Chapter IV

TURCO-ARAB RELATIONS:
HISTORICAL BACKGROUND
The history of Turco-Arab relations is linked with the 600 year history of the Ottoman Empire, the predecessor of the Modern Turkish Republic. Kemal H. Karpat has aptly remarked “it would be literally impossible to study Turkish-Arab relations without some reference to the historical background which has conditioned and will condition these relations in future”. Indeed, it is the past history, apart from common religious and cultural heritage, that continues to weigh heavily on Turco-Arab relations.

The estrangement of Turkey from the West Asia in the aftermath of World War I was based in part on disillusionment with the Arabs for their ‘treason’ during the war. The past fifty years have demonstrated how difficult it was for the Turks to digest the amputation of the Arab provinces that had once formed half of the Ottoman territory. Equally influential in determining Turkey’s political response or diplomatic initiative are the lessons drawn from the disruptive effects of the separatist nationalism usually linked to the expansionist aims of the foreign powers.

If Turkey’s alienation from the Arabs is, in a way, the conscious rejection of the Ottoman past, the Arabs are largely ambivalent in their attitude towards Turkey. This is the result of their failure to reconcile themselves with the new secular-western identity of modern Turkey on the one hand, and the burden of their national history on the other hand that denies the historic role of the Turks during the centuries-long Ottoman domination of the Arab-World.


2 For the Arabs, Turkey’s revolutionary drive towards secularism that involved the disestablishment of Islam as state religion and renunciation of leadership of the Islamic umma is regarded as a kind of treachery against their ancient faith and culture. For details on the Arab reaction to Ataturk’s modernisation reforms, see Bernard Lewis, “Turkey: Westernisation” in Gustave E. Von Grunebaum (ed.) Unity and variety in Muslim Civilization (Chicago, 1955), p. 314, and Wilfred
The image of the Turk as it developed among the Arabs under the impact of the Arab nationalist ideology tends to be static and anachronistic. Turkey's image already blurred by the vision of the past has been characterised by contempt, and distorted so much so that it evokes consternation among the Turks. As a contemporary scholar of Arab-Turkish relations has succinctly presented, "A profoundly conventional image of the uncouth and savage, yet at the same time brave and upright Turkish 'barbarian' changes over the centuries into a negative - the 'Turk' is distorted into a cruel and despotic power addict who because of his innate character is devoid of any cultural refinement". In fact, with the growth of modern Arab nationalism, the irrational wholesale denigration of the Turks began. In the final crescendo of anti-Turkish libel, the Turks were progressively credited with various repellent abnormal and immoral characteristics.

The derogatory ethnic stereotypes and racial cliches are basically meant to serve two prime objectives: forming an independent cultural personality, and providing a psychological relief to the Arabs in their feelings of hatred and inferiority.

Cantwell Smith, *Islam in Modern History* (particularly two chapters, "The Arabs: Islamic Crisis" and "Turkey: Islamic Reformation") (Princeton, 1957). The dual attitude of the Arabs is revealed in their national history where the dream of golden Baghdad and Cordova are contrasted with the nightmare of "alien, uncivilised" Turkish rule through the centuries. The underlying motive behind picturing the Turks as the "undertaker of Arab grandeur" was to destroy old Ottoman bonds by pitting the new idea of Arab political nationality against Ottoman Empire which was no longer respected as the legitimate Islamic polity per se. See, Bernard Lewis, *History: Remembered, Recorded, Invented* (New Jersey: Princeton), pp. 75-82.

3 Ulrich W. Haarmann, "Ideology and History, Identity and Alterity: The Arab Image of the Turk from the Abbasid to Modern Egypt", *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 20 (1988), p. 176. At the end of the 1950s, the preposterous thesis was propagated by equating the term "tyrant" with "Turan" (the customary word used for the homeland of the Turks) both etymologically as well as semantically. See, David C. Gordon, *Self-Determination and History in the Third World* (N.J.: Princeton, 1971); also see, Ilhan Arsel, *Arap milliyetciligi ve Turkler* (Ankara, 1975)
This is manifested in the incorporation of the traditional negative image of Turkey into the national history of Arabs. Interestingly, Arab history is consistently presented, from past to the present with the notable exception of 300 years of "foreign" Ottoman rule. According to Albert Hourani "this is a reflection of certain ideas common in nineteenth century Europe: the romantic cult of a distant past blended with the revolutionary idea that man is free to break and remould his social world; more specifically, the idea that the coming of the Turk ended the brilliance of early Muslim civilisation ..."

