The liminal period: The Arab reaction to the Ottoman call to arms, 1909–1914

MA Thesis in Modern Middle Eastern Studies: Turkish Studies
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Thank you

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Introduction

> In approaching 'the national question' "it is more profitable to begin with the concept of 'the nation' (i.e. with 'nationalism') than with the reality it represents." For "the 'nation' as conceived by nationalism, can be recognized prospectively; the real 'nation' can only be recognized *a posteriori*." This is the approach of the present book. It pays particular attention to the changes and transformations of the concept, particularly towards the end of the nineteenth century. Concepts, of course are not part of free-floating political discourse, but socially, historically and locally rooted, and must be explained in terms of these realities.[1]

The problem of Arab nationalist historiography

This thesis attempts to trace the Arab sense of national belonging to the Ottoman state in the immediate prelude to the outbreak of the First World War in 1914.[2] It analyzes Arab popular sentiment toward the Ottoman state, specifically toward the Committee of Union and Progress (*İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti*, henceforth CUP or Unionists) during the period between 1909 and 1914. In doing so, it seeks to deconstruct the post-Ottoman, Arab, nationalist, meta-historical narrative that commonly links the development of Arab proto-nationalism during the CUP period (1908–1918) with the creation of Arab nation states in the post-Ottoman period, in which the Arab (Sharifian) revolt of 1916 is often presented as the main event that gave way to that transition.[3] In this account, the development of Arab proto-nationalism is viewed as a direct reaction to the policies of the CUP, and the Sharifian revolt as an Arab liberation movement that reflected the collective sentiment of the Arab populace and sought to emancipate the Arabs from a "Turkish yoke."[4] However, to quote Ernest Renan, "Getting its history wrong is part of being a nation."[5] It is, therefore, the job of any serious historian to question nationalist narratives, because, with an obvious ulterior objective in mind—the promotion of said nation-states—these narratives largely often serve to blur the lines between fact and fiction.

As such, this thesis adopts a deconstructionist, revisionist approach in order to analyze the validity of Arab nationalist historical narratives. It looks at the five years preceding the First World War, between 1909 and 1914, in which the CUP was undergoing a nation-building project (a major component of which entailed the development of a conscripted army), as its main timeline of analysis. In doing so, it aims to isolate the war from the period preceding it, in order to break down the historical timeline and get a more in-depth understanding of the social, historical and political realities that shaped the policies of the CUP, the nature of nationalism that it espoused, and, consequently, the manner in which reactions among the Arab populace to these policies took form, before the circumstances of the First World War could alter these realities and before the act of fighting itself could determine the sentiments of conscripts.

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[1] Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 9.

[2] Our conceptual understanding of the term "Arab" will be deconstructed in the third chapter.

[3] See, for instance, "The Great Arab Revolt," Office of King Hussein I, accessed June 13, 2016, http://www.kinghussein.gov.jo/his_arabrevolt.html.

[4] George Antonius, *The Arab Awakening* (London: H.Hamilton, 1938), 39.

[5] Hobsbawm, *Nations*, 12.

This thesis is also revisionist in its attempt to reconsider the entire theoretical trajectory upon which these nationalist accounts have been constructed by questioning, in the first instance, the very idea that Arab proto-nationalism was a collective sentiment (and that, in turn, the creation of Arab nation states was a natural and justifiable consequence of that sentiment) and, in the second instance, and more importantly, the very notion that all nationalist movements should necessary lead to the creation of nation-states.

It strives, therefore, to get a better understanding of the Arab populace's sense of Ottoman national belonging by putting forth the following question: can an analysis of the reaction to conscription, in terms of "fighting for the nation," help us understand the Arab sense of belonging to an Ottoman nation in the immediate prelude to the First World War?

In order to undertake to a valid analysis of this question, it is imperative to account for a diverse range of "Arab" voices from different regions of the empire, in order to get a sense of "popular" perceptions. However, here arises an issue of sources, or lack thereof; most primary material, located in Egypt, Iraq and Syria, is currently inaccessible due to present-day political circumstances in these states. For this reason, the scope of this study focuses more extensively on the region of Greater Syria, which today comprises Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Palestine/Israel.

Apart from the issue of source limitations, this choice is also motivated by a conceptual element; it is often argued that Syria—or *Bilad al-Sham*, as it was referred to under Ottoman rule—was the birthplace of Arab nationalism, and most revisionist studies that inform my background knowledge of the topic have focused on Syria as the main region of study. Since this thesis aims to build on these works, it examines the same regional parameters focused on in these studies. Moreover, Greater Syria is a useful region to consider because it represents, to a certain degree, a microcosm of the Arab provinces in that it is a region whose society is stratified along various lines, and thus offers a variety of social actors to contend with, including urban elites, tribes, Muslims and non-Muslims, etc. A focus on Greater Syria, therefore, allows us to consider this wide range of social actors while still remaining territorially focused. In this way, the study avoids narrowing down into too parochial a perspective and remains manageable enough to carry out within the time and space limitations of this research.

The first chapter consists of a historiographical review of the literature that has dealt with the question of the development of Arab proto-nationalism under CUP rule. Much of this historiography has been constructed around the claim that the Arab Revolt of 1916 took place due to the pursuance by the CUP—by then, in de-facto single-party state control—of a policy of Turkification. As Hasan Kayalı explains, "The Young Turks were portrayed in this conception of Arab history as pan-Turkist dictators desirous of eliminating the Arab national identity and 'Turkifying' all under their rule."[6]

Within this narrative, it has been argued that the majority of the Arab populace reacted negatively to the prospect of *seferberlik* ("mobilization") because it felt forced to defend a state to which it felt no sense of "national belonging" and to which its relationship was based on subjugation.[7] Ottoman and Turkish nationalisms were thus frequently depicted as one and the same, with no clear distinction between the two. These factors, it has been argued, drove the Arab populace to seek independence in order to safeguard its cultural and linguistic heritage, resulting in the Arab Revolt of 1916, a moment

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[6] Hasan Kayalı, *Arabs and Young Turks: Ottomanism, Arabism, and Islamism in the Ottoman Empire, 1908-1918* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 5.

[7] Leila Fawaz, *A Land of Aching Hearts: The Middle East in the Great War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Ussama Makdisi, "Ottoman Orientalism," *The American Historical Review* 107, no. 3 (June 2002): 768-796. Popular plays and TV shows, including one entitled *Nihayyat Rajjul Shujja'* ("The End of a Great Man"), played an integral role in popularizing these sentiments and integrating them into the collective Arab memory.

which Arab nationalist narratives have portrayed as the first expression of Arab nationalism, although this is highly debated.[8]

Taking Rifaat Abou-El-Haj's historiographical breakdown as a main framework of reference, the first chapter analyzes the manner in which post-Ottoman Arab state narratives in the regions of Palestine, Syria, Lebanon and Jordan developed, from the immediate post-Ottoman period up to the 1950's.[9] In his account, Abou-El-Haj connects the nationalist history-writing in post-Ottoman Arab nation-states to the political circumstances in the Arab world during specific timeframes, accounting for the various revisions upon which this thesis builds.

While the focus of the first chapter is mainly on Arab nationalist literature and its revisions, the analysis in this chapter, and in the thesis as a whole, also accounts for European and Turkish perspectives and how they might have contributed to the development of post-Ottoman nationalist narratives. The aim of the first chapter is thus twofold: firstly, to understand why and how these nationalist narratives came to be and, secondly, to highlight the inconsistencies within these nationalist accounts.

The chapter ultimately seeks to build on current revisionism by arguing for the need to look at the development of Ottoman state nationalism, and responses to it in the Arab periphery, as simultaneous Arab and Turkish proto-nationalisms rather than as two separate processes, bearing in mind the specific political realities of the period and, in particular, the impact of the relationship between war-making and nation-building. As Charles Tilly points out, "All nations are born out of war,"[10] or, rather, all nations are born out of wedlock, and if the period in question can be defined in terms of one main characteristic within the Ottoman context, it would certainly be in terms of the war-making that occurred within the course of nation-building from 1909 onward. This point refers both to the secessionist wars that were inflicted upon the Ottoman state (namely in the Balkans between 1912-13), as well as the prospect of an imminent war by 1914 (that came to be the First World War), and which ultimately determined the nature of Ottoman nationalism and the responses to it. Within this framework, the element of conscription as a function of nationalism, which brought the state in direct contact with civil society, and through which it could homogenize these citizens into the nation, was undoubtedly one of the most integral. There is, thus, a three-way, interconnected relationship between nation-building, war-making and conscription; this thesis seeks to focus precisely on the nature of that relationship.

In order to elicit a sufficient response to the question at hand, it is imperative to first go back to the roots of the issue; that is, to understand nationalism as a theory and, within that, to understand the link between nation-building and war-making, in order to measure the extent to which nationalisms and proto-nationalisms can be said to have been representative of a sense of collective identity in the pre-First World War period.

Ottoman state nationalism as envisioned by the CUP between 1909–1914: The changing nature of Ottomanism

This thesis is, thus, in many ways, a hermeneutics of nationalism in its broadest theoretical sense, and specifically of Ottoman nationalism; or, rather, it takes Ottoman nationalism as a case study through which we can better understand nationalism as a general theory. Focusing on the immediate prelude to the First World War—that is, the period categorized by Eric Hobsbawm as the first phase of

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[8] See, for instance, C. Ernest Dawn, "The Origins of Arab Nationalism," in *The Origins of Arab Nationalism*, ed. Rashid Khalidi, Lisa Anderson, Muhammad Muslih, Reeva S. Simon (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991). This point will be further elaborated upon in the first chapter.

[9] Rifaat Abou-El-Haj, "The Social Uses of the Past: Recent Arab Historiography of Ottoman Rule," *The International Journal of Middle East Studies* 14, no. 2 (1982): 185-201.

[10] Charles Tilly, *Coercion and Capital and European States, AD 990-1990*, (Cambridge: Basil Blackwell, 1990).

the development of nationalism as a concept, which, he argues, reached its apex globally during the final years before the outbreak of the war in 1914 (and before the post-First World War treaties delimited the parameters of many of today's nation states)—the thesis seeks to contribute to Hobsbawm's conceptual history of nationalism by building on his claim that nations are undefinable entities, and the process of the development of nationalism (particularly before 1914) is a non-standardized and essentially incoherent process.[11] He writes,

> Most of this literature has turned on the question: what is a (or the) nation? For the chief characteristic of this way of classifying groups of human beings is that, in spite of the claims of those who belong to it, that it is in some ways primary and fundamental for the social existence, or even for the individual identification, of its members, no satisfactory criterion can be discovered for deciding which of the many human collectivities should be labelled in this way. That is not in itself surprising, for if we regard 'the nation' as a very recent newcomer in human history, and the product of a particular, and inevitably localized or regional, historical conjunctures, we would expect it to occur, initially as it were, in a few colonies of settlements rather than in a population generally distributed over the world's territory. But the problem is that there is no way of telling the observer how to distinguish a nation from other entities *a priori*, as we can tell him or her how to recognize a bird or to distinguish a mouse from a lizard. Nation-watching would be simple if it could be like bird-watching.[12]

From this core argument, Hobsbawm's logic concludes that nationalism, as a form of collective identity—much like the concept of individual identity—should be qualified, to use Martin Sökefeld words, by "the conditions of difference, multiplicity, and intersectionality,"[13] given that forms of nationalism can vary greatly because their main characteristics are inconsistent, save for one: a central, supreme, common government, the state.[14]

If we accept the argument that no one form of nationalism follows the same trajectory, then we can turn to the Ottoman case and study the development of Ottoman nationalism not simply as a product of European borrowing, but as its own, unique endeavor, the aim of which is, as Marc Aymes puts it, to "unearth frames of representation [in the study of the conceptual history of nationalism] that may have been left unseen."[15] The CUP's struggle to construct the parameters of an Ottoman nation during the period between 1909 and 1914 presents a unique case study in the history of the development of nation states, simply by virtue of its administrative structure as an empire whose authority extended over a diverse, multi-ethnic, multi-linguistic and multi-confessional community.

This point requires some elaboration; as Hobsbawm argues, most states transitioning toward the nation state during this period, European or otherwise, often struggled to attach characteristics to the concept of the "nation." "It seemed evident," he writes, "that in ethnic, linguistic or any other terms, most states of any size were not homogenous, and they could simply not be equated with nations."[16] In the Ottoman case, that struggle was multifold, because the state was confronted with the

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[11] Hobsbawm, *Nations*, 104.

[12] Hobsbawm, 5.

[13] Martin Sökefeld, "Reconsidering Identity," *Anthropos* 96, no. 2 (2001): 527.

[14] Hobsbawm, *Nations*, 14.

[15] Marc Aymes, "Many a Standard at a Time: The Ottomans' Leverage with Imperial Studies," *Contributions to the History of Concepts* 8, no. 1 (June 2013): 26-43.

[16] Hobsbawm, *Nations*, 17.

additional dilemma of how to create a common bond of solidarity within such a broadly diverse community, one in which the lines of integration and separation were completely blurred. For centuries, these communities had co-existed and formed tight social bonds and units such that it was difficult to delimit exact parameters of homogeneity or separation among them. As such, the process of self-definition and othering was that much more complicated in the Ottoman case.[17]

To confront this issue, the Ottoman state, from the *Tanzimât* ("reform") period in 1839 onward, espoused "Ottomanism"—defined in the sense of "a common allegiance of all subjects in equal status to the Ottoman dynasty"[18]—as the common binding force. When the Young Turks came to power in 1908 arguing the case for a civic patriotism based on Ottoman constitutionalism, it appeared to be an attempt to shift the bond of solidarity toward Ottoman nationalism that promoted loyalty toward the nation state as a territorial entity, in line with the European model.

Here, it is important to emphasize the issue of territorial demarcation as the central characteristic of Ottoman nationalism during the prewar period, because it is due to this factor that the CUP struggled most to configure and develop its nationalist project. Under pressure that was both external, brought on by the force of foreign interjection in Ottoman territory economically and politically (what is known as the Eastern question, which came to a head with the Italian invasion of Tripolitana in 1911) and internal, by the impact of secessionist wars in the Balkans soon thereafter between 1912 and 1913—two processes that were definitely inextricably linked—the territorial boundaries of an "Ottoman state" altered to such a degree that "Ottomanism," as envisioned by the Young Turks, became a complicated concept in and of itself. Ottoman nationalism as state ideology was thus forced to constantly readapt during this period to accommodate the shifting boundaries of the state. With these territorial transitions, the resulting demographic shifts altered the ethnic and religious composition of the Ottoman community, such that the Turkish and Muslim elements of the state became a majority, and Ottoman nationalism, as envisioned by the CUP—which had come to full control by 1913—increasingly came to be defined in terms of these two components.

Here, we come to one of the core elements of this thesis: in its endeavor to define the terms of state homogeneity, which underwent several shifts, what position did the CUP envision for the Arab populations of the empire, which had become, with the loss of the Balkan provinces by 1913, one of the two main ethnic groups within it? That is, what bonds of solidarity did the CUP promote in order to appeal to and encourage Arab allegiance in the face of an upcoming war? And, during a time in which Turkish national consciousness was on the rise—particularly within the state apparatus—what propaganda did the CUP rely on to sell the project of Ottoman state nationalism to an ethnic population that was not Turkish, but which was, unlike the case with the Armenian or the Greek populations of the empire, bounded through a common religious identity, Islam?

The second chapter is an analysis of the CUP's nationalist policies between November 1909 and October 1914. November 13, 1909, is taken as our starting point, because it is the date of the second annual CUP meeting held in Salonica—the party's headquarters—in the aftermath of the 1908 revolution, in which the parameters and details of a nationalist project were first publicly laid out.[19] During this meeting, the Unionists, who were not yet completely in power, argued in favor of centralization as a means of curbing foreign control and regaining the status of the empire as one that could

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[17] François Georgeon, Andreas Guidi, and Aurelie Perrier, "Les Jeunes Turcs," March 23, 2017, in *Ottoman History Podcast* 307, podcast, http://thesoutheastpassage.com/podcast/georgeon-jeunes-turcs-empire-nation.

[18] Kayalı, *Arabs and Young Turks*, 24.

[19] Stanford J. Shaw and Ezel Kural Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey. Volume 2: Reform, Revolution, and Republic: The Rise of Modern Turkey 1808-1975*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 282.

survive and compete on an equal footing with other modern states.[20] As part of this centralization policy, great emphasis was placed on the issue of military reform and conscription as an essential step to that end. Conscription, therefore, came to be perceived as a basic element of national homogenization. August 1914—the date of the Ottoman call to arms, when the nationalist policy that had been crafted throughout preceding five years had to be put to the test as the empire faced its final challenge—is the most relevant date within the thesis, with October 1914 taken as an end point, given that it is the date of the Ottoman call to "jihad" and marked the official entry of the Ottomans into the First World War, after which policy-making had to adapt accordingly.

The aim of the second chapter is to understand how the CUP negotiated and adapted its nation-building process, in order to better understand whether its policies were predetermined. This is relevant because Arab nationalist histories have always claimed that the CUP pursued a deliberate policy of Turkification toward its Arab populations. Yet the CUP appeared to be caught between two opposing forces: on the one hand, it was ideologically focused on the construction of a nationalist Ottomanist policy, and on the other, it had to confront its newly destructed state parameters and was forced to reshape this policy accordingly. Looking at this five-year period and taking these elements into consideration, we find that the policies of the CUP were not consistent or predetermined. Rather, they appear to be defensive and reactionary, adapting to the circumstances at hand.

This framework of perception forces us to reconsider the whole notion of a preexisting CUP policy vis-à-vis the Arabs and to instead highlight the fact that, in its endeavor to create national homogeneity, the tension that developed between the desire to promote an all-encompassing and inclusive civic patriotism and the natural rise of ethnic nationalist tendencies (both among the Turks within the state apparatus and the Arabs, among other ethno-linguistic groups within the empire) was, in many ways, a clash between ideology and circumstance, and one which ultimately determined how Ottoman nationalism would take form.

Proto-nationalism among the Arabs: Did Arabs see the Ottoman state as their nation state?

In the second part of the equation, we turn to the Arab populations of the empire (the so-called "recipients" of this state-organized national project) in order to analyze the effectiveness of the CUP's policy-making in inspiring a sense of (proto)-nationalism—whether Ottoman, Arab or Muslim—in the Arab regions of the empire, and to account for Arab agency within this project. For it is impossible to understand the phenomenon of Ottoman state nationalism by considering the intended project of the state without also considering the actual outcomes of those intentions. Here, it would be useful to refer back to Hobsbawm, who writes,

> Nations and their associated phenomena must therefore be analysed in terms of political, technical, administrative economic and other conditions and requirements. […] They are, in my view, dual phenomena, constructed essentially from above, but which cannot be understood unless also analysed from below, that is in terms of the assumptions, hopes, needs, longings and interests of ordinary people, which are not necessarily national and still less nationalist.[21]

Here, however, we are confronted with one glaring obstacle: the question of how to measure the exact sentiments of individuals and collectives toward a state is an endeavor that appears to be both impossible and ineffective. If one of the clearer features of nationalism, as a concept, is its inconsis-

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[20] "Arab malcontents and Young Turks and the Arab Reform Movement," 1909–1911, TNA, FO 602/52.

[21] Hobsbawm, *Nations*, 10.

tency and its diversity of interpretation, then that applies not only to the nationalisms constructed by the state, but also to the forms of nationalism internalized and regurgitated by its citizens.

Nationalism bears an inherently elusive quality that makes it difficult for one to truly understand how and why they feel what they feel toward the state to which they are considered to belong. As Walter Bagehot succinctly notes, "We know what it is when you do not ask us, but we cannot very quickly explain or define it."[22] Conversely, it is difficult for states to promote defined and standardized nationalist ideologies to target audiences whose sense of collective identity can never really be standardized. As Hobsbawm states,

> First, official ideologies of states and movements are not guides to what is in the minds of even the most loyal citizens or supporters. Second, and more specifically, we cannot assume that for most people, national identification—even when it exists—excludes or is always or ever superior to, the remaining set of identifications which constitute the social being. In fact, nationalism is almost always combined with identifications of another kind. Thirdly, national identification and what it is believed to imply, can change and shift in time, even over the course of quite short periods.[23]

We thus turn to the main function of this paper: if this study is an attempt to understand Arab mass proto-nationalism vis-à-vis the Ottoman state before the outbreak of the First World War, what elements do we rely on to measure any sense of belonging? Conscripts' reactions to military recruitment have frequently, and now more consistently, been relied upon as one of the main indexes of patriotism, because they purportedly expose one's readiness to die for one's land.[24] Conscription is based on a contractual agreement between citizens and their state, in which both have the capacity to make choices; it entails that the state makes demands of its citizens, requiring them, ultimately, to sacrifice themselves for the nation. In turn, citizens, as conscripts, gain a certain degree of authority with which to negotiate these demands, because they become a necessity for the state. Tilly elaborates as follows,

> With a nation in arms, a state's extractive power rose enormously, as did the claims of citizens on their state. Although a call to defend the fatherland stimulated extraordinary support for the efforts of war, reliance on mass conscription, confiscatory taxation and conversion of production to the ends of war made any state vulnerable to popular demands as never before. From that point onwards, the character of war changed, and the relationship between war-making and civilian politics altered fundamentally.[25]

This framework alone allows us to debunk the notion that *seferberlik* was purely enforced as a means of subjugation, and forces us to consider whether Arab citizens of the Ottoman state chose to participate in the call to arms out of a sense of duty or patriotism for the fatherland. But how effective, really, is patriotism as an index of a sense of belonging in and of itself? And, more importantly, did the "nation" necessarily equate the "state" in the Arab mind?

On the one hand, focusing on military recruitment theory as our main framework of analysis allows us to see that reactions toward the state are not always borne out of ideological grounds, but

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[22] Hobsbawm, *Nations*, 1.

[23] Hobsbawm, *Nations*, 11.

[24] See, for instance, Mehmet Beşikçi, *The Ottoman Mobilisation of Manpower in the First World War: Between Voluntarism and Resistance* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), among others.

[25] Tilly, *Coercion*, 83.

rather due to on-the-ground realities and circumstances. As such, we begin to consider aspects beyond ideology that may have played a role in determining popular sentiments toward the state, including economic, social and communal circumstances that could have affected citizens' readiness to join the military.

But that perspective alone is by no means comprehensive enough as a method with which to understand the Arab sense of belonging to an "Ottoman nation," because it focuses only on one aspect of that relationship between states and their citizens, defined in purely civic terms; to take a "readiness to die" as the only indicator of a sense of national belonging is limiting, ignoring alternative forms of belonging that also existed on individual and collective levels, particularly during this formative phase of nationalism, when the concept itself was open to interpretation and its exact parameters yet to be determined. Concentrating on just one element of nationalism—the civic—thus ignores the existence of a tension between the civic and the ethnic/linguistic forms of nationalism, which, as explained above, were already problematic when it came time for the Ottoman state to identify its core nationalist characteristics. If we agree that state nationalism was difficult to define for Ottoman policy-makers, what then for the recipients of that state nationalism?

In this way, applying military recruitment theory as the main indicator of loyalty is anachronistic, since it fails to account for the realities of the period, taking Ottoman, Turkish and Arab nationalisms as predetermined when, in fact, they were as still being shaped into their final forms and would only truly stabilize in the post-Ottoman period, after the creation of nation-states in the aftermath of the First World War.

As scholars, therefore, any attempt to study the development of popular nationalism must take into account that the aim is not to elicit an exact answer as to the measure of individuals' and collectives' sense of "nationalist" loyalty but, rather, to highlight the very fact that an exact measure of collective national consciousness is impossible to ascertain. Hobsbawm explains,

> Finally, and as always, a word of warning is in order. We know too little about what went on, or for that matter what still goes on, in the minds of most relatively inarticulate men and women, to speak with any confidence about their thoughts and feelings, towards the nationalities and nation states which claim their loyalties. The real relations between proto-national identification and subsequent national or state patriotism must often remain obscure for this reason. We know what Nelson meant when he signalled his fleet on the eve of the battle of Trafalgar that England expected every man to do his duty, but not what passed through the minds of Nelsons sailors on that day, even if it would be quite unreasonable to doubt that some of it could be described as patriotic. We know what national parties and movements read into the support of such members of the nation as give them their backing, but not what these customers are after as they purchase the collection of very miscellaneous goods presented to them as a package by the salesmen of national politics.[26]

The third chapter studies the Arab reaction to conscription, the aim of which is to question the very premise of the collectivity of Arab public opinion long ascribed to in Arab nationalist history. By taking a diverse range of primary sources—memoirs, private letters, newspaper articles, state and consular reports—that reflect, to as great a degree as possible, a broad and multifold perspective of Arab opinions with regards to their sense of duty in fighting for the Ottoman state at the outbreak of the First World War, these sources—although by no means comprehensive—offer a small glimpse into what could have occurred in the minds of the men who were drafted and how they understood their own position and function vis-à-vis the state.

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[26] Hobsbawm, *Nations*, 78.

Looked at from the position of individuals, the chapter attempts to understand the link between individual and collective nationalist self-identities, specifically the extent to which individual thoughts and experiences can claim to represent collective sentiments (in this case, a collective Arab experience). The chapter thus seeks to highlight the fact that "the progress of national consciousness […] is neither linear nor necessarily at the expense of other elements of social consciousness."[27] For many an Arab, as we shall see, the boundaries between being an Arab, Ottoman and a Muslim were not clearly defined, for each of these represented singular characteristics of identity (language, patriotism and religion, respectively). But without defined parameters of national belonging, none could be said to have triumphed over the other. Rather, they were amorphous, and constantly adapting. Thus, the deeply inconsistent responses among Arabs, on an individual level, is, if anything, indicative of the inconsistent, amorphous and transactional tendencies inherent within individual (and, ultimately, collective) conceptions of self.

Should we accept this argument, then it follows that the logic behind Arab nationalist history (or accounts of history) would naturally deconstruct and open new spaces for alternative interpretations of the Arab-Ottoman past to develop space to accept the idea that a collective sense of national consciousness is impossible to get at. For, to continue from Hobsbawm, "one formulates such fairly absurd questions not to elicit answers or stimulate research theses, but to indicate the denseness of the fog which surrounds questions about the national consciousness of common men and women, especially in the period before modern nationalism unquestionably became a mass political force."[28]

This brings us to the final point about the extent to which proto-nationalism should be considered a natural prerequisite for the establishment of nation states: if Arab mass proto-nationalism in the prewar period lacked any sense of collectivity, then is it fair to see Arab nationalism as an aftereffect of the creation of Arab nation states, rather than the product of proto-nationalism in the prewar period? Analyzing the Arab reaction to the declaration of jihad in October 1914 (the endpoint of the scope of this research) would certainly be one way of addressing this issue. Moreover, accepting this view allows us perhaps to account for at least one reason as to why mandate rule was so easily imposed on the Arab regions of the former empire in the immediate aftermath of Ottoman rule; that is, the lack of a strong sense of mass popular Arab nationalism, or a strong sense of the Arab self, is perhaps one of the factors that facilitated foreign dominance in the region and, by consequence, the need to create nationalist myths to feed nationalist narratives with which to justify that dominance. These are two issues, however, that are better left for future research endeavors.

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[27] Hobsbawm, 130.

[28] Hobsbawm, 79.

Constructing a 'great' Arab epic: The story of the Arab Revolt in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan

> In most contexts, […] patriotic pride does not make for good history. The real value in studying history lies not in garnering evidence for conflicting nationalist narratives but in gaining a detached and unblinkered view of the past, and especially of the origins of wars. War is said to be too serious a business to be left to the soldiers. By the same token, military history is too serious a business to be left to the politicians.[29]

The narrative of the Arab Revolt has become—perhaps ironically, in many ways—a hallmark of Arab nationalist history in many states of the former Ottoman province of *Bilad al-Sham* (Greater Syria), including Syria, Lebanon, Palestine and, specifically, in what became the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, which bears the name of the leader of the revolt, Sharif Husayn ibn Ali al-Hashemi.

The oft-repeated story claims that, in June 1916, the Arab populace of the Ottoman Empire, led by Sharif Husayn of Mecca, launched a revolt within the context of the First World War against the Ottoman state in a bid to gain liberation from an oppressive Turkish-Ottoman regime, the goal of which was to create an independent Arab nation.[30] The story has commonly rested on two principal claims that have since been reiterated and accepted as fact: firstly, that the revolt occurred as a natural fulfilment of widespread, or popular, ethnic Arab nationalist sentiments and, secondly, that these sentiments came about as a reaction to the oppressive "Turkist-oriented" policies of the Committee of Union and Progress.[31]

Simple as it is, the narrative has all the elements of a heroic epic: an oppressed minority that fights and ultimately defeats an oppressive majority. At its core, it espoused (and continues to espouse) a simple logic: the struggle for freedom in order to attain equality and democracy, the logic of suffering for the nation. It is a winning, widely relied-upon approach for garnering popular support in most nation-states, often known as the "nationalist myth." To quote Avi Shlaim, "Like most nationalist versions of history, it is simplistic, selective, and self-serving."[32]

While the Arab case does not offer much in terms of novelty, the story, unlike common narratives that we find in Greece, Turkey, Israel and many a nation state that came into being in the twentieth century, is not quite as straightforward. Unlike the common standard, in the Arab case, the story did not belong to a single "Arab state," but rather to multiple states—Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and Palestine—to serve their independent interests. It is, therefore, composed of several, inconsistent narratives, and yet, in all four, it has been relied upon as a propaganda tool to rouse popular opinion for decades. For the past hundred years or so, the narrative has been able to easily infiltrate public con-

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[29] Avi Shlaim, "The Perils and Pitfalls of Patriotic History," *openDemocracy*, February 7, 2014, https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/perils-and-pitfalls-of-patriotic-history.

[30] "The Great Arab Revolt," Office of King Hussein I, accessed December 13, 2017, http://www.kinghussein.gov.jo/his_arabrevolt.html.

[31] George Antonius, *The Arab Awakening* (London: H.Hamilton, 1938) 101–126; Hasan Kayalı, *Arabs and Young Turks: Ottomanism, Arabism, and Islamism in the Ottoman Empire, 1908–1918* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), Introduction; Michael Provence, "Ottoman Modernity, Colonialism, and Insurgency in the Interwar Arab East," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 43, no. 2, (May 2011): 206.

[32] Avi Shlaim, "A Betrayal of History," *The Guardian*, February 22, 2002, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2002/feb/22/israel.

sciousness through populist propaganda, including school textbooks, theater plays and film, etc.[33] aiming to inspire a sense of Arab national belonging, the parameters of which are never quite defined. It is lazy history at its finest, packed with grand, superfluous generalization, yet completely unquestioned, and therefore effective.

Arab academia, for its part, has been somewhat ineffectual in questioning the basis of these claims. While several noteworthy revisions, including the more prominent approach adopted by Rashid Khalidi or Salim Tamari, have questioned the very notion of "Arabism" and Arab identity, in which they argue that it was, as a national identity during the Ottoman period, not mutually exclusive of Ottomanism,[34] others, such as Awad Halabi, have sought to reevaluate the immediate post-Ottoman relationship between the Arabs and the Turks, emphasizing the continued support for the Turkish state among the Arabs of Palestine during the liminal transition period between 1918-1922.[35] Most of these revisions, however, are targeted toward a non-Arab audience, for they are usually written in English and published outside of the Arab world.

By contrast, the general Arab approach lags far behind, mainly because it tends to overlook the core question at hand: was Arabism a popular, nationalist movement?[36] Instead, any attempt at answering this question is usually framed as a definitive "yes," and the story of the Arab Revolt is normally provided as the affirmative supplementary example. The impact of the narrative of the revolt has thus continued unabated and largely unquestioned to this day. Very rarely does one come across Arab academics targeting an Arab audience who would be willing to reassess the extent to which the revolt was truly an expression of ethnic Arab nationalism, much less of nationalism at all. Popular perceptions of the Ottoman past in the Arab world, therefore, remain incomplete and deeply flawed.

In Turkish nationalist portrayals, that same event is often referred to as an act of Arab betrayal (*hıyanet*). This depiction has served to bolster the nationalist endeavor that began under the tutelage of the founder of the republic, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, and which emphasized pure Turkish-Muslim nationalism with little space for other minorities, many of which had previously been integral to the fabric of the empire.[37]

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[33] For instance, Lebanese musician Fairuz starred in a musical film entitled "Safar Barlik" (a reference to *seferberlik*, or conscription) that was released in 1967, and which detailed the dire war conditions under Ottoman control. This is one of a number of plays and stories that make frequent references to the Ottoman period—particularly the war period—often in negative terms.

[34] Rashid Khalidi, "Ottomanism and Arabism in Syria before 1914: A Reassessment," in *The Origins of Arab Nationalism*, ed. Rashid Khalidi, Lisa Anderson, Muhammad Muslih and Reeva S. Simon (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 50–73; Salim Tamari and Ihsan S. Turjman, *Year of the Locust: A Soldier's Diary and the Erasure of Palestine's Ottoman Past* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 3–88; Salim Tamari, "City of RiffRaff: Crowds, Public Space, and New Urban Sensibilities in War-Time Jerusalem, 1917–1921," in *Comparing Cities: The Middle East and South Asia*, ed. Kamran A. Ali and Martina Rieker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 23–48.

[35] Awad Halabi, "Liminal Loyalties: Ottomanism and Palestinian Responses to the Turkish War of Independence, 1919–22," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 41, no. 3 (Spring 2012): 19–37.

[36] As part of this research, various dissertations and studies included in the University of Jordan catalogues were analyzed. None offer anything notable in relation to this discussion and so are not quoted directly, although some do provide far more intimate details of names and characters than most-non-Arab research, and can be considered a good resource. For instance, see Khaled Mohammed al-Tarawneh, "The Karak Revolt in Arab Sources (1910/1328 AH)," master's thesis, Mu'tah University, 2006.

[37] Adnan Adıvar, "Ten Years of Republic in Turkey," *The Political Quarterly* 6, no. 2 (1935): 240–252; M. Talha Çiçek, "The Impact of Sharif Hussein's Revolt on the Nation-Building Process of Turks and Arabs," *Journal of Academic Approaches* 3, no. 2 (Winter 2012): 98–111.

It is, perhaps, not so ironic that nationalist histories in the states that emerged out of the empire in the Balkans, Turkey and the Arab world are often hostile in their recollection of one another, for they all do so in order to discount one another and their contributions to the Ottoman past, as part of a larger effort to rewrite that shared past anachronistically through a nationalist lens, now perceived in terms of "pure" ethnic politics, or what Umut Özkırımlı and Spyros A. Sofos describe as "retrospective ethnization."[38]

Yet Turkish academic revisions, in their attempt to reconsider their own nationalist myths, have gone farther than most in Arab academia in highlighting the inconsistencies within their own narratives, although it is only quite recently—in the last thirty years or so, with the opening up of the state archives (*Başbakanlik*), among others, during the 1970s and 1980s—that Turkish academics have been able to rewrite their own nationalist histories, particularly those shared stories that pertain to the nation-states that emerged out of the empire in the Balkans, Greece and the Middle East.[39] Revisions have gone on to show that, as Özkırımlı and Sofos point out, "the leap from empire to nation-state was not as straightforward as nationalist historiography would argue. In fact, Ottoman subjects were presented with and enacted a vast repertoire of potential options, some of which explicitly or implicitly challenged notions of nation and nationhood."[40]

The genesis of national identity in Transjordan

Following the lead pursued by the revisionist Turkish academic works referenced above, this chapter adopts a similarly revisionist approach that aims to analyze the manner in which Arab state histories were constructed in the immediate post-Ottoman moment in regards to the Ottoman past. That is, it focuses specifically on the nation-forming period—or the mandate period, to be more precise—between the 1920s and the 1950s, the aim of which is to study the factors that contributed to construction of the story of the "Arab" nation around which national images and myths were created, specifically in the case of Transjordan.

