CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

The Rise of Arab Nationalism Reconsidered

Author(s): Mahmoud Haddad

Source: *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, May, 1994, Vol. 26, No. 2 (May, 1994), pp. 201-222

Published by: Cambridge University Press

Stable URL: https://www.jstor.org/stable/164733

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at https://about.jstor.org/terms



Cambridge University Press is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *International Journal of Middle East Studies*

JSTOR

This content downloaded from
109.81.212.241 on Tue, 13 Apr 2021 20:46:31 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

Int. J. Middle East Stud. **26** (1994), 201–222. *Printed in the United States of America*

Mahmoud Haddad

THE RISE OF ARAB NATIONALISM RECONSIDERED

The debate over the origins of early Arab nationalism in geographical Syria before World War I revolves around a twofold thesis presented two decades ago.[1] Its first and most influential part advances a social explanation, maintaining that it was a traditional intra-Arab elite conflict: "those members of the Arab elite who had a vested interest in the Ottoman state were Ottomanists. Those who were without such a stake were Arabists."[2]

The second part of this thesis is ideological. It rejects the idea that Arab nationalism was the creation of Lebanese Christian Arabs spreading European political doctrines, but rather looks at it as deriving from Islamic modernism, a school of thought that gained currency in some Muslim, especially Arab, elite circles in the 19th century and which is regarded as an expression of the Muslim Arab need to adapt modern European concepts and to lament "for the lost power and glory that had once been Islam's but had now passed to the Christian West."[3] This thesis, however, dismisses the significance of the Arab nationalists' specific agenda during the Young Turk era before World War I (1908–14). It believes that the Arabists had no grounds for accusing the ruling Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) of Turkification policies since these policies were in place before the CUP came to power in 1908.[4]

A criticism of this thesis tells us that the intellectual debate was "significant of something beyond itself"[5] and should not be dismissed lightly. Indeed, why else would the Arabist spokesmen during the Young Turk era have accused the central government of pursuing a policy of Turkification and why did they emphasize the importance of the Arabic language? Was using Arabic an expression of an exclusively cultural or ideological assertiveness, or was it also a reflection of other social concerns? A second thesis advances the opinion that the Arab movement under the Young Turks was not the instrument of one traditional faction exclusively "but also a vehicle for the entry into Arab politics of new forces and of groups, representing a different social base,"[6] including journalists, teachers, and army officers.[7]

Clarity in this debate can only be achieved through distinguishing among cultural, social, and political concerns. Arab nationalism, although in its nascent form, was a multidimensional movement that was active in all three areas. Much of the

Mahmoud Haddad teaches at the Department of History, Columbia University, 611 Fayerweather Hall, New York, N.Y. 10027, U.S.A.

© *1994 Cambridge University Press 0020–7438/94 $5.00 + .00*

This content downloaded from
109.81.212.241 on Tue, 13 Apr 2021 20:46:31 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

confusion in the field stems from the failure to draw the necessary, if sometimes blurred, lines of demarcation among these areas and between the long-term and short-term factors that contributed to bring that movement to the surface.

THE CULTURAL DIMENSION

It is most probably correct that early Arab nationalism was inspired by Muslim modernists well before 1908, but this account, valuable as it is, confines itself to one aspect of Arab nationalism, namely the cultural crisis of the self-view in relation to the powerful Western other. This is why this thesis, like the thesis that inflates the role of the Christian Lebanese, suffers from ideologism and too much emphasis on a quasi-psychological explanation. There was in fact a second, more concrete contributing factor to the rise of cultural Arab nationalism in the 19th century: the polarization between two approaches to educational reform and modernization, both of which originated in the need to learn the modern natural sciences, on the one hand, and to ward off the prospective religious and political influence of foreign Christian missionary schools, on the other. The Arab Syrian Muslim reformers felt that educational reform should be pursued through Arabic, the language of the land and of Islam; Sultan Abdulhamid II, however, decided to pursue it through Ottoman Turkish, the language of the state.

The situation is well illustrated by a neglected episode involving the eminent Syrian reformer Sheikh Tahir al-Jaza$^{\supset}$iri (1852–1920) in the 1870s and 1880s. Al-Jaza$^{\supset}$iri, who maintained that the best way to revive a people was by educating them concurrently in "the culture of modernity and the culture of religion,"[8] sought what Isaiah Berlin calls "cultural self-determination without a political framework."[9] He convinced Midhat Pasha, the governor (*vālī*) of the province (*vilāyet*) of Damascus and one of the well-known Turkish-Ottoman bureaucrat reformers, to make Arabic the language of instruction in the new state schools, and Arabic remained the language of instruction under both Midhat (1879–80) and his successor, Ahmad Hamdi Pasha (1880–85). But when Ahmad Hamdi was replaced in 1885, Sultan Abdulhamid ordered that Turkish be used instead,[10] a move that dealt a severe blow to the relations between the Arab Muslim reformers and Turkish officialdom. It is in that decision that we may locate a concrete and deeply rooted motive behind cultural Arab nationalism in Syria as a response to a specific policy of the Turkish center before 1908.

Arab cultural nationalism used a number of societies and associations to advance its cause before 1908. The activities of these societies are covered in the available history of the period,[11] and their main centers were in Damascus, Beirut, and Istanbul. Syrian members were mainly senior Muslim modernist reformers and junior secularly oriented students and intellectuals. The roster of members includes names that we will encounter later: Shukri al-$^{\subset}$Asali, Muhammad Kurd $^{\subset}$Ali, Muhibb al-Din al-Khatib, $^{\subset}$Abd al-Ghani al-$^{\subset}$Uraysi, $^{\subset}$Abd al-Wahhab al-Milihi (al-Inklizi), Salah al-Din al-Qasimi, $^{\subset}$Abd al-Karim al-Khalil, and possibly $^{\subset}$Abd al-Rahman al-Shahbandar.[12]

Accepting Islamic modernism's parentage of cultural Arabism does not exclude the role of non-Muslims in another type of Arabism, namely the modern literary-

This content downloaded from
109.81.212.241 on Tue, 13 Apr 2021 20:46:31 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

revival movement. The revival of the Arabic language among Syrian Christians started seriously in the 18th century. In the following century their role in the movement of translation and adaptation of European works and concepts was second only to the efforts of the Egyptian state under Muhammad ᶜAli.[13] Moreover, although the American Protestant missionaries did not play a part in spreading secular education,[14] they had a role in spreading literary Arabic among the Syrian Christians through initiating and supervising the translation of the Bible into Arabic.[15] Additionally, an ethnic-linguistic crisis between the largest Syrian Christian community, the Greek Orthodox, and its high Greek clergy led to the replacement of the Greek patriarch by an Arab and the replacement of Greek by Arabic as the language of the church in the Patriarchate of Antioch at the end of the 19th century.[16]

THE SOCIAL DIMENSION

Identifying Arab nationalism as a social movement requires distinguishing among different frameworks and levels of Ottoman state administration at the end of the 19th and early 20th centuries. It is necessary for our purposes in this study to be aware of the three general frameworks of the state administration: the civil, the religious, and the military. The civil administration should, in turn, be subdivided into its constituent hierarchical components: the court or palace administration at Yildiz until 1908, the ministerial headquarters of the central government at the Sublime Porte (*Bāb-i Âli*) or Grand Vizirate, the central administration itself, the provincial administration, and the local administration. As for the military administration, we may distinguish between two main corps: the forces led by the *alāili* officers who advanced from the ranks and the more modern forces led by the *mekteblis* (officers schooled at the *ḥarbiye mektebi*, the modern military college in Istanbul).[17]

Undoubtedly, policies of administrative centralization in the modern period in the Ottoman Empire predate 1908. They also predate the reign of Sultan Abdulhamid II (1876–1909) and may be located in the Tanzimat period (1839–76). But as he instituted Turkish as the language of instruction in local state schools, Abdulhamid decreed for the first time that Turkish be the language of correspondence among the different branches of the provincial administration.[18] Moreover, he employed Turks rather than Arab Syrians in some sectors of the local administration and apparently Turkified the higher positions of the local civil and judiciary bureaucracies.[19] Under his rule, many teachers in state secondary schools (*rüşdīye*), including teachers of Arabic, were Turks sent from non-Arab provinces.[20] At the same time, however, Abdulhamid's policies accelerated the formation of a new and modern Arab professional elite alongside a similar Turkish elite by opening up the Ottoman state's military and civil provincial administrations to young Arab students of mainly Syrian and Iraqi origin. As Albert Hourani put it, "towards the end of the nineteenth century, the Ottoman policy of administrative centralization began to succeed, and some of the local families began to send their sons to the professional schools in Istanbul and from there into the Ottoman army or civil service."[21] The larger picture, however, shows that toward the end of the 19th century the sons of wealthy local notables along with the sons of middling local

This content downloaded from
109.81.212.241 on Tue, 13 Apr 2021 20:46:31 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

functionaries sought employment and social advancement in one of two areas: (1) either outside the Ottoman administration in the liberal professions, such as engineering and medicine, after graduating from foreign Western universities or from the new, corresponding Ottoman colleges in Syria[22] and Istanbul; or (2) inside the Ottoman civil administration, usually after graduating from either the law school (*ḥukuk mektebi*) or from the college of public administration (*mülkiye mektebi*) in Istanbul. Some Western-trained physicians and pharmacists also worked for the state, usually as employees of the local administration. The sons of poor families were apt to go to military schools in Syria and Iraq and then to the military college in Istanbul before joining the imperial Ottoman army.[23]