4 Apart from the Arab historians there are many western scholars of Ottoman history who suggest that the racial differences prevented the Turco-Arab integration. Rousseau deplored the domination of the Arabs by the Turkish barbarians; William Streams Davis in his A short History of the Near East (New York: Macmillan, 1922) called the Turks bereft of higher culture; A.L. Kroeber wrote, "The Turks have not so far achieved high productivity other than conquest; they participated in many civilizations, even though as much to tear down as to build up ..." Kroeber, Configuration of Culture Growth (Berkeley, University of California, 1944), p. 199; Fisher denied the civilized virtues to the Turks, who in his words "brought to the task of administering their Empire much of the technique that had served them in the handling of animals" because they were "pastoral nomads from the steppes of Asia", Sydney Nettlon Fisher, Social Forces in the Middle East (Ithaca: Cornell Uni. Press, 1955), p. 139.

5 Albert Hourani, The Ottoman Background of Middle East (London: Longman, 1970), p. 2. Also see an interesting article by Rifaat Abou-El-Haj, "Recent Arab Historiography of Ottoman Rule", IJMES, 14 (1982), pp. 188-201. This article clearly exposes the extent of distortion of the Ottoman history by the nationalist-historians. Not only the Ottoman rule was condemned as an alien Turkish imperial domination, the Turkish despotism was also held as the main cause for the depressing age of decadence, inhitat, that saw the political decline (both in terms of power of the Islamic state and Caliphate), and cultural stagnation of the Arabs.

Such a simple and sweeping view about the Turkish rule in Arab history does not stand up to close scrutiny. "First of all the Turks did not come as alien conquerors into a world which tried to resist them or which could protect, rule and develop itself without them" (Hourani, op. Cit., p. 3). Their contributions to Islam lay in their role as Mujahidin (defenders of faith) and as the saviour of the Muslims by the expulsion of the crusaders and by containing the Mongol avalanche. Thus, the greatest Arab historian Ibn Khaldun "saw in their coming a proof of God's continuing concern for the welfare of Islam. At a time when the
Thus, an indisputable fact about Turkish-Arab relations today is the importance of history that dominates the political perspectives, and conditions the attitudes of both the Arabs as well as the Turks. The ethnic animosities between them are in a way connected with both the Ottoman past and also the efflorescence of Arab nationalism. The Arabs refuse to see the elements of prejudice and exaggeration in their traditional attitudes towards the Turks. And the Turks tend to react to the disparaging comparisons by the Arabs. If a new beginning in the relations between two peoples has to be successful, a serious occupation of their common past is required in order to identify the unifying not the separating elements in their long history of Islamic fraternity.

Muslim Caliphate had become weak and degenerate, incapable of resisting its enemies, God in his wisdom and benevolence brought new rulers and debenders from among the great and numerous tribes of the Turks, to revive the dying breath of Islam and restore the unity of the Muslims”. Bernard Lewis, “The Mongols, the Turks and the Muslim Polity” in Transactions of the Royal Historical Society 5th Series, vol. 18 (London: 1965), p. 164. Secondly, the Ottoman state was Turkish not in racial sense, only linguistically and culturally. It was a Muslim state – “so the fact that the Ottoman Empire was ‘Turkish’ did not matter so much as the fact that it was Muslim”. M. Zeine, The Emergence of Arab Nationalism (Beirut, 1966), p. 15. Finally there is no historical evidence to support the Arab nationalist view that Turks were responsible for their cultural retardation. Rather, the Arab lands “benefited materially more than any other Asiatic province from incorporation in Ottoman Empire, as a result of the commercial connections thus formed”. H.A.R. Gibb and Harold Bowen, Islamic Society and the West (London: Oxford University, 1950), vol. 1, part 1, p. 160. Philip K. Hitti recognised that Turks made an original contribution in the fields of “statesmanship, architecture and poetry”, History of the Arabs, (New York, St. Martin Press, 1953) 5th ed. p. 715. In this context Zeine’s concluding remark is very pertinent when he said, “It may well be that the Arabs, up to the reign of Abdul Hamid, suffered not from too much Turkish government but actually too little of it”. Zeine, op. cit., p. 17.

6 It must be noted here that in the Arabs’ perception “the Turk” (Arabic: al-Turk) existed as a more or less constant and homogenous ethnic group through the centuries in whatever different roles and under whatever different names they appeared in their lands”. Haarmann, op. Cit., p. 177.