In this regard, Rifaat Abou-El-Haj's article, "The Social Uses of the Past: Recent Arab Historiography of Ottoman Rule," is an influential piece of work that has opened up many perspectives and points of questioning, both regarding the nationalist ideological and political functions of remembering (or rather, forgetting) the Ottoman past and, by extension, the tendency to look at this past and periodize it in broad, general terms, rather than in context. It is fair to say that, in any analysis of the specificities of nationalist myth-making in the modern Arab world, his is a definitive guide from which future endeavors, including this one, should take their lead.[41]

To go deeper than Abou-El-Haj's broader Arab overview, this chapter takes Transjordan as a specific case study, and looks into the manner in which, during that formative state-building period,

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[38] Umut Özkırımlı, and Spyros A. Sofos, *Tormented By History: Nationalism in Greece and Turkey* (London: Hurst and Company, 2008), 19.

[39] Erik J. Zürcher, *The Young Turk Legacy and Nation Building: From The Ottoman Empire to Atatürk's Turkey* (New York: I. B. Tauris, 2010), 3–40.

[40] For reference, see Özkırımlı and Sofos, *Tormented By History* (for Turkey); Kayalı, *Arabs and Young Turks*, and Çiçek, "The Impact" (for Arab regions); and Ebru Boyar, *Ottomans, Turks and the Balkans: Empire Lost, Relations Altered* (New York: I. B. Tauris, 2007) (for Balkans). Yet it is worth emphasizing, that that despite the progressive revisions in Turkish academia—just as in the Arab world—there remains in Turkey a huge gap between the most advanced academic literature and the history portrayed in textbooks for educational purposes.

[41] Abou-El-Haj, Rifaat. "The Social Uses of the Past: Recent Arab Historiography of Ottoman Rule," *The International Journal of Middle East Studies* 14, no. 2 (1982): 185–201.

history school textbooks referred to (what was at that point) the immediate Ottoman past in general, and the Arab Revolt in specific. It will attempt to show how the state rewrote its relationship with this past with a specific goal in mind, to justify the coming to power of Emir Abdullah al-Hashemi (later King Abdullah I), the son of the leader of the revolt, Sharif Husayn, and a foreigner in his own kingdom when Transjordan was established. The narrative created under his reign, and in which he actively participated in writing, sought to argue above all that the Hashemites, given their claimed prophetic lineage, led the revolt in order to take Islam away from the Turks, under whose rule it was being misused, and back to its rightful leaders, the Arabs. In this sense, it was, again, not a particularly unique approach, for it was a commonly used maneuver that entailed ignoring the recent past and returning to the distant one to "re-forge a new identity, formed on the basis of a shared Islamic past, a ready-made, pre-Ottoman, purely Arab past."[42]

Again, in this sense, it was similar to cases such as Israel and Greece, which justified modern national identities not in purely secular terms, but rather, in ethno-religious ones. Like Greece's Neo-Hellenic Enlightenment around the same period, it "assumed in this context a 'normative' and 'pedagogic role': normative in the sense that it set values and ideals to be attained, and defined tasks to be carried out, and pedagogic as it encompassed the formation of a national community with a common historical and collective memory and vision for the future."[43]

Yet that ideal of an Islamic-Arab national identity strongly clashed with the provisions of the Treaty of Lausanne of 1923, which stipulated that national identity was not hereditary, but rather, based on domicile and residence.[44] The imposition of French and British mandate authorities with complete legislative power in the former Arab regions of the Ottoman Empire meant that they had the authority and, according to the treaty, the duty, to define the status and parameters of national and civic belonging not based on any ideological considerations for the Arabs, but rather in accordance with the legal provisions of the treaty.[45]

However, by pure luck, or calculated chance, Emir Abdullah's own background seemed to fit in particularly well as an intermediary between the two endeavors: he was an Arab and of claimed prophetic lineage, and could thus rally the Arabs on that basis, and was also a candidate who was willing to collaborate with the British mandate authority that legitimized his rule. Abdullah I was also well aware of the convenience of this position both for his family's political ambitions to rule over the whole Arabian Peninsula, from Syria to Yemen, as well as British ambitions in the same territory.[46] The collaboration between the two was thus, in many ways, perfectly well-suited. What remained to be done was to sell that alliance to a public that, initially, persistently felt Ottoman, and rejected both the king and the mandate system. Herein lay the relevance of the story of the Arab Revolt, a story that easily fit all the perquisites for a nationalist myth, and which continues to legitimize Hashemite rule in Jordan and the Arab world to this day.

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[42] Abou-El-Haj, "The Social Uses," 187.

[43] Özkırımlı, *Tormented By History*, 17.

[44] Lauren Banko, "Claiming Identities in Palestine: Migration and Nationality under the Mandate," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 46, no. 2 (Winter 2017): 30.

[45] Banko, "Claiming Identities," 30. The mandates were already part of the 1920 Sèvres Treaty, whose provisions (for Arab countries) were then left intact in the Lausanne Treaty.

[46] On Emir Abdullah's ambitious personality, see Mary Wilson, *King Abdullah, Britain and the Making of Jordan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); see also note 35.

Persisting Ottomanism (1917–1922)

In Halabi's unique analysis, he categorizes the "liminal period" (1917-1922) as a time when the "Ottoman system had collapsed militarily but the colonial system was not yet ushered in."[47] The main point being emphasized is that Arab-Palestinian support for the Ottoman state, or the Caliphate, persisted and was indeed powerful and diverse, affecting a wide range of socio-economic groups. That support was based on multiple factors, namely a continuing sense of Ottomanist patriotic belonging, and with that, a sentiment of hope that, as part of the Turkish struggle for liberation, and given their shared, recent national past, Mustafa Kemal and his government would assist the Arabs in liberating themselves from freshly imposed British and French mandate rule.[48]

After the Kemalist victory against the Greeks in September 1922, and just before the Turkish delegation led by İsmet İnönü traveled to Lausanne to renegotiate the terms the Treaty of Sevrès of 1920 (in which it had been agreed that Arab provinces were to be ruled as mandates), representative members of the Palestinian Arab Executive Committee headed to Istanbul in November 1922 to seek approval from the Istanbul government to argue handing the Palestine government to a Turkish mandate instead of the British one being set up as per the terms agreed upon at Sevrès. They optimistically declared, "We shall meet Mustafa Kemal Pasha. We shall meet the Turks. We shall meet the Moslem world at large. We shall return with complete independence under the Turkish Mandate and with the Balfour Declaration repealed."[49]

This meeting essentially points to the fact that a well-represented proportion of the Palestinian people were not yet ready to break with the Ottoman state. This is not surprising, considering the fact that, until March 1924, the caliph remained in place and it was not clear that Turkey would emerge as a Turkish national state. What does come as a surprise to many students of Arab history is that even those in prominent positions rejected the proposition of full Arab national liberation from the "Turks" and preferred instead to maintain their Ottoman identity. This directly contradicts the notion that Arabism was a movement of national liberation that was collectively espoused by the intellectual Arab elites of *Bilad al-Sham*.[50]

This sense of persistent Ottomanism was not only prevalent among the elites—it was also clearly apparent on the popular level, too. In the most remote Arab regions, one could find support for the Ottoman state during this liminal period; in Jordan, this author personally grew up with a narrative directly pertaining to the point being made. It is said that, in 1918, the Al-Khasawneh tribe based in Eydun, Irbid, hosted Kemal and his forces as they pulled out of Syria, where his Seventh Army had been fighting the Sinai and Palestine campaign toward the end of the First World War. The story goes that the head of the tribe, Mahmoud al-Hmoud al-Khasawneh, himself a member of the Ottoman Parliament in the years preceding the outbreak of war, was so proud to have hosted Kemal, that he named his son Kemal in his honor. The chief, along with other members of the village, had expected the return of Turkish rule the region, and could not fathom the idea that Transjordan had become a separate

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[47] Halabi, quoting Tamari, "Liminal Loyalties," 22.

[48] Halabi, "Liminal Loyalties," 19–37. Crucially, it is worth noting that the Kemalist liberation struggle was not yet defined as Turkish at the time, but rather as a struggle of Ottoman Muslims. It was only after the abolishment of the Caliphate in 1924 that the struggle came to be defined as a Turkish liberation struggle.

[49] Halabi, 30.

[50] A commonly held claim challenged by Khalidi, who argues that it was not merely confined to the Damascene elite. See Rashid Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity: The Construction of Modern National Consciousness* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997). See also Adel Manna', "Between Jerusalem and Damascus: The End of Ottoman Rule as Seen by a Palestinian Modernist," *Jerusalem Quarterly*, 22–23 (2005): 109–125.

entity to be run by a British, non-Muslim, non-Ottoman administration.[51] This could, moreover, be seen as an indication that, despite distance between Istanbul, the seat of the empire, and Eydun—a provincial town with a population of a few thousand, located on the fringes of the Arabian steppes and certainly not visible on any map of the region, Ottoman or otherwise—the centralizing policies undertaken during the Hamidian and CUP eras, including the opening up of Hamidian schools and the inculcation of the populations of the Arab periphery into the state (more of which will be discussed in the subsequent two chapters), were effective in instilling a sense of Ottoman patriotic belonging that many Arabs were not ready to abandon altogether.

Halabi elaborates on this point, saying, "This liminality was manifested in the connections Palestinians maintained with the Ottoman Empire; many Muslims continued to respect Ottoman religious authority as personified by the Sultan-Caliph. Palestinians also viewed the Turks not as former oppressors but as fellow Muslims waging a similar struggle against European occupation, and held up Mustafa Kemal as a leader to emulate."[52]

This account is especially relevant and should be given credit for being among the few that focus on this period and highlight this argument, which many, including myself, can relate to from personal experience.[53] What state-sponsored narratives have done instead, is to avoid any sentimental references to the Ottoman past altogether. Instead, from the beginning of the post-Ottoman period, state narratives—at least those published in the British-mandated territories—served a specific purpose; they gave way for the British authorities to indirectly implement their ideas about citizenship and national belonging, and thus justify the quasi-colonial mandate system under the pretext of their intention to tutor these nascent nations toward the ultimate goal of self-determination according to Wilsonian principles.

At the same time, this influence was intended to remain subtle, for when it came down to it, these states were not colonial territories. British and French policies, therefore, had to be maneuvered indirectly through the local rulers brought into power in these new states. In the case of Jordan, on which this chapter largely focuses, that intermediary was Emir Abdullah, and the goal, at least initially, was to sell him to a local community made up of tribal chiefs, who refused him on the basis that he was foreigner from Hejaz.[54] Having at his disposal his family's claim to the Arab Revolt as a selling point, promoting the story of the revolt as an Arab liberation movement became a means to that end, no matter how contradictory it all appeared to be.

Ethnizing the past

The 1920s

By the mid-1920s, the mandate governments in all four states of Bilad al-Sham were ready to implement the "law of nationality succession," a provision of the Treaty of Lausanne of 1923, which stipulated that mandate subjects be defined legally not in terms of *jus sanguinis* (the right to nationality

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[51] Awn al-Khasawneh and Mahmoud al-Khasawneh, in discussion with the author, January 2017.

[52] Halabi, "Liminal Loyalties," 22.

[53] There is, in fact, a strong tradition of oral history in Jordan, which is often suppressed or somehow integrated into the broader state narratives, but nonetheless offers novel perspectives and a clearer understanding of tribal relations with the Ottoman state. See Andrew Shyrock, *Nationalism and the Genealogical Imagination: Oral History and Textual Authority in Tribal Jordan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

[54] Betty Anderson, *Nationalist Voices in Jordan: The Street and the State* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005), 33–61; Avi Shlaim, *Lion of Jordan: The Life of King Hussein in War and Peace* (London: Penguin Books, 2007), 11–20.

inherited by descent), as they had been under the Ottomans, but rather based strictly upon place of residence. Through this provision, the Treaty of Lausanne granted the mandate authorities the ability to create nationalities and citizenships and, by consequence, took that choice away from the local populations themselves who had, up until then, largely defined themselves as citizens of an Ottoman state in a legal sense, and as members of an Arab nation based on a communal sense of belonging.[55]

In the British mandates of Palestine and Transjordan in 1925 and 1926, the Citizenship Order-in-Council, a division of the Colonial Office, passed what came to be known as the nationality law, which defined in legal terms the identity of these mandate subjects as strictly Palestinian and Transjordanian citizens. The imposition of these tighter regulations transformed the nature of the all-encompassing Ottoman identity that had existed up until then as a by-product of the Ottoman nationalities law of 1869, and which had allowed the free movement of these individuals, both within the Arab territories of the empire and throughout the whole Ottoman domain. Now, with these tighter border regulations in place, that freedom of movement was curtailed, and with it the sense of a communal Arab national identity, which became merely an ideal.[56] In its place, a new ideological identity was being formed and has since been coined as *qutri* or *watani* ("regional" or "territorial") nationalism.[57] In this way, the British mandate authorities, had a large determining role in redefining the lines of national belonging and the extent to which ethnic belonging was a relevant enough element of said national identity in both of these states.

In Jordan, the state, essentially run by Emir Abdullah who took his orders from the mandate authority—physically embodied in the form of Alec Kirkbride, the colonial officer who was brought in in 1920—set about creating his own vision of an imagined Arab nation in corporeal form. In my own analysis of available school textbooks in Transjordan from the period, it is around that same time—the mid-1920s—that an official state program was undertaken via school textbooks to nationalize the curriculum, the main aim of which was to avoid discussions about the very recent Ottoman past. The first series of books that were used in the territory all appeared around 1923. None were actually printed in Transjordan; rather, they were, much like the very fabric of the Jordanian state itself, the work of Egyptians, Iraqis and Syrians, and were published in the main Arab cities—Cairo, Damascus and Jerusalem—where publishing houses already had an established history.

What is noticeable about these books is the lack of concrete national boundaries in any of the maps that appear in the curriculum, and a prevailing sense of Arab communal unity. For instance, the Treaty of Sévres demarcations are referenced and there is an attempt to normalize them, but most of the supplementary content overlooks any territorial divisions.[58] With regards to the Ottomans, there is quite limited reference to them in general. Four hundred years of Ottoman rule are ignored, while a small chapter chronicles the war period, not attaching any particular sentiment to it, national or otherwise, but merely stating that the empire had fallen. The approach, in general, appears to be strictly factual, perhaps because it was the easiest way to deal with the confusion arising from the new administrative and political shift.[59]

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[55] Banko, "Claiming Identities," 36. The discussion about notions of self and belonging will be explored in more depth in subsequent chapters.

[56] Banko, 28.

[57] Abou-El-Haj, "The Social Uses," 190.

[58] Hussein Rouhi, *Al-Mukhtassar fi Jughrafiyat Falasteen* [The concise geography of Palestine] (Jerusalem: LJS Printing Press, 1923), 38.

[59] Rouhi, *Al-Mukhtassar,* 56.

The 1930s

By the 1930s, however, a clearer framework of national belonging came into view, and its relation to the Ottoman past began take form. In 1938, George Antonius' formative work, *The Arab Awakening*, was published in London and, in it, he made the claim that Arabism was a movement started by Arab Christians around the 1860s and which developed in reaction to the suppressive policies of the Ottoman state, reaching its apex under the rule of the CUP.[60] From there, he deduced that the Arab Revolt had been a widely supported liberation movement intended to free the Arabs from the Turkish "yoke'" (*al-inhitat al-'Uthmani*). This perspective became the main lens through which the majority of the Arab public came to view their relationship with a four-hundred-year-old Ottoman past, and it subsequently came to form the basis of most academic and nationalist accounts of that past.[61]

Antonius' account could not have come at a better time, for it conveniently legitimized the same state-sponsored narratives that were taking form at that time. In Transjordan, Emir Abdullah's own rule had more or less settled, for he was able to make alliances with the tribal leaders in return for loyalty to the Hashemite throne.[62] In 1936, the first Transjordanian military unit was established by British commander Frederick G. Peake and, although it was a small unit, it was a solid first move in cementing the authority of the state under Emir Abdullah and developing a sense of a specifically Transjordanian national identity. This was also part of a broader strategy aimed at building up Emir Abdullah's legitimacy in Transjordan in order to expand the limits of his territory so that it encompassed former Greater Syria and, eventually, the whole of Arabia, down to Yemen.[63]

Yet Emir Abdullah's ambitions were always limited by that same mandatory authority that fed and supported his rule, and against whom he could not clash. That tension manifested in how nationalist ideology in Transjordan was taking form: on the one hand, mandate policies encouraged divided *qutri* frameworks of national belonging and, on the other, Emir Abdullah continued to perceive himself as the leader of an imagined unified Arab nation, a claim which the Arab leaders of neighboring counties often refused to recognize and which they often saw as threatening to their own leadership ambitions in the region.[64]

Understanding Emir Abdullah's personal ambitions in this manner allows us to understand more thoroughly the policies and the ideals that he promoted, and which had to simultaneously accommodate the ambitions of the mandate governments.[65] Around that same period, perceiving himself

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[60] Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*, 39.

[61] Although these claims have since been revised, see C. Ernest Dawn, "The Origins of Arab Nationalism" in *The Origins of Arab Nationalism*, ed. Rashid Khalidi, Lisa Anderson, Muhammad Muslih, Reeva S. Simon (New York: Columbia University, 1991), 3–31; Mahmoud Haddad, "Arab Religious Nationalism in the Colonial Era: Rereading Rashid Rida's Ideas on the Caliphate," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 117, no. 2 (Spring 1997): 273–277; Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798–1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Zeine N. Zeine, *The Emergence of Arab Nationalism: With a Background Study of Arab-Turkish Relations in the Near East* (New York: Caravan Books, 1976).

[62] Anderson, *Nationalist Voices in Jordan*, 33–61.

[63] "The Great Arab Revolt," Office of King Hussein I, accessed December 13, 2017, http://www.kinghussein.gov.jo/his_arabrevolt.html.

[64] Shlaim, *Lion of Jordan*, 1–172.

[65] Regarding Abdullah's broad territorial ambitions, Lord Curzon is reported to have said in 1921: "Much too big a cock for so small a dunghill." Quoted in Shlaim, *Lion of Jordan*, 7 and 18, as well as two interviews that reflect the same sentiment: "Near East: Son of the Prophet's Daughter," *Time Magazine*, March 17, 1941; and "Trans-Jordan: Chess Player & Friend," *Time Magazine*, February 16, 1948.

as an Atatürk of sorts, Abdullah published a school textbook entitled, "Who Am I? An Author Discusses the Arabs, their Past and Present."[66] The book provides remarkable insight into the manner in which he saw his own role vis-à-vis his own people and the general Arab populace at large. Its intention was clear, though subtly made: to make a case for the his own leadership role in the Arab world, by contrasting himself and his rule with that of the Ottoman sultans.

Published in 1939, the book opens with an answer to the title question: "I am an Arab. I am proud of my religion and my ethnicity," thereby effectively making a direct link between Arab national identity and Islam and, in doing so, making space for himself right in between.[67] The book was largely dedicated to explaining the various forms of political leadership, their virtues and drawbacks. This was done with a clear intention in mind, to argue the case for nation states over imperial sultanic (i.e., Ottoman) rule. He asks, "What is the difference between a constitutional caliphate and a sultanate? (*Wirathiyya*) ["hereditary rule"]. And which of the two is closer to a democracy?"[68] He then proceeds to subtly imply, through his question, that his own claims to power, as a religiously guided ruler (a *khalifa*, which is how he perceived himself) was more democratic, because caliphs were not hereditarily chosen, but rather selected on the basis of the Islamic principle of consultation (*shura*).[69] In pursuing this logic, he was able link the logic of nation-states, which claimed to espouse democracy, with his own claims to power, based on his prophetic lineage. Naturally, much of the book is then devoted to praising the pre-Ottoman, Arab-Islamic glories of the Abbasids and the Umayyads.

Only after making his arguments with regards to his legitimacy as caliph does Emir Abdullah finally turn to the Ottoman period, in order to directly discredit it, by coming to the core conclusion that Islam had been corrupted under the Ottomans and that the Arabs had been morally bound to fight for it. After reminding his readers of the Islamic duty to defend God's law, he elaborates that the revolt "cannot be seen to have been a betrayal, because it was undertaken in order to accomplish a religious duty." Although, according to Islamic teachings, it is frowned upon to revolt against a ruler in power, Abdullah circumvented that inconvenience by claiming that the Arabs did not seek to revolt against the Ottomans, but that certain circumstances had forced them to do so. Ironically, he then elaborates that the Ottoman state had made alliances with *Rum* ("Romans," or non-Muslims), probably in reference to the German military presence, and from there goes on to claim that the Turks failed to acknowledge and act upon the fact that the Arabs were the "people of God" (*ra'iyyah*), thus implying that the CUP were driven by the secular policies that threatened the authority of Islam in the region. As such, Emir Abdullah argued, he and his family were morally bound to protect and defend the Arabs, and subsequently led the revolt against the sultanic state.[70]

As is plainly obvious, Emir Abdullah's arguments in defense of the Arab Revolt were made through a combination of Islamic rhetoric and "Western" concepts of democracy, thus fusing the two value systems and undermining the claims previously made and upheld by the Ottomans about their role as the protectors of Islam. In many ways, alongside the British, Emir Abdullah too played a direct role in adding flavor to the national identity being formed in Transjordan. If the mandate institution created the basis of nationality in a legal sense, it was he who added the ideological touch by concen-

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[66] Abdullah I bin al-Hussein, *Man Ana? Mu'alif Yatahadath 'An al 'Arab: Qadimuhum wa Hadithuhum* [Who am I? An author discusses the Arabs: Their past and present] (Amman: al-Istiqlal al-Watani, 1939).

[67] Bin al-Hussein, *Man Ana?*, 3.

[68] The term *wirathiyya* ("hereditary rule") was placed in parentheses in the original text.

[69] Bin al-Hussein, *Man Ana?*, 104.

[70] Bin al-Hussein, *Man Ana?*, 122.

trating on three intertwined components: Islam, Arabness and the element that bound them together, the Hashemite dynasty itself, the main pillar of Jordanian identity.

1940s-50s

By the 1940s, the mandate influence in textbook-writing became more evident. In a civics textbook printed in 1948, a large section is devoted to explaining the virtues of mandate rule and the principle of self-determination.[71] This tone was probably adopted as a result of growing agitation against the mandate authorities, particularly with regards to the Palestine question and the British support for a Jewish homeland there.

In 1946, Britain had finally granted Transjordan nominal independence, but when the war in Palestine broke out in 1948, the Jordanian military, now larger in size and more efficient, continued to be managed by a British officer—General Glubb Pasha—along with his British staff.[72] After the defeat, the Arab soldiers blamed their colonial military officers for the losses, and argued that they had conspired with the Jews to bring about the loss of Palestine.[73]

The time was ripe for a prominent Arab figure to rise from the shackles of European mandate rule and to promote the ideals of Arab nationalism. This figure, naturally, came from the army—the Egyptian army, to be precise, where colonial conditions, had been more suffocating. His name was Gamal Abdel Nasser, and it was with his coming to power in 1952 that the narrative of Arabism took on a more intense revolutionary form as an anti-colonial, anti-Zionist, revolutionary moment.[74] With that, the existing precedent of the Arab Revolt became all the more relevant as a nationalist historical moment in that period of Arab supranationalism during the 1950s, for it was a claim that the sense of unified Arab national belonging was real. Ironic? Certainly, but at that point, it was apparently the only available, unifying historical precedent, and it had to be promoted accordingly.

In Jordan, the coming to power of King Hussein in 1952—two years after the assassination of King Abdullah I by a Palestinian Arab nationalist on July 20, 1951—further encouraged Arab nationalist sentiments. In the initial years of his reign, King Hussein, who was only eighteen years old when he ascended to the throne, had been a strong believer in the anti-colonial struggle; in 1956, he ordered that Glubb's contract with the Jordanian Arab Army be rescinded as per the demands of the Arab officers of the armed forces.[75]

With the outburst of nationalist sentiments, the story of the Arab Revolt had gained new significance by the 1950s, becoming an important historical reference point for independence and the struggle against injustice. The Hashemite claim to the revolt further served to legitimize their authority

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[71] Mohammad al-Abbadi, *al-Ma'loumat al-Wataniyya* [Civic information] (Nablus, 1948), 80.

[72] Although, at that point, Glubb had been seconded from the British Forces and was no longer a direct employee of the British government.

[73] Abdullah al-Tal, *Kartihat Falasteen: Mudhakkarat Abdullah al-Tal* [The catastrophe of Palestine: The memoirs of Abdullah al-Tal] (Cairo: Dar al-Kalam, 1959).

[74] Although Egypt had gained its independence from British rule on February 28, 1922, British influence continued to dominate Egypt's political life at least until the Suez Crisis in 1956. This is also true of the states of Iraq, Lebanon, Syria and Transjordan, all of whom gained their independence between 1946–1948, but where former mandate authorities continued to influence policy-making, especially policies pertaining to military strategy and military alliances.

[75] In fact, King Hussein's father, King Talal, who reigned for only one year between July 1951 and August 1952, was reported to have been an ardent anti-colonialist. It is said that he was forced to abdicate from power by the British authorities, who conspired against him with his wife, Queen Zein al-Sharaf, to replace him with his young son, who would have been easier to manage. See Shlaim, *Lion of Jordan*, 97–111.

as the leaders of an Arab nation. In Jordanian history textbooks, the story of the Arab Revolt gained more relevance than ever, but it also was at that point that the story began to take on a more "mythical," fabricated flavor.

In a general history textbook published in Jordan that same year (1956), large sections are devoted to Arab history, clearly written from an Arab nationalist perspective with a strong revolutionary undertone, frequently referencing the French Revolution, the Russian Bolshevik Revolution and the Italian Risorgimento unification.[76] Modernist, and in full support of the model of the nation state, despite its supranationalist rhetoric in favor of Arab unity, it espoused the notion of Ottoman decline as a means to discredit the Ottoman regime. The rhetoric intended to show that, like these "modern" evolutionary European states, the Arabs also had an inherent capacity for progress, but had been held back by four hundred years of Ottoman rule. Ironically, the main culprit here was not the colonial mandate regimes, but rather the Ottoman state, which was, according the book, tyrannical and racist toward its citizens.

On the one hand, the textbook had intended to support the claims that the Arab states were independent, self-sufficient nations. On the other, it specifically aimed to stress the Hashemite's role in taking the first step toward enlightenment and liberation, through their undertaking of the Arab Revolt. More than any other textbook from previous decades, this one touched on all of the different causes of the revolt. It specifically singled out the policies of the CUP, arguing that the Unionists had pursued a pan-Turanist ideology that made little space for the Arabs, and that they had attempted to Turkify the non-Turkish elements of the empire. Moreover, in this account, the CUP are portrayed as having been anti-Islamic and pursuing a secular agenda—in this way, the narrative also continued to build on Emir Abdullah's foundational storylines.

From the other perspective, the textbook portrays the Arabs of the empire as having been completely loyal and willing to fight in order to save the Ottoman state, but claims that they had been betrayed by the Unionists policies, without specific mention of whether or not these were wartime policies or policies established earlier in time. It continues by claiming that, when the Arab Revolt broke out, a great many Arabs rushed to take part, in full support of the Hashemite endeavor.[77] The implication is that, then, as now, the Hashemites were duty-bound to lead the fight against these injustices and to take a stand against the colonial-like conditions as a result of persistent European intervention in Arab affairs.

Conclusion

By tracing the development of the nationalist narratives in Jordan during the preliminary thirty years of its creation under the authority of the British mandate, we notice the simplicity of the argument being served to the public. And it is precisely that characteristic simplicity that allows for it to be easily readapted to suit different time-periods and contexts, and thus remain relevant as a powerful historical nationalist reference point for the Hashemite state today.

With time, the story of the Arab Revolt—and, by extension, the story of the origins of Arabism and the Arab nation—has taken on the characteristics of a foundational myth, a sort-of truth, a process very closely resembling Özkırımlı's and Sofos' description:

> We see ethnies as social constructs just like nations, as collections/collations of cultural practices, established over time or invented, and forged together often arbitrarily, according to the

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[76] Y. Hafith, A. Lutfi, and Y. Omar, *Al-Tareekh al-Hadeeth min Sanat 1789 'ila Sanat 1945* [Contemporary history from 1789 to 1945] (Nablus, 1956), 99–118.

[77] Hafith, Lutfi and Omar, *Al-Tarikh*, 116.

judgement or needs of nation builders [...] most often the product of retrospective legitima-
tion of the very processes that have underpinned nationalist projects. We thus see the past as a
resource to be exploited by the nationalists in their struggle to define the nation.[78]

In their comparative analysis of the two process of national construction in Greece and Turkey
after the Ottoman collapse, we encounter extreme similarities to the case of the former Arab regions
of the empire, and, specifically, in the case of Transjordan. Despite contextual and regional diversity,
the post-Ottoman nation states all displayed similar patterns of nation-building that relied on ignoring
a shared Ottoman past and forging new identities derived from a pre-Ottoman era instead. These
mythical pasts became novel reference points for ethnies, newly constructed as part of a broader na-
tion-building process. Yet, this indicates that, perhaps, there is much more in common between these
nation states then their histories would like to admit. We are thus duty-bound, as historians, to continue
looking at that past comparatively, in order to acknowledge that gaping historical hole.

This process naturally entails, as a first step, proper revisions of the nationalist histories con-
structed within individual post-Ottoman states and regions. In the Arab case, with the Treaty of Sevrès
provisions formally carving up the former Ottoman Arab region of *Bilad al-Sham* into separate territor-
ial enclaves to be administered as mandates, the whole basis of national belonging and citizenship in
the region was reconfigured. As the mandate authorities implemented a legal basis of statehood in
these regions in the 1920s, they relied on local intermediaries though which to indirectly rule these ter-
ritories and to train them toward self-determination on the basis of the Wilsonian principles of nation-
hood. Yet local populations were not always on board with these developments, which appeared to
clash with the ideal of a unified Arab communal identity that had prevailed during the Ottoman period.
In order to circumvent these frustrations, state narratives began to be developed in these newly created
mandates and were transmitted through popular media, namely school textbooks, the aim of which was
to (re)educate the new national subjects about a pre-Ottoman, Islamic past out of which they could
claim a unified Arab national identity and culture.

In each of the four states of Lebanon, Syria, Palestine and Transjordan, these narratives took
on alternative forms, which catered to their own specific national interests. In the case of Transjordan
specifically, the coming to power of Emir Abdullah, who appeared to be the ideal intermediary given
his ability to bridge the gap between the "perceived" aspirations of the local communities and the am-
bitions of the colonial British mandate, was key: his prophetic lineage and his family's role in the Arab
Revolt were two arguing points that were relied upon to defend his position, both as a collaborator with
the British mandate authorities, and an ambitious leader who sought to expand the limits of his author-
ity as an "Arab" ruler.

The story of the Arab Revolt thus gained a specific relevance in Transjordanian narratives, be-
cause it alluded to the role of the Hashemites in fighting against injustices and for Arab liberation. As
such, it became a cornerstone reference to the legitimacy of their authority, both within Jordan and on
the broader Arab platform. All of this, however, came at the expense of the Jordanian public's percep-
tion of the Ottoman past, and their own personal links with that past; individual family histories have
been erased in favor of a wholesale, simplistic recollection of that history. This has permitted a sense
of collective historical amnesia to develop and, alongside it, unjustified resentments to prevail in terms
of the national recollection of the Ottoman period.

Although this is not a novel case of national historical erasure by any means, it has meant that
questions about the origins of Arab national identity are riddled with inconsistencies, the answers to
which are often found in the Ottoman past. Through this complete disregard of the Ottoman period
of rule in the Arab regions, Arab identity has been allowed to be reconstructed unnaturally, not by the

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[78] Özkırımlı, *Tormented by History*, 19.

local populace in these territories—whose genuine sentiments one can never really ascertain—but rather by the states that governed them. In doing so, these states did away with any sense of communal national belonging, both to the Arab nation as well to the Ottoman nation, that had existed up until then. Arab nationalism, whatever that ideal entailed, was pushed to the back burner and remained an ideal to aspire to.

The subsequent two chapters will uncover certain elements of that erasure by going back to the last decade preceding the outbreak of the First World War to understand how the concepts of national and civic belonging were framed by the CUP regime and how, in turn, these were understood by the diverse Arab populace, in order to get a better sense of the forms of national identity negotiated before that identity was reconfigured by the post-Ottoman, mandate-ruled, *qutri* nation states.

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"A Nation in Arms"
Ottomanism under the CUP: War-making, nation building and conscription, 1908–1914

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> From the very beginning, the principle of nationalism was almost indissolubly linked, both in theory and in practice, with the idea of war. For Hegel, for Fichte and Arndt, those Prussian thinkers whose ideas were to be archetypical for so much of nineteenth-century nationalism, war was the necessary dialectic in the evolution of those nations. As one deputy at the Frankfurt Assembly of 1848 put it, 'Mere existence does not entitle a people to a political independence; only the force to assert itself as a state among others.' In nation-building as in revolution, force was the midwife of the historical process.[79]

Introduction

A quick study of the ideological currents at play within the empire during the period between 1908 and 1914 reveals a multitude of opposing factions and clashing ideas, as well as academic accounts that feed into each other's biases as they attempt to navigate the intricate ideological topography that is the period of Young Turk rule. These years are often described as one of the most intensely studied periods in Ottoman history, and yet, to this day, a simple, clear-cut account is hard to come by. This is no surprise, given that it is a period riddled with frequent demographic and border transformations arising out of constant warfare and political upheavals.[80] Within the six-year period spanning the Young Turks' revolution of July 1908 and the Ottoman entry into the war in October 1914, not a single year went by with a semblance of political tranquility; both in terms of domestic and foreign affairs, the Ottoman state suffered blow after blow in the form of internal revolutions, coups and external wars, and, with them, population transfers and boarder redefinitions, all of which had an adverse impact on the Ottoman nation-building project that had begun to take form during the middle of the previous century as part of the Tanzimât reforms (1838–1876).

As such, when we consider that the Ottoman state entered the First World War on the back of three preceding years of warfare, all of which played an integral part in shaping the ideological mindset of a state on the brink of armed struggle—as that of an Ottoman Muslim empire, but one that was navigating its political parameters from a reactive, defensive position—we come to understand the intricacies that shaped the political vision of the Unionists and that, in turn, determined the nature of the CUP's war-time policies.[81]

In many ways, a study of this period could easily constitute a case-study of the impact of war on both society and state and the relationship between the three elements. This chapter, along with the subsequent one, attempt to do just that; that is, to look at the impact of war-making on Ottoman state and society. In this chapter, the focus is on understanding the development of CUP policy-making between 1908 and 1914. Specifically, it examines the manner in which the impact of successive war-making—firstly, in the aftermath of the Italian invasion of Tripolitania in September of 1911, and, shortly thereafter, during the outbreak of Balkan Wars between October 1912 and July 1913—determined the

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[79] Michael Howard, *The Lessons of History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 39.

[80] Feroz Ahmad, "War and Society under the Young Turks, 1908-18," *Review (Fernand Braudel Center)* 11, no. 2 (1988): 265–86.

[81] Erik J. Zürcher, *The Young Turk Legacy and Nation Building: From The Ottoman Empire to Atatürk's Turkey* (New York: I. B. Tauris, 2010), 110–124; M. Hakan Yavuz and Isa Blumi, *War and Nationalism: The Balkan Wars, 1912–1913, and Their Sociopolitical Implications* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2013), 31–84.

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nature of Ottoman nation-building, and how that project was initially perceived, and subsequently conceived, under the vision and leadership of the CUP before the outbreak of the First World War.