The graduates of the new Ottoman professional schools comprised a large portion of the employees in the civil provincial service inside and outside Syria.[24] According to one study, the percentage of Arabs employed in the provincial administration of the Arab and Anatolian provinces increased from only 11 percent before 1839 to 12 percent in 1840–76, but then it nearly doubled to 23 percent during Abdulhamid's reign.[25]

The share of the Arabs in the central administration also showed a small increase from 5 percent in the pre-Hamidian period of 1840–76 to 7 percent during the Hamidian reign.[26] Although this was a modest overall share compared with other ethnic groups, it represented a 40-percent increase under Abdulhamid and was accomplished against the background of an expanding central administration under his rule.[27] But where the Arab Syrians were most prominent was in Abdulhamid's court administration at Yildiz palace. The Aleppan Abu al-Huda al-Sayyadi who was in charge of the sultan's Islamic propaganda and the Damascene ʿIzzat Pasha al-ʿAbid, the sultan's second secretary, were only the most prominent of them.[28] Additionally, Arab Syrian soldiers (*zūḥaf*, or chargers) together with the Albanians (*fezli*, or wearers of the fez) led by *alāili* officers comprised a significant part of the praetorian guard regiments in Istanbul.[29] It is highly unlikely that Arab Syrians dominated the palace administration, but they were visible and influential probably because most of them were associated with Abdulhamid's Pan-Islamic policy.

In general, then, Abdulhamid pursued a mélange of policies in different levels of the Ottoman administration. He pursued a policy of centralization and limited Turkification in the local administration; a policy of centralization, Turkification, and cooption in the provincial administration; and a policy of limited cooption in the central administration. All in all, Arab Syrians saw a chance during his reign for incorporation inside the Ottoman administration rather than exclusion from it.[30] What they lost in one context, they were, in a sense, compensated for in another.

The CUP changed this state of affairs. It not only continued Abdulhamid's centralization and Turkification policies but also tried to expand and broaden them. It also discontinued Abdulhamid's cooption policies. Increased centralization and Turkification without incorporation was to trigger an Arab–Turkish crisis with social implications. The CUP suppressed those elements it regarded as too closely affiliated with the Hamidian rule. In the military institution, the *zūḥaf* and *fezli* regiments, together with other regiments, were dispersed after two short-lived mutinies in late 1908 and 1909.[31] John Leisham, the American ambassador in Istanbul, confirmed this development when he reported:

This content downloaded from
109.81.212.241 on Tue, 13 Apr 2021 20:46:31 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

The personal troops of the Sultan, composed in large part of Albanians and Arabs, had hitherto enjoyed a privileged position, but now their former prerogatives were abolished and little by little their officers were changed for new ones devoted to the Committee [of Union and Progress]. . . . Two mutinies occurred on the part of the old soldiers, who disliked leaving the palace for rigorous service in the other corps, but these were promptly and efficaciously suppressed.[32]

It would be incorrect, however, to link these actions to the increase in the national consciousness among Arab army officers in the 1908–14 period. The officers who became active in secret Arab societies belonged to the *mektebli* corps; the palace guard belonged to the *alāili* corps. These officers had an outlook similar to that of the CUP, and some of them were CUP sympathizers. ᶜAziz ᶜAli al-Masri, who headed al-ᶜAhd (The Covenant), the most important of these secret societies (f. 1913), had participated in the 1908 revolution against Sultan Abdulhamid.[33] The conflict between the Arab and Turkish officers developed not before, but after, 1908 and was a conflict between two military groups with identical training.

The prominence of the Arab-Syrian and other non-Turkish elements in the palace administration aroused the hostility of some Turkish bureaucrats. One Turkish official sympathetic to the Young Turks told a British newspaper in 1907, "[I]n Constantinople we have the . . . fight for supremacy being daily waged, Syrian and Albanian striving to obtain the upper hand at Yildiz, where no pure Turk has a footing."[34] One of the first objectives of the Young Turk revolution in 1908 was the "dismantling of the mechanisms that Abdulhamid had created for the exertion of control from the palace."[35] Enver Bey (later pasha), one of the leaders of the CUP, maintained shortly after the revolution that it was directed against "the palace despotism."[36] Thus, as far as the civil bureaucracy was concerned, the new regime embarked on a policy of drastic purge of the "palace creatures."[37] Through the action of official committees of reorganization (*tansikat komisyonları*), which operated both in the capital and in the provinces, 27,000 officials were purged and removed from the payrolls of the various branches of service.[38] Although the victims of the *tansikat* were initially allowed to petition for reconsideration, a new law published in 1910 forbade fresh appeals.[39]

According to Arabic sources, most of the Arab employees in Istanbul, especially in the ministries of Foreign Affairs and the Interior, were purged.[40] Although the *tansikat* essentially were carried out to reduce both the number of undesirable bureaucrats and the financial burdens of the state,[41] it is possible that they were also used—as Arabic sources insist—to reduce the number of non-Turks in the central and provincial bureaucracies.[42] A Turkish source gives credence to these accounts. Cemal Bey (later pasha), a leading CUP member, "acknowledged in private conversations that he wanted to use the constitution in order to give the Turks, as a national group, a privileged position in the state."[43] If that was the case, then it would be fair to assume that the chances of the Arab students in Istanbul for employment in the Ottoman central administration shrank after the Young Turk revolution of 1908. In fact, their situation was analogous to that of the bourgeoisie on the eve of the French Revolution, of whom Jacques Godechot wrote, the more numerous and better educated they became "the scarcer became the number of governmental and administrative posts to which they could aspire."[44] In 1911 Shukri al-ᶜAsali, the

This content downloaded from
109.81.212.241 on Tue, 13 Apr 2021 20:46:31 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

deputy of Damascus in the Lower Chamber of Deputies (*meclis-i mabᶜusān*), delivered a speech in which he complained of the inability of recent Arab graduates to find positions in the lower ranks of the central civil administration. The Syrian deputy did not link this problem to the use of the Arabic language because Ottoman Turkish was the language of the central administration, and any Arab who intended a civil-service career would have been fluent in it. Al-ᶜAsali said,

> The Government has published lately the Civil List, and on carefully perusing same I find therein but four Arab officials. You know, however, that the Arabs constitute about half the Ottoman Empire's population. They contribute, like the rest, to the Treasury; yet, despite this, and the fact that the Constitution decrees just and equal treatment among the different constitutive elements of the Empire, we see them barred from Government functions in the central administration. Let us assume that there is no one among us who is worthy of discharging the duty of a minister or fitted for the occupation of the post of governor (*walī*), but isn't there among the young Arabs who graduated from the law school or from the college of civil administration or from any other institution of higher learning anyone who is competent enough to be an examining clerk (*mumayyiz*) in a subordinate section or a registrar (*muqayyid*) in the Grand Vezirate, or in some ministerial department? A degree of justice is in order here! . . . Is it possible that the Arab nation lacks competent young men for a position of an examining clerk? And yet we find in the Ministry of Finance 111 Turks, 13 Jews, 10 Armenians, 4 Greeks, and not a single Arab![45]

A month later al-ᶜAsali pointed out that the Syrians would be content if they were to be treated like the Jews in the central administration.[46] In the provincial administration, as Corinne Blake has demonstrated, Arab and Syrian graduates of the *mülkiye* enjoyed a privileged position until 1911.[47] During the Hamidian and early Young Turk eras, the percentage of Syrian graduates of the *mülkiye* who attained high positions of vali and subgovernor (*mutaṣarrif*) was much higher than their percentage in the general population of the graduates of that college. By 1911 the Syrians already employed in the provincial administration began to be promoted at a rate equal to their other classmates.[48] Syrians who graduated in 1911 and after began to be promoted at a rate less than that of the general population of *mülkiye* graduates.[49] As part of the *tansikat*, thirteen Arab *mutaṣarrif*s and an unspecified number of district officials (*kaimmakām*s) were reported to have been fired.[50] Whereas the new regime simply could have perceived those officials to have been too loyal to the old regime,[51] it did not replace them with Syrian Arabs sympathetic to its cause, but chose to replace them with Turks instead.[52] When Talat Bey (later pasha), one of the CUP leaders, answered al-ᶜAsali back that "they wished most heartily that they could form the whole cabinet of noble Arabs,"[53] Arab deputies replied and accused the CUP of having purged many Arab Syrians from the provincial administration as well: "How true, O Talat Bey, since you have given the proof by discharging most of the Arab *qāᵓimmaqām*s during your tenure of office!"[54]

Sacking Arab officials who already occupied high positions in the provincial administration and promoting those who were in lower positions at a slower rate may have been perceived by the CUP as necessary to abolish the privileged position the Arab and Syrian graduates of the *mülkiye* held there before 1911. But as the Arabs' share in the overall appointments was less than one-fourth,[55] they seem

This content downloaded from
109.81.212.241 on Tue, 13 Apr 2021 20:46:31 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

to have interpreted the CUP's move as an attempt to marginalize them in that particular sphere. When al-ᶜAsali accused the CUP of discriminating against the Arabs by not appointing them to "high positions,"[56] he was probably referring to the provincial administration.

