carabī) and the activities of the second government of Yāsīn al-Hāshimī, which was known for its nationalist stance.⁵⁷ Under this law, training was organised by students of lower and higher secondary schools, teaching institutes and vocational schools in the use of weapons in special camps, in synergy with the Ministry of Defence, which decided to use the officers for this activity.

King Ġāzī and nationalist forces considered the youth movement in Iraq as a step in the preparation of the next generation for the day when he would invite the whole Arab nation to take up arms in order to establish Arab unity. The movement met with a great response among Iraqi youth and also received support from the press and most patriotic organizations, and the King considered it a natural step on the Arab National Road and even supported it.⁵⁸ The involvement of the king in the youth movement increased its popularity among the young generation. Due to his interest in the youth and the military, Ġāzī's popularity was great. However, despite Ġāzī's optimistic view of the prospects for Iraq's development, many issues annoyed him, e.g. the limited financial resources of the Government, the quarrels between the old politicians that resulted in crisis situations for the country. In order to ensure peace and stability in the country, the king was forced to concentrate his main efforts on solving them and increased his efforts to reign and rule at the same time.

⁵⁶ CHOUEIRI, Youssef M. *Arab Nationalism: A History. Nation and State in the Arab World*, p. 105; Al-ḤUṢRĪ, Sāṭi^c, Abū Khaldūn. *Mudhakkirātī fī al-^cIrāq* [My Memoirs in Iraq] Vol. II, p. 381.

⁵⁷ WIEN, P. *Iraqi Arab Nationalism, Authoritarian, totalitarian, and pro-fascist inclinations, 1932 – 1941*, p. 89.

⁵⁸ ANĪS, Muḥammad, ḤARRĀZ, as-Sayyid Rajab. *Ash-Sharq al-^carabī fī at-tārīkh al-ḥadīth wa al-mu^cāṣir* [The Arab East in Modern and Contemporary History], p. 499.

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