7 In recent years, serious attempts have been made to rediscover not only their
From the Caliphate Period (632-1258) to Ottoman Conquest (1517)

In a barely one hundred years from the death of the Prophet Muhammad (632 A.D.) an Arab empire had been founded that lasted till the mid-13th century. The swift conquest and the speed victories by the prophet’s successors resulted in the amazing expansion of the power of the “Arab Caliphate” which was the outgrowth of the Medina community and transformation of the early Islamic state into an Arab empire. The empire was at its zenith under the Umayyad rule when its boundaries extended from Spain across North Africa and the West Asia to the borders of China.

common interests but also their common past. One of the interesting results of the newly founded conferences (held in Ankara, Tripoli and Istanbul) on Arab-Turkish relations is the attempt to identify common and new enemy like the colonialists. Because, through their joint struggle against the common enemy they could forge a new Arab-Turkish solidarity. How far they will be successful in their pursuit remains to be seen.


During the centuries that followed the rise and expansion of Islam, the word Arab and the expression ‘The Arab world’ acquired a wider meaning. “The Are those”, the League of Arab Nations defined, “who live in Arab lands, speak the Arabic language, live an Arab way of life and feel proud of being Arabs” Abdul Rahman Azzam, “The Arab Nation” in William Sands (ed.), The Arab Nation: Paths and Obstacles to Fulfillment (Washington, 1960) p. 9. Besides, Maxime Rodinson has used the anthropological jargon “ethno” to designate the Arabs meaning the same as people or nationality. See Maxime Rodinson; The Arabs (London: Croom Helm, 1981), pp. 45-47.

Arnold J. Toynbee has characterised the period which followed the death of the prophet as the ‘Arab Caliphate’ unfolded in three phases: the Rightly Guided Caliphs (632-661), the Umayyad dynasty (661-750), and the Abbasid Caliphate (750-1288). The Arab Caliphate shifted its Centre of power successfully from Medina to Kufa in Iraq (656), from Kufa to Damascus in Syria (661), from Damascus to Baghdad in Iraq (762), and from there to Cairo in Egypt (969). See Arnold J. Toynbee, A Study of History, vol. VII (London: OUP, 1954), pp. 65-72.
The Abbasids who seized power in 750 continued the process of broadening Islam’s base in the West Asia beyond the Arabs alone.

Politically Abbasid rule began to decline after 950 A.D., though the dynasty officially held on until 1258. Abbasid political unity deteriorated dramatically partly due to the burgeoning number of local hereditary dynasties, partly due to a series of external attacks by the Persians (Buyids) and Turkic (Seljuks) Sultanates. With the Mangol invasion of Baghdad in 1258 the Islamic Caliphate was virtually terminated and the fictionally unified Arab Empire disintegrated into multiple independent principalities.  

**Ottoman Conquest of Arab Lands**

The decline of the Abbasid though marked a prolonged phase of political eclipse of the Arabs until the end of the World War II, the fall of Arabs in no way signified a permanent disruption in West Asia. Nor did it signal the end of Islamic rule. The rise of Turkish military power restored political vitality to the region for several centuries. The post-Caliphet period witnessed the rise of the Ottoman Turks, once dedicated to Gaza, the holy war against Christian Byzantium to the position of universal rulers in Dar al-Islam (Domain of Islam).


11 In the transitional phase of Islamic history, the Turks achieved political supremacy in the Dar al-Islam through both “subversion and invasion”. According to Hassan Saab “subversion was the road to power of the military mercenaries of the Abbasid Khalifa in Iraq and the Mameluks (1280-1517), the mercenaries of the Ayyubids in Egypt. Invasion was the road to power of the Seljuks, the Mongols, and the Ottomans who by sixteenth century became the heirs of all their Turkish kinsmen, of the Byzantine Empire, and of the Arabs of the Near East and North Africa”. Hassan Saab, *The Arab Federalists of the Ottoman Empire* (Amsterdam, 1958), p. 82.
Sultan Selim was the first Ottoman Turk who extended the Ottoman sway over the Arab lands by defeating the Persian power in 1514 and Mameluks of Egypt in 1517. His victories resulted in the addition of Eastern Anatolia, upper Mesopotamia, including Kurdistan, Egypt, Syria and Palestine to the Turkish Empire.\(^\text{12}\) Besides, many local rulers, amirs and provincial governors such as the Sherif of Mecca, the ruler of Lebanon and governor of Allepo made peaceful submission to the Ottoman sovereignty. As Selim emerged the master of the Arab world with the Ottoman domination extended without break from Algeria to the Arab Gulf, a new chapter in the history of West Asia opened. As the Near-Eastern Arab regions were unified by the Ottomans under one supreme political authority, the "Arabs lost even the shadow of a leading part and appeared as subordinate actors on a provincial stage only".\(^\text{13}\)