Al-Muqtabas, the most influential newspaper in Damascus, complained about political appointments. It stated that, instead of promoting ᶜAbd al-Wahhab al-Inklizi, who was serving as the *kaimmaqām* of the Bab district in the province of Aleppo, to be vali of the province, the Ministry of Interior chose to appoint Kazim Bey who had no experience in provincial administration. The newspaper did not mention that the new vali was a Turk, but it did say that the appointment deviated from the usual practice of promoting career provincial administrators like *kaimmaqām*s and *mutaṣarrif*s who had originally graduated from the *mülkiye* to be valis and was instead appointing military commanders and pro-CUP newspaper editors to such positions.[57] The Arabists argued that merit should be considered. The very fact that many of them were graduates of the *mülkiye* made them confident that giving priority to merit would gain them the promotions they sought.

One aspect of all this controversy was the conflict between careerist and noncareerist officials. Al-ᶜAsali complained that the appointments to minor positions required passing an exam, but "no such exam is required for the position of vali or *mutaṣarrif* and nobody investigates whether a newly appointed vali is a graduate of a college or not."[58] He demanded that a law be passed governing promotions.[59] Later on, al-ᶜAsali implicitly revealed his true objective of promoting Syrian *kaimmaqām*s to the positions of *mutaṣarrif*s, the next step in the provincial bureaucratic hierarchy. He suggested appointing competent Turks to be valis and competent Syrians to be *mutaṣarrif*s in the Syrian provinces.[60] But the Arabists also advanced another view that made use of the language issue. They demanded that the central government appoint officials fluent in Arabic, so that they would better understand local affairs.[61] An Arabic requirement certainly would have improved employment and promotion chances for Arab-Syrian graduates.

In the local context, the situation was more complex. The assertion that "the Young Turk period was not marked by any changes in the language of administration, the courts, or education"[62] is only partly valid. It is vitiated by the classic methodological problem of undifferentiation between laws passed and laws actually applied. Here again language stood for the more socially significant competition between Arab Syrians and Turks over positions in various areas and levels of the local judicial and civil bureaucracies.

Although it is true that it was Sultan Abdulhamid II who started Turkifying the language of the new state schools, employed Turks as teachers in these schools, employed Turks as judges in the state courts in Syria, and exerted more secular control over these courts, this process of centralization, secularization, and creeping Turkification was far from complete when his rule came to an end. After 1908 it was left for the CUP to try to hasten and complete and process. The reaction of the Arab Syrians was to demand reversing the Turkification policies of both Abdulhamid and his successors. In 1879, Sultan Abdulhamid had issued a law that reorganized the separate state courts (*niẓāmīye*) that had been created in 1854 by putting them under the control of the central authorities rather than under the provincial vali.[63] It was at

This content downloaded from
109.81.212.241 on Tue, 13 Apr 2021 20:46:31 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

that point, or shortly after, that presidents of the courts started to be appointed by the central government, usually from among the graduates of the law school in the capital, and some of them were actually Turks.[64] However, each court had a number of member judges elected by an administrative committee and appointed by the vali of the corresponding province equally from among the local Muslim and Christian notables for a period of two years.[65]

In 1909, a new organizational procedure was implemented. It abolished the role of the local notables and required instead that all member judges of the state courts be appointed from among the graduates of the law school in Istanbul.[66] The step also had another secularizing aspect that was bound to affect the ulema who had performed as judges in the local state courts up to that point. On 23 February 1910, George Devey, the British consul in Damascus, reported that a new order had prohibited any further such appointments and had confined the Ministry of Justice's selection to exclusively Western-educated graduates of the law school in Istanbul.[67] No wonder then that Sheikh Ahmad Hasan Tabara—editor of *al-Ittiḥād al-ᶜUthmānī* newspaper of Beirut, a member of the CUP branch in the city, and a member judge of the Court of Appeals—turned against the central government after he lost his court job. His newspaper supported the Arabists' cause from that point on.[68] The secularly oriented Syrian-Arab graduates of the law school in Istanbul stood to benefit only partially from these changes, however, because at least half of the new appointees were not Syrians, but Turks. The British council in Damascus reported on 4 April 1910:

> The Ministry of Justice abolished the old system of assigning judicial membership in Damascus to natives elected for a term of two years, and appointed permanent members to fill these posts. Four of the newly appointed members are natives of Damascus, while the other eight are Turks. Similar procedure has been applied in four cazas of the vilayet, viz.: Homs, Baalbek, Bekka and Salt.[69]

Arabic had been permitted in the state courts in the Arab provinces as widely agreed[70] until the new law of 1909 prohibited its use, made Turkish the exclusive language of these courts,[71] and reasserted that member judges "in one particular place will not necessarily know the language of that place."[72] The Ministry of Justice had decided shortly before to put an end to the practice of allowing lawyers who had not graduated from Istanbul's law school to defend cases in the courts unless they could pass a qualifying exam.[73] Evidently, this threatened the livelihood of two groups of local lawyers who did not know enough Turkish: the lawyers who had graduated from Western law schools and the ulema who had a traditional Islamic education and were acting as lawyers in these courts. Local merchants were not pleased either. In April 1910, when the president of the commercial court in Damascus insisted on Turkish as the language of proceedings in his court, the merchants protested on the grounds that they could not follow the proceedings. In addition, because their depositions were made in Arabic, any change, however slight, through translation to Turkish might adversely affect their cases.[74] A similar problem surfaced in 1913 when the central government decreed that property transfers usually issued by local headmen to the registry office (*ṭabū*) should be issued in Turkish instead of Arabic. *Al-Ḥaqīqa* in Beirut objected because local headmen did

This content downloaded from
109.81.212.241 on Tue, 13 Apr 2021 20:46:31 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

not know Turkish and suggested that the move was a prelude to replacing local headmen with Turks.[75]

As for language in education, the CUP policies were not consistent. Osman Ergin, a Turkish authority, describes the CUP as indecisive in education.[76] Turkish was the language of instruction in state schools before 1908; in 1909, the CUP promised to allow local languages for instruction in state elementary schools,[77] but, according to Muhammad Kurd ʿAli and to the local press, the CUP did not honor that promise and the program issued by the Ministry of Education did not reflect that change.[78] A non-Arab source maintains that the second annual convention of the CUP, which met in Salonica in November 1910, "decided that the Turkish language be employed in all schools throughout the Empire, aiming at denationalization of all non-Turkish communities and instilling of patriotism among the Turks."[79] The Arabists were not consistent either. Some of them demanded the use of Arabic for instruction only in local state elementary schools; others thought it should apply through secondary schools as well.[80]

What the CUP did indeed try to exert more central control over were the nonstate schools in the empire, a policy chiefly directed against the two school systems run by the non-Muslim millets and by foreigners. This policy may have been motivated by the need for homogeneity and uniformity in the empire. It was pursued between 1908 and 1911 and directed against the privileges enjoyed by the non-Muslims and the capitulations enjoyed by the European powers in Ottoman lands. Instruction in the millet schools on all levels was either in the local language or some European language, and the language of instruction in foreign schools was usually French or English. Turkish was not seriously taught in these schools,[81] which explains why one of the articles of the CUP program in 1908 reaffirmed a decree that had been issued in 1894 that required the study of Turkish in all schools of the empire including communal and foreign schools and was apparently intended "to undermine some of the immunities enjoyed by foreign schools under the capitulations, as well as to circumvent the nationalist fervor among the non-Turkish communities."[82]

The 1908 CUP program subjected schools to inspection by the Ministry of Education,[83] but when it tried to inspect the millets and foreign schools and interfere in the appointment of their teachers,[84] "the minorities depending on their privileges and the foreigners depending on the capitulations refused to enforce these changes."[85] In Syria, as in many other Ottoman provinces, no state schools exclusively for non-Muslims existed[86] and Christian students who attended local nonstate schools were usually instructed in Arabic in both elementary and secondary schools. Muslim students who were more dependent on state schools were instructed in Turkish.[87] The result was that Syrian Muslims were asking the central government to undo the pre-1908 Hamidian policy regarding state schools, whereas the Syrian Christians were asking for the preservation of the pre-1908 practices regarding nonstate schools. By insisting on Arabic as the language of instruction in state elementary and secondary schools, the Muslims were, among other things, seeking equality with their Christian compatriots.