This, in turn, will allow us to analyze how the broadening of state influence and the extension of the ideology of Ottoman nationalism, as envisioned by the CUP, shaped the Unionist's vision for the Arab provinces within the empire—that is, how the Unionist perceptions of Ottomanism vis-à-vis the Arab populations of the empire transformed after the loss of the Balkan provinces. In doing so, the chapter aims to question the notion that the Unionists came to power with a predetermined intention to Turkify the empire's populace, a view long propagated in most post-Ottoman Arab historiography, as we have seen in the previous chapter. Instead, this chapter aims to show how the form of territorial nationalism to which the Unionists aspired, with its coming to the center of politics after the 1908 revolution (under the umbrella of the Young Turks), was subject to continuous challenges and ultimately shaped by circumstance rather than preconceived plans. In this regard, the chapter is predominantly built on Erik J. Zürcher's logic, as follows,

> The ideological debates of the second constitutional period have been the subject of extensive study, both inside and outside of Turkey and rightly so. They form the important experimental phase in the history of modern Turkey. By contrast, there has never been any attempt to relate the ideological debates of the years between 1908 and 1918 to the actual policies of the Young Turks in those years. When the debates are mentioned, it is only to point out that they were inconsistent, seeming to be Ottomanist at some point, Islamist or Turkish at others. In other words, there seems to be a tacit assumption that the ideological constructs of journalists, educators and academics formed the frame of reference for the political leadership of the Young Turks and thus determined their actions, and the role they played in the creation of modern Turkey. But this in my view is very questionable. It is quite conceivable, indeed probable, that the politicians formed their policies under the impetus of fast-changing realities of the day and used the ideological toolkit available to them in an essentially pragmatic manner.[82]

Successive war-making forced policy-makers to question the parameters of Ottoman state belonging and otherness. As the Ottoman state's borders were successively redrawn, so too were the ideological parameters of Ottoman state nationalism. How, exactly, these ideological parameters were redrawn is the source of extensive debate within the field. Some revisionist historians argue that the initial Young Turk ideal of an Ottoman nationalist ideology based on patriotic, territorial national belonging (which had its roots in the Young Ottoman period and was to be a development on the Ottoman nationalism law of 1869) radically shifted after the loss of the Balkan regions in 1913 toward a more ethno-religious conception of nationalist ideology based on Turkism.[83] These historians do so partly in order to challenge the traditional Kemalist narratives by retracing the emergence of the modern Turkish Republic back to the Young Turk period.

An alternative revisionist approach, however, argues that, in the aftermath of the Balkan losses, the model of Ottoman nationalism was focused less on defining the identity of the state in terms of ethnic "Turkish" allegiance and more so in terms of the religious "Muslim" quality of the state, particularly since Muslims had become a majority component with the loss of Balkan territory in 1912–1913 and the population transfers that ensued. This, in my view, is the more compelling argument, particularly when we take into account the Unionist tendency toward a centralized conservative government, which was, in it is nature, aggressively against separatism. Moreover, when we look at the Arab popula-

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[82] Zürcher, *Young Turk Legacy*, 217.

[83] See, for instance, Yavuz and Blumi, *War and Nationalism*, 31–84 (although his is a more progressive account of this argument).

tions of the empire, it makes more sense that a turn toward Turkism as the official ideology of the state would have alienated the Arab populations of the empire. Thus, for both pragmatic and sentimental reasons, Ottomanism, based on an Islamic core identity as the binding element, became the more appealing option for the Unionists after the loss of the Balkan territories.

By splitting the timeframe during which the CUP was engaged in politics into two periods—the First World War period (1914-1918) and the pre-First World War period (1908–1914)—and focusing here specifically on the pre-war period, we are able to understand the social, ideological and intellectual framework that made the Ottomans decide to enter the war in 1914. In doing so, we are also able to distinguish between the varying contextual circumstances that ultimately determined policymaking, and highlight the very transient nature of this policymaking under the leadership of the CUP. This, in turn, allows us to view the Unionists from an alternative perspective, one that is perhaps more nuanced, and does not assume that war-time policies under Unionist leadership were the product of a predetermined plan with which the Unionists came to power. Rather, it allows us to see policymaking as reactive, organic and ever-evolving. On that note, Elie Kedourie is, as always, on hand to offer us an eloquent elaboration:

> History is the record of human actions—those actions that constitute man's nature, by doing what man makes or constitutes himself, provides himself with an identity and a personality. This identity is not a fixed quantity; it is one which, facing, coping, mastering contingencies, and all the while reflecting on itself in the process, finds and recognizes itself in the very flux of continuous change. To use Hegel's formulation, "What the subject is, is the series of his actions." But the series is not programmed or foreordained: every contingency evokes a decision, an action, spontaneous and, before the event, inconceivable.[84]

Adopting this alternative perspective, we are forced to account for the multiplicity of circumstances that naturally pushed and pulled the state in disparate directions. In this regard, it is noteworthy to remember that the Ottoman Empire had three core heartlands: the Balkans, Anatolia and the Arab provinces. Events in one part of the empire, though distant, naturally shaped outcomes in the other, with the state as the central engine, managing, or attempting to manage, the constant fluctuations. Focusing, in this chapter, on the outbreak of war in distant provinces (distance being relative to the Arab provinces), namely in the Balkans, and how these wars impacted empire-wide policy-making (specifically, in this case, in the province of al-Sham) is but one instance that reveals how policy-making considerations were the product of broader empire-wide—and, sometimes, supra-empire-wide—contexts, rather than simply the outcome of the interaction between two ethnic groups fighting for their individual interests within a defined Turco-Arab framework.

In terms of the historiographical debates about the emergence of Arabism, this then forces us to question the very basis of the rise of "Arabism" during the early twentieth century as a reactionary movement against Turkism. On the one hand, this chapter does not necessarily seek to argue that Turkist-oriented tendencies did not exist within the CUP, but rather, it aims to understand why and how these tendencies developed, and whether it would be appropriate to understand these policies as policies of "Turkification," or the forced imposition of Turkish cultural influence, onto Ottoman (Arab) citizenry. On the other hand, by studying the trajectory of CUP nation-building aspirations, it allows us to see where the Ottoman state, in which the CUP was an integral component during the period between 1908 and 1914, succeeded in actually fostering sentiments of Ottoman national belonging and loyalty among the Arab populace, rather than merely looking at how it failed. This chapter is, therefore, largely dedicated to understanding the nation-building project of the CUP, which aspired, above all, to

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[84] Elie Kedourie, "Historiography: History, the Past and the Future," *The American Scholar* 53, no. 1 (Winter 1984): 111.

foster a sense Ottoman national unity in the broadest sense, before it sought to advocate for any sort of ethnic Turkish nationalism.

The question of Turkification: A conceptual analysis

The idea that the CUP were ideologically led by a policy of Turkification is an all-too-common perception, although one that is very much understood anachronistically within most post-Ottoman historiography. It remains relevant in the histories of many Ottoman successor states, because it serves as a main point of reference through which to understand and justify the final period of Ottoman rule. Within the successor Republic of Turkey, for instance, the interest in tracing the history of the ideology of Turkism developed after Turkish nationalism succeeded in becoming the dominant ideology within the republic following the breakdown of the empire.[85] The role of Turkism during the pre-war period is thus emphasized in order to highlight the continuities between the two periods, the Unionist and the Republican.

Alternatively, the standard Arab nationalist accounts of CUP policy-making (as we have seen in the previous chapter) often argue that the committee pursued a deliberate policy of Turkification (*siyaset al-tatrik*) and that the Arab Revolt of 1916 was a natural reaction to this form of cultural dominance.[86] The argument for Turkification within most of Arab academia serves to justify the portrayal of the Arab Revolt as a liberation movement that sought to emancipate the Arabs from "Turkish" imperial rule. Here, it is worthwhile to focus on the elements that are often referenced as examples of policies of Turkification from the Arab perspective. Quite often, these policies are easily conflated with the notion of "Ottoman nation-building," two ideas which, as this chapter aims to show, were frequently, but certainly not always, exclusive to one another.

The two main issues that stand out in most writings of Arabists during this period (and the academics who wrote the histories of Arabism afterward) are that of language—or the idea that the CUP attempted to enforce the implementation of the Turkish language as the language of state administration—and that of the dominance of the Turks within the racial hierarchy of the state, according to the majoritarian principle.[87] Perhaps the easiest manner through which to trace the Arabists' own idea of what Turkification implied is by looking at the demands they called for during the 1913 Arab Congress in Paris. What we find is that these demands are largely centered around ensuring that Arabs were given agency to govern themselves within a broader Ottoman state context, but not outside of it.[88] In the minutes of the 1913 meeting, the four main themes around which the conference was organized are listed as follows: national life and the struggle against occupation, rights for Arabs within the Ottoman domains, free migration to and from Syria, and the need for reform in Syria based on a decentralized model.[89]

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[85] Erik J. Zücher, *The Unionist Factor: The Role of the Committee of Union and Progress in the Turkish National Movement 1905–1926* (Leiden: Brill, 1984), 1–19.

[86] In grammatical terms, the Arabic definite article "al" in the phrase *siyaset al-tatrik* ("the" policy of Turkification) implies that there was a defined, concrete policy to Turkify the Arabs.

[87] Rafiq Bey al-'Azm, *Al-Mu'tamar al-'Arabi al-Awwal: Al-Mun'akad fi al-Qa'a al-Kubra li al-Jam'iyya al-Jughrafiyya bi Shari' San German fi Barees* [The First Arab Conference: Held in the Great Hall of the Geographic Society on St. Germain Street in Paris] (Cairo: Bosphorus Press, 1913), 13.

[88] The full agreement between the Decentralists and the Unionists can be found in al-'Azm, *Al-Mu'tamar*, 4.

[89] Zürcher, *The Unionist Factor*, 1-19.

In post-Ottoman historiography, these claims of Turkification—which, at the time, had been made within a specific context of debate and discussion about the future of the Ottoman state—are now often reinterpreted anachronistically within a broader conceptual framework, one that sees the relationship between the Ottoman state and the Arab populace (particularly during this final period of Ottoman rule) as one of subjugation, often explained in terms of a colonial or imperial relationship between state and society. Within the Arab and Turkish traditions, the more recent academic analyses of this period of Ottoman rule tend to split into two (broad) tangents. One school of thought, promoted predominantly by M. Şükrü Hanioğlu on the Turkish side and Ussama Makdisi on the Arab side, supports the Turkist argument and posits that the state, under CUP rule, adopted an imperialist, orientalist mindset through which to control its subject populations. For instance, in his article, "Ottoman Orientalism," Makdisi, writes,

> Through efforts to study, discipline, and improve imperial subjects, Ottoman reform created a notion of the pre-modern within the empire in a manner akin to the way European colonial administrators represented their colonial subjects. This process culminated in the articulation of a modern Ottoman Turkish nation that had to lead the empire's other putatively stagnant ethnic and national groups into an Ottoman modernity. Islam in this vein served to signify the empire's commonality with the Muslim majority of its subjects, but this commonality was implicitly and explicitly framed within a civilizational and temporal discourse that ultimately justified Ottoman Turkish rule over Muslim and non-Muslim subjects, over Arabs, Armenians, Kurds, Bulgarians, etc.[90]

Hanioğlu's analysis of the formation of the CUP between 1889 and 1908 encourages the idea that it was an elitist group, one that strongly favored the dominance of Turks within the state and was a proponent of a Turkist-oriented policy. His analysis predominantly focuses on the early period of the creation of the Young Turks as a secret society, and convincingly demonstrates how a sense of Turkish ethnic and cultural superiority pervaded, despite the fact that the CUP included various non-Turkish members.[91] He focuses mainly on the leading ideologues within the party, who were fascinated by questions of racial hierarchy and superiority derived from positivist intellectual currents, which were common among European intellectuals during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[92] He writes,

> Although over time political Turkism gave way to a more racial doctrine, the majoritarian principle, as well as historic claims […] continued to serve as justifications for granting a guiding role to the Turks. […] Others, on the other hand, saw the Turks as a narod-patron leading others on the path to progress. […] Although nineteenth-century race theories could provide no legal basis for Turkish leadership, their perceived scientific character could help sanction Turkish superiority. In this respect, the widespread acceptance of scientism in Young Turk circles, went hand-in-hand with the embrace of race theory.[93]

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[90] Ussama Makdisi, "Ottoman Orientalism," *The American Historical Review* 107, no. 3, (June 2002): 796.

[91] M. Şükrü Hanioğlu, *Preparation for a Revolution: The Young Turks, 1902–1908* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Hanioğlu, "Turkism and the Young Turks, 1889–1908," in *Turkey Beyond Nationalism: Towards Post-Nationalist Identities*, ed. Hans-Lukas Kieser (London: I. B. Tauris, 2006), 3–20.

[92] M. Şükrü Hanioğlu, *The Young Turks in Opposition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995); Hanioğlu, "Turkism," 11–12.

[93] Hanioğlu, "Turkism," 12.

Hanioğlu elaborates, quoting an unnamed member of the CUP as describing "reasonable Arabs" as those "who were willing admit that the Arabs do not have among them men able to match the Turkish officers and governors, and that the Turks are superior to other Muslims in the arts of war, administration and law enforcement."[94]

Yet it is imperative here to note that Hanioğlu's analysis mostly focuses on the ideologues who founded the committee between 1889 and 1906. As such, this line of reasoning places less emphasis on the role of the armed branch of the committee, which had originally formed in Macedonia under the name of the Ottoman Freedom Society (OFS) and which unified with the committee in 1907, one year before the revolution of 1908.[95] In this analysis of events, the role of leading ideologues, including Ahmet Rıza and Abdullah Cevdet, who had formed the CUP in exile in Paris, is often depicted as being hijacked by the members of the Ottoman Freedom Society (Enver Paşa, Mehmed Talat Paşa and Ahmed Niyazi Bey), although more recent readings have suggested alternative theories.[96] Either way, there is a certain truth to the argument that those leading ideologues who did advocate for a Turkish political basis for Ottomanism played a less significant role once the committee turned into a political party in 1909. This is a point worth emphasizing when we consider the development of the CUP's nation-building aspirations after 1908.[97]

Here, we are inclined to focus in on the question of motive; both Makdisi and Hanioğlu plainly and bluntly see nation-building under the vision of the CUP as a preconceived project to bring forth Turkish cultural dominance within the empire through policy-making. In this sense, they argue that ideology was the driving force behind policy-making. The alternative perspective, held by academics including C. Ernest Dawn, Rashid Khalidi and Hasan Kayalı, rejects the notion that Arabism developed as a result of Turkist policies of the CUP, arguing instead that Turkism emerged after the First World War as an outcome of the breakdown of the Ottoman Empire and the desire for Turkish liberation during the independence movement. Feroz Ahmad, one of the foremost writers on the history of the committee, is split between the two groups. On the one hand, he is a proponent of the idea that the CUP were imperialists, writing, "The Ottomans practiced a premodern variety of imperialism, perhaps comparable to the Roman Empire, exploiting conquered territories for tribute rather than for raw materials or markets or places to invest capital, as later empires did."[98] Yet he rejects the idea that the CUP were Turkists, maintaining that the form of imperialism that the CUP intended to promote was ideologically broader and underpin by multi-ethnic, multi-religious ideals that sought to foster an "Ottoman" national unity and identity. As such, Ahmad sees the interaction between the Arab populace and the Ottoman state not in terms of pure ethnic politics, but rather as a struggle between a "civilized" "Ottoman"-educated elite, attempting to bring forth cultural reform to the masses through a top-down approach to social change, inspired by the Jacobin model of social revolution.[99] In this sense, he differs from Hanioğlu and Makdisi in that he does not see Arabism as a reaction to policies of Turkification. He writes,

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[94] Hanioğlu, 12.

[95] Hanioğlu, *Preparation*, 212.

[96] Hanioğlu, 7.

[97] Hanioğlu, "Turkism," 15.

[98] Feroz Ahmad, *The Young Turks and the Ottoman Nationalities: Armenians, Greeks, Albanians, Jews, and Arabs, 1908–1918* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2014), 2.

[99] Feroz Ahmad, *The Making of Modern Turkey: Nation and State in Eastern Anatolia, 1913–1950* (London: Routledge, 1993), 77.

The argument that is often made regarding the rise of "Arab nationalism" rests on a false premise: that it was a response to Turkish nationalism and the "Turkification" policies of the Committee of Union and Progress. This is based on the misreading of "Turkification." It is a problem that most scholars writing in this period are unable to use Ottoman sources and have only a cursory knowledge of late Ottoman history.[100]

Instead, Ahmad sees Arabism as part of a broader movement of decolonization from an imperial structure: "Like other empires, the Ottomans were faced with the challenge of decolonization when subject peoples began to assume new identities."[101]

Alternatively, when we look at scholars who take the Arab provinces as their point of focus, we find that Dawn was among the first to argue that Arabism was not necessarily exclusive of Ottomanism. In his well-known essay, "The Origins of Arab Nationalism," he argues that Arabism was not a reactionary nationalist movement seeking independence, but rather a movement that sought reforms within the bounds of the Ottoman state.[102] This argument undoubtedly opened the door for revisionism, particularly within the Arab tradition of historiography. Khalidi, for instance, was among the first to subscribe to Dawn's narrative, demonstrating how Arabism was not limited to the Damscene elite, but was actually a broader "Arab" cultural movement inspired by the revolutionary atmosphere after 1908, one that sought to create a defined space for Arabs within the Ottoman nation, as opposed to outside of it.[103]

Kayalı's *The Young Turks, Ottomansim and Arabism* is exceptional within Turkish academia in the manner in which it exclusively focuses on the relationship between the CUP and the Arabs (a point of focus that not many Turkish academics have covered in depth).[104] Kayalı conducts a thorough analysis of the minutes of post-1908 parliamentary sessions that Arabs participated in and, through that analysis, comes to reject the idea that the state pursued a deliberate policy of Turkification. In his writings, he urges his readers to distinguish between the sentiments of intellectuals who occasionally advocated for Turkist or pan-Turanist ideology and the actual policies of the Ottoman state which, as he shows, were not necessarily discriminatory toward the Arab populace.

Within this set of academics, the CUP is not viewed as a body led by ethnic nationalist ideology, but rather as a group of reformist, centralist policy-makers who sought to standardize state subjects and integrate them into a collective state-system. In this regard, Ottoman nationalism is conceived of as part of a modernizing, centralizing project that promoted a universal "Ottoman" identity, which the committee saw as the only viable means to save the empire, rather than a project through which to impose a specifically Turkish cultural identity onto the empire's Arab subjects.

By establishing that Arabists continued to identify as both Arabs and Ottomans and did not seek independence, these analyses have set in motion a historiographical trajectory that any student of

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[100] Ahmad, *Ottoman Nationalities*, 115.

[101] Ahmad, 2.

[102] C. Ernest Dawn, "The Origins of Arab Nationalism," in *The Origins of Arab Nationalism*, ed. Rashid Khalidi, Lisa Anderson, Muhammad Muslih, Reeva S. Simon (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991): 122–47.

[103] Rashid Khalidi, "Arab Nationalism: Historical Problems in the Literature," *The American Historical Review* 96, no. 5 (December 1991): 1363–1373.

[104] Hasan Kayalı, *Arabs and Young Turks: Ottomanism, Arabism, and Islamism in the Ottoman Empire, 1908–1918* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); In the last five years or so, however, a new wave of Turkish scholars are beginning to delve into Arab-CUP relations. See, for instance, Selim Deringil, *The Ottoman Twilight in the Arab Lands: Turkish Memoirs and Testimonies of the Great War* (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2019) and M. Talha Çiçek, *War and State Formation in Syria: Cemal Pasha's Governorate During World War I, 1914–1917* (London: Routledge, 2014).

Arab nationalism should be inclined to pursue, taking heed of Kayalı's critical observation: "Historians have not scrutinized the continuities between empire and the modern Arab states as critically as they have done in the case of Turkey. The widely accepted view that the imperial failings during the First World War crystalized Arab political nationalism, which found expression in the Arab Revolt and the renunciation of the Ottoman Empire, demonstrates and validates rupture."[105]

Shared spaces and ideals

If we do not view the history of the empire and its successor Arab states solely through the lens of the rupture instigated by the Arab Revolt (in the way that is officially ingrained in these states' nationalist histories) and instead highlight the areas where Arab society and the Ottoman state continued to seek cooperation, we can perhaps uncover forgotten elements within the collective Arab-Ottoman past, or fragments of that past, which can perhaps help delineate the deep divisions and antagonisms that have since developed within the broader Arab community.

Building on these existing historiographic traditions, the approach within this chapter (and the subsequent one), seeks to reconsider the spatial framework of the relationship between the two groups, the Arabs and the Turks. It does so by moving away from the idea that two sets of racial groups existed within separate ideological spaces, often identified as a "Turkish central space" and a distinct "Arab peripheral space." Instead, it attempts to understand how the interaction between the two groups occurred within a broader, common Ottoman space, wherein both sets of groups aspired to a shared Ottoman ideal as part of a common unifying project of nation-building. In this sense, the goal is to trace the manner in which both groups saw themselves as belonging to a single space and, within that space, debated the boundaries of belonging for both the Arab and Turkish communities of the empire.

In order to do so, it would be useful, in my view, to focus on the areas where the Ottoman state and Arab society interacted. Kayalı's focus on the parliamentary debates is one such effort, but it concentrates more so on the "upper echelons" of Arab society: the intellectuals, so to speak. Many of these intellectuals, however, already had direct relations and experiences with the Ottoman state. As such, one of the underlying limitations of these analyses is that we do not get a proper overview of the sentiments of the masses, the ordinary people, who had limited interactions with the state and did not necessarily view themselves as citizens of one.

On the other hand, the army was a major pillar of the state and, under the vision of the Unionists, was deemed an appropriate space for popularizing CUP politics and nationalizing the subjects of the empire into a common loyal citizenry. The proposal to introduce universal conscription, strongly endorsed by the CUP, was one approach toward that end. Up until that point, conscription had not been universal, and state violence had been the monopoly of a few, namely the Muslim subjects of the empire. When universal conscription was introduced in July 1909, the army then became a space in which the state interacted directly with society at large, with subjects-cum-citizens from multiple religious and ethnic backgrounds naturally converging within a single, (theoretically) standardized domain.

Salim Tamari's relatively more recent analysis of the diaries of Ihsan Hasan al-Turjman, which were published in 2011, has been a welcome addition to the existing literature on the Arab experiences of the First World War.[106] Since then, there has been a growing tradition in both Turkish and Arab academic circles to attempt to account for the experiences of non-elite groups, namely their experiences as

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[105] Hasan Kayalı, "The Ottoman Experience of World War I: Historiographical Problems and Trends," *The Journal of Modern History 89*, no. 4 (December 2017): 898.

[106] Tamari, Salim, and Ihsan S. Turjman, *Year of the Locust: A Soldier's Diary and the Erasure of Palestine's Ottoman Past*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011).

conscripts in the Ottoman army during the war.[107] Most of these, however, focus more exclusively on the war period itself, with an emphasis on conscripts' experiences as the war progressed. As such, they reveal less about the sentiments of loyalty in the pre-war period, and more about how these sentiments, along with feelings of national patriotism, may have been influenced by the actual experiences of war, rather than as a result of preconceived ideological nationalist propaganda.

In the Arab provinces, the interaction between Arab conscripts and the Ottoman state within the army produced various reactions, which will be explored further in the next chapter. For now, let us focus on understanding the development of CUP nation-building, and where universal conscription fit into this project of creating a common Ottoman citizenry.

1908: The beginning of a new model of Ottoman nation-building

The Young Turk émigrés

July 1908 marks an integral point in the history of the transition from empire to post-Ottoman nation states; between July 6 and 24, a network of junior officers from the Ottoman Third Army, based in Macedonia and western Anatolia, initiated an armed insurgence against the Sublime Porte, the aim of which was to demand that Sultan Abdülhamid II reinstate the Ottoman Constitution (which had been prorogued in 1877) and to call for a return to parliamentary politics. At the time, the Third Army officers were operating as part of a broader organization referred to as the Committee of Progress and Union (CPU), which was the result of the merger in September 1907 between the Ottoman Freedom Society (OFS) and the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) based in Paris.[108]

On July 24, 1908, Abdülhamid II conceded to the insurgent's demands with little resistance; the Constitution of 1876 was reinstated and Parliament reconvened for the first time in over thirty years. The events of that month sent shockwaves throughout the Ottoman domains, instigating a wave of euphoria and mass support among a public who eagerly took on the slogans of the revolution calling for "justice, equality, fraternity and order."[109] These events mark one of the biggest transitions in the development of Ottoman society and its relationship to the Ottoman state, to the extent that, to use Kayalı's words, "some historians have viewed the establishment of a constitutional monarchy in July 1908 following the insurgence of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), the paramount faction

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[107] Eyal Ginio, *The Ottoman Culture of Defeat: The Balkan Wars and Their Aftermath* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016); Yigit Akin, "Seferberlik: Building Up the Ottoman Home Front," in *World War I and the End of the Ottomans: From the Balkan Wars to the Armenian Genocide*, ed. Hans-Lukas Kieser, Kerem Oktem, and Maurus Reinkowski (I. B. Tauris, 2015), 54–73; Mehmet Beşikçi, *The Ottoman Mobilisation of Manpower in the First World War: Between Voluntarism and Resistance* (Leiden: Brill, 2012); Erik J. Zürcher, ed., *Fighting for a Living: A Comparative Study of Military Labour, 1500–2000* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2013), 547–580; Yavuz and Blumi, *War and Nationalism.*

[108] According to Zürcher, *Young Turk Legacy*, 99: The Ottoman Freedom Society was born out of a "group of ten people, who came together in Salonica in the summer of 1906 and founded a secret society, the *Osmanlı Hürriyet Cemiyeti* (Ottoman Freedom Society or OFS), to take up the cause of constitutionalism." The group heavily depended on the active participation of army officers from the Second and Third Army units based in Edirne and Monastir, more of which will be elaborated upon throughout this chapter.

[109] Michelle U. Campos, *Ottoman Brothers: Muslims, Christians, and Jews in Early Twentieth-Century Palestine* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010), 6; Jacques Benoist-Méchin, *Turkey 1908–1938: The End of the Ottoman Empire: 004 (A History in Documentary Photographs)* (New York, Marboro Books, 1989), 85.

in the Young Turk movement, as the main political realignment, if not rupture, of the twentieth century in the Middle East."[110]

In historiography, the Young Turk insurgence of 1908 is an event that polarizes academics from all sides; seen through the framework of modernism, it has been viewed either as the moment that heralded a new liberal age, one cut short as a result of the Ottoman losses during the First World War, or alternatively as the reason for the rupture within the natural trajectory of Ottoman modernization, the catalyst that broke the identity of the Ottoman state.[111] How one reads this period can very much determine one's understanding of the ideology of state nationalism that developed as a result of the events that followed and, consequently, the manner in which this period is remembered.

Figure 1. Ottoman citizens take to the streets to celebrate the proclamation of the Ottoman Constitution in 1908.

To begin with, there is, within late-Ottoman historiography, an extensive debate as to whether 1908 constituted a political coup d'état or a complete social and ideological revolution. Was it a reactionary move that aimed to swiftly replace the government? Or should the events of 1908 be understood as part of a broader campaign led by the Young Turks striving to revolutionize Ottoman society and its relationship to the state? That is, to what extent was the Young Turks' nationalist agenda predetermined, and according to what standards?

It could be useful here to provide some insight into the social makeup of the members of the Young Turk organization. The ideological current of the organization had developed during the Hamidian period by graduates of the newly formed military medical schools during the late nineteenth

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[110] Kayalı, "The Ottoman Experience," 877. In common parlance, the insurgence is commonly referred to as the CUP insurgence, rather than the CPU insurgence, ignoring the details about the merger.

[111] Hanioğlu is a strong proponent of the idea that the Unionists came in with a revolutionary attitude, while Georgeon sees constitutionalism as a factor in encouraging secessionism and the eventual collapse of the empire.

century. Initially, they had been ethnically diverse, albeit with a large Turkish majority. They were also very much the products of the Hamidian education system, which had sought to centralize and integrate broader segments of society into the Ottoman state through new, "modern" (semi-secular) modes of education.[112]

With the growing impact of Hamidian censorship and autocracy, many of these students fled to Europe or were exiled there, wherein they formed into a secret oppositional organization, the CUP. Inspired by "Western ideals" pertaining to theories of race, nationalism and the role of culture within the state (i.e., positivism and materialism), they began to strongly criticize the Hamidian regime.[113] Through journals published outside of the bounds of Hamidian censorship, they were able to covertly diffuse their ideas and attract like-minded supporters. In these articles, they often called for state reforms and argued that their demands were going unheeded. This, they claimed, contributed to the overall deterioration of the Ottoman state, both through its growing dependence on Europe economically and as a result of the developing secessionist nationalist movements within the Ottoman domains, which increasingly threatened to break the territorial unity of the empire. In response, they advocated a return to constitutional politics, along the model espoused during the mid-nineteenth-century by the Young Ottoman thinkers.[114] The Young Turk reformers of the Hamidian period saw the return to constitutional politics as the only effective tactic to curb the autocratic rule of the sultan, and the only feasible means to allow the equal participation of all of the diverse communal groups of the Ottoman Empire in state politics. This, they hoped, would ultimately encourage the "union of the elements" (*ittihad-i anasir*), an elusive concept that promised to deter secessionist nationalist movements and prevent further territorial disintegration of the empire—or so the logic went.[115]

The Macedonian armed branch

Ottoman Freedom Society

Figure 2. Mehmed Talat Paşa

In September 1907, the Ottoman Freedom Society (OFS) , with its high concentration of Ottoman army officers stationed in the European provinces of the empire, namely from the second and Third Army units based in Monastir and Edirne, became affiliated with the CUP organization and, through its support, the CUP became directly (albeit secretly) associated with one of the main active components of the state, the military. As Zürcher explains, the Ottoman Freedom Society had been the initiative of "first generation Young Turk Mehmet Talât, a native of Edirne, who had been exiled to Salonica in 1896 and was now the chief clerk of the Salonica Telegraph Office. The two people he confided in most were two contemporaries from Salonica, Midhat Şükrü (who had been involved in the Young Turk movement in Geneva) and Evranoszade Rahmi, a scion of a famous family of Rumelian notables, who had also joined the CUP

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[112] Zürcher, *Young Turk Legacy*, 97; Hanioğlu, *Preparation*. For more on the reformation of education under the auspices of Sultan Abdülhamid II, see Benjamin C. Fortna, *Imperial Classroom: Islam, the State, and Education in the Late Ottoman Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

[113] Hanioğlu, *Young Turks in Opposition*.

[114] Şerif Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought: A Study in the Modernization of Turkish Political Ideas* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962).

[115] Zürcher, *Young Turk Legacy*, 213–236. Another interesting article that discusses the concept of the "union of the elements" from an Arabist perspective is Fujinami Nobuyoshi, "The Ottoman-Arab Perception of 'Ottoman Nationhood': Abdülhamit Zehravi on 'ittihad-ı anasır'," *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 73 (2007): 159–176.

while in France. […] While they were all civilians, they realized that success in the struggle depended on the army, so they approached seven army officers."[116]

This marks the beginning of an instrinsic relationship between the military and civilian elements of the organization, in which the lines of separation between civilian and army rule became a point of much contention and debate, particularly with regards to the intervention of the army within state politics, specifically in the context of nation-building. Zürcher further elaborates on the background of officers who comprised the main military backbone of the OFS as follows,

> The officers, mostly captains and lieutenants along with a few majors, who were involved in setting up the first cells of the OFS in Monastir and Salonica, included people like Enver[117], Fethi [Okyar], Colonel Sadık, Aziz Ali al-Misri (who would end up as Egyptian ambassador to Moscow under Nasser), İsmet [İnönü], Kâzım [Karabekir], Ali [Çetinkaya] and Kâzım [Özalp]. These officers were key players in that they brought the army onto the side of the society and thus gave it its decisive political power. Between late 1906 and the summer of 1908 the number of officers joining the society grew quite fast. At the time of the revolution, the CUP had about 2,000 members, of whom about two-thirds or more seem to have been military men.[118]

The inclusion of a faction of the armed forces offered the Young Turk opposition a more violent means to assert their claims and, eventually, the ability to rebel against the Hamidian regime in 1908, thereby enforcing their proposed constitutional reforms. More crucially for the purposes of this essay, it marked the first instance in which the army became a direct active member of the state, such that, by 1909, with the active participation and expansion of the role of the CUP, it came to dictate policy-making according to the notion of "a nation in arms."

Aftermath of 1908

The immediate aftermath of the coup of 1908 was not favorable to the CUP.[119] To begin with, the committee did not initially assume direct power, but rather, due to lack of organized and centralized coordination, it remained in the hands of the government of the grand vizier, Said Paşa (under the authority of the sultan). Ahmad explains, "In reality, this power became a bone of contention between three forces, the Palace, the Sublime Porte and the CUP."[120]

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[116] Zürcher, *Young Turk Legacy*, 99.

[117] Zürcher, 313, note 7: "Enver, hero of the 1908 revolution and of the wars in Tripolitania and the Balkans, of course later became the Ottoman Minister of War and Vice-commander in Chief. His is an interesting example of the complications involved in tracing the geographical background of the Young Turks. He was born in Istanbul, where his father and mother had also been born, but the family, originally Christian Gagauz Turks, hailed from the Crimea. After the Russian occupation of the Crimea, they had moved to Kilia on the Danube. When the Russians occupied that area in 1877, the family fled to Abana in the province of Kastamonu, whence they moved to Istanbul. Although Enver was born there in 1881, he grew up mostly in Monastir, where his father got a job as a technician for the Ministry of Public Works before he was eight years old."

[118] Zürcher, 100.

[119] Zürcher, 103: "When elections were organized later in 1908, the CPU, which had by then renamed itself the CUP, won a handsome (albeit somewhat unstable) majority in parliament, and was able to install a government sympathetic to its ideas."

[120] Feroz Ahmad, *The Young Turks: The Committee of Union and Progress in Turkish Politics 1908–1914*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969) 9.

Externally, the independence of Bulgaria on October 5, 1908, and the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina by Austria-Hungary the following day, as well as Crete's union with Greece on the same day (October 6), did much to taint the CUP and their revivalist pretensions. These developments began to quell the argument that parliamentary democracy would, in and of itself, put to rest Europe's territorial ambitions within the empire.

These internal and external factors eventually compounded and, on the night of April 12, 1909, a counter-revolution was mounted by the soldiers of the First Army Corps, which were loyal to Abdülhamid II. The counter-revolution facilitated the restoration of full Hamidian power, but this was short-lived. Soon after, the junior officers from the Ottoman Third Army in Macedonia, the core Young Turk loyalists, mobilized a relief force and managed to regain power on April 24, 1909, forcing the abdication of Abdülhamid II.[121] The Unionists, fighting to save the constitution, were back in power and determined to stay. Yet both internal and external threats to their rule would continue unabated.

Figure 3. "The first members of the CUP Central Committee in Istanbul following the declaration of the 1908 Constitution: Midhat Şükrü [Bleda], Hüseyin Kadri [Mahmud Şevket's aide], [Hafız] İbrahim [representative of İpek], Hayri [Ürgüplü], Talat [Paşa], Ahmed Rıza, Enver [Paşa]."

Meanwhile, various opposition movements were also taking form, and would eventually materialize as the Liberal Union (formed in November 1911).[122] Its policies were more favorable to the Arabists, who were becoming alarmed by the Unionists' centralizing outlook, which clashed with their own interpretation of Ottoman unity as they envisioned it after the 1908 revolution. For the Arabists, intellectual groups within the Arab periphery who advocated for the representation of an Arab contingency in the Ottoman Parliament, and of whom more will be discussed it the subsequent chapter, equality of

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[121] Eugene Rogan, *The Fall of the Ottomans: The Great War in the Middle East* (New York: Basic Books, 2015) 8.

[122] Ahmad, *The Committee*, 65–92.