**Ottoman Government in Arab Lands**

An important characteristic of the Ottoman administrative pattern was the local autonomy with less state intervention in internal affairs of the conquered lands. The Arab lands conquered from the Mameluks such as Egypt,\(^\text{14}\) Syria\(^\text{15}\) and


\(^{13}\) Reynold A. Nicholson, *A Literary History of the Arabs* (Cambridge, 1953), p.442, Nicholson is one among many authors who drew a dark picture of the Turks. In his assessment, the recruitment of the Turkish body-guards by the Abbasid Khalifa in 9th century to counter Arab and Persian influence marked the beginning of the end of the Arab universal rule in the Eastern abode of Dar al-islam. Ibid., p. 263

\(^{14}\) Egypt was one autonomous administrative unit of the Empire, governed by the Ottoman beylerbeyiar Pasha. Because of the remoteness of the province and
Mesopotamia\textsuperscript{16} were not directly administered from Constantinople. Similarly, the
tribal leaders and feudal chiefs in the Arabs, Iraq and Lebanon\textsuperscript{17} were granted almost
cOMPlete local and internal independence. Moreover, the holy cities of Mecca and
Medina were hardly ever under the direct or rigid control of the Ottomans.\textsuperscript{18}

\begin{itemize}
  \item [15] Unlike Egypt, Syria was divided first into the Eyalets (formerly known as beylerbeyi\textalic{\textlilks}) of Aleppo, Sam (Damascus), and Rakka and was formed in the 19\textsuperscript{th} century out of Damascus, Aleppo and Beirut as villayets, and Lebanon and Jerusalem, as independent Sanjaks (Sanjak was an administrative unit under a military governor called Sanjak —beyi). The villayet of Aleppo included former Sanjaks: Marash, Urab, Zor and Aleppo. The new Villayet of Beirut was consisted of the four Sanjaks of Latakia, Tripoli, Acre and Nabulus.

  \item [16] Mesopotamia or Iraq, after its conquest from Persia was ruled effectively by an oligarchy of Mameluk princes and chief tribesmen, but nominally ruled by the Sultan. Iraq, in the sixteenth century formed one single administrative unit, but in the 18\textsuperscript{th} and 19\textsuperscript{th} centuries was divided into three units of Basra, Baghdad and Mosul. Baghdad and Basra were ruled from the mid of 18\textsuperscript{th} century by an oligarchy of Mameluk Pashas who were virtually independent of the Porte.

  \item [17] In ‘Southern Syria’ which included Lebanon, the feudal Emirs and local chiefs who submitted themselves to Selim were confirmed in their feifdoms. The Lebanese Emir, Fakhr al-Din who bore the title of Sultan al-Barr (the king of the land) retained a higher degree of sovereignty as compared to other Arab provinces. By the 17\textsuperscript{th} century after a successful rebellion against his Ottoman sovereign, he was recognised as the lord of “Arabistan from Aleppo to the frontiers of Egypt”. Philip Hitti, \textit{History of Syria} (New York, 1951), pp. 729-30.

  \item [18] Although the Sherif of Mecca, Hussan Ibn Nami made a peaceful submission to the ottoman rule and endowed Selim with the title of the “Servant of Holy Places”, the autonomy of Mecca was jealously defended by the descendents of the Sherifian stock even at times in defiance of the Constantinople. See Hassan Saab, \textit{op. Cit.}, p. 108. Likewise, the Arab tribesmen in the Arab Peninsula were the most unruly but independent groups in the Empire. The Ottoman Sultans concluded agreements from time to time with the tribal chieftains in order to establish Ottoman control of the roads connecting the major provinces. These tribes were though nominally under direct administration, they were in very slight obedience. See Carleton S. Coon,
No wonder, the Ottoman conquest in West Asia could not bring any change either in the existing system of local feudal structures in Syria and Lebanon or in tribalism predominant in Arabia and parts of Iraq. The general philosophy behind the Ottoman policy of local autonomy was the preservation of the status quo under a superficial community of allegiance to the Sultan. The guiding principle of the central imperial government was to ensure a balance of power. Since it was high-nigh impossible for the Ottoman rulers to impose a direct authority on all Ottoman provinces, their representatives tried to “promote a state of balance among them, which would allow to keep them all under control and which would enable the rulers to outweigh the rising power of the local party by another local party in the same province or in a neighbouring province”.  

It is often pointed out that because the ottoman Sultans “regarded the existing local institutions in the Arab lands as Muslim institutions, with a certain deference”, they preferred their preservation to any disruption. In addition to the administrative and tribal forms of autonomy there was religious autonomy under the Millet system as well as the economic autonomy resulting from the ownership of the land

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19 Hassan Saab, op. Cit., p. 112.