In the local civil administration, measures that had adverse social effects on the lower and low-middle classes were also initiated. One was the order by the Ministry

This content downloaded from
109.81.212.241 on Tue, 13 Apr 2021 20:46:31 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

of Finance to fire all local tax collectors not fluent in Turkish,[88] an edict that threatened to make junior-level Syrian civil servants functionally illiterate and replace them with Turks. The government also tried to restrict the influence of foreign schools by refusing to employ their graduates in the public sector.[89] Talat Bey, the minister of the interior, told the French paper *Le Temps* in late 1909 that students of the millets and foreign schools who did not have a perfect knowledge of the national language and the national culture, both of which "are naturally Turkish," had no place in state service.[90] ᶜAbd al-Rahman al-Shahbandar's career could have experienced a blockage at that point. Although his opposition to the CUP may have been grounded in ideology,[91] as a graduate of the medical school of the Syrian Protestant College in Beirut and a physician employed by the municipality of Damascus,[92] the new measures would have affected him. A liberal profession did not guarantee freedom from government control or influence.[93]

In April 1910, the British consul in Damascus took notice of some of these developments and observed,

> the antagonistic sentiment as between Arab and Turk has been greatly fomented during the past three or four months now, whether by hasty or somewhat autocratic behavior on the part of office holders, or by the over-advanced views of those connected with the Young Turks party which are manifesting themselves in a distinct tendency towards xenophoby.
>
> The antagonistic sentiment between Turk and Arab is beginning to permeate downwards to the lower classes; and will soon be no longer confined to the ulama, notables and grandees, and official circles.
>
> The most sore point of all is the attempt of Young Turks to propagate the use of Turkish in exclusion of Arabic in all official circles; and while all verbal evidence is in Arabic at the law courts, judgments, sentences, decrees and sundry orders are put into Turkish often to the confusion of the applicant or the litigant. In the Judicial Department again most of the higher officers such as the Procurer-General, presidents of courts, know scarcely any Arabic or indeed none at all, and in fact out of some thirty or more, only about one half a fair colloquial knowledge of the language of the country, these being mainly the clerks and assessors; of the three mustantiks [examining magistrates], one know[s] very little Arabic, whereas it is absolutely essential for his investigation.[94]

The outcry against these various pre-1908 and post-1908 Turkification measures in the local administration came from many quarters. Syrian members in the Lower Chamber of Deputies exerted pressure on the government to change its policy. According to Sulayman al-Bustani, deputy of the province of Beirut, they were partially successful. In a speech he delivered in Beirut in September 1910, al-Bustani, who was on good terms with the CUP and usually acted as a mediator between it and the Arabists, mentioned that the central government had yielded to Syrian demands on two points. It had reversed its earlier decision to sack local tax collectors, and it had agreed that only Arab teachers should teach Arabic. The latter decision was especially important because it promised to reverse a pre-1908 practice. On another pre-1908 practice, the ignorance of Arabic by non-Arab judges, al-Bustani said only that the minister of justice was looking into this matter.[95] In another speech delivered in the same month in Cairo, al-Bustani mentioned that the central government had decided not to post Turkish functionaries who did not know Arabic to any Arab province.[96] Even taking al-Bustani at his word, it would

This content downloaded from
109.81.212.241 on Tue, 13 Apr 2021 20:46:31 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

be fair to deduce that the CUP had reversed its earlier policy only where junior posts affecting local functionaries were concerned; its reversal did not affect middle-level and senior posts that were held by Turks before 1908. All that Istanbul promised was a change in style, not substance, that is, to send Arabic-speaking instead of non-Arabic-speaking Turks to fill these posts.

The significance of this last point should not be overlooked. It showed that the central government was, wittingly or unwittingly, continuing Abdulhamid's policy that resulted in blocking the employment of the middle-class, Western-educated Arab Syrians in the local administration. These were the same people who formed the Arab core of the CUP's local chapters in Syrian cities. This may explain, at least in part, why a number of young Syrians who opposed the Hamidian autocracy thought that their earlier membership in Arab cultural nationalist societies was not incompatible with joining CUP local chapters in 1908 and 1909, but reversed their position in 1910 and after. ᶜAbd al-Ghani al-ᶜUraysi, ᶜAbd al-Rahman al-Shahbandar, and Shukri al-ᶜAsali, for example, were members of Arab cultural societies before 1908 and became members of local CUP chapters in 1908 or 1909. However, all three left the CUP and became activist Arab nationalists after 1910. Another more visible sign of intra-CUP conflict between the central committee and the local Syrian chapters may be detected when a split occurred in the Beirut chapter of the CUP between the Arab and Turkish members in 1911.[97] In January 1912, thirty members of this chapter threatened to resign over the language controversy.[98] These resignations had no consequence because the local CUP chapters had been run by Turks sent by the central committee of the CUP since the previous year. According to a British correspondent writing in early 1911,

> Jealousy of the Turk has been aggrevated by the methods of the Committee. The local Syrian committees reorganized by agents from Salonika, are now almost entirely in the hands of Turks. Most of the Arab members seeing that they are of no account, have refrained from attending and many of them have gone to the length of resigning. Their openly expressed discontent has made no impression upon the Committee. If the local newspapers dare to publish articles disrespectful to it, they are warned from Salonika that the editor had best set guard over his pen lest he should come to an untimely end, a threat which it is all the more difficult to disregard since in Constantinople it has twice been carried out.[99]

The largely untapped U.S. Department of State archival material confirms the general picture provided above and suggests that Istanbul was not honoring some of its promises, but rather trying to broaden the scope of Turkification. On 16 August 1911, W. Stanley Hollins, the American consul-general in Beirut, stated in a dispatch to the secretary of state in Washington that "the Government is slowly but steadily going ahead and replacing Syrian officials here with Turks, practically none of whom know Arabic, the language of all of Syria."[100]

Circumstances also played their part in giving a new lease on life to the Arab–Turkish conflict by threatening the employment chances of the middle- and lower-middle-class Syrians in the local administration. After the Ottoman defeat in the war with Italy over Tripolitania in 1911–12 and in the first Balkan war in late 1912, refugees from both regions found their way to Anatolia and Syria. Many of

This content downloaded from
109.81.212.241 on Tue, 13 Apr 2021 20:46:31 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

those who had been in state service in the lost provinces were reemployed by the central government in similar positions in Syria. At the end of 1912, for example, local newspapers describe how Arab clerks and functionaries in Beirut's first circuit court had to be demoted to comply with an order from the Ministry of Justice in Istanbul appointing a non-Arabic-speaking immigrant Turk from Tripolitania as a head clerk in that court.[101] Similar stories about junior functionaries from the Balkans also appear.[102] An encounter between Shukri al-ᶜAsali and Hazim Bey, the vali of Beirut in March 1913 illustrates how at least some Arab nationalists were acting out of concern for the lower local bureaucratic class when they tied their economic well-being to the use of Arabic in the local administration. In a conciliatory move, the vali asked al-ᶜAsali to assume his responsibilities as the newly appointed *mutaṣarrif* of the northwestern coastal Syrian district of Latakia. Al-ᶜAsali refused and asked the vali why he was accompanied by alien policemen. The vali replied that they were experienced men and victims of the fall of the Balkans. To that al-ᶜAsali tersely protested, emphasizing the role of Arabic in the local context, "The Arab nation is in no position to maintain all the employees of the state. It has rather to choose them on the basis of merit and knowledge of the local language and customs. The rest can choose other professions for a living."[103]

The problem was not solved six months later even after an agreement was reached between the Arabists and the CUP in August 1913.[104] American consul-general Hollins in Beirut reported on 24 September 1913 that,

> in spite of the alleged promises of the present Government at Constantinople, to the so-called Syrian and Arabic "reformers," that no non-Arabic speaking Turks will be appointed to subordinate positions in Syria and that the preference in such appointments will always be given to Syrians and Arabs, the Government has commenced by transferring six of the oldest native Beirut commissaires of police to Bassorah [Basra] and filling their places with Turks who are utter strangers to Beirut and who do not understand a word of Arabic.
>
> As was expected, the commissaires who were ordered to go to Bassorah have resigned rather than be obliged to go to such a place as Bassorah, where it would be impracticable for them to take their families. This is a very convenient way to get rid of a Syrian official; transfer him to some outlandish place where it will be impossible for him to live, and he will resign and leave a vacancy into which a hundred hungry Turkish ex-office-holders, belonging to the hereditary office-holding class, of whom a vast horde have been driven out of Tripolitania and Macedonia, will clamor to be put.
>
> In addition to these changes in the personnel of the police, ten Turks who have lost their positions in Northern Macedonia, and who do not understand any Arabic at all, have just arrived in Beirut and have been given positions in the local finance department.[105]

At that point the Arabists began to insist that Arabic be recognized as the official language in the Arab provinces. The CUP, ostensibly in a conciliatory step, reiterated the promise made by Sulayman al-Bustani in 1910 that "all officials in Arab provinces must be acquainted with Arabic as well as Turkish."[106] But while al-Bustani's promise referred to senior-level bureaucrats in the provincial and local administrations, the CUP was using it to refer to junior functionaries in the local administration. The reaction of some Arabists was swift. On 9 October 1913, the Ottoman Administrative Decentralization party (*al-Ḥizb al-lāmarkaziyya al-idarīyya al-ᶜuthmānī*) issued a proclamation from its headquarters in Cairo saying that

This content downloaded from
109.81.212.241 on Tue, 13 Apr 2021 20:46:31 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

the CUP would deny junior local functionaries even minor jobs such as reporter or draft writer because many of them did not know Turkish. Making knowledge of Turkish mandatory, according to the proclamation, was "tantamount to expelling thousands of them from their present jobs in the name of the law, instead of opening the doors for appointing them in the service of the local government."[107] The specific reference to the careers of "thousands of junior functionaries" leaves no doubt about the concern the party had for low- and mid-level civil servants and suggests that the support for the Syrian movement was much more broadly based than has been supposed. Of course, finding enough bilingual Turkish junior functionaries to replace the Syrians would be a difficult, if not an impossible, task. But the Arabists seem to have proceeded on the assumption that the bilingual proficiency requirement was in this case not a serious provision but simply a device that was going to be used to replace Arabs with Turks. It was well known that in the local administration Turkish officials held most of the highest positions and local Syrians the lower ones.[108]

This leads us to conclude that, although there had been indeed a conflict about positions and offices, it was not mainly a traditional intra-Arab elite conflict, but rather a much more socially meaningful conflict between Turkish and Syrian-Arab elite and non-elite professional groups of middle- and lower-middle-class character on all levels of the central, provincial, and local bureaucracies. Yet, groups outside these bureaucracies also played a role. The opposition of the local merchants, lawyers, and members of the liberal professions cannot be ignored.