Ottoman citizens meant equality under the law rather than homogeneity, and non-Turks were to be respected as equal partners in the running of the state.[123]

The army as a space for centralization and Ottomanization

To be sure, CUP policy-making was inconsistent and not predetermined, but it did grow out of a specific context: the backdrop of ethnic tensions in the Balkans, where the leaders of the committee had spent their formative years.[124] There, ethno-religious conflict and developing secessionist nationalist movements among the non-Muslim groups of the Balkans, namely the Bulgarians, Greeks, Serbs, but also the Albanians and other groups, had allowed for the build-up of independent nationalist power bases in the form of military bands and militias that frequently challenged the authority of the Ottoman state. These tensions intensified in Macedonia, where Russia and Britain frequently intervened on behalf of the non-Muslim secessionist communities. This, in turn, only served to emphasize the weakened power of the Ottoman state vis-à-vis its own citizens. The result was that, among the Muslim communities of the Ottoman state, there developed a deepening sense of shame that their own government lacked the power to protect its own "Muslim" populations. In his memoirs, Enver Paşa, one of the leading Unionist decision-makers, writes,

> Without a doubt, the government was incompetent to shape a policy of action. Even today one cannot understand how that state was dominating huge areas of the Balkans and Macedonia to be such a fictitious power […] Moreover, not only in European Turkey but also in the rest of the Ottoman Empire, powerless, economically weak and unproductive, how was it possible for the Sultan's Empire to survive? The Ottoman Empire was, in effect, a paper empire.[125]

This point perhaps helps explain why the CUP, once at the center of politics after 1908, was so keen to push for a centralized, standardized, reform-oriented and "progressive" government as a means to attain national unity and control. This model would have allowed the CUP to subdue any potential dissidents with the ability challenge the central state and its authority, and give the state control over the ever increasingly secessionist, nationalist movements developing throughout the empire.

The law that made conscription mandatory for all citizens irrespective of religion was passed on August 7, 1909, and termed the law "on military service for non-Muslims."[126] In November 1909, a year after the CUP had undertaken the insurgence and several months after the deposition of Abdülhamid II in the counter-coup of April 13, 1909, the Unionists held their second annual meeting in Salonica. There, the committee emphasized the importance of conscription as a central tenant of the modern state. According to the British consul in Basra, Gerard Lowther, during the meeting, Nazım

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[123] Ahmad, 65–92; Ahmed Tarabein, "'Abd al-Hamid al-Zahrawi: The Career and Thought of an Arab Nationalist," in *The Origins of Arab Nationalism*, ed. Rashid Khalidi, Lisa Anderson, Muhammad Muslih and Reeva S. Simon (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991).

[124] Erik J. Zürcher, "The Young Turks—Children of the Borderlands?" in *Ottoman Borderlands: Issues, Personalities and Political Changes,* ed. Kemal H. Karpat and Robert W. Zens (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003), 275–286.

[125] Enver Paşa was one of the leading generals who carried out the insurgence of 1908, and continued to be among the main policy planners up until the end of the First World War. See Paşa, Enver, "Memoirs," in "Enver Paşa's Comments on the Work and Organization of the Macedonian Anti-Ottoman Committees," by Christ Anastasoff, *Balkania* 7, no. 1 (January 1973): 6–7.

[126] Mehmet Hacısalihoğlu, "Inclusion and Exclusion: Conscription in the Ottoman Empire," *Journal of Modern European History* 5, no. 2 (2007): 279.

Bey emphasized the necessity of inculcating the military body into the state space.[127] He explained that the process of Ottomanization was inextricably linked with the process of conscription, and both were necessary to counteract the increasing threat of Balkan nationalism. In this sense, the Unionists were both threatened and inspired by the Balkan model:

> Sooner or later, the complete Ottomnisation of all Turkish subjects must be effected but it was becoming clearer that this could never be achieved by persuasion and recourse must be had to force of arms. Mussulman domination was inevitable, and respect must be persevered for Mussulman institutions and traditions, the most humane in the world. Accordingly, other nationalities must be refused the right of organisation, as all notions of decentralisation and autonomy are treachery to the Turkish Empire. The Caliph was the head of the nation, other nationalities were a negligible quantity, they must retain the right of worship but not the right of retaining their own languages as the extension of the Turkish language was one of the chief means of retaining their predominance and of assimilating other elements.[128]

This quote, in particular, is a useful one in analyzing the notion of "Turkification" and the manner in which it fed into the program of centralization. The idea that Turkish should be the language of state grew out of a reaction to the Balkan model of resorting to ethnic identities as markers of belonging and nationalism. In their rejection of the decentralist model, which they believed had the potential to lead to secessionism, the Unionists' recourse toward a program of centralization through practices of standardization and legibility was intended to encourage the union of the elements and, in doing so, protect Ottoman nationalism. This entailed the standardization of the bureaucratic functioning of the empire on the bases of a common administrative language—Turkish—as well as the standardization of the civic practices, duties and responsibilities of all Ottomans, irrespective of race or religion. The project to introduce universal conscription fell into this latter category and was conceived as a means to the same end: to attain a "union of the elements."

In his monumental work, *Seeing Like a State*, James C. Scott identifies two main characteristics of this process of standardization: legibility and simplification, both of which were intended to rationalize society in order to make it more easily administrable. Scott explains,

> Much of early modern European statecraft seemed similarly devoted to rationalizing and standardizing what was a social hieroglyph into a legible and administratively more convenient format. The social simplifications thus introduced not only permitted a more finely tuned system of taxation and conscription but also greatly enhanced state capacity […] How did the state gradually get a handle on its subjects and their environment? Suddenly, processes as disparate as the creation of permanent last names, the standardization of weights and measures, the establishment of cadastral surveys and population registers, the invention of freehold tenure, the standardization of language and legal discourse, the design of cities, and the organization of transportation seemed comprehensible as attempts at legibility and simplification. In each case, officials took exceptionally complex, illegible, and local social practices, such as land tenure customs or naming customs, and created a standard grid whereby it could be centrally recorded and monitored.[129]

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[127] Nazım Bey, one of the leaders of the CUP, had been the liaison between Paris and Salonica before the revolution, and later became one of the authors of the Armenian genocide.

[128] "Arab malcontents and Young Turks and the Arab Reform Movement," 1909–1911, TNA, FO 602/52.

[129] James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 2.

In the Unionist's case, the conscription system became a core element of this standardization and control project. The Unionists had clearly been inspired by the European model of "a nation in arms," which advocated that all citizens of the nation be active in the defense of said nation. The aim of this project was to institutionalize military participation, so that military service could transform from a profession for "expendable mercenaries" to a patriotic duty for respectable citizens.[130] It was a process that had been inspired by the western European model of military reform, which culminated in the *levée en masse* of 1793 that was undertaken during the French Revolutionary wars (1792-1802).[131] Arnold Toynbee elaborates as follows,

> The peasantry in the non-Western societies, like the peasantry in the Western World at the dawn of a Modern Age of Western military history, had, […] for the most part, not been permitted, and *a fortiori* not been compelled, to bear arms before the military institution of these non-Western societies were revolutionized, one after the other, by the Western Civilization's impact. In all of these encounters with the West, except the Hindu World's and Russian Orthodox Christendom's, the impact did not occur on the military plane until after an English Industrial Revolution had begun to make universal compulsory military service an economically practical possibility, and until after this possibility had been translated into a portentous accomplished fact in the fateful French *levée en masse* of A.D. 1792; and therefore everywhere, except in Russia and India, the effect of the introduction of Western Military institutions was to militarize *en masse* at one stroke, without any transitional phase of selective conscription, a peasantry that had been non-militant up to that moment.[132]

Although the project to modernize and expand the function of the military had already begun in the mid-nineteenth century by Sultan Mahmud II, the Unionists had been the first to ensure the application of universal military conscription law, which entailed that all of the empire's citizens, irrespective of religion or race, were duty-bound to serve the Ottoman nation. Ahmad defines this shift as a radical transformation in Ottoman policy-making.[133] Up until that point, the duty to serve was an obligation of a select social group: Muslim males between the ages of twenty and forty-five. Non-Muslims were exempted in return for paying a tax (*bedel*).[134] Now, the introduction of the universal conscription system meant that violence was no longer the sole monopoly of a few privileged social groups, but rather the duty of all citizens.

In theoretical terms, the new system altered the relationship of interdependence between state and society, since it entailed that the state make demands on its citizens, requiring them ultimately to sacrifice themselves for the nation. In turn, citizens, as conscripts, gained a certain degree of authority to negotiate these demands, because they had become a necessity for the state. In order for the Ottoman conscription system to succeed, it entailed certain perquisites: it required "contingent consent," which could be achieved through "policy bargaining." Levy explains these concepts as follows,

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[130] Arnold J. Toynbee, *A Study of History (Vol. 9): Contacts Between Civilizations in Time (Renaissances); Law and Freedom in History; The Prospects of the Western Civilization* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), 475.

[131] Toynbee, *A Study of History*, 493.

[132] Toynbee, 506–507.

[133] Ahmad, "War and Society," 125.

[134] Hacısalihoğlu, "Inclusion and Exclusion," 279.

By contingent consent, I refer to behavioral compliance with state obligations; however, it is compliance that is neither coerced nor totally selfless. It requires either approval of the policy to which consent is required or approval of the process by which the policy came into existence. The precondition to contingent consent is a policy bargain that defines the mutual expectations of the parties to the bargain. The policy bargain establishes the terms of exchange between the citizen and the state. It delineates the conditions under which compliance can be demanded by government; the services, money, or obedience citizens must provide; what government actors must do in return, and the penalties for failure to uphold these terms of trade.[135]

A nation in arms

Practically, conscription served as the main means through which to build a large standing army, a structure that had come to be seen as a necessity for modern warfare. The Unionists had clearly been inspired by the theories of Colmar von der Goltz, who headed the German military mission in the Ottoman Empire.[136] The mission had been brought in to reform the army along the Prussian model after the Ottoman defeat in the Russo-Ottoman War (1877–78). In his book, which is appropriately titled, *The Nation in Arms*, Goltz explains the practical function of a large standing army,

> Prussia outdid the conscription, which was always attended with hardships and always pressed heavily upon the lower classes, by a system of universal service, the prime idea of which was to distribute the military burden equally among all classes. This universal service woke into life the systematic education of the people for the armed and military service […] This is the way by which we have arrived at raising armies from the whole national strength; at training them, in times of peace, in the best manner for war; at furnishing them with all the resources that intelligence, wealth, and intercourse can provide us with; and at giving them an organisation which allows of a transition from a state of peace into one of war in the shortest possible time. Upon the existence of such armies and upon the principle of employing them unreservedly for war purposes, are based the phenomena displayed by our modern warfare.[137]

At the same time, Goltz advocated for a new function for the army as an active component of the political process. For him, the army and the state were inextricably entwined, and the goal was to eventually create a psychological tide of martial-mindedness that was to permeate the collective psyche of the entire state population, inducing a collective sense of patriotic nationalism:

> We no longer require foreigners, because the country possesses sons of its own in sufficient numbers both for army and for labour. We need no longer paid recruits, because we can fill up our "cadres" from those who flock to the standard of their county. The defence-system of our country, based as it is upon the universal service of its sons, is in harmony with our conception of the modern state, as being a union which accords to each of those belonging to it like protection and advantages, but which, on the other hand, also owns the right of imposing like bur-

[135] Margaret Levi, "The Institution of Conscription," *Social Science History* 20, no. 1 (1996): 133–67.

[136] The Ottoman Turkish translation of Colmar von der Goltz's *Das Volk in Waffen* (The Nation in Arms), entitled *Millet-i Müsellaha*, preceded even the English translation. See M. Şükrü Hanioğlu, *Atatürk: An Intellectual Biography* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 35.

[137] Colmar von der Goltz, trans. Philip A. Ashworth, *The Nation in Arms* (London: W. H. Allen and Co., 1887), 12–13.

dens upon each. In its nature it is an ideal defensive organisation of a civilised people. […]
Napoleon's saying, that tactics ought to be altered every ten years, we may rightly supplement by
saying that this must also, at definite periods, be the case with the defence system, only every
such system must be careful to keep in harmony with the other conditions of the nation if it is
to live. *Every good defensive system has an express and definite national character.*[138]

This logic was validated by the popular Social Darwinist ideas of his time, which propagated the idea
that only the fittest nations would survive the struggle among states.

The Unionists as the harbingers of civic progress

The idea that military could become an integral component of state policy-making became a
contentious point of debate among the Unionists themselves. These debates largely revolved around
the issue of a separation of powers. Given that the committee had been split between civilian and mili-
tary elements, the question of the extent to which the army was allowed to intervene in political affairs
become the focus of these negotiations.

In 1909, the Unionists convened to discuss the "*cemiyetler nizamnamesi*" (law on committees).
During this discussion, various members present debated the function of the military components in
the promotion of political ideas pertaining to Ottoman unity.[139] Outwardly, the views of those present
seems to suggest that they were in support of a separation between the political and military compo-
nents.

> The original goal of the convocation of the congress is to decide upon the shape of the new
> "cemiyetler nizamnamesi" (law on committees) which the committee will receive, and to render
> the idea of Ottomanism lovable among the different [ethno-religious] elements [of the empire].
> Other than that, it will work to circularize the Turkish language. It will not be involved in poli-
> tics in any way. This [matter] should be run by the cabinet which the committee confides.[140]

By then, the CUP had, as Zürcher explains, "decided to remain a closed, secretive, society ruled
by its Salonica-based [Central Committee]. The party it founded merely consisted of its parliamentary
faction and had no independent existence outside parliament."[141] The Central Committee, as Zürcher
further elaborates, "was dominated by the civilian element within the CUP, in particular, Talât. The of-
ficers, who had played such a crucial role in the constitutional revolution, the suppression of the coun-
terrevolution of April 1909 and the coup d'etat of January 1913, were hardly represented at all except
for two of the original 'heroes of the revolution' (officers who had started the rebellion in July 1908):
Enver and Eyüp Sabri."[142]

Yet as Mahmud Şevket Paşa, the grand vizier at the time, later explained, this separation of
powers had proved to be impossible. He is reported to have said,

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[138] Goltz, *The Nation in Arms*, 16.

[139] Ahmet Mehmetefendioğlu, "İttihat ve Terakki'nin 1909 Kongresi," *Toplumsal Tarih*, July 1998, 20–35.

[140] Berk Metin's translation of source 93 in Mehmetefendioğlu, "İttihat ve Terakki'nin," 24–25.

[141] Zürcher, *Young Turk Legacy*, 103.

[142] Zürcher, 103.

Following the [realization of] constitutionalism, the soldiers who were involved in politics could not have been barred from it. Those who were to bar them, even if they were even powerful enough to do so, should not have done it. I myself was not powerful [enough] to bar the army from politics and even if I had the power, I could not have dared to do so. If I was to attempt it, I would have been met with a reaction. I would have been chocked by being named a reactionary, and so I did not do it and could not do it.[143]

Mustafa Kemal, later Atatürk, was one of those present in the meeting. Although his stance seemed ambiguous, advocating initially for the separation of powers between the military and the civilian components, he ultimately stressed the value of having army officers play an integral role in the policy-making of the state.

I should have not been here today according to my convictions, which I will share before you. But thinking of the great danger that our mighty nation is in, I came to this congress […] to tell the truth. We carried out the revolution with the help of our army. We were unable to continue. Our committee still relies on the army. For this reason, discipline is crippled in our army. However, our enemies that surround us are strengthening their armies constantly. The danger is great. Our military colleagues from the committee should leave the army and join the civilian organization of the committee if they want to continue in politics. Our army should be distanced from politics in this manner without letting a single day to pass. Our friends who will remain in the army should engage themselves in politics and direct their attention to the strengthening of our army.[144]

Ultimately, most members of the CUP agreed that the army was an integral component in the program to civilize and unify the Ottoman nation. To that end, the committee, with its strong military composition, was presented as the harbinger of modernity and progress, the only body capable of carrying the empire into modernity, and the institution of the military an integral component in that process of nationalization.

There is a need for the Committee of Union and Progress in this country for long years to come. The most sacrificial, the most forgiving, and the most lettered of its members are mostly comprised of officers. If the officers were to stop engaging in public matters, the committee would lose a very valuable [source of] contribution.[145]

This notion that the military components could affect broader revolutionary change in society was, again, seemingly inspired by Goltz's ideas, who wrote about the role of the officer corps,

"The soul of the Prussian army is in its officers." This saying of Rüchel may, at the time it was delivered, have been laughed at on account of its somewhat ludicrous form. But its sense is excellent. The corps of officers speaks for the condition of the whole army. Here is repeated what is universally observed in political life. So long as the educated, leading classes maintain their position, the people is serviceable and strong. On the other hand, the decay of the ruling classes of society entails the decay of the whole nation, except it be that a great social revolu-

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[143] Berk Metin's translation of source 93 in Mehmetefendioğlu, "İttihat ve Terakki'nin," 26.

[144] Berk Metin's translation of source 100 in Mehmetefendioğlu, "İttihat ve Terakki'nin," 26–27.

[145] Berk Metin's translation of source 109 in Mehmetefendioğlu, "İttihat ve Terakki'nin," 27.

tion abolishes the former, and replaces them by others; this may for a time cause a check, but never affords a permanent remedy. In the Turks of the present day, we may perceive what lot is in store for an honourable, proud, and religious people when derived of the leadership of the upper classes. The best possible troops under bad officers are at most but a very deficient body. The corps of officers must accordingly be chosen from the best classes of people, who exercise even in ordinary life a natural authority over the masses.[146]

In the same manner that Goltz advocated for a role for the officer corps as the intellectual elite that could inspire the whole, so too did the CUP, including its military elements, perceive itself as the harbinger of progress.

War-making and ideology

Tripolitania, 1911

This civilizing mentality held by the Unionists became apparent in their campaign in the Ottoman province of Tripolitania. On October 3, 1911, the Italian naval fleet began bombing the port of Tripolitania. The province had been the last remaining Ottoman North African stronghold, and Italy, eager to participate in the ongoing European colonial power play, decided to grab it. The reaction to the invasion would be the first instance of CUP policy-making that had a direct impact on Arab public opinion. Here, ideology became a major determining factor.

Enver Paşa, (who was still General Enver Bey at the time) directly led the campaign to defend the province.[147] He was joined by several young officers who were supporters of the CUP. As Eugene Rogan explains, however, "Officially, these young officers were disowned by their government as 'adventurers acting against the wishes of the Ottoman government,' though the Ottoman treasury actually made monthly payments to their commanders serving in Libya."[148]

The Italian invasion of Tripolitania, an Arab province, was the first real test of the relationship between the Arabs and the Ottoman State, and at the same time, another instance that challenged the parameters of the perceived Ottoman nation. The main issue at hand was the extent to which the Ottomans were willing to defend the province, which had remained under Ottoman control purely for reasons of prestige (i.e., to justify their assertion that the empire extended across three continents, North Africa, Asia and Europe).[149] Grand Vizier Hüseyin Hilmi Paşa told the British Ambassador, "The Government [...] which is already being accused of being too Ottoman and too much inclined to neglect the interest of other races of the Empire, especially the Arabs, could never agree to relinquish an Arab province to a Christian power. It would mean the rising en masse of all the Arab provinces of the Empire against the government."[150]

Yet while the government preferred to negotiate and come to an agreement with the Italians through diplomacy, the Unionists, ever the ardent nationalists, preferred not to cede any more territory and argued in favor of intervention.[151] With only a minimal number of Ottoman troops available to

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[146] Goltz, *The Nation In Arms*, 36–37.

[147] Enver only became a pasha when he was promoted to brigadier in 1913.

[148] Rogan, *The Fall*, 15.

[149] Rogan, 17.

[150] Ahmad, *The Committee*, 93.

[151] Rogan, *The Fall*, 15.

defend the province against Italian naval bombardments, Enver resorted to training Arab tribes in guerrilla warfare in order to defend it by land. Enver's interaction with the Arab tribes would prove significant, making him aware of the power of Islam and the role of the sultan as a mobilizing force in these distant Arab provinces that cared little for secular Ottomanism. He described the fighters as "fanatical Muslims who see death before the enemy as gift from God" and saw in their devotion an ideological tool to mobilize the forces.[152]

In his diaries, which were written as the campaign in Tripolitania progressed, he emphasized the symbolic significance of the province for the Islamic world. "Tripolitania, the miserable country, is lost for the moment—who knows, maybe forever […] Why then am I going? To fulfil a moral duty that the Islamic world expects from us."[153] He further elaborated that the only reason the Arab tribes supported the Ottoman campaign was because they appreciated Enver's link with the sultanic family. Through his marriage to Naciye Sultan, granddaughter of Sultan Abdülmecid I, Enver became directly linked with the House of Osman. Yet, the tribes Tripolitania had been unaware of Enver's role in leading the insurgence of 1908. He explained that, in Tripolitania, he had simply been seen as the representative of the sultan and the Caliphate, and support for his campaign by the Sanussi tribes was given on that basis.

> Here, I am the Sultan's son-in-law, the envoy of the Caliph who commands. And it is this alliance alone that helps me. Arabs do not know Enver Bey, the hero of freedom, or even Major General Enver Bey, but they respect the Caliph's son-in-law.[154]

This, in turn, inspired Enver to see Ottomanism though an alternative lens, or to develop his own vision of Ottomanism. Throughout the passages in his memoirs, we are constantly told about his determination to protect the Islamic frontier. Enver was not only moved by the show of unity brought about by the bond of Islam, but also saw the province as an intrinsic part of the Ottoman territory and the tribes as citizens of the Ottoman state, arguing "We will gather our forces in the [Libyan] interior. Mounted bands of Arabs, citizens of the country."[155]

For Enver, at least, the campaign in Tripolitania was directly tied with the Balkan scenario, for he had come to see the duty of the Unionist as the defenders for the Islamic populations of the empire. He now felt that the Unionists would restore trust and intervene where the Ottoman state was failing. But he also spoke of his joy at seeing Muslim and non-Muslim reserves participating together in the defense of the province, saying, "What patriotism I find among the people. The reserves called to arms, who took the same train as I did, sang the national anthems and presented themselves with joy, all together, Muslims and non-Muslims."[156]

Truthfully, Enver's memories offer only one perspective of the manner in which the Unionists perceived their duty in Tripolitania. From his perspective, he saw the defense of the province as an act of honor against European pretensions of military superiority. This is why he was keen to profess his desire to defend both Ottoman honor and the honor of the Caliphate. Tied with this rhetoric was the belief that, in order to gain European respect, the Ottoman state ought to be as powerful as European ones in its military organization. "I hope, dear friend, that we will show civilized Europe that we are not

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[152] Rogan, 17.

[153] Author's translation of the quote from M. Şükrü Hanioğlu, *Kendi Mektuplarında Enver Paşa* [Enver Paşa in His Own Letters] (Istanbul: Der Yayınları, 1989), 81.

[154] Author's translation of the quote from Hanioğlu, *Kendi Mektuplarında Enver Paşa*, 93.

[155] Rogan, *The Fall*, 15.

[156] Author's translation of the quote from Hanioğlu, *Kendi Mektuplarında Enver Paşa*, 77.

'barbarians without rights' and that we deserve to be respected; otherwise, we will die on the path of honour."[157]

This also naturally implied that, in their role as harbingers of progress, the Unionists would be leading the Libyan tribes in a *mission civilisatrice*. At the core of Unionist ideology was this belief that, as the ruling elite, it was their duty to uplift the tribes. To the Arab tribal warriors, Enver proclaimed, "Where today tents stand, there will be stone houses in a few months!"[158]

Again, however, it is it important to reiterate that this was one perspective, or one set of recollections, of the Tripolitanian campaign. The CUP was made up of many members, and that is a point worth reiterating when it comes to analyzing "CUP policy-making," because one of the core characteristics of the committee is that decision-making was borne out of debate between the different factions of the group, each of which had alternative ways of foreseeing the future of the state and how to get there. These disparate perspectives, which have often been relied upon in studying Unionist policy-making, did not necessarily reflect the actual policies pursued by the committee. Rather, they were simply part of broader conversations about the state and its future. Nevertheless, my focus here on Enver, who is, I believe, still worth acknowledging in his own right given his leading role in policy-making during this period.

Figure 4. "Arab tribal warriors defile past Enver Bey."

The Balkan Wars: When "idealism gave way to new pragmatism"[159]

Back in the Arab provinces, the war effort initially had a unifying effect, with many Arabs expressing their support through donations and by volunteering in the war campaign. The war rallied

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[157] Author's translation of the quote from Hanioğlu, *Kendi Mektuplarında Enver Paşa*, 77.

[158] Benoist-Méchin, *Turkey*, 113.

[159] Rogan, *The Fall*, 28

Muslims in defense of the Caliphate, and at the same time, garnered the support of the Arabists.[160] But public support began to wane when the Ottomans were forced to quickly turn their attention back to the Balkans, where a coalition of the newly independent governments of Bulgaria, Serbia Montenegro and Greece launched a joint attack on the Ottoman state in October 1912. It was, in fact, an extension of the Italian campaign in Tripolitania; after struggling to break through the Turkish defense, the Italians resorted to bombing other cities in the empire, including Beirut and Izmir; when all else failed, they forced a move in the Balkans.[161] The Italians encouraged Montenegro to declare war on the empire on October 8, 1912, and other Balkan states soon followed suit. The Ottomans could not afford to leave one of its main heartlands exposed and were forced to quickly conclude a peace treaty with the Italians and shift the theater of war toward the Balkans.[162]

This had significant ramifications on public opinion. Firstly, the Ottoman failure in Tripolitania exposed the military weakness of the state, and compromised its position with regards to the non-Turkish nationalist movements. For the Arabists, the failure of the Ottoman state to defend an Arab province further weakened their belief in the state, and while they still remained in favor of staying within the bounds of Ottoman sovereignty, demands for greater autonomy were becoming more widespread.[163] Secondly, the loss of Tripolitania showed that, constitution or no constitution, the European powers no longer respected the territorial integrity of the empire. And while the war had also revealed that Islamist-Ottomanism, as a mobilizing force, was far more powerful in terms of gaining the support of the Muslim masses, ultimately, the state's inability to defend the province undermined the viability of that argument. The First Balkan War was launched by the Balkan coalition (referred to above) with the intent of gaining more Ottoman territory in Thrace, Albania and Macedonia. But the threat on Balkan territories, one of the three main heartlands of the empire, was one that the Unionists took very seriously. For one thing, it was the most prosperous region of the empire economically. For another, the Balkans were especially significant for the Unionists because they were the home territories of many of its leading officers, and Salonica, the headquarters of the CUP, was located right in the center of these territories; a threat to the Balkan territories would mean a threat to the main support base of the party.[164]

Figure 5. The military attachés of the Great Powers at Constantinople conferring on the Çatalca line conferring on the Çatalca line.

At this point, the Unionists were under attack from all directions. Ousted from power in mid-1912 as a result of growing opposition within the government, they were determined to reassert

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[160] Kayalı, *Arabs and Young Turks*, 107.

[161] Rogan, *The Fall*, 17.

[162] Rogan, 17.

[163] Kayalı, *Arabs and Young Turks*, 107.

[164] Zürcher, "Children of the Borderlands?" 275–286.

themselves in order to dictate policy-making.[165] Similar to the Tripolitanian scenario, the government under Grand Vizier Kâmil Paşa, a staunch opponent of the CUP, was working for an early peace in the Balkans. The committee, on the other hand, and unsurprisingly, advocated for resistance; it simply would not agree to sit and watch as its homeland was lost.[166]

The coalition advance proved too powerful and, on November 8, 1912, Salonika fell to the Greeks. However, soon thereafter, the advance was halted at Çatalca, just forty miles from Istanbul. In Edirne, a former Ottoman capital, the city's defenders were surrounded by Bulgarian forces who had managed to capture the city, and, by December 1912, the Ottomans were demanding an armistice, which was reached that same month.[167]

On January 23, 1913, the Unionists, unwilling to allow the loss of Edirne in any peace agreement, advanced to the Porte and carried out a coup d'état against the government of Kâmil Paşa. "The question of Edirne, which had become an emotional factor in current politics, provided them with the psychological moment and ample justification for staging their coup,"[168] an incident that came to be known as the "attack on the Sublime Porte." Enver elaborates,

Figure 6. Thracian refugees waiting to embark to Asia.

Figure 7. Crown Prince Alexandre and the royal family enter the City of Skoplje behind priests.

> The government worked with the greatest energy to arouse the martial spirit of the nation and create an army capable, at any rate, of beating the Bulgarians facing the Chatildja [*sic*] lines during the second war against the [Balkan] Allies. On the one hand, they founded the Committee of National Defense, and endeavored to accumulate all possible material and military resources, and on the other, they tried to raise the moral of the army and did everything in their power to create opinion favorable to them among the great powers.[169]

The loss of Balkan territory, the homeland of the CUP leaders and the base of the Unionist party, at the hands of Christians powers who only a few years earlier had been a part of the Ottoman state, was humiliating, to say the least. Yusuf Akçura, the leading proponent of Turkish nationalism, wrote at the time, "The Bulgar, the Serb, the Greek—our subjects of five centuries, whom we have de-

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[165] Ahmad, *The Committee*, 113.

[166] Ahmad, 113.

[167] Ahmad, 114.

[168] Ahmad, *The Committee*, 120.

[169] Hanioğlu, *Kendi Mektuplarında Enver Paşa*, 225.

spised, have defeated us. This reality, which we could not conjure up even in our imaginations will open our eyes […] if we are not yet entirely dead."[170]

The impact of this loss on the psyche of the committee leaders would also have an effect on their policy-making. The loss of the Balkans, as Mustafa Aksakal explains, "intensified Ottoman and Muslim feelings of vulnerability, sense of violation, and revenge."[171] But it also exacerbated the nationalist urge. The Unionists became extremely reactionary and defensive, making their nationalism even more fervent. Believing that the only means of maintaining their grip would be by tightening their control, they resorted to pushing their centralizing policies further.[172]

In the Ottoman press, the war was depicted as a religious one between Christian and Muslim rivals. It was referred to as a crusade, or as "Balkan jihad."[173] This argument was not entirely created to stir public sentiment in favor of the Caliphate. In actual fact, Russia's expansionist policies were justified using its plans to expand the authority of the Orthodox Church,[174] making the CUP leaders all the more aware of their Muslim identity. With the population transfers that ensued, which saw the emigration of non-Muslims to the Balkans, and the parallel influx of Muslim refugees from the Balkans into the empire, the demographic makeup of the state also changed such that Muslims became an even greater majority in the empire. The notion of a secular, multi-ethnic, multi-religious empire was now becoming less viable and secular Ottomanism less useful. If the nation-building project was to continue, policy-making would have to take a new turn, and ideology had to adapt accordingly.

François Georgeon argues that the loss of the Balkans was a decisive moment that forced the Ottomans to accept the failure of "empire" as a political framework and to move toward a homogenous Turkish Muslim nation-state.[175] In other words, he sees this moment as one that inspired the emergence of the modern Turkish Republic. But this, in my belief, is too presumptuous; the Unionists still had to contend with the Arabs, the Kurds and other religious minorities, including the Jews and the Armenians. Moreover, they were generally not prone to giving up territory so easily.

Eyal Ginio and Kayalı argue that the Balkan wars forced a shift in ideology toward a more Islamist-oriented Ottomanism.[176] While Islam did become a more prominent identity marker, it came out of a defensive position, rather than a genuine belief in Islamist politics.[177] In any case, too much ephasis has been placed on that aspect of the shift in ideology, which is not surprising in light of the debates about the Armenian massacres. But what is interesting in this case is understanding how the Unionists adapted the policy of Ottomanism to accommodate the Arabs, who had become, by then, the second largest majority in terms of ethnicity within the empire after the Turks. This, however, is an endeavor which we will leave for the next chapter.

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[170] Quoted in Rogan, *The Fall*, 21.

[171] Mustafa Aksakal, *The Ottoman Road to War in 1914: The Ottoman Empire and the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 23.

[172] Aksakal, *The Ottoman Road*, 23; Zürcher, *Young Turk Legacy*; Rogan, *The Fall*, 23.

[173] Eyal Ginio, "Between the Balkan Wars (1912–13) and the 'Third Balkan War' of the 1990s: The Memory of the Balkans in Arabic Writings," in *Untold Histories of the Middle East*, ed. Amy Singer, Christoph K. Neumann and Selçuk Akşin Somel (London: Routledge, 2011), 179–196.

[174] Benoist-Méchin, *Turkey*, 127.

[175] François Georgeon, "Aux antipodes de l'État-nation: Le monde pluriel des Ottomans," *Confluences Méditeranée* 2, no. 73, (2010): 21–30.

[176] Ginio, "Between the Balkan Wars" 159; Kayalı, *Arabs and Young Turks*.

[177] Zürcher, *Young Turk Legacy*, 213–236.

Suffice it to say that the loss of Balkan territory, instead of defining the parameters of Ottomanism in more exclusive terms—i.e., in ethnic or religious terms—actually opened the space for debate and proposals for new ways of envisioning the future of the empire.[178] From an economic or military perspective, at least, the impending sense of war immediately after these losses came to be seen by the Unionist leadership as an opportunity for recovery. The CUP thus promoted a nationalist program focused on building up the national character of the state and, with it, a strong military. Aksakal explains, "Such a recovery was […] available to the Ottoman empire, but only if its society, as a totality, prepared unconditionally for war during times of peace."[179] He further explains that the Young Turks intended to transform the empire into a politically and economically independent, modern country by removing foreign control and cultivating a citizenry loyal to the state. These individuals imagined that conditions of war could offer an appropriate pretext for the expulsion of foreign businesses and the nullification of fiscal and legal exemptions for foreign nationals, the so-called capitulations. (Their actual cancellation on October 1, 1914, announced on September 9, produced massive public celebrations.) Wartime, moreover, presented the state with additional tools for the mobilization of citizenry behind the Istanbul government.[180]

The Ottoman entry into the First World War

The humiliation of the Balkan losses inspired a shift in Young Turk psyche, which encouraged the belief that "society must organize itself and prepare itself for war".[181] The Young Turk leaders, many of whom hailed from a military background, sought, above all, to make great strides in military advancement because they had come to believe that military campaigns alone could determine international relations. As such, they sought to create a body of militarized national citizens and a uniform army. In the Ottoman Chamber of Deputies, a delegate argued,

> It does not matter however many books we write on international law or however many human rights laws we implement. In order to get states to respect these [laws] we must still possess additional means, means of coercion. Every state has adopted this position and for that reason builds up its [military] strength. [A state] will use all of its defensive or offensive strength in order to defend and protect its rights. We are a state, too, and we therefore cannot escape this truth.[182]

As a result, mobilization was declared in August 1914, and the state budget primarily allocated to military spending. Yet, as Aksakal explains, in their endeavor to reemerge as a powerful nation, the Ottomans sought a military partner in peacetime. An alliance with the Germans was deemed the most suitable because it was a neutral partner with whom an alliance could offer international stability and economic advances. The German strategy with regards to the Ottomans, meanwhile, was inclined to-

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[178] For an excellent revision of the teleological reading of a neat transition from empire to nation state, see Ramazan Hakkı Öztan, "Point of No Return? Prospects of Empire after the Ottoman Defeat in the Balkan Wars (1912–1913)," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 50, no. 1 (2018), 65–84. For an equally excellent revision of Arab–Ottoman relations in the aftermath of the Balkan wars, see Yenen, Alp. "Envisioning Turco-Arab Co-Existence between Empire and Nationalism." *Die Welt des Islams: International Journal for the Study of Modern Islam* (forthcoming in 2020).

[179] Aksakal, *The Ottoman Road,* 33

[180] Aksakal, 14.

[181] Aksakal, 4.