21 Millet system established by Mohammad II the Conqueror, laid down the foundation of communal harmony for the people of Book – Christians and Jews. According to Albert Hourani “The Millets were autonomous in spiritual and in certain administrative and judicial matters”. All over the Empire, these Millets were considered as individual nationalities though the political identity was Ottoman (Osmanli). Albert Hourani, "Minorities in the Arab World (London: OUP, 1947), pp. 20-21.
In the final analysis this ‘quadruple’ autonomy in the Ottoman imperial set-up encouraged the particularistic attitude of the various components of the Empire and intermitent assertions of the local forces for independence. The vastness of the Empire, lack of communication network and effective central control, combined with the absence of the “common nationality”\(^{22}\) stimulated the process of disintegration of the Islamic community, to which belonged the majority of people of the Arab lands.

Secondly, the absence of an Ottoman policy of Turkification of the Arab lands, despite three centuries of Ottoman rule and more than ten centuries of Turkish supremacy in Dar al-Islam, was the main factor for the survival of Arabism in its cultural sense in the Near East. This is in striking contrast to the sweeping phenomenon of Arabisation of seventh and eighth centuries. Prof. M.A. Cook observed, “In Europe it was the Romans and Germans who provided the substantive components of Holy Roman Empire; the holiness was adjectival. In the Ottoman case, it was religion which provided the key-term in one of the commonest designations of the Empire, ‘the lands of Islam’”.\(^{23}\)

The Ottoman Empire, evolved from an organization of warriors (ghazis) engaged in the sacred struggle with the infidel where Islam provided direct and emphatic sanction for the military enterprise. By the mid of the sixteenth century, the Ottoman Empire was in a very concrete sense, the Islamic State. The constitutive role of religion is underlined by the close identification of the Ottomans with Islam. This

\(^{22}\) The idea of nationality in the West European nineteenth century sense was non-existent in the Ottoman Empire. “The Ottoman Empire began as the very opposite of a national state. It is not called after any people who inhabit it, but after the prince who founded it – Osman”. Great Britain Handbooks, Prepared under the Direction of the History Section of the Foreign Office (No. 96c & d, The Rise of the Turks – the Pan-Turanism Movement), p. 16.

\(^{23}\) M.A. Cook, op. Cit., p. 3.
is evident in the Ottoman chronicles where “the territories of the Empire are referred to as the lands of Islam, its armies as the soldiers of Islam, its religious head as the Shaikh of Islam’, its people thought of themselves first and foremost as Muslims”.  

To the Ottoman rulers, Islam, and not Turkism, was the common bond and driving force of the Empire. Islam preserved the universalistic character of the Empire which was “international or rather supra-national representing a brotherhood of the faithful, irrespective of descent, or race, language or native land”. In the words of Cook,

Islam provided a clear terminal value for the Ottoman polity in the shape of the Holy War against the infidel, and in consequence it provided also fairly persuasive instrumental status for the concrete machinery of the state as a means to victory in this struggle. But it was a legitimacy that was very much one of achievement rather than ascription: Islam conferred little intrinsic legitimacy on the structure of the society.  

The rationalization of the Ottoman ruling oligarchy and justification for Ottoman Sultans’ claim to the Caliphate by the court historians and orthodox jurists


25 Hans Kohn, ‘Nationalism’, in Ernest Jackh, Background of the Middle East (Ithaca: Cornell University, 1952), p. 145. On the doctrine of Islamic universalism, see W.M. Watt, Islam and the Integration of Society (London, 1961), p. 273. Watt sees Islamic universalism primarily in terms of the claim of Islam to be a universal religion in contrast to other religions; he neglected the political, i.e., the supra-national dimension of authority which this universalism has sanctioned in Islamic history.


27 Since the Caliphate according to Islamic orthodoxy is reserved to member of the Qurashi tribe to which prophet Muhammad belonged, the Ottoman court historians invented a ‘fabulous Arab family tree’ tracing their Arab origin back to prophet. Lufti Pasha, a Grand vizier in 1554 attempted to dismiss the orthodox requirement of Qurashi descent as Shiite heresy in order to justify
ensured the loyalty of the subjects on religious grounds. However, the Ottoman organisational pattern consequently was reduced to one of the most static pattern of government in the history of Islam. Any dynamic that this society possessed was based on perpetual military conquest; the Ottoman polity was a “plunder machine”.28

Its motto was the continuation of power through power alone, and perpetuation of status-quo under the umbrella of Islam thereby resisting any form of liberating enlightenment. With the triumph of traditionalism in Islam the Arab East tended to stagnate both in socio-economic and cultural terms. Worse still, the Ottoman Turks who had once acquired the forefront of the Islamic period failed to effect any meaningful change in the dogmatism of Islam. Hence, started the downward march – both politically and ideologically – of Islam and, along with it, the Ottoman Empire.