THE POLITICAL DIMENSION

Early Arab nationalism as a political movement was the outcome of at least three trends of opposition to Turkish nationalism and Pan-Turkism; the Turcocentric Ottomanism of the CUP; and the prospects of European, or more specifically French, colonial control of Syria that became dominant in the latter part of the Young Turk period (1912–14) before World War I.

The first trend began to emerge before 1908 and toward the end of Abdulhamid's reign. In the latter part of the 19th century, a Turkish nationalist movement started to emphasize Turkish heritage "in contrast with Ottoman and Muslim roots."[109] However, some Muslim-Arab intellectuals were discussing the idea of an Arab spiritual caliphate. This led at times to polemics between Turkish and Arab publications.[110] Although this trend was in the main cultural and/or religious, it acquired political significance in 1908 and after. It may have been responsible, together with jealousy of the role Syrian Arabs played at Yildiz, for the openly anti-Arab expressions that were projected by the new Turkish military and civilian elites in 1908.[111] Ahmad Qadri, then an Arab student in Istanbul, makes the point that he and two other Arab students, ᶜAwni ᶜAbd al-Hadi and Muhammad Rustum Haydar, had the idea of forming a secret society, the Young Arabs Society (*Jamᶜiyyat al-ᶜarabiyya al-fatāt*) in Istanbul along the lines of the Young Turks Society, only four days after the Young Turk revolution. What prompted them was that on the day the constitution had been reenacted a Turkish army officer openly denounced Abdulhamid's Arab advisers by emphasizing their ethnic origin.[112]

This content downloaded from
109.81.212.241 on Tue, 13 Apr 2021 20:46:31 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

Similar episodes were reported in the Turkish press.[113] Although Arab independence was discussed, it was not at first part of a program and did not go beyond the "whispers" described by one of the members of al-Fatat.[114] The society acquired an organizational framework after it was founded in Paris in 1911, mainly by a group comprised of Arab-Syrian students.[115] Salah al-Din al-Qasimi wrote in early 1909 that in face of anti-Arab insults and portrayals by some Turks, including a number of prominent Turkish professors in the institutions of higher learning in Istanbul,[116] the Arabs should hold fast to the principles of nationalism and say "they were Arabs first, Ottomans second."[117] Defending one's national rights was essential to an equilibrium among all the different ethnic elements that formed the Ottoman state. For al-Qasimi, there was no alternative to political cooperation among those elements, including Arabs and Turks, within the bounds (*jāmiᶜa*) of Ottomanism.[118]

The second trend developed in the wake of the 1908 revolution and the CUP's indirect and later direct control of the affairs of the Ottoman state. Although the CUP and other Turkish cultural associations declared their allegiance to political Ottomanism, they were perceived by many Arabs as Turkish nationalists. Muhibb al-Din al-Khatib said that the Arabs had at first hailed the return of constitutional rule, but they were soon disappointed. Al-Khatib accused a faction inside the CUP of having been intent on concentrating the power of the state in Turkish hands and treating the non-Turkish elements in the Ottoman Empire just like colonial France treated the Algerians.[119] This perception led the Arab students to form a number of national societies and associations.[120] Arab members of the CUP in Istanbul complained of having been excluded from its inner decision-making circle.[121] The CUP's support for Turkish and Pan-Turkish cultural publications and associations such as Türk Derneği (1908), Türk Yurdu (1911) and Türk Ocakları (1912) are cited in the memoirs of a number of Arabists as evidence that it had abandoned Ottomanism and Islam and embraced Turkish nationalism.[122] On the policy level, however, Jacob Landau may be closer to the mark when he said that the CUP simultaneously pursued a number of approaches that emphasized Turkish nationalism, Ottomanism, and Pan-Islamism in different geographical areas.[123] Ernest Dawn wrote in one of his earliest studies that "Turkish Ottomanists had never been consistent in their actions. Talking Ottomanism they practiced Turkism."[124] This explains why the Arabists accused the CUP of using Islam and Pan-Islamism merely as foreign-policy tools and resented the calls to "purify" the Turkish language of its Arabic words.[125] Two other facts, that Turkish and Pan-Turk nationalist associations were set up in Istanbul and that Turkish students in the capital and in Europe were their most active members,[126] exhibit a double symmetry. The centers of Arab cultural and political nationalist societies during the first phase of the Young Turk era developed initially not inside, but outside, Syria, mainly in Istanbul—"the hotbed of the Arab renaissance" according to one Arabist[127]—and Paris. Moreover, the vast majority of their members were Arab students living in one of those cities. "The Arab youth" (*al-Shabība al-ᶜarabīyya*), the very name the Arab students used to refer to themselves and by which they were referred to, is indicative of this fact. Hence, Arab nationalism was,

This content downloaded from
109.81.212.241 on Tue, 13 Apr 2021 20:46:31 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

in one of its manifold aspects, a predominantly Arab-Syrian student movement that developed in opposition to the Turkish nationalist student movement. One of its purposes was to complain that the CUP excluded Arab students from the state scholarships that paid for a European education.[128]

The loss of Tripolitania and the Balkans generated a different Arab nationalism, an anticolonial political movement that thought the Ottoman Empire vulnerable and that it could be dismembered. In this period, when the Arabists discussed plans for an Arab entity separate from the Ottoman Empire, they did so in the conditional, "in the event the empire collapsed."[129] European discussions about partitioning the Ottoman Asiatic provinces were conducted openly and known throughout the empire.[130] In the case of Syria, however, French colonial rule was the threat uppermost in the Arabists' minds. It was at that point that a new group of Arab political societies was formed. Rashid Rida said that the thought that Syria might become another Tripolitania led him and a number of Syrian emigrés in Cairo to establish the Ottoman Administrative Decentralization party in December 1912.[131] The al-ᶜAhd secret society composed of Iraqi and Syrian military officers was also formed at that time. Although its existence was influenced by the ideological conflict between Arab and Turkish officers,[132] it was actually formed shortly after the debacles of Tripolitania and the Balkans. The Turkish commander Cemal Pasha mentioned in his memoirs that the Arab army officers were politically restless during the first Balkan war.[133] ᶜAziz ᶜAli al-Misri, the leader of al-ᶜAhd, returned to Istanbul at the end of 1912 after commanding the Ottoman forces in the war against the Italians in Tripolitania. Whereas the program of al-ᶜAhd called for Arab internal independence and a federal Ottoman state, it also spoke of Arab–Turkish cooperation to defend the East from the West and insisted on keeping the caliphate in the hands of the Ottoman dynasty.[134] The Arab press reported that local notables in Baghdad, Basra, Aleppo, Beirut, and Jerusalem had asked the central government to agree to decentralize and implement measures that could avert the destiny of Tripolitania and allow them to deal with the Europeans on their own.[135] After the Ottoman defeat in the first Balkan war at the end of 1912,[136] Amin Saᶜid wrote that fear of being subjected to the atrocities the Balkan Muslims suffered moved the Arab Muslims to think of decentralization as a solution. This was especially urgent because the Arab provinces lacked any means of defense.[137] Other sources confirm this state of affairs. On 29 November 1912 the American consul general Hollins in Beirut observed:

> It is well known that the great majority of the more intelligent Syrians believe that France has designs upon Syria, though but a small fraction of the said Syrians look with favor upon such schemes; and the prompt despatch of two French men-of-war, the "Montcalm" and the "Henri IV," immediately upon the breaking out of the war between Turkey and the Balkan States, was considered by some Egyptian newspapers as an indication that France had some particular interest in Syria.
>
> Our first dragoman informs me that it is a current topic of conversation in town that the French Acting Consul General gave to the Vali of Beirut what was practically a verbal ultimatum, when he informed the Vali that any disorders in town would be promptly put down

This content downloaded from
109.81.212.241 on Tue, 13 Apr 2021 20:46:31 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

by French sailors, who would be landed for that purpose, and that, in case it should become necessary to land any of the armed forces of France on Syrian soil, it could not be assumed that they would be in any hurry to return to their ships afterwards, and that, as a matter of fact, nobody could say when they would be withdrawn from the town.[138]

French statesmen made no secret of their ambitions to turn Syria into a French dependency if the Ottoman Empire fell. When the Balkan nations defeated the Ottoman army and reached the Chatalja lines, no more than forty miles from Istanbul, the French paper *Le Temps* advocated the occupation of Syria under the pretext of a "Syrian question" and the need for protecting the Christians of the East. This invited sharp reactions from the Arabists. Muhammad Kurd ʿAli, the editor of *al-Muqtabas*, wrote an article that M. Ottavi, the French consul in the city, thought was important enough to forward to Raymond Poincaré, the minister of foreign affairs in Paris. Kurd ʿAli attacked both the French government and the French press, reminding his readers of the French colonial behavior in Algeria. He went on to say:

It is said in Europe that there is a Macedonian question because Macedonia should belong to the Macedonians. By the same logic, if there is a Syrian question it means that Syria should belong to the Syrians and not to the French because Syria is Ottoman and shall remain so as long as there still is enough blood and enough life in the Ottoman Empire to defend this province and others.[139]

Similar sentiments were expressed by the Arabist Syrians resident in Egypt. Rafiq al-ʿAzm, the president of the Ottoman Administrative Decentralization party wrote:

Syria is Ottoman as long as the Ottoman state is capable of defending it. If, God forbids, the Ottoman state collapses . . . then Syria is an Arab country indivisible from Arab territory (*al-Jism al-ʿArabī*). Its question is part of the Arab question because it is the gate to Iraq to the East and the gate to al-Hejaz and Najd to the South . . . Syria is Ottoman first, Arab second and it rejects any foreign interference. It recognizes no sovereignty save that of its people and of its [Ottoman] state. The majority of the Syrian nation holds fast first to its Ottomanism and then to its national solidarity (*jinsiyya*) . . . and does not wish for the policy of colonization to put an end to its national life.[140]

Salah al-Din al-Qasimi explained the demand for decentralization in the Syrian provinces in late 1912 by the need for reform and self-reliance to ward off the danger of foreign occupation.[141] Muhibb al-Din al-Khatib claimed that the weakness of the Ottoman state had its roots in the weakness of the Ottoman nation. The cure for the ailments of both nation and state lay in "administrative decentralization and political centralization."[142]

CONCLUSION

Cultural, social, and political forces at work among Syrian Arabs during the late Ottoman period made it imperative for them to recognize that not one but several identity frameworks were interacting in relational modes. When faced with Turkification in education, they affirmed the centrality of the Arabic language for their cultural life. The process had started well before 1908, but it grew in intensity during the Young Turk era. Social conflicts over jobs and positions in the local administra-

This content downloaded from
109.81.212.241 on Tue, 13 Apr 2021 20:46:31 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

tion hid behind the centrality of Arabic in the national life of the country. A parallel social conflict in the central administration could not be camouflaged behind a debate about languages and thus was conducted directly in terms of the ethnic origins of the employees concerned. Conflict in the provincial administration, however, was waged over bilingual proficiency, merit, and career service. Abdulhamid tried to strengthen the Ottoman state by starting to Turkify part of the bureaucracy and the language of the provincial administration and by coopting the new Arab educated elite concurrently. The CUP pursued the same policy of strengthening the Ottoman state through more radical Turkish "bureaucratic nationalism"[143] that threatened to exclude or marginalize the Arabs in the bureaucracy. In response, the Arabs insisted on a share in the state apparatus. Arab nationalism was a political reaction to Turkish nationalism and European colonialism, although in the latter case the Ottoman, Arab, and Syrian identities were stressed equally. Al-Qasimi's motto was "We are Arabs first, Ottoman second" vis-à-vis the Turkish nationalists; al-ᶜAzm's motto was the reverse, "Syria is Ottoman first, Arab second," and Kurd ᶜAli's motto was "Syria for the Syrians" vis-à-vis the Europeans.

The Syrian Arabists were not, of course, a homogeneous group. They represented the entire constellation of nationalist, or rather protonationalist, tendencies. But their basic political ideology was formed, not as a reaction to Ottomanism, but as a reaction to the possibility of its disappearance. However, the version of Ottomanism embraced by the Syrian Arabists emphasized decentralization and the concept of "nations-state" instead of that of "nation-state." In contrast to "one nation, one state" the Arabists insisted on a policy of "several nations, one state." One of their slogans was *Ittihād al-anṣār lā tawḥīduhā*[144] (a federated, rather than an assimilationist, unity among [the empire's] elements). The Arabists continued to regard the Ottoman state as the ultimate repository of political legitimacy because it was regarded paradoxically as a bulwark against the Western colonial powers. They used the term "nation" (*umma*) in a variety of ways: for them, there was certainly an Ottoman nation, but this Ottoman nation was comprised of many nations—Arab, Turk, Kurd, Armenian, and so on—of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds and characteristics. Within the Arab nation there was a smaller, territorially defined, Syrian nation. In this sense, Arabism was a sub-Ottoman concept and Syrianism a sub-Arab concept; one did not exclude the others. The nationalist allegiance did not undermine the supranationalist. As was the case in the 19th century, "the Arabist movement was not aiming at independence but autonomy. Unlike Balkan nationalism this autonomism was not considered as a first step toward independence but a federation."[145] The continuity in the Syrian-Arab political thinking on this matter in the 20th century was expressed by ᶜAbd al-Hamid al-Zahrawi, a leading Syrian Arabist, when he wrote in 1913, "We have a general solidarity bond (*jamiᶜa*) of Ottomanism, a particular solidarity bond of Arabism, and a yet more particular solidarity bond of Syrianism."[146]

NOTES

Author's note: I thank Columbia University Council for Research in the Social Sciences for its support in making this study possible. Equal appreciation goes to Richard Bulliet, Abdul-Karim Rafiq,

This content downloaded from
109.81.212.241 on Tue, 13 Apr 2021 20:46:31 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

Kemal Karpat, Engin Akarli, Philip Khoury, Rashid Khalidi, and Gregory Gause III for their criticisms and suggestions. Any shortcomings are the sole responsibility of the author. An early version of this study was presented at the Fifth Biennial Conference, "Nationalisms on the Periphery of the Ottoman Empire," organized by the Southwest Asian and North African Studies and Fernand Braudel Center, State University of New York at Binghamton, on 6–7 November 1992.

[1]See C. Ernest Dawn, "The Origins of Arab Nationalism," and Rashid Khalidi, "Ottomanism and Arabism in Syria Before 1914: A Reassessment," in *The Origins of Arab Nationalism*, ed. Rashid Khalidi et al. (New York, 1991), 3–30, 50–69.

[2]Ernest Dawn, "The Rise of Arabism in Syria" in his *From Ottomanism to Arabism: Essays on the Origins of Arab Nationalism* (Urbana, Ill, 1973), 173.

[3]Ibid., 6.

[4]Ibid., 19.

[5]Albert Hourani, "The Arab Awakening: Forty Years After," *The Emergence of The Modern Middle East* (Berkeley, Calif., 1981), 205.

[6]Rashid Khalidi, "Social Factors in the Rise of the Arab Movement in Syria" in *From Nationalism to Revolutionary Islam*, ed. Said Arjomand (Albany, 1986), 54.

[7]Ibid.

[8]Muhammad Kūrd ʿAlī, *al-Mudhakkirāt*, 4 vols. (Damascus, 1948–1951), 3:719.

[9]In "Two Concepts of Nationalism: An Interview with Isaiah Berlin," *The New York Review of Books*, 21 November 1991, 19.

[10]ʿAdnān al-Khatīb, *al-Shaykh Ṭāhir al-Jazāʾirī: Rāʾid al-nahḍa al-ʿilmīyya fī bilād al-Shām* (Cairo, 1971), 42.

[11]Most recently, for example, David Commins, *Islamic Reform: Politics and Social Change in Late Ottoman Syria* (New York, 1990), 89–103.

[12]For a longer list of members, see ibid., 92–96; Mustafā al-Shihābī, *al-Qawmiyya al-ʿArabiyya* (Cairo, 1961), 53. For al-Shahbandar's likely membership in one of those societies, see Samir Seikkaly, "ʿAbdul-Raḥmān Shahbandar: The Beginnings of a Nationalist Career," *al-Abḥāth* 34 (1986): 54.

[13]Pierre Cachia, *An Overview of Modern Arabic Literature* (Edinburgh, 1990), 31–32; Kamal Salibi, *The Modern History of Lebanon* (Delmar, N.Y., 1977), 126–30, 154–55.

[14]Dawn, "Origins of Arab Nationalism," 4.

[15]Cachia, *An Overview*, 32.

[16]Robert Haddad, *Syrian Christians in Muslim Society: An Interpretation* (Princeton, N.J., 1970), 83; Satiʿ al-Husri, *Muḥaḍarāt fī nushūʾ al-fikra al-ʿarabiyya* (Beirut, 1985), 124–27.

[17]Glen W. Swanson, "Enver Pasha: The Formative Years," *Middle Eastern Studies* 16 (October 1980): 194.

[18]See the informative and unsigned article, "Taʾrikh al-idāra al-ʿuthmānīyya fī al-bilād al-ʿArabiyya," *al-Ahrām* (Cairo), 26 April 1913, 1.

[19]Max Gross, "Ottoman Rule in the Province of Damascus 1860–1909" (Ph.D. diss., Georgetown University, 1979), 337.

[20]Commins, *Islamic Reform*, 95.

[21]Hourani, "Arab Awakening," 203.

[22]An Ottoman medical school was established in Damascus in 1903. See Yūsuf al-Ḥakīm, *Dhikrayāt al-Ḥakīm*. Vol. 1, *Sūriyā wa-al-ʿahd al-ʿuthmānī* (Beirut, 1966), 59.

[23]Tālib Mushtāq, *Awrāq ayyāmī, 1900–1958* (Beirut, 1968), 36; cited also in Reeva Simon, *Iraq between the Two World Wars: The Creation and Implementation of a Nationalist Ideology* (New York, 1986), 9.