[182] Quoted in Aksakal, 22.

ward encouraging Islamism as the primary ideology of the state because it represented an ideal counter-argument to mobilize Muslims globally against the colonial European (namely British) powers who could rely on a large pool of colonized Muslim subjects for the war effort.[183]

For the CUP, the decision to enter the war on the side of Germany made sense, both because of the historic military ties between the two countries, and because it offered security and stability vis-à-vis the European powers and eased the Ottoman state out of its diplomatic isolation. But, more than that, the agreement, signed on August 2, 1914, was an opportunity for the state to alleviate its economic burdens, while, at the same time, continuing along its nation-building trajectory.

Conclusion

Within this relationship between war-making and nation-building lies ideology. Most often, it is the key to mobilizing peoples to participate in the defense of "the nation" and to support the war effort. For the Unionists, ideology was a crucial instrument of nation-building, but not its guiding principle. Rather, the Unionists were mainly working to ensure the success of their project to unite the Ottoman population on the basis of territorial nationalism. This entailed relying on a framework for nation-building that emphasized the centralization practices of standardization and legibility. These practices were intended to create a common citizenry loyal to the Ottoman nation state. In this regard, conscription was an integral component of that centralization model in that it had the ability to create a collective sense of martial-mindedness and, through that, a sense of national loyalty among the population at large. We could therefore say that the end goal of Unionist policy-making was to maintain Ottoman unity in the face of secessionist threats, and ideologies—whether, Turkist, Islamist or otherwise—were a function of that policy-making.

The demographic changes that resulted from the successive war-making in the period between 1911 and 1914 made it extremely difficult to sustain a single, consistent ideology, and with the progression of time, the Unionists, denied a breathing space, had to come to terms with the idea that their approach to nationalism through centralization and standardization was not viable, considering the variety of actors with which they had to contend. The ideology of the Unionists was thus constantly evolving, seemingly Islamist-Ottomanist at points and secular at others. Perhaps, given more time, its parameters could have been more clearly determined, but in the short period between its coming to power in 1908 and the outbreak of the First World War in 1914—a period of tumult and fundamental changes—the Unionists were still coming to grips with the notions of power and social control.

Resolute in their defense of the national vision but forced to accept an alternate reality, their ideology fluctuated and adapted accordingly. Nothing made this tension more painfully obvious than the aftermath of the Balkan wars of 1912–1913. Rogan argues that the Balkan losses had forced the Unionists to "abandon their liberalism in a bid to preserve the empire from total collapse."[184] In this sense, their policy-making can be seen as pragmatic. For Zürcher, they were defensive, which explains why the Unionists went to drastic lengths to homogenize the various elements of the state, not only through centralization, but also through population transfers, which help explain the Armenian massacres.[185] Either way, we can understand CUP policy-making as reactionary, rather than as part of a preconceived ideological movement to Turkify and Islamize the state, a point which also undoubtedly forces us to reconsider the notion that the Arab movement was a reaction to the CUP's policies of Turkification. This chapter has attempted to show that the ideology of the CUP was not fixed, but

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[183] Aksakal, 93–119.

[184] Rogan, *The Fall*, 28.

[185] Zürcher, *Young Turk Legacy*.

rather had to adapt in tandem with policy-making considerations, which were definitionally inconsistent—all the more so since the future of the state itself was becoming increasingly unclear as a result of its constant territorial losses.

Geography and the national imagination: Diverse trajectories of individual and collective "nationalist" expression in *Bilad al-Sham* (1908–1914)

Figure 2.1 French map of the Province of Ottoman Syria, 1896

[The nation] is *imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion. Renan referred to this imagining in his suavely back-handed way when he wrote that 'Or l'essence d'une nation est que tous les individus aient beaucoup de choses en commun, et aussi que tous aient oublié bien des choses.' With a certain ferocity Gellner makes a comparable point when he rules that 'Nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness: it *invents* nations where they do not exist.'[186]

The idea of reflexively acting selves is a powerful check against deterministic pretensions of culture. It forces us to reflect intensely about how relationships between culture and selves are to be conceived, how selves acquire, enact, create, and transform culture. This requires us to pay strict attention to selves in our ethnographic work, and, further, to represent selves as selves in our ethnographies.[187]

Introduction

The period between 1908 and 1914 can be identified as a "liminal period": a peri-

od of transition, in which a society is in the process of negotiating between past networks and new forms of identity. "During a rite's liminal stage, participants stand at the threshold between their previous way of structuring their identity, time, or community, and a new way, which completing the rite es-

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[186] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006), 6.

[187] Martin Sökefeld, "Reconsidering Identity," *Anthropos* 96, no. 2 (2001): 540.

tablishes."[188] As the previous chapter has shown, this period can be considered to be a liminal one because, from the state perspective, it was a period in which the official nationalism of the state was transforming as a result of the reintroduction of parliamentary politics in 1908, which entailed the reconceptualization of the legal-ideological framework of Ottomanism into a civic-patriotic nationalist framework. Because the outline of this framework was subsequently reimagined, both by the Committee of Union and Progress as well as several oppositional political forces within the empire, the ideological parameters of Ottomanism remained, in many ways, blurred.[189] We can thus say that official Ottoman nationalism, when considered from the specific perspective of the Committee of Union and Progress, was essentially reactionary, and it was reactionary because it was in transition.[190]

In this chapter, the aim is to reconsider dynamics of this period beyond the central state space, focusing instead on the peripheral zone—specifically, the Arab-speaking periphery of *Bilad al-Sham* (Greater Syria).[191] It does so in order to understand how the project of Ottoman statecraft (which included the CUP centralist approach, more exclusively from 1912 onward) was interpreted within Ottoman society at large, and to account for the factor of liminality in helping us acknowledge the diversity of Arab experiences and sentiments of belonging to either Arab or Ottoman nationalisms (or both, or neither). This chapter attempts to make sense of, or measure—if that is even possible—the parameters of a nationalist Ottomanist imagination within the Arab periphery and, by extension, to see where conceptions of Arab nationalism or Arabism fit into the limits of those imaginings; that is, whether they belonged within or beyond the parameters of an imagined Ottoman national identity, if at all.[192]

This chapter will argue that, due to the changing relationship between Ottoman state and Arab society during this period, which entailed a shift from Hamidian policy-making—which was far less standardized than the Unionist approach—reactions within the "Arab" *Shami* periphery to Ottoman state programs of centralization, at the core of which was conscription, were inconsistent and

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[188] Michael Gallagher, "Ideas and identities in liminality," February 15, 2014, accessed July 5, 2019, http://michaelseangallagher.org/ideas-and-identities-in-liminality/: "In anthropology, liminality (from the Latin word *limen*, meaning 'a threshold') is the quality of ambiguity or disorientation that occurs in the middle stage of a rite of passage, when participants no longer hold their pre-ritual status but have not yet begun the transition to the status they will hold when the rite is complete. During a rite's liminal stage, participants 'stand at the threshold' between their previous way of structuring their identity, time, or community, and a new way, which completing the rite establishes." For an extended theoretical analysis of the concept of liminality, see Rina Arya, "Exploring Liminality from an Anthropological Perspective," in Digital Media and Technologies for Virtual Artistic Spaces, ed. Dew Harrison (Pennsylvania: IGI Publishing, 2013), 159–165.

[189] Socialists, decentralists and ethnic nationalists also emerged during this period, alongside the CUP. See "Al-ahzab al-siyasiya fi al-Mamlaka al-'Othmanniyya" [The political parties in the Ottoman state], *Al-Muqtabas*, September 16, 1911, 1.

[190] "Official nationalism" refers here to Anderson's use of the term, i.e., the nationalism promoted by states as official ideology. Based on this logic, one could also argue that, since time is constantly moving, societies shift in a constant state of transition and, by consequence, policy, rather than being pre-determined, is always evolving in relation to its surrounding forces.

[191] Also referred to throughout the chapter as the *Shami* periphery.

[192] Arabism is defined as proto-nationalism and revisionist accounts have argued that, during the late Ottoman period, Arab nationalism was still in the proto-stage, not completely fully developed. The nuances of this are explored further in C. Ernest Dawn, "The Origins of Arab Nationalism" in *The Origins of Arab Nationalism*, ed. Rashid Khalidi, Lisa Anderson, Muhammad Muslih, Reeva S. Simon (New York: Columbia University, 1991).

diverse.[193] This, in turn, forces us to reassess the very notion of a uniquely "Arab" reaction to CUP policy-making, as defined in ethnic terms.

Theoretical discussion on the Arab space: Geography, identity and reactions to conscription

The element of geography or, more specifically, spatial distance from the state-space, can be identified as one of the most integral factors in shaping sentiments of loyalty and belonging to a national collective, particularly within the Ottoman imperial context. By considering the role of space in determining the influence of official national ideologies within peripheral zones, we are thus able to analyze—to an extent—both the degree and the form of success of the Unionists' interpretation of Ottomanism between 1908 and 1914 within the periphery of *Bilad al-Sham*. This, in turn, allows us to also identify the element of geography as an essential factor in our capacity to determine the Ottoman state's ability to mobilize conscripts from the province during both the Balkan Wars (1912–1913) and the First World War (1914).

To elaborate on this point, it would be useful to turn to James C. Scott, who offers a useful model through which to understand the dynamics of the extension of state centralizing projects onto non-state peoples and spaces.[194] Scott analyzes the impact of states' attempts to sedentarize mobile populations into defined state-spaces, a process which entails making "a society legible, to arrange the population in ways that simplified the classic state functions of taxation, conscription, and prevention of rebellion," all of which were deemed central processes in the kinetics of nation-state formation.[195]

> Only the modern state, in both its colonial and its independent guises, has had the resources to realize a project of rule that was a mere glint in the eye of its precolonial ancestor: namely to bring nonstate spaces and people to heel. […] Seen from the state center, this enclosure movement is, in part, an effort to integrate and monetize the people, lands and resources of the periphery so that they become, to use the French term, *rentable*—auditable contributors to the gross national product and to foreign exchange. In truth, peripheral peoples had always been firmly linked economically to the lowlands and to world trade. […] Nevertheless, the attempt to fully incorporate them has been culturally styled as development, economic progress, literacy, and social integration. In practice, it has meant something else. The objective has been less to make them productive than to ensure that their economic activity was legible, taxable, assessable, and confiscatable or, failing that, to replace it with forms of production that were. Everywhere they could, states have obliged mobile, swidden cultivators to settle in permanent villages. They have tried to replace open common-property land tenure with closed common property: collective farms, or more especially, the individual freehold property of liberal economies. They have seized timber and mineral resources for national patrimony. They have encouraged, whenever possible, cash, monocropping, plantation-style agriculture in place of the

[193] For an elaboration, see Eugene L. Rogan, *Frontiers of the State in the Late Ottoman Empire: Transjordan, 1850-1921* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 44–160; Odeh Al-Qsous, *The Memoirs of Odeh al-Qsous (1877–1943)* (Amman: National Library of Jordan, 2006) 2.

[194] James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999).

[195] Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, 2.

more biodiverse forms of cultivation that prevailed earlier. There term *enclosure* seems entirely appropriate for this process.[196]

At the core of this dialectical relationship between an expanding state-in-the-making and the unruly societies that it had tried to govern was a simple logic: the state, set out on its quest to make society legible and governable in order to attain control, in return, it offered protection. In this sense, as Charles Tilly has argued, the state formed a protection racket, which he defines as "some[thing that] produces the danger and, at a price, the shield against."[197] In broader terms, the state sought to control violence by subduing "illegitimate" power sources under the sole "legitimate" monopoly of the state, creating large armies in order to prepare and partake in large projects of violence, but also in order to protect those who were submitted into the central state's boundaries of control.

In this way, states could define the limits of their authority, and thus delimit their physical boundaries vis-à-vis those of their neighbors. This also required the development of administrative structures that could support the state-building project, including personnel and funds, which were extracted through conscription and taxes, with the aid of census measures, which helped define identities of belonging and taxable property and resources. Tilly elaborates, "The general rule seems to have operated like this: The more costly the activity, all other things being equal, the greater was the organizational residue. To the extent, for example, that a given government invested in large standing armies—a very costly, if effective, means of war making—the bureaucracy created to service the army was likely to become bulky."[198]

We can trace several similarities between Scott's and Tilly's models of statecraft and the model ascribed to by the CUP as part of its centralization campaign, which ultimately sought the same end goal: to standardize society in order to make it legible, an appropriate objective if the empire was to survive in the age of nation-states. Yet, it is important to stress that the Unionists were by no means the first to attempt a centralization project. In fact, the core logic of the Tanzimât reforms, which began during the mid-nineteenth century, was designed to gear Ottoman policy toward that end. Nevertheless, when the Unionists entered politics after the 1908 insurgence, they sought a form of centralized statecraft that relied on the twin principles of standardization and legibility, the aim of which was to attain *ittihad-ı anasır* (union of the elements). At the core of this project was a policy of universal conscription for all Ottoman subjects, without discrimination by creed or race, through which it sought to systemize state-citizen relations. This contrasted with the Hamidian centralization policy, characterized by its more tailored approach to policy-making, which was more malleable and could, and often did, adapt to the diverse provincial contexts and social groups of the empire.[199]

Yet the process of integrating peripheral groups into a central Ottoman state-space had significant implications on the process of defining the cultural and ideological modes of individual and collective belonging within the "Arab," *Shami* periphery of the Ottoman Empire, particularly vis-à-vis tribal groups there. We get a sense that the dynamics of interaction between the central Ottoman state and the peripheral *Shami* communities entailed processes of resistance, adaptation and negotiation that, in turn, produced inconsistent patterns of belonging into the Ottoman state-space. Again, we can rely on Scott for a theoretical elaboration (which uses Southeast Asia as a case-study),

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[196] James C. Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 4–5.

[197] Charles Tilly, "War Making and State Making as Organized Crime" in *Bringing the State Back In*, ed. Peter B. Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, and Theda Skocpol (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 169.

[198] Tilly, "War Making," 16.

[199] Rogan, *Frontiers*, 44–160.

One challenge for a non-state-centric history of mainland Southeast Asia consists in specifying the conditions for the aggregation and disaggregation of its elementary units. The problem has been succinctly put by one observer of a somewhat comparable flux between states and their autonomous hinterlands: "There comes a time when one realizes that one is dealing, really, with molecules which sometimes unify in the form of a vague confederation, sometimes, just as easily, disaggregate. Even their names offer no consistency or certainty." If the fluidity of the molecules themselves is an inconvenience for anthropologists and historians, imagine the problem it poses for the dynastic official or would-be state-builder, the colonial official, and the modern state functionary. State rulers find it well-nigh impossible to install an effective sovereignty over people who are constantly in motion, who have no permanent pattern of organization, no permanent address, whose leadership is ephemeral, whose subsistence patterns are pliable and fugitive, who have few permanent allegiances, and who are liable, over time, to shift their linguistic practices and their ethnic identity. And this is just the point! The economic, political, and cultural organization of such people is, in large part, a strategic adaptation to avoid incorporation in state structures. These adaptations are all the more feasible in the mountainous hinterlands of state systems.[200]

The framework of empire and the expansion of the state under Hamidian rule (1876–1909)

In comparison to Scott's model, however, the framework of empire in the Ottoman case poses alternative challenges for would-be theorists, for the divide between state and nonstate spaces was not quite so obviously dialectic. On the one hand, as previously mentioned, several administrative reforms carried out during the Tanzimât period were intended to ensure a more centralized state presence in the peripheral regions. Between 1833 and 1872, several successive land ownership and administration laws were enacted, ensuring that peripheral administration be divided into smaller units, defined as *vilayets*, *sanjaks*, *kazas* and *nahiyes*, which can be likened to the French *departments*, *arrondissements*, *cantons* and *communes*.[201] These divisions ensured that Ottoman administrators increasingly gained the capacity to directly intervene in the affairs of peripheral communities, even in the most remote parts of the empire.[202]

The reorganization of provincial units of administration into a hierarchy that directly linked the center with the remotest regions of the empire—many of which had, hitherto, survived nearly autonomously—inspired new frameworks of interaction by creating direct lines of communication and offering new avenues of social mobility for local populations. Through a process of collaboration and reliance on local intermediaries, the state managed to maintain its hegemony. At the same time, the introduction of provincial councils facilitated the incorporation of the periphery into the center, consequently giving greater agency to local representatives of power.

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[200] Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed*, 38–39.

[201] "TURKEY: Military Report. Syria. (WO)," 1911, TNA, FO 881/9958X.

[202] Benjamin C. Fortna, *Imperial Classroom: Islam, the State, and Education in the Late Ottoman Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002). See also Al-Qsous, *Memoirs*; Salih al-Tell, "The Memoirs of Salih Tell," in *al-'Asha'er al-Urduniyya: al-'Ard wal-Insan wal-Tarikh* [Jordanian Tribes: Land, Peoples and History], ed. Ahmad Oueidi al-Abbadi (Amman: Maktabat al-Muhtaseb, 2004). Jens Hanssen, *Fin De Siècle Beirut: The Making of an Ottoman Provincial Capital.* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), 9; Jens Hanssen, "Practices of Integration: Centre-Periphery Relations in the Ottoman Empire," in *The Empire in the City: Arab Provincial Capitals in the Late Ottoman Empire*, ed. Thomas Philipp and Stefan Weber (Beirut: Orient Institute, 2002). 49–77.

During the Hamidian period, state schools were opened across the Arab peripheries, aiming to attract the loyalty of diverse communities there.[203] These schools were intended to create a cadre of Arab officials educated in the traditions of Ottoman bureaucracy. For instance, *Maktab 'Anbar* was a Hamidian secondary school that opened in Damascus in 1885.[204] It was the first of its kind in the province and became the main breeding ground for citizens loyal to the Ottoman cause, out of which a variety of noteworthy Arab reformists graduated. In this way, alumni were offered a direct vehicle for social mobility into the state structure. Besides *Maktab 'Anbar,* Sultan Abdülhamid II had been intent on creating a vast schooling network throughout the imperial domains. "During his rule, 10,00 new semi-religious elementary (*sıbyan*) schools opened, while the number of *ibtidai* (more secular elementary) schools increased from 200 to 4,000, *rüştiye* (mid-level high schools) from 250 to 600, *idadi* (middle schools) from 5 to 104, and teachers' colleges from 4 to 32."[205]

The memoirs of Salih al-Tell, a native of Irbid in the Sanjak of Ajloun, are particularly interesting in this regard. In his account, we are told that the local population in the Syrian peripheries was also actively engaged with the state in demanding educational reform in the region, namely because education was seen as the primary vehicle for social mobility. On the subject of his own education, al-Tell explains that he attended a newly established state school, which was opened after much persistence by his father. He writes,

> My father was illiterate; he could neither read nor write. However, he was a person of some standing in Irbid. In the habit of mixing and socializing with government officials, he discovered that one of them was the son of a blacksmith, while another the son of a craftsman, and yet another the son of a peasant. Before he made this discovery, he had assumed all along that government offices were only given to the children of the elite, chiefs or notables. As a result of this discovery, he repeatedly requested from the *qaimaqam* [local governor] to ask the government to establish a primary school in Irbid. Finally, after much correspondence and further requests, the *Vilayet* acceded to the request.[206]

The school, which exists to this day, was the first Hamidian *rushdiye* school to be opened in Irbid.[207] Like most Hamidian schools, it was branded with the sultan's *tughra* (official seal), a symbol of allegiance to the sultanate.[208] Ultimately, these schools helped foster communities within the Arab peripheries that were loyal to the state, and many of these Ottomanized generations eventually served as

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[203] See Fortna, *Imperial Classroom*; Michael Provence, "Late Ottoman State Education" in *Religion, Ethnicity and Contested Nationhood in the Former Ottoman Space*, ed. Jørgen Nielsen (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 115–127.

[204] Provence, "Late Ottoman," 118; Al-Tell, "Memoirs," 151.

[205] M. Hakan Yavuz, *Islamic Political Identity in Turkey* (Oxford, Oxford University Press: 2003), 44.

[206] Al-Tell, "Memoirs," 150.

[207] Ahmad Shgeirat, "Madrassat Hasan Kamel al-Sabah: Madrassa Rushdiya" [Hasan Kamel Sabah School: A Rushdiya School], *Muhandis Irbid Magazine*, (July 2008), 28.

[208] Shgeirat, "Madrassat," 28.

state functionaries in their home provinces, where they often became members of the local administrative town councils.[209]

We can turn to al-Tell again for an account of his own trajectory toward becoming an Ottomanized citizen. When the governor of Syria paid an inspection visit to Irbid, al-Tell's teacher introduced him to the governor, who asked him a few questions and was pleased with his answers. Al-Tell was given a scholarship to attend *Maktab 'Anbar* in Damascus, and his accounts of his time there are perhaps the most interesting part of the memoirs as well as the most useful for understanding his transition into an Ottoman gentleman. He recounts his experiences in the cosmopolitan setting of Damascus and his experience at the school, where students could "be admitted without paying fees and could lodge, eat and study at the expense of the government."[210] Thereafter, al-Tell was appointed to work with the state as a schoolteacher in different regions of the province and, later, during the First World War, fought with the irregulars alongside the Ottoman army. His memoirs illustrate the success of this policy of Hamidian Ottomanism; for al-Tell, the state had provided an opportunity for employment and upward social mobility.

Yet, despite their allegiance to the state, once these Ottomanized officials returned to their home provinces, it was common for them to operate both within the state structure and with alternative social structures, including tribal, familial and religious ones. As Jens Hanssen explains, "The modern Ottoman state was neither omniscient nor omnipotent, and local power continued to appropriate its own spheres of influence."[211] Local contexts thus made way for the emergence of multiple affinities, and the further away a province was from the central state-space, the more likely it was for one to encounter societies that were heterogeneous in their affiliations (as will be shown further throughout the analysis). As a result, the defining limits between state and nonstate people was blurred, such that within the single provincial unit that is *Bilad al-Sham*, diverse communities and individuals could simultaneously exist both within and beyond the bounds of the Ottoman state-space. Loyalties were therefore subject to adaptation and could shift at any time, meaning that individuals and communities could have multiple loyalties at any one given time, depending on convenience and circumstance.

Reflexivity

In the period between 1908 and 1914, the phenomenon of shifting or deviating state boundaries further contributed to the development of malleable identities and communities with alternating loyalties in regards to the state. One could say that, during this pre-nation state period, in which the borders of the Ottoman Empire were constantly being redefined and the limits of Ottoman state authority were constantly being challenged, the boundaries of both Arabism and Ottomanism were still being negotiated. That is, the lack of any clear physical boundaries to correspond to the ideological imaginations of national belonging rendered individual conceptions of self and communal identity fluid and adaptable, rather than strictly defined.

In this sense, we could also build on Martin Sökefeld's theoretical model of the self vis-à-vis culture and community, in which he argues that culture is both a process and a struggle. In this context,

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[209] Al-Tell, "Memoirs," 155; Ruth Roded, "Social Patterns among the Urban Elite of Syria During the Late Ottoman Period (1876–1918)," in *Palestine in the late Ottoman Period: Political, Social and Economic Transformation*, ed. David Kushner, (Jeruslaem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi Press, 1986) 147; Benjamin C. Fortna, "Emphasizing the Islamic: Modifying the Curriculum of Late Ottoman State Schools," in *Childhood and Youth in the Muslim World*, ed. Klaus Kreiser and François Georgeon (Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose, 2007), 193–209.

[210] Al-Tell, "Memoirs," 155.

[211] Hanssen, *Fin De Siècle Beirut*, 9; Hanssen, "Practices of Integration," 49–77.

Sökefeld sees selves as "reflexively" acting, in that they "struggle, make designs, dissent, put themselves in opposition to groups or dominant views, and construct and deconstruct identities."[212]

According to Benedict Anderson, the nation is always conceived of as a deep horizontal comradeship.[213] However, by looking at a diverse number of individual actors from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds and regions within *Bilad al-Sham*, this chapter attempts to trace vertical, non-national (or nationalist) relationships and networks, which existed alongside, or despite, the prevalence of nationalist tendencies. In this way, the chapter seeks to look beyond the prevalent but limited and limiting tendency of scholars of nationalism to define the past through the lens of methodological nationalism, or to see identity only in terms of belonging to a national community. Instead, it seeks to highlight the diversity of the human experience of belonging to collectives that tend to cut across a wide spectrum of communal networks over long periods of time. This approach forces us to lean toward a conception of identity that highlights plurality within the singular. To quote Sökefeld,

> It is very essential that difference is supplemented by plurality and intersectionality because both conditions prevent a renewed essentialization. Plurality means that differences never exist in the singular. Everybody has to position her- or himself (or is positioned) with regard to a multiplicity of differences, and those differences do not simply run parallel and congruent but intersect each other. […] I distinguished different "dimensions of difference" intersecting one another and producing a field of forces in which individuals constantly have to position — and to re-position — themselves.[214]

In the broadest sense, this chapter seeks to analyze the manner in which individual conceptions of identity transformed into collective conceptions of identity, and eventually into national (in this case, Arab or Ottoman) forms of bonding. Yet it also seeks to highlight that this trajectory was not necessarily consistently linear, nor ever clearly outlined.

To arrive at that argument, the chapter largely focuses on individual narratives derived from memoirs and contemporary diaries and writings by conscripts (or individuals) residing within the diverse regions of *Bilad al-Sham*, who lived through the period between 1908 and 1914 and consequently reacted to, firstly, the Ottoman campaign to integrate them into a broader Ottoman nation-state and, secondly (and by extension), the Ottoman call to arms in 1914. The inconsistent patterns of national belonging offered therein force us to look beyond normative assumptions about nation-state formation as a linear, collectively preconceived process, and instead "give[s] importance and attention to these acting selves" as agents of their own identity-formation process.[215] Culture and identity formation are thus imagined not as singular, monotonous processes, but rather as diverse, multifaceted and ever-evolving ones. This also implies that the relationship between the Ottoman state and peripheral communities within *Bilad al-Sham* were not static, nor were they strictly defined in terms of a central "Turkish space" and another peripheral, reactionary "Arab space." Rather, it shows that the two "sides" were in a constant state of debate, negotiation, inculcation, adaptation and integration.

To elaborate on these points, the chapter will comparatively consider four spaces within *Bilad al-Sham*, all with varying distances from the center of Ottoman rule, Istanbul. In the first section, the chapter looks at Damascus, the center of the province of *Bilad al-Sham*, and the closest in proximity to

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[212] Sökefeld, "Reconsidering Identity," 541.

[213] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 50.

[214] Sökefeld, "Reconsidering Identity," 535–537.

[215] Sökefeld, 541.

the Ottoman center. Its relevance in relation to the province is described by the British consul in Damascus as follows,

> Damascus is the capital of the country, as well as the chief centre of Muslim influence; Aleppo is the northern capital, but its influence on the central districts is slight. […] The Vilayet of Suriye […] takes in the country east of the Lebanon Range and the Jordan River, from Hama on the North to Akaba and the Hejaz Vilayet on the South. It has four Sanjaks: Hama, Damascus, the Hauran, and Maan.[216]

In Damascus, a nascent, linguistic, debatably nationalist Arab movement had been emerging since the middle of the nineteenth century, and was largely the outcome of the vigorous incorporation of peripheral Arab communities into the Ottoman state space.[217] The section shows that, in fact, Arabists, in their effort to integrate the Arab community into an electoral parliamentary body defined in ethnic terms, also became agents of Ottomanization, in that they sought to promote the reform-advocated ideals of modernization and progress onto "tribal and uncivilized" peripheral populations. Their rhetoric of reform within *Bilad al-Sham* was thus part of a broader project intended to integrate the region into the Ottoman nation-state under formation, but along decentralist lines.

The subsequent sections comparatively analyze three other regions within *Bilad al-Sham*, "peripheries within peripheries." These are Hauran, Al-Karak (Ma'an) and Palestine (which did not administratively fall under the Damascene administration, but ideologically looked to Damascus as a center of belonging). Within these "regions," a diverse range of communal groups interacted and moved within common spaces and were not always exclusively defined in ethnic or national terms, but often, simultaneously, in communal terms (by tribal, religious or familial affiliation, or in the sense of belonging to a specific city or village). Here, too, the state was present and, conversely, representatives from these regions were presented as part of the state apparatus, but geography greatly determined the level, as well as the forms, of interaction between local social groups and the Ottoman state; the general model being, the less easily accessible these regions were to the state, the less likely they were willing to integrate into a broader Ottoman framework of civic organization, which entailed conscription.

In order to get a sense of the multiplicity of dynamics at play during this period, the chapter also relies on a range of newspaper reports and articles published in prominent Arab journals during the period. These also include opinion pieces by several notable Arabists, as well as letters from individuals from different regions of *Bilad al-Sham*, who relied on these journals as platforms through which to voice their concerns and disseminate their opinions. These give a sense of the manner in which the ideas of a specific intellectual milieu traveled throughout the region, and the extent to which these actually had an effect on framing notions of belonging to an Ottoman and/or Arab national community.

Finally, the chapter also relies on documents provided by the British consular records on the Vilayet of Suriye (Province of Syria) written during the period between 1908 and 1914. These are unique in that they offer consistent and intricate details about political networks and interactions, as well as dynamic processes that influenced *Shami* society and its interaction with the Ottoman state,

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[216] "TURKEY: Military Report. Syria. (WO)," 1911, TNA, FO 881/9958X.

[217] See Butrus al-Bustani, *Nafir Suriyya*, no. 9 (January 1861).

from a point of view that is neither Ottoman nor Arab and which will allow us to see beyond standard nationalist biases on either side.[218]

Arabist-Ottomanists: Damascene peripheral intermediaries

Damascus is commonly treated as the center of the Arabist movement, where intellectual groups increasingly began to define themselves in ethno-nationalist (i.e., Arabist) terms. By and large, most of the scholarship that deals with the origins of Arab nationalism tends to focus on the perspective of reformist intellectual groups, mainly in Beirut and Damascus, the two Ottoman cities that have traditionally been perceived as the "centers" of Arabist reformist thought.[219] In earlier works published during the 1960s, scholarly accounts mainly concentrated on the "politics of the notables."[220] Since the 1980s, however, revisionist accounts broadened the scope of analysis and came to emphasize the role of a newly emergent subset of the middle class: civil servants within the state, who were largely the product of the Hamidian reform programs, such that when we trace their backgrounds, we find that they were mostly graduates of *Maktab ʿAnbar*.[221] Otherwise, the Hamidian *Aşiret Mektebi* (Imperial School for Tribes), which inculcated the sons of tribal sheikhs, had the same function for the tribal

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[218] These sources, however, are to be approached with caution, for they provide a detached perspective of society and were intended to form the core ethnographic studies on which British foreign policy-making considerations in the Near East were based. One of the predominant characteristics of the reports is the fact that they often depict *Shami* society through the dual and inextricably linked lenses of ethnic and religious divisions. In this sense, these consular reports can be likened to any standard colonial documents produced elsewhere in the British colonies, in which society was mapped along ethno-religious lines, an approach that was, in many ways, motivated by the desire to render these societies into units of analysis. As an example, see David Gilmartin, "Scientific Empire and Imperial Science: Colonialism and Irrigation Technology in the Indus Basin," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 53, no. 4 (November 1994): 1127–1149.

[219] Cairo was another city where Arabist thought developed, and intellectuals within the three centers often traveled and exchanged ideas between them. In this way, Arabism was not necessarily geographically confined. However, the Arabist agenda in Cairo was different to that of Damascus and Beirut, due to Egypt's status as a British protectorate, which added another dimension to the form that Arabism took there. (It is for this reason I am focusing solely on *Bilad al-Sham* in this research.) On a separate but relevant note, scholars of Arab nationalism tend to create a distinction between Arabism and Arab nationalism, although the lines of said distinction are not always clear. Arabism is generally defined as a proto-nationalist movement not quite seeking independence from Ottoman rule, and is said to have developed during the pre-First World War period, while Arab nationalism is a post-First World War movement that builds on the basic principles of Arabism, but is a fully fledged independence movement in its own right, developed as a reaction to the quasi-colonial mandate system and post-war territorial divisions.

[220] Albert Hourani is the leading proponent of the notion of the politics of the notables. See Albert Hourani, "Ottoman Reform and the Politics of the Notables," in *The Modern Middle East: A Reader*, ed. Albert Hourani, Philip S. Khoury and Mary C. Wilson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 87. See also, Philip S. Khoury, *Urban Notables and Arab Nationalism: The Politics of Damascus, 1860–1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.) For an analysis of the concept see, James L. Gelvin, "The 'Politics of Notables': Forty Years After," *Middle East Studies Association Bulletin* 40, no. 1 (June 2006): 19–29.

[221] David Commins, "Religious Reformers and Arabists in Damascus, 1885–1914," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 18, no. 4 (November 1986): 410; Eugene L. Rogan, "The Political Significance of an Ottoman Education: *Maktab ʿAnbar* Revisited," in *From the Syrian Land to the States of Syria and Lebanon*, ed. Thomas Philipp and Christoph Schumann (Würzburg: Ergon, 2004), 77–94; Provence, "Late Ottoman," 115–127; Birgit Schaebler, "From Urban Notables to Noble Arabs: Shifting Discourses in the Emergence of Nationalism in the Arab East, 1910–1916," in Philipp and Schumann, *From the Syrian Land*, 186.

populations of the extended Syrian peripheries.[222] Christian reformers, meanwhile, had, in many cases, although not exclusively, been the product of missionary (especially American and British Protestant, or French Catholic) schools, which increasingly infiltrated the Syrian provinces from the 1860s onwards.[223]

The generation that emerged from the late-nineteenth-century, "modern" schooling system (particularly graduates of the Hamidian schools) can thus be perceived as the Arab counterpart of the Young Turk reformers, particularly those intellectual émigrés that went into exile in Paris and London during the late Hamidian period. Both sets of groups were of the same generation and reacted to the same grievances; like the CUP émigrés abroad, the "Arabists" initially developed their reformist position in reaction to Hamidian censorship and framed their demands for reform in the Syrian province in terms of progress and modernity, based on positivist principles and defined by their calls to reinstate parliamentary constitutional rule, which was deemed the only appropriate measure through which to save a weakening empire under Hamidian autocracy.[224]

The Late Hamidian period: Ottomanism as a tool for overcoming sectarianism

One of the earliest journals published for an Arab-speaking audience between 1895 and 1896 was titled *Turkiyya al-Fatat* ("Young Turkey") and edited by Khalil Ghanem and Emir Emin Arslan. Ghanem was a Maronite Christian who had risen rapidly in Ottoman official ranks after coming to the attention of Governor Esat Paşa, who employed him as a translator in the grand vizierate. He later became—at the young age of 32—a deputy for Syria in the short-lived Ottoman Parliament of 1876, which was prorogued by Abdühamid II two years later, in 1878.[225] Arslan, the scion of a noble family in Mount Lebanon, belonged to the Druze community, a heterodox religious sect. Both had cooperated with and were attached to the Young Turk movement[226] and, after 1896, the CUP, a branch of the movement led by Ahmet Rıza, an exile in Paris.[227] Ghanem was a main editor, alongside Rıza, for the journal *Meçveret*, established in 1896, while Rıza also contributed to the bi-weekly *Turkiyya al-Fatat*.[228]

In articles published in *Turkiyya al-Fatat*, Ghanem and Arslan frequently expressed their desire to see reform in the Syrian province as a means to overcome sectarian violence there. The violence that developed out of sectarianism had consequently come to be perceived as a symptom of the poor management of the provinces, increasingly so after the 1861 outbreak of hostilities between Druze and Maronite communities, which resulted in a mass exodus of members of both groups from Mount Lebanon to the Americas.[229] The two editors advocated a turn toward national, secular forms of belonging to an Ottoman nation as a means to overcome divisive loyalties to any one sect, creed or race,

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[222] Rogan, "Aşiret Mektebi," 83–107.

[223] George Antonius, *The Arab Awakening* (London: H.Hamilton, 1938), 35–61; Rogan, *Frontiers*, 122–160.

[224] "Ila ikhwanina al-Suriyyeen" [To our Syrian brothers], *Turkiyya al-Fatat,* January 27, 1985, 1.

[225] M. Şükrü Hanioğlu, *The Young Turks in Opposition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 44.