**Impact of Europe on the Empire**

Although Islam was “more intense in its feeling of unity and more unified in the outlook than medieval Christianity”29, the challenge of European particularistic concepts, such as the idea of nation-state, affected the Ottoman universalism

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adversely. In its encounter with the West after Napoleon Bonaparte’s conquest of Egypt in 1798, the Ottoman Islam was overwhelmed by the powerful currents of Westernisation. Militarily, the French conquest, regardless of Bonaparte’s political motives, was the first foreign territorial encroachment of the Arab lands. Economically, the successful Egyptian campaign marked the beginning of the decline of trade and commerce. For the opening of Suez canal dominated by the Western powers in addition to the Portuguese discovery of new route to India proved catastrophic to the Arab economy. These revolutionary changes deprived the Arab people of enormous revenue as trade was the major source of revenue for the people of the Arab Near East.

According to Hitti, “Napoleon’s descent on Egypt was epoch making in more than one way”. The Napoleonic expedition brought to Egypt and the whole of Arab world “the ideas of the French Revolution embodied in a European army”. “This was also the beginning of an extensive contact with the West that kindled the

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30 The Portuguese who discovered the route of the Cape of Good Hope were responsible for the recession of the culture and prosperity of the Arabs. Because, until the early 16th century “the foundation of Arab prosperity was trade from India to Europe which passed mostly through their lands”. But the “passage of this trade into Portuguese hands was rapidly rendering those commercially insignificant and in fact threatening them with complete ruin”. George William Frederick Stripling, _The Ottoman Turks and the Arabs_, 1511-1574 (Urbana: Illinois University Press, 1942), p. 15.

31 “Even in the 16th century, during the age of mercantilism”, Samir Amin observed, “the European merchants had been able to extract commercial privileges from the Ottoman authorities. The Arab merchant class was already defeated, Europe had won. For the following three centuries, the East slipped into a long slumber, and was quite unaware of what was going on in the West. The merchant-led growth of mercantile Europe had its corollary the decrepitude of the Arab merchant’s world”. Samir Amin, _op. Cit._, p. 24.

32 Philip K. Hitti, _op. cit._, p. 745.

intellectual spark that was to set a corner of the Moslem world on fire".\textsuperscript{34} This also provided the liberating force that helped to awaken the consciousness of the existence of a distinct Arabic speaking whole within Ottoman Empire. It is not a mere coincidence that desire for independence appeared in the Arabic-speaking parts of the Ottoman Empire, principally, in Najd, located in the heartland of Arabia and Egypt.

Both the Najdi and Egyptian movements started in the beginning of $19^{th}$ century were essentially the outcome of a common realisation of the decadence of the last surviving universal Islamic state, the Ottoman Empire. The two movements differed widely in their motives and means, but they were of Arab origin and had identical goals: the "regeneration and reintegration of the Empire".\textsuperscript{35} The Najdi movement originated from the life and teaching of Muhammad Ibn Abdul Wahhab was an Islamic revival movement of an "archaic and millenarian kind".\textsuperscript{36}

Whereas, the Egyptian movement led by Mohammad Ali was in a sense progressive which sought truth in reason rather than blind faith, to the Wahhabis deviation from, and non-abidance of Koran was the cause of Islamic decay. Contrarily, to Mohammad Ali, Europeanisation of Islam was the best way to revival and power.

\textsuperscript{34} Hitti., \textit{op. cit.}, p. 745.
\textsuperscript{35} Hassan Saab, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 142.

Wahhabi movement was the culmination of the Arab Islamic Hanbali School of Law which gave \textit{taqlid} the precedence over \textit{ijtihad} (reasoning). Mohammad Ali’s effort at regeneration was representative of the \textit{Hanabi} School of Law which gives prominence to reason in Islam.
WAHHABI MOVEMENT

The movement emerged as a reaction to the adjustment of Islam to more complex conditions, the Wahhabi unitarian movement was profoundly rooted in the school of Ahmad Ibn Hanbal the most conservative of the four Sunni Schools. Wahhabism insisted on the original law whose source were the Quran and the pure Sunna alone, and campaigned for cleansing Islam of its inner decay by restoring Muslim society to its original purity and order. The Wahhabis were not opposed to despotic autocracy of the Ottoman rule, but the corruption and debauchery into which it had fallen. Although the Wahhabis challenged the Ottoman to be rightful representative of Islam and Caliphate they cannot be truly considered as the fore-runners of Arab nationalism. For, “their concern was Islam, not the Arabs and they directed their zeal against lax backsliding or heretical Muslim rather than toward creating an Arab national state”.