[24]Abdulhamid gave preference to the graduates of the *mülkiye* and specified their eligibility to a list of offices in the central and provincial administrations; see Carter V. Findley, *Bureaucratic Reform in the Ottoman Empire: The Sublime Porte, 1789–1922* (Princeton, N.J., 1980), 276. For a breakdown of the highest positions attained by the students who graduated from the *mülkiye* from 1860 to 1909, see Andreas M. Kazamias, *Education and the Quest for Modernity in Turkey* (London, 1966), 90.

[25]Joseph S. Szyliowicz, "Changes in the Recruitment Patterns and Career-Lines of Ottoman Provincial Administrations during the Nineteenth Century" in *Studies on Palestine during the Ottoman Period*, ed. Moshe Maʿoz (Jerusalem, 1975), 261.

[26]Ibid.

This content downloaded from
109.81.212.241 on Tue, 13 Apr 2021 20:46:31 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

[27]Findley, *Bureaucratic Reform*, 167–68.

[28]Al-Ḥakīm, *Dhikrayāt al-Ḥakīm*, 1:57–58; A. L. Tibawi, *A Modern History of Syria Including Lebanon and Palestine* (London, 1969), 183.

[29]David Farhi, "The Şeriat as a Political Slogan—or the 'Incident of 31st Mart,'" *Middle Eastern Studies* 7 (October 1971): 281. It should be mentioned that the Albanians were more prominent than the Arabs in Abdulhamid II's palace guard. However, there was an intense rivalry between this section of the Ottoman army led by *alāili* officers and other sections led by *mektebli* officers. According to a British contemporary observer: "Amongst these troops [Yildiz palace guards] in the later years of Abdul's reign the Albanians held so favoured a position as to render plausible the statement made to me by an officer of the Genie, a corps corresponding to our Royal Engineers, that the army would like the chance of attacking the regiments around Yildiz and killing every man in them." See Sir Edwin Pears, *Forty Years in Constantinople* (London, 1915), 222.

[30]Engin Akarli, "Abdulhamid II's Attempt to Integrate the Arabs into the Ottoman System" in *Palestine in the Late Ottoman Period: Political, Social and Economic Transformation*, ed. David Kushner (Jerusalem and Leiden, 1986), 75–89.

[31]*The Times* (London), 3 November 1908, 5; ibid., 9 March 1909, 5; ibid., 1 April 1909, 5.

[32]Numerical and minor files of the Department of State 1906–10, Turkey 10044/179. John Leisham, the American ambassador (Constantinople) to [Philander Chase Knox] secretary of state (Washington, D.C.), 15 April 1909.

[33]Majid Khadduri, "ᶜAzīz ᶜAlī Misrī and the Arab Nationalist Movement," in *St. Antony's Papers*, no. 17, *Middle Eastern Affairs*, no. 4, ed. Albert Hourani (Oxford, 1965), 147.

[34]Cited in *Egyptian Gazette*, 15 October 1907, 5.

[35]Findley, *Bureaucratic Reform*, 64.

[36]*Egyptian Gazette*, 8 September 1908, 2.

[37]Findley, *Bureaucratic Reform*, 296–97.

[38]Ibid., 297.

[39]Ibid.

[40][Asᶜad Daghir], *Thawrat al-ᶜarab* (Cairo, 1916), 52.

[41]Findley, *Bureaucratic Reform*, 238; Stanford Shaw and Ezel Kural Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, 1977), 2:275.

[42]Muhammad ᶜIzzat Darwaza, *Nashᵓat al-ḥaraka al-ᶜarabiyya al-ḥadītha*, 2nd ed. (Sidon, 1971), 301; [Daghir], *Thawrat al-ᶜarab*, 52.

[43]Kemal Karpat, "The Memoirs of N. Batzaria: The Young Turks and Nationalism," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 6 (July 1975): 293.

[44]Jacques Godechot, *The Taking of the Bastille* (London, 1970), 51.

[45]*Al-Muqtabas* (Damascus), 6 April 1911, 1. For a slightly different version of al-ᶜAsalī's speech, see *The Near East and the Anglo-Egyptian Mail* (hereafter, *Near East*), 14 June 1911, 124. For a concise and insightful account of al-ᶜAsalī's career, see Seikaly, "Shukri al-ᶜAsali: A Case Study of a Political Activist" in *Origins of Arab Nationalism*, 73–96.

[46]*Al-Muqtabas*, 17 May 1911, 3.

[47]Corinne Blake, "Training Arab-Ottoman Bureaucrats: Syrian Graduates of the Mulkiye Mektebi 1890–1920" (Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 1991), 194–95.

[48]Ibid., 193.

[49]Ibid., 194.

[50]Darwaza, *Nashᵓat al-ḥaraka al-ᶜarabiyya*, 301.

[51]ᶜIzzat Pasha al-ᶜĀbid, the Damascene second secretary to Abdulhamid, was instrumental in appointing many of his proteges in the provincial civil and judicial administrations in both the provinces of Damascus and Beirut; see Gross, "Ottoman Rule in the Province of Damascus," 471–72.

[52]Darwaza, *Nashᵓat al-ḥaraka al-ᶜarabiyya*, 301.

[53]*Al-Muqtabas*, 6 April 1911, 1.

[54]Ibid.

[55]Szyliowicz, "Changes in the Recruitment," 261.

[56]*Al-Muqtabas*, 15 April 1911, 2–3.

[57]Ibid., 17 April 1911, 3.

[58]Ibid., 6 April 1911, 1.

This content downloaded from
109.81.212.241 on Tue, 13 Apr 2021 20:46:31 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

[59]Ibid.

[60]Ibid., 9 September 1911, 1–2.

[61]*Al-Mufīd* (Beirut), 14 May 1911, 1.

[62]Dawn, "Origins of Arab Nationalism," 19.

[63]Najib Saliba, "The Achievements of Midhat Pasha as Governor of the Province of Syria, 1878–1880," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 9 (August 1978): 314; David Kushner, "The Place of the Ulema in the Ottoman Empire during the Age of Reform (1839–1918)," *Turcica* 19 (1987): 60.

[64]Al-Ḥakīm, *Dhikrayāt al-ḥakīm*, 1:126.

[65]Ibid., 112; FO 195/2342/175–76, "General Report for the March Quarter [1910]"; Consul George Devey (Damascus) to Sir G. Lowther (Constantinople), 4 April 1910.

[66]Al-Ḥakīm, *Dhikrayāt al-ḥakīm*, 1:184–85.

[67]FO 195/2342/94, "Permanent Members in the Courts of Damascus"; Consul George Devey (Damascus) to Ambassador Sir G. Lowther (Constantinople), 23 February 1910.

[68]*Al-Hudā* (New York), 19 November 1910, 4.

[69]FO 195/2342/175–76, "General Report for March Quarter [1910]." Because Consul Devey had reported earlier on 23 February 1910 in his dispatch about the "Permanent members in the courts of Damascus" that the central government had appointed sixteen new permanent members for the courts of Damascus, it is probable that the unaccounted for four members were non-Damascene Syrians.

[70]Dawn, "Origins of Arab Nationalism," 20.

[71]*Al-Ahrām*, 19 November 1909, 1.

[72]FO 195/2342/94, "Permanent Members in the Courts of Damascus,"

[73]*Al-Iqbāl* (Beirut), 1 March 1909, 6.

[74]*Al-Muqtabas*, 2 April 1910, 1–2.

[75]*Al-Ḥaqīqa* (Beirut), 3 April 1913, 2.

[76]Osman Ergin, *Türkiye Maarif Tarihi*, 5 vols. (Istanbul, 1977), 3:1273.

[77]See article 10 of the amended CUP program of 1909 in Tarik Zafer Tunaya, *Türkiyeʾde Siyasal Partiler*, 2 vols. (Istanbul, 1984), 1:82; see also, *al-Shaʿb* (Aleppo), 20 October 1909, 1.

[78]In his "al-ʿArabīyya wa-al-turkīyya," *al-Muqtabas* (monthly) 4 (1909): 109–12; see also, *al-Mufīd* (Beirut), 8 February 1911, 3; *al-Muʾayyad* (Cairo), 13 September 1910, 2.

[79]Jacob Landau, *Pan-Turkism in Turkey: A Study of Irredentism* (London, 1981), 47.

[80]A. A. Duri, *The Formation of the Arab Nation: A Study in Identity and Consciousness* (London, 1987), 229–31.

[81]No Turkish was taught in the schools run by the Greek Orthodox millet, for example, until 1895 when Turkish became a required subject of study, although not the language of instruction; see Kazamias, *Education and the Quest for Modernity*, 95.

[82]David Kushner, *The Rise of Turkish Nationalism 1876–1908* (London, 1977), 91.

[83]Article 17 of the Program in Tunaya, *Türkiyeʾde Siyasal*, 67.

[84]The Ministry of Education decreed in 1910 that all foreign teachers employed in either state or millet school should be replaced by Ottoman nationals; see *al-Shaʿb*, 10 August 1910, 2.

[85]Ergin, *Türkiye Maarif*, 3:1292.

[86]Dawn, "Origins of Arab Nationalism," 20.