[226] M. Şükrü Hanioğlu, "The Young Turks and the Arabs before the Revolution of 1908," in *The Origins of Arab Nationalism*, ed. Rashid Khalidi, Lisa Anderson, Muhammad Muslih, and Reeva Simon (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 35.

[227] Hanioğlu, "The Young Turks," 35.

[228] Hanioğlu, 36.

[229] "Turkiyya al-Fatat" [Young Turkey], *Turkiyya al-Fatat*, December 13, 1896, 1.

in order to attain *ittihad-ı anasır*. This, in their view, would have been best achieved through a parliamentary system in which all members could be represented as Ottoman citizens.[230]

> Our country is divided. Unite all the parties so that we no longer have Turks, nor Arab, nor Kurds, nor Greeks, nor Armenians, nor Christians, nor Druze, nor Metwalis, but Ottomans; that is to say, the children of the same nation.[231]

Interestingly, the two editors often resorted to defining their audience as a "Syrian" one; linking identity with a defined territorial space in this way was perhaps an attempt to overcome these religious and ethnic identity divisions. Yet this tilt toward a definition of self in terms of territorial belonging was, in many ways, also tied to the broader effort to conceptualize Ottomanism in patriotic terms (i.e. in terms of love of the *patrie*, or fatherland). In the journal, Syria was consistently defined as a province of the Ottoman nation, and it was argued by the two editors that their duty was to defend the integrality of Syria's position within this Ottoman fatherland.

> If the journal and its editors were to receive support from some Syrians […] its position would become stronger due to wider circulation, thus gradually attracting greater sympathy in such a way that, in no time, national solidarity would spread like a contagion, from one heart to another, and from father to son, and would become a rallying point surrounded by enough people seeking to prevent injustice and restore rights that had been abrogated. […] Can't you see that every patriotic union began in this manner and under similar conditions? The point of this is to make every human right known, liberate the oppressed and demand that which has been taken away, in order to eventually […] attain a union of the elements and unify the symbols and slogans of the nation.[232]

Yet the debate about ethnolinguistic nationalism and its characteristics was one that was difficult to avoid; Arabs, not only in Syria, but in Egypt and Iraq as well, increasingly came to question the interaction between "Arabs" and "Turks," two of the dominant ethnic groups within the empire. For Islamic reformers who had rallied around Muhammad Abduh and Al-Azhar scholars in Egypt, these debates usually centered around the legitimacy of a Turkish caliphate (as opposed to an Arab one).[233] They were inclined toward a fusion between Islam and science, in which they saw a natural alliance as a step toward adapting to modernity.[234] These Islamic reformists offered an alternative proposition for reform to attain *ittihad-ı anasır*, which, unlike the CUP's positivist, laïc approach, was more inspired by a Salafi one to return to the untarnished origins of Islam.[235]

Ghanem and Arslan addressed the thorny topic of Arab-Turkish relations in the third issue of the journal, as part of a series of articles entitled "To our Syrian Brothers," which aimed to inspire Syri-

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[230] "Ila qura'unna al-kiram" [To our dear readers], *Turkiyya al-Fatat*, December 13, 1896, 3.

[231] "Ila qura'unna al-kiram," 3.

[232] "Ila ikhwanina al-Suriyyeen," 3.

[233] Mahmoud Haddad, "The Rise of Arab Nationalism Reconsidered," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 26, no. 2 (May 1994): 201–222; Schaebler, "Urban Notables," 176–198.

[234] Haddad, "The Rise," 201–222.

[235] For an interesting argument on the link between the Arabists of Syria and the Sharifian Revolt of 1916, see Schaebler, "Urban Notables," 176–198.

ans to "lift the veil of silence" imposed by the censorship of the Hamidian Palace and reveal the true intent of the sultan and his policy of pan-Islamism. Much like the journal itself, the series was riddled with contradicting notions about the Turks. Firstly, however, it is important to note that, within the journal, there were two types of Turks, the first of which were those whom they referred to as the "Free Turks," or Turkish members of the opposition with whom Ghanem and Arslan had been collaborating. (Many of whom were, in fact, not ethnically Turkish, but rather Albanian, Kurdish, Circassian, etc., but collectively defined as Turks in the context of Balkan identity politics.) The second was the "Turkish"-Ottoman government (which, incidentally, was also not exclusively made up of Turks). The editors supported the "Free Turks," whose efforts toward constitutionalism fit in with their own agenda of reform and who were, in fact, praised for their mobilization toward attaining national representation, something which the editors felt that the Syrians needed to learn from.

> Here, now, the Free Turks have called for the need for reform and have objected to the [present government's] bad judgments and declared their innocence from them and their consequences. And so they have established national associations and published newspapers […] What excuse do the Syrians have for retiring to doing nothing? Why this humiliating idleness?[236]

On the other hand, when it came to blaming an entity for the problems of the empire, they resorted to criticizing the "Turks" as the ruling community within the empire on the basis of their characteristics as leaders and their policies of rule. They had the following to say,

> We, Arabs, have accepted the rule of the Turks by preferring the unity of Islam, which binds us on the basis of religion, to territorial unity, which binds us in a nationalist sense. The result was that [the Turks] used religion as a means to rule over us, causing sedition between us and our fellow citizens.[237]

A comparison between the manner in which the editors spoke of the two groups of "Turks" reveals that their opinions changed according to how it fit into their political agenda. For reformers in Syria and Lebanon, a group that comprised members of non-Muslim, minority groups, and who were more prone toward secularist policies, the debates about Arabism were another means to overcome sectarianism; by focusing on the linguistic element that bound Arabs, they frequently advanced the argument that the Arabic language predated the Muslim religion, and could thus be a binding force through which to overcome sectarianism. Arabism was, therefore, a means of asserting their communal identity within a potential new parliamentary system. Here, again, the goal was to aspire toward a Syrian Arab constituency within a broader Ottoman parliament or nation.

In this way, the writings of Ghanem and Arslan reveal a vacillation between the three amorphous yet overlapping identities of Arab nationalism, Syrian nationalism and Ottomanism. This sense of alterity in how the national self was conceived would become a pattern that would repeat itself in the nationalist debates within the Syrian province throughout the period between 1908 and 1914.

Political affiliations in Syria after 1908

Ghanem died in 1904 and did not live to see the reinstitution of the 1908 Constitution. However, we can trace direct inspirations between his and Arslan's ideas about constitutional reform and the ideas of

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[236] "Ila ikhwanina al-Suriyyeen," 3.

[237] "Ila ikhwanina al-Suriyyeen," 3.

Damascene intellectual groups in the aftermath of 1908, who increasingly came to regard themselves as representatives of an Arab/Syrian political constituency within the Ottoman parliamentary system.[238]

In 1906, Muhammad Kurd 'Ali, a Damascene Sunni Muslim of Kurdish and Circassian descent, began publishing the journal *Al-Muqtabas*. Prior to that, Kurd 'Ali had been an editor of several journals in Egypt, which, at the time, had been a hub for journalists and editors of the exiled Ottoman opposition, who were escaping the wrath of Hamidian censorship.[239] In Egypt, he became more closely associated with the group of Islamic reformists that had formed around Abduh and his disciple, Muhammad Rashid Rida.[240] Kurd 'Ali seems to have fit his own ideas somewhere in between Islamist-oriented and secular-patriotic views. Like Arslan and Ghanem before him, he was driven to speak on behalf of the Syrian constituency and to address—in order to eventually overcome—the sectarian divisions that had plagued the Syrian community for decades. In his memoirs, *Kihtat al-Sham* [Plans of the Levant], he argues that sectarian strife within *Bilad al-Sham*, particularly between Druze and Maronites, had allowed for Europeans to intervene on behalf of the two communities, both of whom were sponsored by Britain and France respectively.[241] By contrast, he argues that the Sunni majority, as well as the Alawites, had been left unprotected by the Ottoman state, and that the Hamidian state, with its claims to the caliphate, had betrayed its own "Muslim" populations. Here, we can trace similarities between Kurd 'Ali's arguments and those of the Unionists, who had formed in the Balkans (ultimately leading the insurgence of 1908) and who had similarly felt that the Hamidian state had failed them by succumbing to European diplomatic and military pressures.[242] As such, Arabists, like Kurd 'Ali, felt that their duty was to ensure the protection and fair representation of the Arab Syrian periphery within the Ottoman state.

1908 and the beginning of divided loyalties

In the aftermath of the 1908 reintroduction of constitutional politics, the debate about the nature of Ottomanism as a unifying nationalist ideology became more urgent and also more divisive. Unlike the Unionists, who increasingly stressed the centralized, homogenizing approach to attaining a union of the elements, Kurd 'Ali and his coterie—which included Shukri al-'Asali and Abd al-Rahman Shahbandar, among other prominent Arabists—became some of the main representatives of an Arab constituency within the state and the central figures of an Arabist movement, one which tended to support a decen-

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[238] In fact, Ghanem's brother, Shukri, became one of the most vocal members of the *Meclis-i Mebusân* (Parliament). See Andrew Arsan, "Shukri Ghanem and the Ottoman Empire 1908–1914" (undergraduate thesis, University of Cambridge, 2004).

[239] Schaebler, "Urban Notables," 176–198.

[240] Haddad, "The Rise," 201-222; Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, "Between the Arabs and the Turks," in *The Complete Works of Jamal al-Din al-Afghani*, ed. Muhammad Amara (Cairo: Dar al-Kitab al-Arabi, 1968), 222–227; Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, "The Eastern Question," in Amara, *The Complete Works,* 227–242.

[241] Muhammad Kurd 'Ali, *Khitat Al-Sham [Plans of the Levant]* (Damascus: Maktabat al-Nuri, 1983), 103.

[242] Enver Paşa, "Memoirs," in "Enver Paşa's Comments on the Work and Organization of the Macedonian Anti-Ottoman Committees," by Christ Anastasoff, *Balkania* 7, no. 1 (January 1973): 6–7.

tralized model of government in which Arabs could be represented proportionally and fairly within a broader Ottoman civic parliamentary model.[243]

For the Unionists, the lack of support for their project in the Syrian province was a constant source of worry. From the outset of their endeavor, they had failed to attract a prominent body of adherents to their cause and, as such, began to make designs for the propagation of the Unionist agenda within the province. During the annual CUP meeting held in Salonica in November 1910, Nazım Bey explained that "there were 4,800 branches of the committee with 13,500 members in 1909 and 18,300 members in 1910. Most of these were in Turkey in Europe. There were very few in Syria and Asia Minor and none in Arabia, Yemen Mesopotamia and Tripoli."[244] It was then decided during the meeting that "there would be a planned effort to increase the number of Committee branches within the province."[245]

More interestingly, support for non-reformist groups within the province, namely the Mohammedans, appears to have been especially threatening to both the Arabists and the Unionists. In April 1909, while the Unionists were struggling with the counter-coup, a British consular letter noted that, in Damascus, there was "strong support for the Mohammedan group" who were leading the counterrevolution that aimed to undermine constitutional rule.[246] This indicates that a sizeable proportion of the population was still leaning toward the Hamidian regime, more so than any reform program. By January 1910, it was further reported that "The Mohammedan association in Constantinople spread to Damascus and, till now, several thousand have signed the declaration of joining the association. Their intention is to demand the application of the Shariat laws."[247]

The Arabists as agents of state: Promoting conscription as a civilizing, nationalizing tool

However, despite their overall divergent approaches, both the Unionists and the Arab Ententists shared a united vision for a progressive, reform-oriented empire. In the immediate post-constitutional moment, Kurd 'Ali and his group had adopted a position with regards to the Arab tribes of the Syrian periphery that was very much in line with the standard Unionist and general state-expansionist attitude; both argued the need to bring the "unruly" Syrian tribes to heel and force them into the Ottoman fold. Conscription, which also entailed disarmament of the tribes, was an integral means to achieve that goal. In a report dated January 2, 1909, by Gerard Lowther, the British consul in Damascus, stated the following,

> Ali Yumni Effendi, the mutessarif of Kerak Sanjak, resigned his post and went to Constantinople on account of being unable to cope with the backward and little civilised condition of

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[243] Kayalı also mentions that there were several Unionist clubs operating in Syria, as well as Unionist supporters in the Arab provinces. However, he states that the majority of the Arab constituency represented in Parliament were part of the decentralist camp, and Arabists gained attention in the aftermath of Cemal Paşa's hanging of several Arabists in June 1915. As such, further research on Unionist Arabs is required. See Hasan Kayalı, *Arabs and Young Turks: Ottomanism, Arabism, and Islamism in the Ottoman Empire, 1908–1918* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 60–64, 192–196; Samir Seikaly, "Shukri al-Asali: A Case Study of a Political Activist," in *The Origins of Arab Nationalism*, ed. Rashid Khalidi, Lisa Anderson, Muhammad Muslih and Reeva S. Simon (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991): 73-97; Rashid Khalidi, "Ottomanism and Arabism in Syria before 1914: A Reassessment," in Khalidi, *The Origins*, 50–73; Schaebler, "Urban Notables,"176–198.

[244] Nazim Bey, one of the top leaders of the CUP, had been the liaison between Paris and Salonica before the revolution.

[245] "Arab malcontents and Young Turks and the Arab Reform Movement," 1909–1911, TNA, FO 602/52.

[246] "Reform movement in Syria," 1913, TNA, FO 195/2451/484; "General reports," 1909, TNA, FO 618/3.

[247] "Reform movement in Syria," 1913, TNA, FO 195/2451/484; "General reports," 1909, TNA, FO 618/3.

that Sanjak, much as Haidar Bey a year or so ago found it impossible to remain in Hawran district.[248]

Similarly, in *Khitat al-Sham,* Kurd ʿAli argued that tribalism was a symptom of incivility and backwardness. He reasoned that it ought to have been eradicated by the Ottoman central authorities long ago and that, with a reformist government in power, it had become imperative for the Ottoman state to finally civilize the tribes and bring an end to tribal violence in the province.[249]

The role of the Arabists in Syria vis-à-vis the peripheral groups within the province can thus be defined as that of agents of the state, or agents for Ottomanization. Given their proximity to the Ottoman center, and their incorporation into the central Ottoman political fold, in which they were engaged in parliamentary debates, they increasingly came to espouse the state's expansionist tendencies and to support its infiltration into nonstate spaces.[250] This logic would fit Scott's model of peripheral intermediaries, whose function it is to extend the values of the central government, particularly its "discourse of development, progress, and civilization" onto peripheral groups. Scott elaborates,

> "Behind each lament lies a particular project of rule: […] All would style themselves, unselfconsciously, as bearers of order, progress enlightenment, and civilization. All wish to extend the advantages of administrative discipline, associated with the state or organized religion, to areas previously ungoverned."[251]

By 1913, *Al-Muqtabas,* according to a British consular report, had become the "most widely read newspaper in the Arab provinces." Through journals similar to it published in Beirut, Damascus and Cairo, intellectual Arabist thinkers were able to, in Arabic, diffuse their ideas pertaining to modernity and nation-building onto a broader Arab populace. In doing so, they helped introduce a new vocabulary of modernity and nationalism. This can be likened to the process pointed out by Anderson,

> These print-languages laid the bases for national consciousness in three distinct ways. First and foremost, they created unified fields of exchange and communication below Latin and above the spoken vernaculars. Speakers of the huge variety of Frenches, Englishes, or Spanishes, who might find it difficult or even impossible to understand one another in conversation, became capable of comprehending one another via print and paper. In the process, they gradually became aware of the hundreds of thousands, even millions, of people in their particular language-field, and at the same time that only those hundreds of thousands, or millions, so belonged. These fellow-readers, to whom they were connected through print, formed, in their secular, particular, visible invisibility, the embryo of the nationally imagined community.[252]

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[248] "General reports," 1909, TNA, FO 618/3.

[249] Kurd ʿAli, *Khitat*, 107–8.

[250] See Seikaly, "Shukri al-Asali," 73–97; Khalidi, "Ottomanism," 50–73; and Kayalı, *Arabs and Young Turks,* 52–122.

[251] Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed*, 2.

[252] Anderson, *Imagined Communities,* 56.

Reactions to conscription in the central and peripheral peripheries: Two protection rackets battling for authority

Through an analysis of the ideas of Kurd 'Ali and his coterie, we can trace the development of a certain spatial distinction within the Syrian/Arab periphery, which, in most research narratives, has been left unaccounted for. It refers to the emergence of two distinct peripheral zones: firstly, a central-peripheral "Syrian-Arab-Ottoman" zone, with its capital in Damascus, and, secondly, several outlaying "peripheral-peripheral" zones, which looked to Damascus as "a" center. The implications of this distinction are most obvious when we comparatively examine the reactions to conscription in the various districts of the province.

Damascus

On the July 24, 1909, the Ottoman state passed the CUP-sponsored law on "military service for non-Muslims" (i.e., the universal military conscription law)[253] and new military training drills were introduced to the VII regiment stationed in Damascus.[254] Initially, it seems that the new conscription law was not received with much enthusiasm,

> Considerable activity appears to prevail in military circles: troops are being constantly drilled and maneuvered; and new uniforms and military bands are more than ever in evidence. With increasing prominence, however, it can hardly be said that the army are gaining in popularity.[255]

According to Lowther, the most noticeable development with regards to the introduction of the law was the participation of non-Muslim communities in the draft, which—perhaps surprisingly—was initially welcomed:

> It is a curious sight to find at Damascus quite considerable numbers of uniformed men attending divine service in various churches, Greek, Protestant, Armenians, Catholic etc., during the last three months. Fatih Pasha has been particularly busy (among other things) with the projected reorganisation of the service. Solid, well-built stabling for about 80 cavalry horses is approaching completion opposite the barracks, and I believe the sum of five thousand pounds has been assigned for the purchase of more horses for the corps.[256]

The Druze of Hauran

The Druze were the most prominent peripheral-peripheral community to reject the advances of the constitutional reform movement. In a quarterly report written by Lowther in 1909, he noted,

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[253] Mehmet Hacısalihoğlu, "Inclusion and Exclusion: Conscription in the Ottoman Empire," *Journal of Modern European History* 5, no. 2 (2007): 279.

[254] Erik J. Zürcher, "The Ottoman Conscription System, 1844–1914," *International Review of Social History* 43, no. 3 (1998): 437–49; Mehmet Beşikçi, *The Ottoman Mobilisation of Manpower in the First World War: Between Voluntarism and Resistance* (Leiden: Brill, 2012); Mehmet Hacısalihoğlu, "Inclusion and Exclusion: Conscription in the Ottoman Empire," *Journal of Modern European History* 5, no. 2 (2007): 264–86; "TURKEY: Military Report. Syria. (WO)," 1911, TNA, FO 881/9958X.

[255] "General reports: the Druze Affair," 1910, TNA, FO 618/3.

[256] "General reports," 1911, TNA, FO 618/3.

The Druze community in general is believed to be feeling somewhat apprehensive as to the tendency and the possible future designs of the constitutional movement in Turkey, who they have not welcomed with any cordiality, in respect of their quasi-independent position: they are anxious lest they may be hereafter attacked and they themselves forced to contribute their fair quota of conscripts and universal taxes with almost all other districts of the Sanjak.[257]

Throughout 1909 and into 1910, various reports by the British consul revealed an increasingly hostile attitude by the Druze community toward efforts to integrate them into the Ottoman fold.[258] They frequently refused to nominate delegates to parliament, and completely rejected the very notions of disarmament and conscription. Instead, they began to stock up on arms supplies with the surplus profits made from a newly developed grain trade.[259]

For the Arabists, the more troubling issue was the fact that the Druze were inclined to frequently raid and attack the Muslim inhabitants of the adjacent town of Bosra in Hauran, a habit that they persisted with as a demonstration of their rejection of any attempt to subdue or delegitimize their claims to violence as non-state actors within the Arab periphery.[260]

What becomes obvious through this analysis is that the Druze of Hauran were less inspired to rebel because of any patriotic or ethnic concerns; rather, they were more focused on attempting to maintain their independent protection racket, which was increasingly being challenged by the ever-expanding protection racket defined as the Ottoman state. By early 1909, the Ottoman government began discussing sending a military troop to quell them:

> I have the honour to report that the government in its new constitutional form seems to be unwilling to tolerate any longer the disorderly attitude of the Druze of the Hawran and the Bedouins living among them, and though the present state of these disobedient people is not much worse than it used to be under the late government. There is an idea of sending a force of ten battalions against them in order to be able to carry out the necessary reforms in that district. If this takes place, the Druze probably will be invited to hand over all brigands and ill-reputed persons among them to pay arrears of taxes due by them to the government, to restore all spoils and things stolen by them from other people during the past few years, and to give promise under guarantee to respect and obey the government orders and to live in peace with each other and with their neighbours.[261]

Meanwhile, the local provincial council (*Meclis-i Umumi*) met in Damascus in April of 1910 to discuss the Druze issue.[262] The council consisted of 16 elected members, four from each *sanjak*, whose function it was to report back to the central government. The council members argued that the rugged mountainous landscape made it difficult to infiltrate the Druze environs and, as a solution, suggested that structural reforms be undertaken in the province to ensure more direct state access. Here, again, the council members were acting as functionaries of the state, with Ottoman-expansionist interests:

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[257] "General reports," 1909, TNA, FO 618/3.

[258] "General reports," 1909, TNA, FO 618/3.

[259] "General reports," 1909, TNA, FO 618/3.

[260] "General reports," 1909, TNA, FO 618/3.

[261] "General reports," 1909, TNA, FO 618/3.

[262] "General reports: the Druze Affair," 1910, TNA, FO 618/3.

They passed many decisions referring chiefly to constructing or repairing carriage roads between the various towns and establishing new preliminary schools in the villages and recommended precautions against Bedouin raids and aggression on the settled people, measures for promoting native trade and industries and for ameliorating the present state of agriculture, and for redistributing the present state of the Vilayet, creating new Cazas and Mutassarifliks.[263]

In the Syrian press, journals dedicated several issues to discussing the Druze rebellions, oftentimes agreeing with the government on the need to reform the Arab periphery. When the Druze consistently went back on promises to stop the violence, a force led by Syrian Arab General Sami Pasha al-Faruqi was sent to quell and disarm them in August 1910. Additionally, the force had a mandate to prepare a census count in order to eventually conscript them. Sami Pasha moved to Dar'aa with an artillery battalion of mostly Arab officers and conscripts, who had been preparing for the expedition since early August of that year.[264]

It speaks volumes that the central authorities preferred to send Arab troops to subdue the Arab tribes, and were supported in that effort by the Arabists. While relying on the troops that were closest in proximity to the events was not an uncommon phenomenon (in practical terms, it was much easier to send troops that were close), the measure was nevertheless seen as a provocation, intentionally intended to undermine any ethnic sense of belonging by having members of the same ethnic group pitted against one another.

For their part, the Druze continued to resist and claimed that, if they were to give up arms, they would open themselves up to attack by marauding bedouin tribes, who could undermine their authority in the region. Instead, they resorted to destroying symbols of Ottoman authority and continued their violence against neighboring tribes. Another tendency, and one which was generally on the rise during this period, was to flee:

> Local newspaper today states that most of the Druze are sending their wives, children and effendis to Lebanon from Sheikh Mersin station. Also that the director of the French railways made an agreement with some Druze for a sum of money to start a special train to carry them to Aley and Sofar. This agreement is for one month only. Other Druze have gone to Basthaya and Jennouna.[265]

To make up for the insufficient numbers of conscripts from Hauran, the Ottoman authorities resorted to conscripting larger numbers from the adjacent district of Ajloun. This, in turn, caused a greater sense of dissatisfaction among the tribes there, who complained to the authorities in 1910.

> All arms had been taken from the villages (everyone need[ed] to carry something in traveling before) and […] after 400 soldiers had made a cordon round El Husn, the first conscription was carried out and about 85 young men taken away. There had been much bribing and lying as to age to rescue the men.[266]

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263 "General reports: the Druze Affair," 1910, TNA, FO 618/3.

264 "General reports: the Druze Affair," 1910, TNA, FO 618/3.

265 "General reports: the Druze Affair," 1910, TNA, FO 618/3. Certain names of places in this document, including "Basthaya" and "Sheikh Mersin station," could not be easily read through the consul's handwriting and might therefore be incorrectly transcribed.

266 Quoted in Rogan, *Frontiers*, 193.

As such, we can say that practical government policies, rather than ethno-nationalist ideological concerns, were noticeably more effective in deterring sentiments of loyalty and support for the Ottomanist project.

Figure 2.2 Troops pictured near Dar'aa station of the Hejaz Railway, where they were involved in putting down the Druze revolt and Karak rebellion. Photo is dated January 1, 1910.

The Karak Revolt, 1910

By the end of 1910, the Druze model of resistance had inspired tribes south of Hauran to follow suit. In, Dar'aa, around Amman, and in Ma'an, tribes were rising up in reaction to the inception of the Karak Railway construction scheme. Their frustration was doubled when the state failed to pay its monthly stipends to the tribal sheikhs in those regions, which, again, threatened their quasi-independent structure.[267]

In Karak (Sanjak of Ma'an), along the southern frontier of the province, a rebellion broke out in November of 1910, only one month after the Druze affair had been quelled. Agitation was brewing as early as 1908, when the government stopped its monthly stipends to the sheikhs, but another incident that year made matters worse: Qadr al-Majali, *sheikh al-mashayekh* (the head tribal authority) of Karak, after being elected to represent Kerak in the *Meclis-i Mebusân* (the Ottoman Chamber of Deputies), was rejected by the Unionists on the basis that he was illiterate.[268] Here, on a very deep level, we notice the interplay of political divisions clothed in anti-state rhetoric. Within Karak, there developed a specifically anti-Unionist sentiment, such that by the time Ottoman forces came into Karak to begin the head count for the census in November of 1910, the opportunity was ripe for al-Majali to prepare for a rebellion in order to reaffirm his authority. In an excerpt from his memoirs, Odeh al-

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[267] "General reports: the Druze Affair," 1910, TNA, FO 618/3.

[268] Al-Qsous, *Memoirs*, 62.

Qsous (a member of the local council of Karak and also an ally of al-Majali, the main leader of the rebellion) recounts the events as follows,

> The [census] committees [which included many Unionists appointed by the government] pursued their endeavors harshly, such that fear rose in the hearts of the villagers who had bitterly complained about what was to become of them after all the information was gathered. Moreover, the heads of the Majali tribe strongly believed that the government was attempting to undermine their authority through these measures, and to overload the local population by forcing new tax payments and sending their children to distant provinces to serve in distant wars. What had made them sure of these conspiracies was the manner in which the government interfered in the case Qadr al-Majali's election to the administrative council, and their removal of his name from the list of those who had been elected, despite his victory by a crushing majority, and the subsequent appointment of Mustafa Effendi al-Jafari in his place. Additionally, Kheiri Bey[269] did not respect Qadr and frequently challenged him in public. The heads of tribes therefore began to secretly meet up to discuss and debate what needed to be done, without informing any of the heads of the Christian tribes, so they decided in these meetings to stand together against the government through a revolt aimed at killing government officials and pushing away the army from these territories, in the same way that they had done with Ibrahim Pasha's army. […] The sheikhs decided to undertake the revolt and chose the date Tuesday, the 23rd of November, 1910.[270]

When an old woman approached al-Majali to relay her fears about the census authorities and the possibility that local boys would be conscripted, it was decided by Qadr al-Majali, after a consultation with other tribal leaders, to go ahead with the attack. That same evening, on Sunday, November 21, 1910, the attack was launched, and was followed by a 10-day assault on government buildings, including the official government headquarters, the post office, local Ottoman schools and other symbols of state. Moreover, a number of government officials were pursued and assassinated.[271]

The revolt clearly targeted all government symbols as a show of authority, and of rejection of Ottoman presence. What is interesting to note is the role of "minority groups" in the region, two of which stand out. One was comprised of rival clans, who either sheltered government officials or were involved in informing officials in other provinces to call for their support. For instance, immediately after the attack, a member of the Tarawneh tribe—the main rivals of the Majalis—ran to the district commissioner (*mutasarrif*) and informed him of the situation. In doing so, he was hoping to show his loyalty to the Ottoman cause and distance himself from the insurgents. This was also intended to help him gain Unionist support, particularly when it came to the issue of municipal elections, in which the Unionists frequently intervened (as was the case with al-Majali's election).[272]

The second notable group was composed of Christian tribes, of which al-Qsous was a member (as part of the al-Halassa clan). Karak had been a confessionally mixed district with a large Christian tribal population that had close ties with leading tribal leaders. Nevertheless, as Christians, they could never be expected to lead the tribal alliances themselves, and were always regarded as secondary within the tribal hierarchy. In the excerpt quoted above, for instance, we see how al-Qsus mentions that a

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[269] Kheiri Bey was a Unionist who headed the census committee responsible for counting the Majali tribe alongside Qadr al-Majali, the head of the tribe. Al-Qsous, *Memoirs*, 61–62.

[270] Al-Qsous, *Memoirs*, 62.

[271] Al-Qsous, 62.

[272] Al-Qsous, 61.

meeting of leading Muslim tribal heads was held secretly, without the knowledge of Christian tribes. In the rest of his memoirs, al-Qsus recounts how Christian families had come together and agreed to flee to a nearby town. While on the move, they spotted the incoming Ottoman back-up troops moving toward Karak from Hauran. According to his account, they immediately ran to join them and offer their support. Al-Qsus states that he played a leading role as an intermediary, for he had strong ties with al-Majali, but was strongly opposed to the revolt, and frequently asserts his support of the Ottoman state. (He had been elected to several administrative councils and it was a point of honor for him to attain those posts.)[273] He recounts an exchange between himself and the head of the arriving Ottoman forces, in which he states that he advised government forces on how to set up their defenses within the city in order to launch the counter-attack. In return for his help, al-Qsus writes that he asked the head of the forces to protect the Christian tribes and attest to the fact that they remained loyal and were not involved in the attacks.

What we can glean from this account is that, among the two groups (the Christians and the rival clans), the Ottoman state offered an alternative form of protection and an avenue for these repressed groups to move up socially within a larger system. As a protection racket, the expanding state was thus able to reshape alliances and social ties in the region. Eventually, it was through these opportunities that the Ottoman forces were able, via the knowledge offered by their supporters in the district, to overcome the rebelling tribal alliance and eventually subdue them.

It is interesting here to compare the Karaki situation to the Balkan one. In Karak, unlike the Balkans, it was the Muslim groups who rejected the authority of the state, while Christian groups saw in the Ottoman state an opportunity for an expanded political role. This, in many ways, highlights the lack of nationalist ethno-religious tendencies as a motivating factor for rebellion and dissent (as opposed to the case in the Balkans), and points to the areas in which the Unionist policy of reform and standardization was actually successful in maintaining Ottoman hegemony and support.

The Hauran and Karak revolts as causes célèbres among the "Arabists" of Damascus

By early 1911, the instigators of both the Hawran and Kerak rebellions were rounded up and either severely punished or executed. In newspapers in Damascus, Aleppo and Beirut, leading intellectuals debated whether the state was right in pursuing such harsh punishments, with many—including the editors of *Al-Muqtabas* —defending General al-Faruqi's harsh measures against the tribes, arguing that it was necessary to quell the rebellion in order to maintain safety and security.[274]

Moreover, in *Al-Muqtabas*, both the Karak and the Hauran revolts were covered with great enthusiasm. Throughout the campaign, news of the revolts made front pages, indicating how these events were deemed by the Arab press as crucial to a larger initiative to integrate the distant peripheries into a broader "Arab-Ottoman" physical space and the tribes of Hauran and Karak into the broader "Arab" community. The reform-oriented Damascene elite thus sought to introduce the region to the broader Arab public; in the months following the Karak Revolt, two series of articles were published over several editions in the paper. The first was a three-part series published throughout December 1910 (a month after the revolt), entitled "Rebellion in Karak," while the second, "The past and present of al-Karak," was a seven-part series published between December 1910 and February 1911. Both were written by a leading Arabist, Khalil Rifʿat al-Hawrani, and were intended to introduce Arab readers to the

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[273] Al-Qsous, 65.

[274] Khalil Rifʿat al-Hawrani, "Fitnat al-Karak" [Rebellion in Karak], *Al-Muqtabas*, December 10, 1910, 3.

region of Al-Karak, which was described as "a great region and one of the most important regions of Syria."[275]

The intermediary role of the Arab intellectuals—who used the incident to press for reforms in the Arab regions of the empire—is interesting to note here. Although the writers blamed the rebels for their insubordination, they frequently argued that Al-Karak had been in a state of disrepair prior to the outbreak of the revolt. This, according to them, was the reason the tribes rejected the extension of Ottoman authority. Moreover, many articles stressed that, in keeping with the constitutional logic of the times, it was integral that the Ottoman state reform the Arab lands. In an article published in September 1911, almost one year after the revolt, one writer argued for the need to "eradicate unruliness and ignorance [in the Arab peripheral regions.] […] The only manner by which the state will be able to accomplish these goals is through administrative reforms, the establishment of schools, and an internal police division".[276]

Intensification of hostilities between Arabists and Unionists on the basis of ethnicity

Yet 1911 and 1912 were also difficult years for Arabist-Unionist relations. In parliament, the Arabists were growing increasingly weary of what they perceived as a "chauvinistic" Unionist attitude toward policy-making, which, they believed, favored the Turkish components of the state and made little space for Arabs to participate in their own self-government. Lowther reports that,

> The rather evident anti-Turk sentiment and prejudice, which began to appear throughout Syria some eight months ago has gone on simmering, and nearly reached boiling point, perhaps after speeches of the Deputy al-'Asali (who is popular among Arabs) and certain remarks about the number of employees in the ministry of finance whom the Arabs reckon less than one percent. The Unionist and Progress Committees have certainly within this district been dwindling and losing influence and less and less attended by parties esteemed for their patriotism and capacities, for fully a year past and are now a mere shadow. A large party was to have been delegated and sent from Salonica, for the restoration of the Union and Progress influence and allaying any sore feelings on the part of the Arabs; this drew forth adverse criticism on the part of certain local newspapers, which again was answered by a reminder that such attitude was far from polite and quite out of accord with Arab route for hospitality and welcome to visitors. The project, I hear, is now suspended at least for several months, but occasional visitors have been here lately, including Yusuf Zia Bey of the Turkish Foreign Office and others from Salonica.[277]

This intensifying division between the Arabists and the "Turkish" Unionists was the result of several successive events. Firstly, in October 1911, Italian forces invaded Tripolitana, the last Ottoman Arab stronghold in North Africa. In opposition journals, including *Al-Muqtabas* and *Al-Mufid*, articles lamented the state of the empire and professed fears that Syria would be next if the Unionists were to continue overlooking the Arab periphery in their calculations.[278] These fears were expounded even further after the Italian fleet launched attacks on the Beirut Harbor in February 1912, causing panic

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[275] Khalil Rif'at al-Hawrani, "Madi wa hader al-Karak" [The past and present of Karak], *Al-Muqtabas,* December 27, 1910, 3.

[276] "Al-ahzab al-siyasiya," 1.

[277] "General reports," 1911, TNA, FO 618/3.

[278] "Italya wa Tarablus al-Gharb" [Italy and Tripolitania], *Al-Muqtabas*, October 16, 1911, 1.

among the inhabitants there, particularly non-Muslims.[279] As such, there was a general lack of trust in the Ottoman authorities, a sentiment redirected against the Unionists by the Arabists, despite the fact that the Unionists were not yet in total control.