The Wahhabi movement grew rapidly even after the death of its founder because of his matrimonial alliance with the House of Sa’ud, the rulers of Arabia. Until the beginning of the nineteenth century they continued to pose a serious threat to Ottoman authority. The Ottomans unable to contain the Wahhabi advance sought the help of Muhammad Ali of Egypt. The Egyptian campaign in Arabia lasted seven years that ended in crushing the movement and restoring imperial authority over the holy places in 1818.


38 The Wahhabi movement gave a great blow to the Ottoman Empire in 1806 when Muhammad Al-Saud entered Mecca triumphantly and read public prayer in his name instead of Sultan Selim III. Wahhabism though finally was crushed, “in the Arab Near East it became a force of disintegration. For it emerged from its struggle as new Islamic sect, and as the initiator of an independent monarchical Arab state”. Hassan Saab, op. cit., p. 162.
Egyptian Movement: Muhammad Ali Pasha and Ibrahim Pasha

Unlike Wahhabism, Muhammad Ali Pasha of Egypt tried to introduce the process of westernisation, which he certainly valued but purely for his political ends. After having relieved the Sultan of the Wahhabis by frustrating the Najidi expansionism, Muhammad Ali confronted the Sultan with greater menace of Egyptian expansionism. During the Egyptian occupation of an important part of the Arab world that included Mecca and Medina, Cairo, Jerusalem and Damascus, Muhammad Ali harboured an ambitious project of founding a Near Eastern Arab Empire. Apart from his unsuccessful attempt to separate the Arab world from the Turkish sovereignty, he intended to make a bid for the Caliphate as well.

It was for the strong British pressure that Muhammad Ali’s project of carving out an oriental empire from the Sultan’s dominion could not materialise. “Thus the

39 Muhammad Ali was an Albanian officer who had come to Egypt in 1801 at the head of a detachment of Ottoman troops. After the departure of Napoleon he made use of the intercine feuds among the Mameluk rulers to eliminate them. Finally he declared himself viceroy of Egypt, independent of Ottoman Empire. Muhammad Ali, inspired by the French culture, undertook reform measures to westernise the Islamic land not the Islamic mind. Among his reforms, the abolition of Iltizam or fief system which was the basis of military feudalism, a number of unsuccessful attempts at industrialization and modernization of the army with French assistance are the most significant. For an account of Ali’s administration, see C. Issawi, Egypt in Revolution, An Economic Analysis (London, 1963), pp. 18-31.

40 The London conference of European powers held in 1839 on the initiative of British Secretary Palmerston put a final curb on Muhammad Ali’s political design. British opposition to the dismemberment of Ottoman Empire was very much consistent with its Near Eastern policy since William Pitt in 1791. Moreover, Ali’s expansionism conflicted with English commercial interests, and Britain feared that consolidation of Egyptian power would lead to consolidation of French influence there and Russian power in Istanbul. Elie Kedourie, England and the Middle East: The Destruction of Ottoman Empire, 1914-1921 (London: Harvester Press, 1978), p. 3.
ambitious plan of an Arab Empire by Muhammad Ali and nurtured by Ibrahim failed to find in Syria the sustenance it needed and was the more easily stifled by England’s hostility. Its great weakness was that it was formed out of time, in advance of Arab national consciousness”.  

Although his son Ibrahim Pasha, the governor of Syria, forcefully advanced the idea of reintegrating the Arabs under the one rule by reviving Arab nationality, Muhammad Ali who never meant to be a Pan Arab. He was rather a “dynast and an opportunist who tried to take advantage of the enfeeblement of the Ottoman Empire and of the Anglo French rivalry in the Levant in order to enlarge his domain”.  