[87]Ergin, *Türkiye Maarif*, 3:1293.

[88]*Al-Hudā*, 23 September 1910, 4–5.

[89]Cited in *al-Muʾayyad*, 13 September 1910, 2.

[90]*Le Temps* (Paris) 5 October 1909, 1.

[91]Seikaly, "ʿAbdul Raḥmān Shahbandar," 61.

[92]*Al-Muqtabas*, 16 January 1910, 3.

[93]Later on, the central government permitted the Ottoman graduates of foreign universities to retain their posts if they passed an examination proving their proficiency in Turkish; see ibid., 7 July 1910, 3.

[94]FO 371/1002/28562. Consul George Devey (Damascus) to Ambassador Sir G. Lowther (Constantinople), 4 April 1910; cited also in Philip Khoury, *Urban Notables and Arab Nationalism: The Politics of Damascus 1860–1920* (London, 1983), 122, n. 18.

[95]*Lisān al-Ḥāl* (Beirut), 1 September 1910, 3.

[96]Ibid., 17 October 1910, 2.

This content downloaded from
109.81.212.241 on Tue, 13 Apr 2021 20:46:31 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

[97]FO 371/1491/4965, "Turkey: Annual Report, 1911"; Ambassador Sir G. Lowther (Constantinople) to Sir Edward Grey (London), received 5 February 1911.

[98]*Al-Ahrām*, 19 January 1912, 1.

[99]*The Times* (London), 24 March 1911, 5. On the point of a conflict between Arab and Turkish members of the CUP's Beirut branch, see also Rashid Khalidi, *British Policy towards Syria and Palestine 1906–1914* (London, 1980), 228–29.

[100]Records of the United States Department of State relating to the Internal Affairs of Turkey 1910–29, 867.00/349. W. Stanley Hollins, American consul-general (Beirut) to [P. C. Knox] secretary of state (Washington, D.C.); it should be mentioned, however, that Hollins's explanation for the central government's behavior stemmed from what he perceived as its concern for maintaining public law and order. I do not believe that the above explanation for Istanbul's motives is credible for a number of reasons, the most important of which is that the Syrians were being ousted at that point not only from the local administration but also from the central administration.

[101]*Al-Muqaṭṭam* (Cairo), 14 December 1912, 1.

[102]Ibid.

[103]*Al-Ahrām*, 15 March 1913, 1.

[104]Tawfīq Birru, *al-ʿArab wa al-turk fī al-ʿahd al-dustūrī al-ʿuthmānī 1908–1914* (Cairo, 1960), 534–35.

[105]Records of the United States Department of State relating to the Internal Affairs of Turkey 1910–29, 867.00/578. W. Stanley Hollins, consul-general (Beirut) to [William J. Bryan] secretary of state (Washington, D.C.).

[106]FO 195/2451/423; Sir Gerard Lowther (Constantinople) to Sir Edward Grey (London), 25 September 1913.

[107]*Mirʾāt al-Gharb* (New York), 12 November 1913, 4.

[108]*Al-Mufīd*, 6 April 1911, 3. In 1910 Sulayman al-Bustani mentioned that, according to his calculations, only 7 percent of the officials in the province of Beirut were Turks; see *Lisān al-Ḥāl*, 17 October 1910, 2.

[109]Landau, *Pan-Turkism in Turkey*, 30.

[110]On one of these pre-1908 polemics, see Arminius Vambéry, *Western Culture in Eastern Lands: A Comparison of the Methods Adopted by England and Russia in the Middle East* (New York, 1906), 275.

[111]Muḥibb al-Dīn al-Khaṭīb, "Introduction" in *al-Duktūr Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Qāsimī 1305–1334 [1886–1916]: Āthāruhu*, ed. Muḥibb al-Dīn al-Khaṭīb (Cairo, 1959), iv; Darwaza, *Nashʾat al-ḥaraka al-ʿarabiyya*, 303.

[112]Ahmad Qadrī, *Mudhakkirātī ʿan al-thawra al-ʿarabīyya al-kubrā* (Damascus, 1956), 6–7. That many of the Arab societies formed in Istanbul during the Young Turk era was a reaction to the Young Turk society or the CUP is confirmed by al-Shihabī, *al-Qawmiyya al-ʿarabiyya*, 67–68.

[113]Blake, "Training Arab-Ottoman Bureaucrats," 265–67.

[114]Tawfīq al-Suwaydī, *Mudhakkirātī: Niṣf qarn min tārīkh al-ʿirāq wa al-qaḍiyya al-ʿarabiyya* (Beirut, 1969), 24.

[115]Qadrī, *Mudhakkirātī*, 11.

[116]*Al-Duktūr Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Qāsimī*, 72–73. For the names of some Turkish professors who were members of the Turkish Association (Türk Derneği) in those educational institutions in Istanbul, see Masami Arai, *Turkish Nationalism in the Young Turk Era* (Leiden, 1991), 9, Table 1.

[117]Al-Qāsimī published these ideas on 8 February 1909, in the Damascene newspaper *al-Muqtabas*; cited in *al-Duktūr Ṣalāḥ*, 72–75.

[118]Ibid., 74–75.

[119]Al-Khaṭīb, "Min mudhakkirāt Muḥibb al-Dīn al-Khaṭīb," *Majallat al-Awqāf al-Islāmiyya* (Damascus) 1 (1945–46): 19.

[120]Ibid.

[121][Daghir], *Thawrat al-ʿarab*, 52. On the attitude of the CUP Turkish members toward the Arab members before 1908, see M. Şükrü Hanioğlu, "The Young Turks and the Arabs before the Revolution of 1908" in *Origins of Arab Nationalism*, 31–49.

[122]Al-Khaṭīb, Introduction, *al-Duktūr Ṣalāḥ*, iv; Darwaza, *Nashʾat al-ḥaraka al-ʿarabiyya*, 302.

[123]Landau, *Pan-Turkism in Turkey*, 45–47.

[124]Dawn, "The Rise and Progress of Middle Eastern Nationalism," *Social Education*, January 1961, 22.

This content downloaded from
109.81.212.241 on Tue, 13 Apr 2021 20:46:31 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms

[125]Al-Khatīb, Introduction, *al-Duktūr Ṣalāḥ*, iv; al-Qāsimī, *al-Duktūr*, 92.

[126]An association called Türk talebe yurdu (homeland of the Turkish students) was the name of a separate organization of Turkish students abroad, mainly in Switzerland, France, and Germany; see Landau, *Pan-Turkism in Turkey*, 39.

[127]Al-Suwaydī, *Mudhakkirātī*, 21.

[128]*Al-Muqtabas*, 17 May 1911, 3.

[129]Dawn, "Origins of Arab Nationalism," 13; Khalidi, "Social Factors," 56–57.

[130]Amīn Saʿīd, *al-thawra al-ʿarabīyya*, 1:13.

[131]*Al-Manār* (Cairo), 17 (25 April 1914), 395.

[132]Majid Khadduri, "ʿAzīz ʿAlī al-Masrī," 149; Nūrī al-Saʿīd, *Mudhakkirāt Nūrī al-Saʿīd ʿan al-ḥarakāt al-ʿaskariyya lil-jaysh al-ʿarabī fī al-hijāz wa sūriyā 1916–1918*, 2nd ed. (Beirut, 1978), 20.

[133]ʿAlī Aḥmad Shūkri, trans., *Mudhakkirāt Jamāl Pasha* (Cairo, 1923), 90.

[134]Qadrī, *Mudhakkirātī*, 14; for *al-ʿAhd* program and the debate about it, see Birru, *al-ʿArab wa al-Turk*, 557–61.

[135]*Al-Ahrām*, 16 December 1912, 1.

[136][Daghir], *Thawrat al-ʿarab*, 57; Saʿīd, *al-Thawra al-ʿarabīyya*, 1:13.

[137]Saʿīd, *al-Thawra al-ʿarabīyya*, 1:13–14.

[138]Records of the United States Department of State relating to the Internal Affairs of Turkey 1910–29, 867.00/438. W. Stanley Hollins, consul-general (Beirut) to [P. C. Knox] secretary of state (Washington, D.C.).

[139]Ministère des Affaires Étrangères (Quai d'Orsay, Paris), N. S. Turquie. Syrie-Liban, No. 118 Decembre [1912], Direction Politique et Commerciale D44/1, 129. M. Ottavi, French consul (Damas) to Raymond Poincaré, minister of foreign affairs (Paris), 24 December 1912.

[140]*Al-Muʾayyad*, 24 December 1912, 4.

[141]*Al-Duktūr Ṣalāḥ*, 57.

[142]*Al-Muʾayyad*, 24 December 1912, 1.

[143]François Georgeon, "La montée du nationalisme turc dans L'État ottoman (1908–1914)," *Revue du monde musulman et de la Méditerranée* 50 (1988): 39.

[144]*Al-Mufīd*, 14 May 1911, 1.

[145]I[lber] Ortayli, "Ideological Structure of Syria and Lebanon in the 19th Century and Ottoman Counter-Measures," *Revue d'histoire maghrebine* 12 (June 1985): 151.

[146]*Al-Muʾayyad*, 3 May 1913, 4.

This content downloaded from
109.81.212.241 on Tue, 13 Apr 2021 20:46:31 UTC
All use subject to https://about.jstor.org/terms