Secondly, elections were coming up, and both the Unionists and the Decentralists were keen to strengthen their positions.[280] By late 1911 and early 1912, a fully developed decentralist agenda was taking form. The opposition coalesced into the *Hürriyet ve İtilâf* ("Liberty and Entente," sometimes known as Liberty and Union) party, which was to contest the 1912 election against the newly formed party of Union and Progress.[281] Both parties began to campaign more intensely, undertaking tours of the Syrian province in order to endear themselves to the Arab public.[282]

By mid-1911, *Al–Muqtabas* had begun to publish articles attempting to introduce its Syrian readership to the logic of party politics. For instance, an article entitled "*Al-ahzab al-siyasiya fi al-Mamlaka al-'Uthmaniyya*," ("The political parties of the Ottoman Empire") was published in the journal.[283] The article elaborated on the function and status of the four dominant political parties in the empire: the Socialists, "of which there were very few"; the Liberals, to which the majority of leading Arabists, including Kurd Ali, adhered, and whose decentralist campaign for Ottoman unity was strongly praised; the Democrats; and, finally, the Unionists, whose program was extensively undermined— increasingly so because, during the electoral campaigns of the preceding years, the Unionists were inclined to meddling with the electoral process to ensure outcomes favorable to their program. Thus, in 1909, a consular report written by Lowther noted,

> Two delegates from the C.U.P. of Salonica arrived here towards the end of October and left about the 10th of December. During their stay they tried to influence the elections for parliament but their efforts failed and the result was displeasing to the liberals. They also modified the organization of the C.U.P. in Damascus.[284]

These intimidation tactics by the Unionists and the oppositional campaigns in the Arabic press served to further deter the Arab public against them and in favor of the Ententist Agenda.

Thirdly, by 1910 and 1911, the outlying Arab provinces of the Gulf had become increasingly susceptible to British and French interference. Unrest therein led to the outbreak of a series of revolts and subsequent alliances, which altered the delicate balance of power between the Ottoman state, the princes of the Gulf, and the British and French authorities.

In the summer of 1909, the Idrisi rebellion broke out in Yemen and had to be forcefully quelled by Arab—sometimes Syrian—conscripts, who resented having to punish their fellow "Arab" brethren.[285] The distance of Yemen (located at the very southern tip of the Arabian Peninsula) from Syria was also difficult to bear for many conscripts and their families, and contributed to an increase in

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[279] "General reports," 1912, TNA, FO 618/3.

[280] Rashid Khalidi, "The 1912 Election Campaign in the Cities of Bilad al-Sham," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 16, no. 4 (November 1984): 461–474.

[281] Khalidi, "1912 Election Campaign," 463.

[282] Khalidi, "1912 Election Campaign," 466.

[283] "Al-ahzab al-siyasiya," 1.

[284] "General reports," 1909, TNA, FO 618/3

[285] "Jerusalem: Bedouins in Beersheba district," 1913, TNA, FO 195/2452/1153.

the number of complaints against the Unionists' conscription system, along with demands that Arab conscripts only serve within their own provinces.

Meanwhile, Britain had been making designs on the Persian Gulf and was attempting to create alliances with members of royal families there. Throughout 1912, a succession of alliances and treaties were agreed upon between the British government, the Ottomans and representatives of the houses of Thani, Saud and Rasheed (of Qatar, Nejd and al-Hasa, and Ha'il, respectively.) The concessions by the Ottoman government pointed to the precarious status of the Arab-Ottoman periphery. The newly determined status of these regions, as well as the issue of Zionist settlement in Palestine, were strongly contested by Arabist representatives in parliament, who complained about the lack of Unionist initiative to intervene in the regions where Arabs were most strongly under threat of foreign dominance.[286] This inspired Arab delegates in parliament to become more hostile to the Unionist agenda, who increasingly became vocal in their debates, effectively undermining Unionist support in the Syrian province.

> The popular sentiment of Syria in general, and more particularly in Damascus, would appear to be strongly adverse to the Union and Progress (*Ittihad*) and in favor of the Union and Liberty Party (*Itilafiyin*), while government functionaries and army officers mostly take side for the Union and Progress and indeed it was asserted recently that any official venturing to declare against this Party's projects would be liable to instant dismissal.[287]

Still, the Ententists were keen to emphasize that their campaign was loyal to the Ottoman cause. In an article published February 1, 1912, a small section was devoted to praising the *redif* (reserve) soldiers stationed in Beirut, who were keen to enlist and adopt military uniforms. "We have witnessed many young men flocking to ask for military uniform and weapons, to the extent that some have gone without permission, evidence that the Beirutis are strongly in favor of maintaining the honor of the beloved Ottoman nation, and are keen to express their devotion to their sublime state, may it be blessed by the hand of God."[288]

Prominent Arabists and the impact of their agenda on public opinion

Circa 1911, Shukri al-Asali, a close friend of Kurd 'Ali's had been elected to represent Syria in parliament. He was notoriously vocal about his disapproval of Unionist tactics and began to press more earnestly for a decentralized model.[289] It was around this time, too, that the Arabist agenda itself began to take on a more coherent form, with more precise points of appeal, the main crux of their argument being that schooling and administration within the Arab provinces should be carried out in Arabic. Arabists began to speak on behalf of the young conscripts, and, in the aftermath of the Yemen expedition, pressed more thoroughly to have Arab conscripts serve in their home provinces, a point which became a core element of the Arabist agenda.[290] All of these events contributed to the development of a sense of Arab ethnic consciousness, one that was not necessarily nationalist (or secessionist), as yet, but certainly communal.

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[286] Seikaly, "Shukri al-Asali," 86; Kayalı, *Arabs and Young Turks*, 81–108.

[287] "General reports," 1912, TNA, FO 618/3.

[288] "Al-redif fi Beirut" [The *redif* in Beirut], *Al-Muqtabas*, February 1, 1911, 2.

[289] Seikaly, "Shukri al-Asali," 86.

[290] "Reports, nationality, political situation, etc.," 1914, TNA, FO 618/3.

Figure 2.3 Wasif al-Jawhariyyeh in uniform.

Al-Asali's rhetoric strongly resonated in the urban centers of Beirut and Damascus, which, in turn, had a direct impact on conscription levels. Reporting from Damascus, Lowther noted in his April 1912 quarterly report that,

The calling out of the *ihtiat* (reserve) soldiers last month presumably for a training of 2 or 4 months duration provoked much repugnance generally; hundreds of persons are believed to have purposely absented themselves, hurrying away to Aleppo or Jerusalem of the Lebanon, so as not to be found. Many even went off to America. It would appear that no Christian nor Jew consented to serve but every individual preferred to pay the exemption fee of 130 pounds. The number of those actually under arms may now amount to 2,500 perhaps, certainly not more.[291]

So wary were the Unionists of the perceived effects of al-Asali and Kurd 'Ali's ideas on Arab public opinion that attempts were made on both of their lives, the former sometime in early 1912 and the latter on April 18, 1912. Both instances served to further agitate the Arab public. [292] Then, on April 23, 1912, Kurd 'Ali was arrested after being accused of "having formed, or attempted to form, a secret society for the purpose of subverting the Caliphate and HM the Sultan." [293] He fled south, where he began to work on mobilizing the populations of the Hejaz to take up the Arabist cause.[294] There, he apparently began to build connections with leading tribal sheikhs, including Sharif Husayn of the Hashemites, the instigator of the 1916 Arab Revolt.

Birgit Schaebler argues that this encounter between the Hejazi and the Damascene Arabists changed the nature of the relationship between the Damascene reformers and the tribes of Arabia.[295] Kurd 'Ali and other Arabists no longer viewed the tribes as inferior but rather came to see them as an integral, legitimizing component of the Arabist program. In traditional etymology, the term "Arab" had been used by Ottoman statesmen as a derogatory term to refer to Bedouins, meaning that Bedouins, rather than Damascenes, were perceived as the real "Arabs." Now, the Damascenes needed the support

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[291] "General reports," 1912, TNA, FO 618/3.

[292] "General reports," 1912, TNA, FO 618/3.

[293] Kurd 'Ali's brother was arrested instead in connection with the publication of a poem in *Al-Muqtabas* accused of "exciting animosity against the Europeans generally and of course against the Italian government especially." The arrest caused agitation in Syria, especially among supporters of the Liberty and Entente Party. "General reports," 1912, TNA, FO 618/3.

[294] Schaebler, "Urban Notables," 193.

[295] Schaebler, 193–94.

of the "real Arabs" to legitimize their own campaign to become a communal electorate within the Ottoman parliamentary framework.[296]

This shift in the Arabists' perception of and approach toward the Arab Bedouins of the south also inspired a shift in their stance toward the Karak and Hauran incidents. While the editors of *Al-Muqtabas* had initially been fully supportive of the Ottoman state's undertaking of severe measures against the revolters, now, they published articles in the journal lamenting the state's handling of the punishments and framing the state's campaign as an anti-Arab project. In this way, they increasingly began to depict themselves as the defenders of the Arab tribes against the exclusionary Unionists.[297]

However, as indicated in a report by Lowther, Kurd 'Ali's reformist agenda was not taken seriously by the general public in Medina.[298] Rather, the reform program was seen as impinging on the authority and stability of the caliphate, which had remained the leading mobilizing ideological symbol within the Arab (and Muslim-majority) province and to which the majority of the population professed support.[299] As a result, while in Medina, Kurd 'Ali was attacked by hostile mobs.[300] This indicates that there was dissonance in terms of the Arab experience of, on the one hand, belonging and professing loyalty to the Ottoman state as the seat of the caliphate, and, on the other, the Arabist agenda, which did not necessarily always have the interests of the caliphate in mind. Here, the distance of communities from the Ottoman center, or, at least from Damascus, noticeably affected this sense of dissonance in terms of defining the Arab identity and its relation to the Ottoman state.

War as a mobilizing force: The Balkan Wars, 1912–1913, and the question of national loyalty

The internal turmoil and conflict that developed as a result of the outbreak of the Balkan Wars in October 1912 created a broad spectrum of panic and multifold reactions. The Arabist reform agenda, with its emphasis on an Arab-oriented policy, was but one of the solutions offered to overcome a general, overarching sense of ill-ease in the province (and throughout the empire). More than ideology, the imminent threat of war and its outcomes were enough to motivate Arabs to enlist in order to support and defend the empire. In these instances, the question of ethnic nationalism was less relevant, and support for the caliphate, patriotism or, more simply, the instinctual will to survive, prevailed.

Immediately after the outbreak of hostilities, a consular report described scenes of jubilation and excitement by conscripts eager to participate in the defense of the nation,

> Sir, I have the honour to report that throughout the past week, considerable excitement has been witnessed here in respect of war rumours and movements in the Balkan states. These rumours began to be published and to obtain credence about the 2nd instant. The day before the Sultan's Birthday (which was celebrated in the usual fashion), and just then, the calling out of reserves had begun, and was being actively carried out, not without some confusion and muddle. Since then, there have been daily bellicose demonstrations on a large scale, by mobs of various quarters of the town marching with drums and flags to the government house or army

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[296] According to Schaebler, 192, this alliance also sowed seeds of rebellion which would unfold during the Arab Revolt in 1916.

[297] Schaebler, 191–194; Seikaly, "Shukri al-Asali," 50.

[298] "General reports," 1912, TNA, FO 618/3.

[299] "General reports," 1912, TNA, FO 618/3.

[300] "General reports," 1912, TNA, FO 618/3.

headquarters, and displaying great enthusiasm, and zeal for war upon Turkey's enemies, yesterday in particular, these were supplemented by contingents of Druze, Bedouins and certain neighbouring villages. On the previous day, the discourse of H. M. the Sultan had been publicly read to the troops assembled, and great readiness to go to high war? is displayed by the troops generally.[301]

Most noteworthy in the above text is the point about the contingents of Druze and Bedouins that were supplemented to the regiments, which indicates several things: firstly, that the conscription system and al-Faruqi disarmament campaign had proven successful despite its harshness, and, secondly, that, despite their quasi-independent nature, a long-standing relationship of mutual dependence had existed between the tribal and Druze authorities, on the one hand, and the Ottoman state on the other, which entailed that both rely on each other; both needed one another to protect their own boundaries of authority.

In terms of the protection racket model, this then is an interesting example of two interdependent protection rackets that were embryonically entwined, rather than mutually exclusive, which further emphasizes the intricacies and difficulties in deciphering the boundaries of separation and belonging of various identity and communal categories that exist between states—particularly empire states—and their peripheries. Indeed, the desire to save the Ottoman nation, which derived from patriotic motives, appeared to be one of the most effective tools for mobilization and indicates the success of the centralizing reforms, including the (all-encompassing) conscription model proposed by the CUP. Rashid Khalidi explains that this was partly down to the fact that the general masses were disinclined to change, and preferred to maintain the status quo.[302]

In that regard, the memoirs of Wasif al-Jawhariyyeh offer an interesting case-study. Al-Jawhariyyeh was an Orthodox-Christian Jerusalemite and, as a result, most standard nationalist historical accounts would have you assume that al-Jawhariyyeh was an anti-Ottomanist, Arab revolutionary. Yet, his story illustrates how complicated identity politics were during this period. To begin with, al-Jawhariyyeh seems to have cared very little for the reform movement in Damascus (which, by 1912 or 1913, was also becoming popular in parts of Palestine), and rarely mentioned the Arabist movement at all in his memoirs (although he did frequently refer to Damascus as "the capital" city to which he was oriented). Rather, al-Jawhariyyeh defined himself mainly as a Jeruselamite. His city of origin, his religious affiliation and, finally, his profession (as a musician) were the three primary identity categories with which he most strongly identified. Yet when the Balkan Wars broke out, al-Jawhariyyeh's father was intent on sending his elder son, Khalil, (al-Jawhariyyeh's brother) to enlist in the army regiment stationed in Beirut, before he was to even officially called by the state.[303] Al-Jawhariyyeh elaborates,

If he had wanted to, my father could have prevented Khalil from serving the army by marrying him off to a foreign lady, as was the tradition amongst the Christians then, or he could have made him work as an industrialist rather than carry arms for the Turkish army while still so young. However, [Father's] love for the nation, and his sense of loyalty towards his country and the fact that Khalil was the appropriate age to carry arms, made him agree to serving in the army with all sense of conviction.[304]

[301] "General reports," 1912, TNA, FO 618/3. Handwriting unclear.

[302] Khalidi, "1912 Election Campaign," 461–474.

[303] Wasif Jawhariyyeh, *The Storyteller of Jerusalem: The Life and Times of Musician Wasif Jawhariyyeh, 1904-1948* (Northampton: Clockroot Books, 2014).

[304] Jawhariyyeh, *The Storyteller,* 139.

More interesting even is Wasif's reaction to the call to arms in August 1914, which further adds to the complexity of the situation.[305] Despite the apparent sense of loyalty that the family had toward the Ottoman nation, once the second call to arms was announced in August of 1914 and Turkish troops began to infiltrate the city of Jerusalem, al-Jawhariyyeh (who interestingly, seems to have been a supporter of the Hamidian regime), describes a sense of alienation and disregard for the "Turkish" campaign. He writes,

> This safe land [Jerusalem] has become a breeding ground for some Ottoman officers, which has induced a sense of panic upon the local residents. After war broke out in Europe between Germany and the French, rumors began to spread that the Ottoman state would be forced to enter the war soon. And so we noticed a stream of Turkish officers who infiltrated the Old City and began to rent houses in the district of Sa'diyeh […] The country had joined the warring countries overnight and citizens, particularly in the Arab countries, lurked in expectation, for they had great hopes for liberation from the oppressive yoke of occupation. In the wake of this, the well-known Decentralization society was formed. […] Arab members of this society, some of whom were from Jerusalem, such as Baiter Ali al-Nashashibi, began to dress in the Arabic dress and wear the qumbaz, the abaya, and the kaffiyyeh with the headrope. It was refreshing and hope-inspiring to see them wearing the kaffiyeh, having taken off Turkish and foreign costumes, including the fez.[306]

For al-Jawhariyyeh and his family, there was, thus, a discrepancy between the imagined sense of belonging to an Ottoman nation, on one level, and the practical reality of life and war in defense of the nation, on another. Once al-Jawhariyyeh actually saw the symbols of the nation (i.e., the Ottoman "Turkish" officers) in physical form, a sense of alienation or differentiation prevailed, and that meant that, for him, there was less of an inclination to serve their cause.

To return to the Balkan War period, for a moment, we can say that, as the first real Ottoman experiment with the universal conscription program, the wars proved to be divisive in shaping outcomes, both in terms of policy-making (as discussed in the previous chapter) and in terms of shaping sentiments of belonging. In many ways, the uniqueness, or newness, of that experience, particularly for the non-Muslim conscripts, forced inhabitants of the outlying Arab peripheries to confront the question of national loyalty. Immediately after the call was made, sectarian violence broke out in the province (one report noted that a sheikh had incited Muslim worshippers to attack Christians).[307] Given that the Balkan Wars were undertaken as holy wars by the Balkan states, many had sought to blame the empire's Christian communities for being the source of its political misfortunes (in much the same way that the Unionists themselves had come to advocate the very same logic).[308] The report further elabo-

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[305] The front and back covers of his memoirs include photos of Sultan Abdülhamid II, probably because, in Arab historiography, Abdülhamid is seen as the savior of Palestine for his refusal to allow Zionist settlement there. Al-Jawhariyyeh kept writing his memories well after 1948 (the Nakba), which explains why the photos of Abdülhamid II make an appearance.

[306] Jawhariyyeh, *The Storyteller,* 160-161.

[307] "General reports," 1912, TNA, FO 618/3.

[308] The role of the Unionists in inciting sedition between the different sects and framing the non-Muslims as anti-Ottoman was discussed in the New York-based journal *Al-Bayan* one year later. "The Turks strove to massacre the Christians," *Al-Bayan,* October 13, 1914.

rates that the outbreak of war was surrounded by scenes of "recruitment, confusion, demonstrations, mob violence."[309] Many Christians in the Syrian province reacted by fleeing:

> The *ihtiyat* [reserve] and *redif* troops that were summoned to arms besides recruits is very much to be remarked. The conduct of these troops is satisfactory, and fairly severe discipline is maintained. As soon as the call to arms was published the non-Muslim elements of the population began to leave the country in greater numbers than ever before, and the exodus which was noted in my dispatch no 18 of April 1st is continuous and increasing. The Syrian Patriarch secretly told me that five years ago, his community numbered about 350 families and today about 270 only and added to that the ratio of decrease is increasing as in the last five months alone the depletion had been 14 families. The departure of whole families must be a very serious (?) upon the population and resources of the province.[310]

Figure 2.4 Sa'ad Bishara.

The tendency to flee the empire was intensifying, particularly (although not exclusively) among the non-Muslim components of the province. A report from Mosul Vilayet further noted, "I am told that large numbers of Christians, from whom military service will shortly be due, are emigrating to America; no fewer than 53 are said to have left in one week."[311] A private letter, written on March 15, 1913, by Elias Salfiti, an Orthodox Christian from the town of Salfit in Palestine, to his uncle, Suleyman, in America, gives us great insight into the personal motives for fleeing, and the manner in which those who fled were able to maneuver the whole endeavor:

> My dear Suleyman, I want to leave Aleppo and I am not sure where to go. Either to Germany, with one of the khawajas, or to America. So I ask you, my dearest, if you receive this letter, to write back to me immediately, and let me know what it is like in America. Right now, along the Baghdad Railway, they are capturing anyone within the age of conscription and I am now confused as to where to go, and what place would suit me. Here, in Aleppo, it has become extremely expensive and the circumstances for employment in the railway network have really worsened.[312]

Although the letter does not contain any direct reference to the Balkan Wars, Salfiti was obviously planning to escape in order to avoid serving in the wars. More noticeably, he makes no reference to any ideology worth fighting for (Arabism, Christianity, Ottomanism, or otherwise). Rather, what is discernible in the letter is the familial network, based on religious affiliation (all of the people referred to in the extended letter with whom Salfiti was planning his escape were part of larger Orthodox-Christian communal network), which formed the core around which his own sense of self was constructed.

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[309] "General reports," 1912, TNA, FO 618/3.

[310] "General reports," 1912, TNA, FO 618/3. Handwriting unclear.

[311] "Mosul vilayet: current events in," 1913, TNA, FO 195/2452/988.

[312] In the rest of the letter, we are told that Salfiti was an employee of the Baghdad Railway and, before that, the Aleppo Railway.

This could mean that the broader national Ottoman affiliation was far less relevant than his personal familial and sectarian affiliations.[313]

But Salfiti was, in many ways, an exception; the option to emigrate was only afforded by a few who had the financial means or the networks to do so. Oftentimes, the choice to participate in the call did not exist. The very nature of universal conscription entails obligation and thus the majority had no choice but to participate in the call to arms, even if they did not necessarily feel any sense of loyalty or patriotism toward the state that they were serving. A photo of Sa'ad Bishara (also a Jerusalemite Christian) is illustrative of this conundrum. Like most conscripts who dreaded the call, he was duty-bound to participate. On a pocket-sized portrait photo left for his family members, he wrote, "If time passes and you do not see me, here is my photo so that you remember me."[314]

The call of the Beirut Reform Movement of 1913 and its reverberations in the provinces

The impact of the Balkan Wars proved to be even more strenuous for Arab-Unionist relations; the influx of refugees from the Balkans, the stagnation of trade and involuntary conscription all served to raise the ire of the Arab public against the Unionists, such that more extremist reactions developed during this period, and some groups began to demand Arab autonomy more openly.

> There seems to be a general tone of public disgust with political conditions and most the most unfortunate issue of the current wars. The Union and Progress Committee for the years past has lost esteem and is now discredited: its clubs remain open still but is hardly frequented by anyone at all.[315]

Throughout the first quarter of 1913, while the Unionists were heavily engaged in the war effort and the recapturing of the old Ottoman capital, Edirne, the Arabists were preparing to host the first Arab Decentralist Congress in Paris.[316] The choice of Paris was controversial, but was intended to exert pressure on the Unionists to take more concrete action in implementing a decentralized administration in the Arab provinces. The intensification of Arab maneuvers and demands also coincided with one of the most delicate moments of the Balkan Wars, when the Unionists were involved in the January 23 coup incident, during which Enver Paşa and Talat Paşa led a coup d'état that ended with the forced resignation of the grand vizier, Kâmil Paşa, and the murder of Nazim Paşa, the minister of war. The incident, known as the raid on the Sublime Porte, effectively allowed the Unionists to impose single-party rule (until 1918).

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[313] From the 1860s onward, immigration from the Levant to the Americas was on the rise. Eventually, transnational immigrant communities were formed, but these continued to have strong connections with their families and networks back in the empire, and many Syrians remained updated on the events taking place there. For instance, the political daily *Al-Bayan* was set up by Suleiman Beddur from New York City, in order to keep the Arab-Ottoman immigrant communities informed about and involved with the events of the empire. During the first Arab Congress, which was held in Paris in 1913, the Arabists also made sure to include Syrian immigrants from the Americas in the debates. See Rafiq Bey al-'Azm, *Al-Mu'tamar Al 'Arabi al-Awwal: Al-Mun'akad fi al-Qa'a al-Kubra li al-Jam'yya al-Jughrafiyya Bi Shari' San Germain fi Barees* [The First Arab Conference: Held in the Great Hall of the Geographic Society on St. Germain Street in Paris] (Cairo: Bosphorus Press, 1913), 6.

[314] Image obtained from his great grandson, Sa'ad Bishara, dated 1914.

[315] "Reports, nationality, political situation, etc.," 1913, TNA, FO 618/3.

[316] David S. Thomas, "The First Arab Congress and the Committee of Union and Progress, 1913–1914," in *Essays on Islamic Civilization: Presented to Niyazi Berkes*, ed. Donald P. Little (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1976), 317-328.

Early in 1913, a group called the Beirut Reform Committee became more prominent in the province and began to circulate pamphlets heavily criticizing the Unionist authorities for their failure in the Balkan war effort.[317] It espoused its desire for Arab autonomy, but emphasized its continued loyalty to the Ottoman state. A British consular letter written on April 23 of that year elaborates,

> Letters have recently been received by prominent men in Mosul containing circulars advocating a union of Arab speaking peoples. One of these circulars was a programme of reforms drawn up by 'The Beirut Reform Committee.' Another which I saw, pointed out that the Turks had failed so unanimously in the [Balkan] war because they were totally ignorant of everything: that in the old days the Arabs were pre-eminent in all the sciences, and were capable of being so again. It called on the Arabs to wake up, and take up the place they formerly held. It did not advocate independence or separation from the Turks, but only decentralisation, but it concluded thus: "Should Allah, however, will the dissolution of the Turkish Empire, we must see to it that Arab lands remain in Arab hands."[318]

The fact that the agenda of the Beirut Reform Committee reached Mosul is indicative of the rate at which ideas could be easily transmitted (rather than remain territorially confined). It is also indicative of the manner in which the Arabist movement was attempting to broaden to include all Arab-speaking territories of the empire. Thus, as it developed, the reform movement became more strategic, but also more fractured, with several factions emerging around this period, the Beirut Committee being one of the more extreme elements, in favor of total autonomy.

More notably, however, the circular indicates the intensification of ethnic tensions and the creation of a sense of self and otherness, more clearly defined along lines of ethnic belonging. For the Beirut Committee members, the Balkan losses had proved the ineffectiveness of the Ottoman state and the Unionist's program of centralization. It argued, in turn, that ethnicity or, more specifically, the Unionists tendency to lean toward a predominantly "Turk-based" composition of state administrators had effectively pushed other minority groups out of the framework of the Ottoman state, and contributed to the overall sense of disunity between the various Ottoman communities. This lack of cohesion, the group claimed, led to the Ottoman failure in the Balkan war effort, and made it even more susceptible to foreign intrigues.

Yet this was not necessarily a novel argument, as we saw in the earlier writings of Khalil Ghanem. Social-Darwinist logic (itself a globally popular intellectual current at the time) had long been invoked by Arab reformers to justify the need for reform. Now it was also being argued that the time had come for "Arabs," who had suffered under Turkish repression, to self-govern in order to protect the Arab race.[319]

However, while the division between Arabs and Turks was becoming more prominent, the actual parameters of the "Arab self" were not necessarily clearly identifiable. Rather, the boundaries of belonging to an Arab collective remained opaque, and was often decided by an exclusive intellectual milieu. In the note referenced above, the British consul, Howley, refers to a hierarchical division invoked by the members of the Beirut Committee, emphasizing their progressive role as leaders of the reform movement.

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[317] See Kurd 'Ali, *Khitat*, 127; "Mosul vilayet: current events in," 1913, TNA, FO 195/2452/988.

[318] "Mosul vilayet: current events in," 1913, TNA, FO 195/2452/988.

[319] A series of article were published in *Al-Muqtabas* stressing the need to uplift the Arab race. See, for instance, "Al-nahda al-'Arabiyya" [The Arab renaissance] *Al-Muqtabas*, September 1, 1913; Abdul Fattah al-Sakiri al-Rakabi, "Al-lugha al-'Arabiyya" [The Arabic language], *Al-Muqtabas*, February 19, 1914.

According to the consular report, the members of the Beirut Committee had come to see themselves as decision-makers; it was they who had the authority to decide who belonged to the Arab collective and who did not. Membership qualifications were decided on the basis of background and place of residence within the Arab periphery.

> A Beirout paper appears to have spoken slightingly of the inhabitants of Mosul vilayet, saying that they could hardly be expected to take part in the general movement for reform as they were mostly 'Black-tenters', i.e., nomadic tribes. The notables of Mosul at once sent a telegram to the Porte, saying that they had refrained from demanding reforms so far, because they did not wish to embarrass the government at this juncture, but that they were now behind Basra and Beirout in their determination to have reforms.[320]

The Balkan Wars and, more specifically, the inability of the Ottoman state to protect itself against Balkan aggression, had therefore created a crisis of self with regards to defining both the Arab and Ottoman identities, as well as the relationship between the two. This is especially apparent when we consider the extended provinces. For instance, in the Sanjak of Jerusalem (Palestine), which encompassed Jerusalem, Gaza, Jaffa, Hebron, Bethlehem and Beersheba, debates intensified around support for the Beirut Committee's proposals. On the one hand, the movement was attracting support among a certain milieu within the *sanjak*, mainly among notables and inhabitants of the main Palestinian towns, who looked to Beirut and Damascus, as well as Cairo (especially among the inhabitants of Gaza), as centers of intellectual Arabist thought. [321] In April of 1913, a British consular report from Jerusalem noted that the movement was attracting adherents in the region,

> The movement in favour of administrative reforms on the basis of decentralisation which has made considerable progress in Syria has now begun to attract public attention in the Sanjak of Jerusalem […] A few days ago, a telegram signed by various notables of Gaza including the deputy for that town and endorsed by about sixty prominent men of various creeds in Jerusalem, requested that they be allowed to participate in a discussion of measures similar to those advocated by the Beirut Congress. I understand that the demands put forward in the Gaza telegram are less far-reaching than those formulated in Beirut, and that hitherto there has been no scheme for concentrated action by the population of the two provinces. The reform movement in this Sanjak does not seem to be either widespread or enthusiastic and the reason of this lukewarmness are not far to seek, as the majority of the population has lost faith in the possibility of any good thing coming out of Constantinople, and eventual annexation to Egypt seems hitherto to have been regarded as inevitable even by those who desire it least: while important sections of the population such as the Jews and many of the Beduin tribes at the frontier district profess to see the end of Turkish rule.[322]

Around the same time, three telegrams were sent by the Jaffa notables to the grand vizier, strongly emphasizing their desire for cooperation with the Ottoman authorities but, again, stressing the need for reform in order to avoid a repetition of the Balkan scenario in the Arab territories. These are interesting because they were mostly written by Ententists, former state functionaries who had a vendetta against the Unionist government. Yet, as the consul notes, the signatories comprised notables

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[320] "Mosul vilayet: current events in," 1913, TNA, FO 195/2452/988.

[321] "Reform movement in Syria," 1913, TNA, FO 195/2451/484.

[322] "Reform movement in Syria," 1913, TNA, FO 195/2451/484.

from all religions, emphasizing the secular, non-sectarian nature of the reform movement, a point that the consuls often liked to stress in order to encourage support for the reform movement:

> The loss of large portions of our territory and the dismemberment of our unfortunate country, affected by the diseases of bad administration and lack of reforms, has grieved us all, and convinces us that something ought to be done that will enable us to keep the remaining parts of our Empire. Consider the case of those we have lost to; their inhabitants defeated us because of their superior education and economic administrative abilities. If we shut our eyes to these facts and refuse to take them as an exemplary lesson for our future guidance it will mean our utter annihilation. We should also see to it that, after the calamities which have befallen us due to bad administration, we prove by fact that our love for our country is not less than that of other nations. Therefore after the train of events which this realm has witnessed, bought about by lack of reforms, no time should be lost in applying the reforms which Beirut has been compelled to insist on for the sake of saving our beloved country from the encroachment of European ambition. The importance of Palestine is so well-known that I need not enlarge it. The immediate application of these reforms is demanded in order to save our country, which is at the point of death, owing to maladministration which threatens its life. The acquiescence in the demands of Beirut is the only way of keeping it alive. Consequently, notwithstanding the delicate nature of the present situation, it is absolutely necessary to apply the Beirut programme to our Sanjak in order to enable us and this country to maintain our existence under the Ottoman crescent. Please give orders for their immediate application. Hafiz Bey Es-Said, ex deputy.[323]

Generally, however, compared to the members of the Beirut Committee, the notables of Palestine were less extreme in their demands. Howley, the British Consul in Jerusalem, explained that, "This movement seems to me somewhat unenlightened and unintellectual as far as this district is concerned."[324] The supporters of the reform movement, unlike the reformers of Beirut, were compelled to take action due to the worsening conditions of the province in the aftermath of the Balkan Wars and, here, any ethnic component underpinning their demands were less visible. For instance, a report from the Jerusalem consulate, dated February 24, 1913, and entitled "Dissatisfaction of Bedouins in Beersheba," elaborates on the impact of the bad harvest, which agitated the tribes of the Palestinian Desert:

> I have the honour to report to your excellency that I have recently had a conversation with Mahmud Nedim Bey, Kaimakam of Beersheba, who gives a very gloomy account of the condition of his district and seems to apprehend trouble among semi-nomadic Bedouins who form its population. He informs me that, in consequence of successive bad harvests, the population is much impoverished and that, as the police and gendarmerie, in connivance with their respective superiors in Jerusalem, continue to encroach on the slender resources of the Bedouins by illegal exaction of all kinds, the idea of an insurrection against Turks rule is gaining ground.[325]

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[323] "Reform movement in Syria," 1913, TNA, FO 195/2451/484.

[324] "Reform movement in Syria," 1913, TNA, FO 195/2451/484.

[325] "Reform movement in Syria," 1913, TNA, FO 195/2451/484.

The role of foreign consuls in delimiting ethnic identities

Howley, even more than Lowther in Damascus, seems to have had a network of informants from among the reformist groups within the province who supplied him with information. His reports frequently emphasized the ethnic divisions, sometimes in places where the local population itself had not made any references to ethnic trouble. For instance, when in June of 1913, the military unit stationed in Beirut mutinied, claiming lack of pay, the consul saw it as an opportunity to intervene in favor of British interests, causing further sedition:

> These events make it more imperative than ever that a Foreign Officer should be appointed to reorganise the gendarmerie [...] [such an officer] should not be a Frenchman unless absolutely necessary. I venture to think that in view of the French interest in Lebanon, it would be difficult for us to endorse Mr. Cumberbatch's suggestion.[326]

This indicates that the consuls themselves contributed to promoting ethnicity as a marker of identity and, by extension, as a marker of division. Due to their preference for the reform movement, the European consuls came to associate Arabism with anti-Unionism and, therefore, anti-Turkishness. In this way, both the consuls and the Arabist intellectuals in the main urban centers contributed to the development of the division of spatial identity based on ethnic belonging. Yet these definitions of self, based on ethnicity, did not quite permeate the broader population. For, as the consul himself explains, "Discontent with the present administration is universal and it is a significant fact that among the Moslem 'fellah' population [...] the majority of those who are impelled to leave to the Americas are driven out by the dread of military service, and the abuses of the tax-collector."[327]

Howley's extraction of information from informants, who were presumably supporters of the reform movement, gave further credence to accusations that the reform movement was sponsored and supported by the intervention of foreign groups. This, in turn, motivated groups (themselves perhaps sponsored by the Unionists) to mobilize against the reform movement,

> Among other government agents reported as working against the reforms was Sheikh Abdul Jelil Effendi al-Dora, school inspector in the Hauran, who delivered speeches in Sidon and other places decrying the reformers as disloyal Ottomans working for foreign governments who are "aiming at replacing the 'Minarets' of their Mosques with church bell-towers"[328]

In his memoirs, Cemal Paşa, a leading Unionist, who had assumed responsibility as the military governor, or *muhafiz*, of Istanbul, in January of 1913, reflected on the demands of the Arab decentralists from a contemporary Unionist perspective. For the Unionists, or at least for Cemal, the Arab Decentralists' demands were self-centered and inconvenient, and would make any attempt to improve the woes of the empire during this critical juncture even more difficult. He argued that, in that moment, it was imperative to maintain strength and control in the face of aggressive attempts at sedition. In Cemal's view, "A powerful army, which would ensure the balance of power and enable [the state] to demand the abolition of the capitulations, was more important than the re-organisation of justice."[329] He

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[326] "Reform movement in Syria," 1913, TNA, FO 195/2451/484.

[327] "Reform movement in Syria," 1913, TNA, FO 195/2451/484.

[328] "Reform movement in Syria," 1913, TNA, FO 195/2451/484.

[329] Cemal Paşa, *Memories of a Statesman: 1913–1919* (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1922), 58.

lamented the Arab reform project as being "nothing more than satisfying the ambitions of a few persons who were hankering after offices and dignities."[330]

The Decentralization Party: An Arab-Ottoman communal electorate or a separatist movement?

From April 1913 onward, the plan to host the first Arabist Congress, in favor of decentralization, had been taking shape. The scheme for decentralizations entailed that "Arabic be made the official language with which every official but the vale [sic] must be acquainted and the vale too after five years. The second scheme makes Arabic admissible in Government offices but Turkish remains the official language."[331] Conscription, too, was made into a point of debate, with the Arabists requesting that Arab soldiers serve in their home provinces. But the most interesting proposal, according to Howley, was the suggestion to "appoint foreign advisors or inspectors."[332]

Yet when the first Arabist Congress was eventually held between June 5 and June 20, 1913, at the Geographic Society in Paris, the first stated aim of the conference was to "show foreigners that the Arabs oppose any forms of foreign intervention, and strive to remain faithful to their national life." This, however, was an (intentionally) ambiguous statement. On the one hand, in many of the writings of the Arabists, the notion of Turkish rule, particularly under "a predominantly Turkish administration led by the Unionists," was often referred to as a form of foreign occupation. In this sense, the term "national life"[333] could have been a specific reference to "Arab national life." On the other, hand, it could also be read as a measure of loyalty to the Ottoman nation, and an attempt to reject any association with the foreign backers with which the Arabists had been accused of collaborating. Here, the Arabists either intentionally played on the ambiguity to suit their interests, or were otherwise unclear about their position.

The congress was a space for Arab proponents of the decentralization scheme from different regions of the Arab provinces—who had, by then, coalesced into *Hizb al-Lamarkaziyya* (the Decentralization Party)—to converge and discuss "the Arab question." Their point of confluence was their effort to make decentralization a core component of the "Arab struggle." The party included Rashid Rida and most Islamic modernists based in Cairo (most of whom were actually of Syrian origin), as well as members of the Beirut Committee and several other Arabist groups that had proliferated in the aftermath of the Balkan Wars.[334] It was agreed that the Islamic modernists would lead the 1913 conference, in order to enhance the notion that the reform program was not simply a Christian-led initiative. This was intended to undermine the Unionists' growing suspicions of the non-Muslim communities in the aftermath of the "Balkan betrayal," and was intended as a show of unity and cooperation between the different sectarian groups within the Arab provinces.[335]

David Thomas explains that, while the various groups had managed to come together despite their religious and sectarian differences, they remained divided in terms of their support for the inter-

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[330] Paşa, *Memories*, 59.

[331] "Reform movement in Syria," 1913, TNA, FO 195/2451/484.

[332] "Reform movement in Syria," 1913, TNA, FO 195/2451/484.

[333] Al-'Azm, *Al-Mu'tamar*, 5.

[334] Al-'Azm, 4–5.

[335] Al-'Azm, 29.

vention of foreign advisors, with the majority of Christian Beirutis in favor of French intervention, and the Damascus and Cairo-based groups skeptical of foreign interference altogether.[336]

The conference sought to propose measures to induce and strengthen progress within the Arab territories, so that they could become efficient and eventually contribute to the broader Ottoman nation, thereby invigorating it.[337] What is obvious is that, in the aftermath of the Balkan losses, the De-centralists felt greatly threatened by the possibility of a reoccurrence of the Balkan scenario in the Arab provinces. As a result, they proposed a system whereby Arabs could share power with the Unionist "Turks." The president of the congress, Abd al-Hamid al-Zahrawi, stated that the ultimate goal of the reformers was to ensure an equitable division of state power between the various ethnic groups of the empire.[338] He argued that the Arabs should be seen as "partners in government," adding, "We confront the Ottoman state [representatives] by informing [them] that decentralization is the basis of our existence, that our existence is our most precious right and that the Arabs are partners in this kingdom, partners in the military, partners in administration, partners in politics. In their own provinces however, the Arabs are the partners of themselves only."[339]

It was around this time that debates about the reorganization of the administrative structure of the empire had been intensifying on all sides of the spectrum. These included proposals for alternatives forms of government, including a proposal for a federal government or an Arab-Turkish union (along the Austro-Hungarian model) with Damascus as a potential capital.[340] Al-Zahrawi's speech during the first session, held on June 13, 1913, gives a sense of the logic behind these debates from an Arabist de-centralist perspective:

> I am inclined to go deeper into this matter and honestly say the Arabs had befriended the Turks and the Turks likewise befriended the Arabs, and together the two groups had integrated into beautiful integration that has lasted for centuries. But nothing remains of that integration apart from the union of the Arabs with a few Turks, those known as the Turkish-Ottomans. And that union still remains valuable for those Ottoman-Turks and the Arab-Ottomans together, but with the growing impact of national pride, that union has come under threat by none other than politics itself. It is well known that politics in this nation had been under the rule of the Turks, and it is for that reason that it has come to be known by Europeans as the "Turkish state." Upon reflecting on what has become of the this "Turkish" government today, in which the Turks have applied the majoritarian principle in their favor over all other groups within this union, the Arabs realized a great duty, overlooked by both the Arabs and the Turks: the need to join the two groups in governing the country. For it has become obvious that the Arabs have not benefitted from their lack of intervention and the loss of [Balkan] territory, nor have the Turks benefitted from bearing, alone, the burden of that heavy loss. It is my firm belief that cooperation in government is not the reason for the disintegration of the brotherhood between Arabs and Turks, but rather that the reason for the disintegration of the brotherhood between Arabs and Turks is the fact that there is no cooperation in government. We have therefore be-

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[336] Thomas, "First Arab Conference," 231.

[337] Al-'Azm, *Al-Mu'tamar*, 5.

[338] Al-'Azm, 29.

[339] Al-'Azm, 28.

[340] The latter had been the set-up supported by German General Liman von Sanders. See Paşa, *Memories*, 60; Yenen, Alp. "Envisioning Turco-Arab Co-Existence between Empire and Nationalism." *Die Welt des Islams: International Journal for the Study of Modern Islam* (forthcoming in 2020).

come proponents of the decentralist position, which we believe to be the most efficient means of highlighting the need for this unity outside the capital. Meanwhile, in the capital [Istanbul], our brothers [the Turks] are not ignorant on how to cooperate, they merely require a few explanations and it is through this conversation that we hope to develop the decentralist idea amongst all Ottomans, because the state of the Armenians and the Kurds is like ours. It is also known that there are many Turks who lean towards this idea as well, but we hope that they will increase in number in these coming days, such that a reconciliation can occur [between the Unionists and the Decentralists], because it is relevant to us that they [the Turkish groups] not be split. For the longer that division remains, the greater the risk that it will lead to a great volcanic explosion. We also fear that that would lead to our own split which we have worked very hard on minimizing. Thus, what I would like to call for and highlight is the need to cooperate and befriend one another no matter the circumstances, and in this request, we do not pretend to be more gracious than others, nor are we more jealous towards our nation in comparison to others, but for that reason our souls are filled with an intense desire to hear those same cries for cooperation from among our [Ottoman] brethren.[341]

In the aftermath of the Balkan defeat, the threat of another potential rebellion from the Arab provinces was much too dangerous a prospect. The threat induced by this possibility encouraged the Unionist authorities to quickly negotiate with the Decentralization Party and to accede to many of their demands. Unionist delegates were quickly dispatched to Paris to express their willingness to cooperate. Cemal Paşa elaborates,

At that time, I paid very little to these Arabian affairs. My wish was only to let it be known that foreign intrigues were sowing discord between the two great Islam races, the Turkish and the Arab. I also desired that we should use some highly placed individuals, on whose patriotism and religious fervor we could rely, to ascertain which of the Arab demands we could accept without engendering the common interests and unity of the Islamic world and ultimately take the steps necessary to carry through these reforms. Fortunately, this view was shared by the government, and Midhat Shukri Bey and some others were sent to Paris to negotiate with the influential Arabs who had assembled the congress in the hope of finding a basis for an understanding. The congress, did, in fact, assemble, but as the meeting of Midhat Shukri Bey and his companions with the Mussulman Arabs had given the affair another complexion, the congress dissolved after communicating to him a few of its deepest desires.[342]

Meanwhile, in Palestine—which was evolving into a center of debate between the pro- and anti-reformist factions—groups began to mobilize more strongly against the reformers. A telegram signed by nineteen signatories and written by Osman Nashashibi, was sent to the grand vizier on June 26 (i.e., while the conference was being held) and subsequently published in several Ottoman newspapers.[343] It vehemently condemned the Arab reformist agenda and defended the Unionists:

At this time, when we cannot sleep for indignation at the loss of an important part of our empire, and the injustice, tyranny and massacre wrought upon by our brethren in Roumelia, some obscure persons, unknown in Palestine, void of feeling or intelligence, have aimed at our de-

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[341] Al-'Azm, *Al-Mu'tamar*, 36–37.

[342] Paşa, *Memories*, 58.

[343] "Reform movement in Syria," 1913, TNA, FO 195/2451/484.

struction by seeking, under the cloak of reform, the dismemberment of our empire and the dissipation of our strength. These traitors, as we have heard, disseminate their propaganda, which they call "decentralisation" from Egypt or Paris, in the name of the Arab nation. We make it known that we curse, openly and in secret, both these persons and the nests which cover their cursed attempts to endanger our country by their decentralisation propaganda, and that therefore we remain an inseparable member of our Government.[344]

Framing

Yet again, the consul who reported the note was keen to downplay the significance of this alternative anti-reform sentiment by framing its signatories as socially irrelevant, and their ideas as being of little value in terms of the broader intellectual currents in the region. Howther described Nashahibi as being "hardly worthy to fill the post of cabdriver" and the signatories as "mostly villagers of no importance."

At the other end of the spectrum, in the post-Balkan-War period, the Unionists had increasingly come to believe that the Ottoman, Muslim community was under threat. In turn, they increasingly began to frame the Arabist-Decentralist movement as a threat to the Islamic unity that bound the Arabs and Turks under a single banner. Aware that support for the Ottoman state among the broader Arab population could be mobilized on the basis of Islamic unity in the aftermath of the Balkan "betrayal," the Unionists sought to delegitimize the reform movement by drawing parallels between the Arab reformists and the Balkan rebels, both of whose movements were framed as being threats to the Muslim inhabitants of the empire and the caliphate. This was the rhetoric around which anti-reformist Arabs and Unionists could agree to come together. Thus, during their negotiations with the Arab decentralists, the Unionists made sure to consult with the leading Islamic authorities within the Arab provinces.[345]

Only after a meeting with Sheikh Abdul Aziz Shawish, Abd al-Hamid al-Zahrawi of the Islamic modernists, and Abdul Kerim al-Khalil, was a final agreement decided upon in July.[346] The agreement was published in August 1913 and appeared to have been—or at least, was portrayed as having been—a success. In August, government delegates arrived to Damascus, and were met with large-scale celebrations, which included a marching band and flags.[347] The final agreement stipulated that, "The administrative work be handed over to the native authorities in accordance with the special law relating to the administration of the vilayets; the secondary school teaching and national school teaching to be in Arabian; the Arabian text be used for certain legal formalities; the Arabian text to be appended to summonses as well as criminal and civil judgments, […] certain Arabian officials be appointed to the Senate, the State Council, the Court of Appeals, the staff of Sheikh al-Islam, and the Fetvahane."[348]

With regards to conscription, it was agreed that, in times of peace, the soldiers were to serve in their home regions. However, they were also expected to agree to leaving their home regions if the government deemed it necessary, without any need to justify that demand. Meanwhile, soldiers that were to be sent to distant provinces, such as Yemen, Assyr and Nejd, were to be proportionally collected from all over the empire to maintain fairness and balance.[349]

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[344] "Reform movement in Syria," 1913, TNA, FO 195/2451/484.

[345] Paşa, *Memories*, 58.

[346] Paşa, 5.

[347] "Reform movement in Syria," 1913, TNA, FO 195/2451/484.

[348] Paşa, *Memories*, 59; Al-'Azm, *Al-Mu'tamar,* 4

[349] "Reform movement in Syria," 1913, TNA, FO 195/2451/484.

The conscription clause best illustrates the success of the negotiations, which ensured that both parties came out satisfied. The Arabists' acquiescence to have the conscripts serve throughout the provinces was a show of their loyalty to the Ottoman nationalist endeavor and underlined their continued support to the Ottoman state during threatening times. An article published by *Al-Muqtabas* in the immediate aftermath of the agreement announcement glorified the Ottoman state as one that "the Arabs were proud to belong to."[350] It specifically praised the poise of the Ottoman armed forces and reminded Arabs conscripts of their duty to passionately serve their national uniform.

On the other hand, the Unionists' acknowledgement of the proposal to have the conscripts serve in their home provinces was a sign of resignation to the Arabist demands for autonomy and the decentralist framework in general. The success of the negotiations also cemented the role of the Arabists as a unified representative body that spoke on behalf of the Arab community. This, in turn, helped further clarify the parameters of that Arab nation, both in and of itself and in relation to the Ottoman nation.

Calm before the storm

Thus arrived a tense period of calm. Writing in May 1914, Lowther explained, "There is quiet in Damascus […] In general, this province enjoys a state of comparative repose and security which could hardly be expected in certain other districts of Turkey."[351]

During this period, however, the Unionists were busy silencing dissidents as quietly as possible. In early 1914, elections were held and many pro-Unionists were appointed.[352] To appease the Arabists, al-Zahrawi, the Azhar scholar and head of the Paris Congress and of the Cairo reformists, was elected to parliament, despite protests from Talat Paşa.[353] This was probably done to appeal to the Muslim sentiment. Kurd 'Ali, however, was arrested, and soon thereafter, Shukri al-Asali, a former minister and friend of Kurd 'Ali's, was summoned due to virulent speeches made in reaction to the arrest.

By June of 1914, tensions were running high. In that same month, *Al-Muqtabas* was forced to shut down and, soon thereafter, seditious pamphlets began to reappear in Beirut as a reaction to the Unionists moves. These pamphlets were even more virulent then the ones produced by the Beirut Committee a year earlier:

> What relation have you with the Turks, and what benefit did you obtain from the Ottomans? If you believe that the Turks are Mohammadens, you should believe that those who have destroyed the glory of Islam, the sellers of the Arab country, the murderers of the Qurani language, the mortgagers of the vilayet of Hejaz, with which money is being spent on the Turkish harlots, are Mohammadens. […] Is the money that is levied from Arabs being used to kill the Arabs? Can Hakki and Javid be Mohammadans while facilitating the project of the Zionists to acquire the lands of Jerusalem and Palestine? Does Islam command that money levied from the Arabs should be spent for the education of the children of the Turks only and the Arab be deprived? […] To whom are you giving these taxes? To your enemies who cannot oppress you and enslave you without it? Can you sleep while your children buy their livelihood from Talat and Javid and the likes, who are ruling your country over the head of your noblemen with oppression? Soon our country, like the Balkans, will be ablaze. Is it not wonderful that you are collect-

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[350] Muhammad Kurd 'Ali, "Adab jayshuna" [Discipline in our army], *Al-Muqtabas*, August 8, 1913, 1.

[351] "Reports, nationality, political situation, etc.," 1914, TNA, FO 618/3.

[352] "Reports, nationality, political situation, etc.," 1914, TNA, FO 618/3.

[353] Paşa, *Memories*, 59.

ing your money for your enemies to be used for arms to kill you and you are sharpening your swords to kill your brethren like a "fire that eats itself"? […] The first thing you ought to do is to refuse to pay taxes, buy arms and expel those destroyers from your country.[354]

Conclusion

The pamphlets were ominous, to say the least, but, as this chapter has shown throughout, they did not speak on behalf of the collective Arab or Syrian body. Rather, through an analysis of the perspectives of different communities and social groups within different regions of the Syrian province, this chapter has shown that the period leading up to the First World War was a period of uncertainty and constant debate. In the moment leading to the outbreak of the First World War, the multiplication of political groups and points of view were symptomatic of the instability produced by the danger of an upcoming war. Instead of national unity, war created a sense of anxiety among the population at large, who were coming to terms with the possibility that the social networks to which they had become accustomed were susceptible to being redrawn in a moment's notice.

In different regions of the province, the various responses to this threat indicates that there was not yet any collective "Arab" decision-making, nor was there a collective sense of "Arab" belonging to the Ottoman state. Instead, class, community and regional differences had an impact on the manner in which Arabs responded to the prospect of Ottoman unity and nationhood. For some Arabs in the intellectual capitals, the Ottoman state was defined in ethnic, secular, terms as a "Turkish" state. Their sense of belonging to that framework was therefore very much defined in equally ethnocentric and secular, "Arabist" terms. For the Arabs in the provincial towns—who were deemed less "socially prominent," at least according to the British consuls—the Ottoman state was directly correlated with the caliphate, or the seat of the Islamic community, and loyalty to the Ottoman state was argued for on that basis. Meanwhile, for the tribal and peripheral populations, the Ottoman state was not perceived in terms of identity politics, but rather in terms of the economic threats or promises that it could offer, and responses to the state expansionist program were also developed on that basis.

Yet we must remain aware that these are still generalizations; in every individual circumstance, the sense of belonging to the Ottoman nation was based on personal experiences and stories. Through individual case-studies, we were able to grasp how themes of class, ethnicity and religious affiliation often overlapped and contradicted one another. And when we boil the matter down to the individual core, we find that the very notion of national self was liable to be constantly transformed. The chapter has shown how these notions of self were formed "in reaction" to the broader contextual and political trajectories of the time, be those on state, familial or communal level.

This also indicates that Arab nationalism was not the product of a preconceived plan for collective mobilization. That is, it was not a linear trajectory to reach a predetermined end goal; rather, we could say that individuals and collectives in the Arab Ottoman periphery were presented with a plethora of pathways through which to reach that goal of national self-expression, and in the period before the outbreak of the First World War, no option was said to have triumphed over any other.

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[354] "Reports, nationality, political situation, etc.," 1914, TNA, FO 618/3.

Conclusion: The call to arms in August 1914

On August 4, 1914, less than two months after the distribution of the seditious pamphlets in Beirut, the Ottoman call to arms was proclaimed. The closure of some of the most prominent Arabic newspapers, including *Al-Muqtabas*, along with the immediate escape of most foreign consuls when the call to arms was announced leaves us with very few first-hand accounts of the events as they unfolded. Nevertheless, these do exist, and tend to depict scenes of panic and dread as Arab conscripts were separated from their families and shipped to recruitment stations.[355] As the fourth chapter has attempted to show, reactions toward the prospect of serving the Ottoman nation were ambiguous and varied. Notions of self, loyalty and belonging to a national body remained inconsistent, and were based on individual circumstances reactionary in nature and, therefore, ever-evolving. As such, it is not surprising to imagine that the sense of dread that overtook the region on the eve of war was also mixed with a sense of pride and determination to defend the national homeland, be that Arab, Ottoman or Islamic.

The very prospect of war is not an appealing endeavor. According to Kurd 'Ali, twenty-seven units were drawn from *Bilad al-Sham* on the eve of war.[356] This immediately resulted in the impediment of labor markets throughout the region, provoking panic and disorder.[357] Families were separated, with little prospect of ever reuniting. A body of literature in the form of *zajal* (oral) poetry was established in the aftermath of the experience of *seferberlik*, in which tragic scenes of chaos, separation and longing were recited by mothers lamenting the departure of their young sons to distant provinces, never to return again.[358] This body of literature has helped enshrine the experience of *seferberlik* as a collective tragedy in the Arab mind. As touched upon in the first chapter, the sense of collective trauma under Ottoman, "Turkish" rule, has since been inculcated into the official historiographical paradigm of the Arab experience of the First World War. It is now standard fare to lament the Ottoman experience as an experience of Turkish colonialism and occupation. Take Amin Maalouf's 1943 novel, *Les Échelles du Levant* (Ports of Call), for instance. In it is a scene in which the main protagonist, Ossyane—a former Ottoman subject—illustrates the Beiruti attitude toward the arrival of "Ottoman subjects" to the port city after the fall of the empire:

> Finalement, pour nous, qui appartenons malgré tout a la famille ottomane, ce n'était peut-être le meilleure moment pur nous installer au Liban. Que voulez-vous, nous n'avons rien choisi, c'est l'Histoire qui a choisi pour nous. Cela dit, je ne veux pas paraitre injuste, ni ingrat. S'il est vrai que les gens de Beyrouth préféraient parler le français et oublier le turc, pas une seul fois ils ne nous ont laisses sentier que nous pourrions être indésirables. Tout au contraire, ils semblaient a

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[355] See Odeh Al-Qsous, *The Memoirs of Odeh al-Qsous (1877–1943)* (Amman: National Library of Jordan, 2006); Salim Tamari and Ihsan S. Turjman, *Year of the Locust: A Soldier's Diary and the Erasure of Palestine's Ottoman Past*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011); Wasif Jawhariyyeh, *The Storyteller of Jerusalem: The Life and Times of Musician Wasif Jawhariyyeh, 1904–1948* (Northampton: Clockroot Books, 2014).

[356] Kurd 'Ali, Muhammad. *Khitat al-Sham* [Plans of the Levant] (Damascus: Maktabat al-Nuri, 1983), 132.

[357] Kurd 'Ali, *Khitat*, 132.

[358] Eugene Rogan, *The Fall of the Ottomans: The Great War in the Middle East* (New York: Basic Books, 2015); Najwa al-Qattan, "*Safarbarlik*: Ottoman Syria and the Great War," in *From the Syrian Land to the States of Syria and Lebanon*, ed. Thomas Philipp and Christoph Schumann (Würzburg: Ergon, 2004), 163–173.

la fois amuses et fiers que <l'occupant> d'hier soit revenu en quelque sorte habiter parmi eux en qualité d'invite.[359]

Maalouf very casually creates a clear distinction between Beirutis and Ottoman subjects, through which he assumes that the Beiruti community never really felt Ottoman and that the immigrants arriving into the city were not only alien somehow, but also former occupiers. This quote is typical of a text written during the mid-century, in which the distinction between the two identities, Ottoman and "Lebanese" or "Beiruti" are very clearly defined in ethno-nationalist terms. In doing so, the depiction undermines the intricate interweaving of identities that had taken place, particularly during the last century of Ottoman rule, which, as we have seen in the fourth chapter, resulted in the development of ambiguous loyalties and overlapping, amorphous identities. Maalouf's failure to account for that ambiguity is in keeping with the standard nationalist narratives that emerged in the post-Ottoman period. Yet, in this case, his failure to reconsider the Ottoman past, and the identities that developed out of that past, from a non-nationalist perspective is especially ironic given that the book itself is a thesis on identity and its multiplicities.

It can be argued that this literature, and the historiography constructed around it, is very much a reflection of the war period and fails to account for the immediate prelude to that period, when the relationship between the Ottoman state and its Arab periphery was not quite as tragic, nor nearly as dialectical. With the Unionists' decision to involve the empire in the First World War as an ally of Germany, the nature of the relationship between the Ottoman state and its Arab, *Shami* periphery was altered. This brings us to an important point: when we turn to examine the call to arms and the war period (an endeavor that this thesis will not undertake), what is most noticeable, and what has often been overlooked in the literature, is the existence of a historiographical break between the Unionist policies during the war period and their policies during the prewar period. The latter has been the subject of this thesis, while the former is an venture that I will leave for another time. But the main point of this thesis is to highlight the historical break in terms of Unionist policy-making in the Arab periphery as distinct from that which took place in the context of the First World War.

August 1914 can be pinpointed as the moment when Unionist policies shifted toward a more war-oriented, defensive attitude, whereas the prewar period between 1908 and 1914 was still, to an extent, inspired by a revolutionary attitude that sought, beyond all and despite the circumstances pushing against it, to introduce a democratic constitutional model of state. The aim of this project was ultimately to attain a union of the elements (*ittihad-ı anasır*) and thereby control the secessionist nationalist tendencies that were becoming prevalent throughout the empire. In the Unionist perspective, this entailed the promotion of a centralized state in which the law was to be standardized for all Ottoman citizens, including the duty to serve the Ottoman nation based on the logic of a nation in arms, in which universal conscription was a core component.

This means that when we speak of the "Turkification policies of the Unionists," there are contextual and historical variables that should be taken into consideration. In the collective memory of modern Arab states, the bulk of that memory has been constructed from recollections of the war period in which famine, cholera and brutal Unionists tactics toward Arab populations, particularly under the rule of Cemal Paşa (also known as "the butcher" in the Arab world), have come to dominate the narrative of the Arab experience of Ottoman rule during the period of CUP influence. As such, it makes sense that the shared Arab-Ottoman history has been portrayed as bloody and oppressive.

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[359] "Finally, for us, who despite everything belong to the Ottoman family, it was perhaps not the best time to settle in Lebanon. What do you want, we didn't choose anything, History chose for us. That said, I don't want to appear unfair or ungrateful. If it is true that the people of Beirut preferred to speak French and forget Turkish, not once did they make us feel unwanted. On the contrary, they seemed both amused and proud that yesterday's 'occupant' had somehow returned to live among them as a guest." Amin Maalouf, *Les Échelles du Levant* (Paris: Grasset, 1996), 57.

Unlike the prewar period, policy-making during the war period was distinctly dominated by a Unionist—according to Kurd 'Ali, "Turkish"—milieu. In his memoirs, Kurd 'Ali recounts that,

> The empire had barely announced the call to arms when four [non-Turkish] ministers resigned, they had been against the Ottoman entry into the War. Amongst this group was Suleyman Effendi al-Bustani, from al-Sham. They presented their resignation letters and left the government in the hands of the Turks. [...] The main outcome of the Ottoman entry into the War was the unification of power under the sole authority of the Unionists. The revolution [of 1908], which was intended to transform Turkey into a democratic state, ended up transforming Turkey into an absolutist government, in which injustice and tyranny prevailed."[360]

This compels us to propose two important revisions. The first pertains to our understanding of the notion of "Turkification," a project presumed to have been undertaken by the CUP. There seems to be a tacit assumption that the wartime policies of the Unionists, which lasted a mere four years, were representative of the four hundred years of Arab-Ottoman experience. The horrifying memories of war have been used to justify accusations of Ottoman colonialism and the rise of Arab nationalism as a counter-liberation movement. While there are elements of truth in the inherent racism of Unionist policies toward the populations of the Arab periphery, as can be gleaned from Selim Derengil's *The Ottoman Twilight in the Arab Lands*, no evidence exists to show that policy-making was calculated in such a way as to promote the dominance of the Turks over the Arabs.[361] Rather, Unionist policies, both before and during the war period, appear to have been adaptive and open to debate, and were the product of circumstance rather than any preconceived strategies of Turkish supra-dominance. That is not to say that ideas pertaining to the promotion of Turanism or a Turkish national homeland were not discussed, but rather to argue these concepts were not adopted as official policy strategies, but were simply options within an endless array of possible strategies for the future designs of the empire.[362]

The desire to protect the empire's Islamic identity remained a core component of the Unionist policy throughout the First World War, such that in October 1914, when the proclamation to jihad was made, the goal was to safeguard the caliphate, which encompassed members of a variety of ethnic groups. This logic would seem to contradict the idea that Unionist policy-making was one-dimensional and preconditioned toward the systematic Turkification of all of the empire's citizens. This forces us, instead, to view Unionist policy-making as the product of a complex set of processes, debates and reactions to the circumstances at hand, and to thus characterize it as inconsistent and organic. Ideologies, be they Islamic, nationalist or otherwise, were tools used interchangeably to mobilize the diverse communities of the empire during a period of incessant conflict and turmoil.

The second revision to be made is that Arab sentiments were not collective. While Cemal Paşa's policies were certainly brutal, especially when they culminated in the public execution of some of the most prominent Arabists on May 6, 1915, not all Arabs were necessarily offended by that event. Indeed, as we have seen in the fourth chapter, many Arabs from *Bilad al-Sham* were suspicious of the Arabist movement and its tendency to rely on the support of European governments to promote its values.

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[360] Kurd 'Ali, *Khitat*. The identity marker "Turkish" is used here to refer collectively to Unionists, who were ethnically diverse but considered Turkish in the context of Balkan identity politics.

[361] Selim Deringil, *The Ottoman Twilight in the Arab Lands: Turkish Memoirs and Testimonies of the Great War* (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2019).

[362] Ramazan Hakkı Öztan, "Point of No Return? Prospects of Empire after the Ottoman Defeat in the Balkan Wars (1912–1913)," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 50, no. 1 (2018): 65–84.

Instead, we have seen that geography and the physical division of landscape was a determining factor in shaping sentiments of belonging to the Ottoman state among the communities of the Syrian periphery. The diverse populations of the province—which included multiple ethnies, communities and sects, whose boundaries were often indistinguishable—reacted to the intrusion of the state in diverse and unique ways. For the intellectual milieu of Damascus and Beirut, state centralization and nationalization were deemed progressive and in keeping with the global trends of nationalism. However, the boundaries of progress and the limits of where the Arab community fit into that civilizing project were not articulated as clearly. Rather, the parameters of "Arabness" were constantly being challenged by the communities of the extended Arab peripheries, or what I refer to as the "peripheral peripheries".

The thesis has thus challenged the very premise of a finely delimited center-periphery dynamic between the Ottoman center in Istanbul and the Syrian periphery with its center in Damascus. It has shown that, in fact, when we speak of the Arab periphery, we must account for a multitude of peripheries, each of which had its own distinct relationship of interdependence with the Ottoman state. These relationships were liable to transformation based on the interests offered to them by the Ottoman state. Therefore, we find that the answer to the question of national loyalty, or lack thereof, was never clearly articulated. Rather, as the boundaries of the Ottoman state constantly transformed, due to frequent territorial losses, so too did the very conception of an Ottoman national ideal. As a result, peripheral communities were prone to frequently realigning their allegiance to the Ottoman state.

Thus, for instance, the tribal communities of Hauran and southern Syria, who were out of touch with global dynamics given their local dominance of the steppe regions, were threatened by the expansion of the Ottoman space into their autonomous territories. There, existing tribal structures were under the threat of destruction as a result of the standardization and legibility practices pursued by the Unionists. So when the reformist Ottomans, both Unionists as well as Arabists, sought to promote the Ottoman national project, which entailed the inculcation of these tribes into the Ottoman fold, they were met with a defensive reaction from tribes seeking to safeguard their autonomy. On the other hand, in moments when the very legitimacy of the Ottoman state was under threat of collapse, these same groups were eager to participate in the defense of the Ottoman state, due to the existence of a historical and somewhat parasitic dynamic between the Ottoman state and those Arab tribes. Therefore, we can say that (dis)loyalty of the tribal communities did not correlate to sentimental issues of national belonging and allegiance as much as it was dictated by calculated, practical interests, designed to ensure the continued success of their semi-independent protection rackets in the face of the expanding Ottoman threat. In some instances, this meant having to cooperate with the Ottoman state when threats or alternative opportunities arose. As such, it is not surprising to find out that, during the First World War, as Mithqal al-Fayiz notes, the tribes of Al-Karak frequently switched allegiances between the Ottomans and the British-Hashemite alliance.[363] They fluidly alternated between the two camps depending on the political trajectory of the war and the successes and losses of each belligerent.

Along the littoral zone in the Sanjak of Jerusalem, the threat of Zionist settlement proved to be the most contentious point around which communities debated the viability of the Unionist endeavor. For some, the failure of the Unionists to undertake any visible measures to intervene on behalf of the local communities of the Sanjak was seen as a sign of their inherent weakness and failure to protect the Arab identity. For others, the path toward unity and success in the face of the Zionist threat was hinged upon their maintaining unity with the Ottoman state, particularly after the Balkan Wars. Those in favor of an alliance with the Unionists hoped that, together, they could work to protect the overarching Islamic identity of the province and defend the caliphate accordingly.

This leads us to two main conclusions. Firstly, this research has shown that the sense of national allegiance does not simply develop out of the mere sentimental desire to belong to a larger group.

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[363] Yoav Alon, *The Shaykh of Shaykhs: Mithqal al-Fayiz and Tribal Leadership in Modern Jordan* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016).

Rather, it is a complex phenomenon that entails processes of self-debate and calculated decision-making. For this reason, it looks different for every individual and often bears multiple elements that can, and often do, contradict one another. However, in instances where a particular group is under threat, the desire to belong to a collective body can become more pronounced. Identity politics are more likely to come into play in times of instability; the need to belong to a larger whole develops as a measure of protection during periods when the very essence of one's identity is under the threat of being lost. In the case of the populations of *Bilad al-Sham*, the very revolutionary idea of constitutional reform pushed forward the question of national allegiance and forced individuals to confront their positions within the various collectives emerging at the time. However, these questions became more imperative when a direct threat was induced by the Balkan Wars. As identity categories mushroomed, the dilemma of choosing one's alliances became more complex and more contradictory. For these reasons, we saw different groups within the Arab periphery proposing different frameworks of relating to the Ottoman state. None was said to dominate over the other. Rather, a space of debate had opened, mainly through public platforms, such as journals and the parliament, which allowed for the different points of view to be set forth.

This brings us to the second point: a clear and defined sense of national belonging among the Arab population of the Syrian periphery was only established (at least in the legal sense) once national boundaries were officially delimited. That is to say, it was only after the formal adoption of the legislation to divide the former Ottoman territory into different Arab nation-states, as an outcome of the Treaty of Lausanne, that individuals and communities lost the ability to choose which communities they belonged to. Suddenly, the notions of where or what to belong to were decided on their behalf. There is thus a direct link between boundary-making and identity-formation; the clear articulation of the physical boundary has a decisive role in forming the parameters of the ideological boundary of national belonging. That, however, does not imply that the creation of a physical or legal border naturally leads to the erasure of multiple other identities naturally encompassed within the self. Rather, it is to highlight what has come to be the prominence of national identity as the "main" identity category of the twentieth century.

Henceforth, in the Arab world, a sense of national loyalty has since been allowed to develop along *qutri* and *watani* lines. This rigidity in terms of defining the lines of belonging has unfortunately, however, come at the expense of what had previously been flexible and malleable frameworks of loyalty and belonging that were, in their own way, open and tolerant. Perhaps it is now best to leave it to Arnold Toynbee to finally put to rest the presumption that the Arab Revolt was ever a movement for Arab liberation:

> It had been clear that the significant event of the First World War had been the destruction of the weakest of the Great Powers of the day, not the spawning of a litter of new minor states. The temporary erection of minor states in a political vacuum produced by the break-up or mutilation of former Great Powers, so far from militating against the concentration of power, had created an opportunity for it. The nominal 'liberation' of 'successor states' had indeed been illusionary from first to last. They had been created to be enslaved; for no other fate than enslavement could await minor states, new or old, in a world in which the concentration of power was being ordained inexorably by Technology's relentless progress.[364]

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[364] Arnold J. Toynbee, *A Study of History (Vol. 9): Contacts Between Civilizations in Time (Renaissances); Law and Freedom in History; The Prospects of the Western Civilization* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), 475.

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Images

Figure 1.1 Benoist-Méchin, Jacques. *Turkey 1908–1938: The End of the Ottoman Empire: 004 (A History in Documentary Photographs)*. New York, Marboro Books, 1989, 112.

Figure 1.2 Ahmet Mehmetefendioğlu, "İttihat ve Terakki'nin 1909 Kongresi." Toplumsal Tarih, July 1998, 25.

Figure 1.3 Ahmet Mehmetefendioğlu, "İttihat ve Terakki'nin 1909 Kongresi," Toplumsal Tarih, July 1998, 26.

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Figure 1.5 Benoist-Méchin, Jacques. *Turkey 1908–1938: The End of the Ottoman Empire: 004 (A History in Documentary Photographs)*. New York, Marboro Books, 1989, 137.

Figure 1.6 Benoist-Méchin, Jacques. *Turkey 1908–1938: The End of the Ottoman Empire: 004 (A History in Documentary Photographs)*. New York, Marboro Books, 1989, 133.

Figure 1.7 Benoist-Méchin, Jacques. *Turkey 1908–1938: The End of the Ottoman Empire: 004 (A History in Documentary Photographs)*. New York, Marboro Books, 1989, 133.

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Figure 2.3 Jawhariyyeh, Wasif. *The Storyteller of Jerusalem: The Life and Times of Musician Wasif Jawhariyyeh, 1904–1948*. Northampton: Clockroot Books, 2014. 160.

Figure 2.4 Obtained from Sa'ad Bishara's great grandson.