It is a truism that the Wahhabism and Muhammad Ali’s move to separate the Arabic speaking parts of the Empire were not the manifestation of Arab nationalistic resurgence. They were partly of personal political ambition, partly of local assertion for liberation in a loose Ottoman administration. Still in a greater part they were the

41 George Antonius, op. cit., p. 33.
42 In the words of Ibrahim who said “I am not a Turk. I came to Egypt when I was a child, and since that time, the soil of Egypt has changed my blood and made it all Arab”. This statement to a French visitor has often been quoted, as has the visitor’s comment that Ibrahim’s aim was to found an entirely Arab state, and “give back to the Arab race its nationality and political existence”. Hourani, op. cit., p. 261.
43 Haim, op. cit., pp. 3-4.
44 According to Hourani, in a sense, “they could be regarded as spokesmen of ‘Arab’ consciousness”. Because, “the Wahhabi kingdom in Arabia was Arab: not only by the accident that it arose in a region where Arabic was spoken, but also because by calling Muslims to return to the primitive purity of Islam it revived the memory of the Arab period in the history of the Umma. The short lived empire of Muhammad Ali too was Arab by geographical accident: expansion from Egypt was bound, in the first instance, to be expansion in Arab countries”. Hourani, op. cit., p. 261. Under the impact of such movements and also because of the spread of nationalism among Balkan subjects, the consciousness of the difference between Arabs and Turks was growing throughout the first half of the 19th century.
attempts at the regeneration of the decadent Islamic society either through the current
of religo-political traditionalism or by initiating westernisation.

Naturally, these two cataclysmic internal events along with the external
European challenge shook the consciousness of the Ottoman Sultans to the state of
decay of the Empire, and created the need for change. The course of westernisation
started by the Sultan Selim II and Mahmoud II with the military reforms soon covered
other areas of imperial administration in the Tanzinat period. Apart from some
superficial changes, the basic reforms-projects that aimed at creating a modern state
apparatus were never carried out. On top of all the adoption of the external trappings
of the West, the incompatibility between the old and new had disastrous impact on the
Ottoman society.45

The increasing contact with the west, the introduction of European life-style
by the “young Ottomans”, the setting up of Arabic press, the functioning of the
missionaries and above all the free flow of the western political ideas combined to
effect a radical transformation in the Ottoman intellectual life by breaking the
medieval stagnation. The historical roots of Arab nationalism can be traced in the
eyear 19th century when the Arab world was passing from this medieval phase to

45. The reaction to the Ottoman westernisation programme has been discussed in
the first Chapter. Here, we are concerned with its impact on Islam and Arab
minds in shaping the cultural and political consciousness of a separate identity. It
is to be noted that social change in West Asia was generated by forces from
outside the area. This can be explained by the growth of the archic-chilliastic and
secular-nationalist variants of the literary and political renaissance which took
place in the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire in the 19th century. For social
change in the region, see Carl Leiden (ed.), The Conflict of Traditionalism and
Modernity in the Muslim Middle East (Austin, 1966); Daniel Lerner, The Passing
of traditional society: Modernising the Middle East (Glencoe, 1962).
modern era. However, there was no "Arab question" in the international politics till the beginning of the 20th century.46

Arab nationalism, in political terms was preceded by the anti-Turkish sentiment followed by the racial distinction between the Arabs and Turks and the assertion of Arab identity. Growth of Arabism both culturally as well as politically will be discussed in three stages, and finally the role of the external powers in precipitating the estrangement of the Arabs from the Turks.

The anti-Turkish sentiments in the second quarter of the 19th century was the product of diverse causes: mainly the deterioration of the Ottoman government and increasing influences of the West on the Near East. The deterioration of the overall Ottoman imperial control was evident in its failure to contain the Wahhabis or taking on the Egyptian move to create a new Oriental Empire. The British intervention not only prevented the division of the Ottoman Empire but also facilitated the cultural penetration of the West. However, the process of westernisation had already taken roots in the Arab lands under the Egyptian rule. The seven-year long Egyptian occupation of Syria "opened the door to western missionary enterprises ... which were destined to become the foster-parents of the Arab resurrection".47 The missionaries were the forerunners of western colonialism, but their activities on the

46 The word ‘Arab’ was mainly reserved for the Arab tribesmen, specially the Bedouins of the desert. Moreover, the general terms ‘Christians’ and ‘Muslims’ were used to describe the two main communities of the Empire irrespective of their racial or linguistic differences. Turks and Arabs for instance were first “Muslim brothers in the Faith”. For the Muslims, Islam is the fatherland (watan) that recognises no geographic boundaries and it expands with the spreading of Islam.

47 Antonius, op. cit., p. 35.

48 The activities of the European missions – French Jesuits, American Protestants and Orthodox of Czarist Russia – varied substantially. American and Russian missionaries contributed considerably towards the Arab cultural renaissance;
Ottoman heartland contributed in a significant measure towards the Arab cultural renaissance in the second half of 19th century.

In true sense, this period marked the beginning of the Arab awakening though not in political terms. For, Arab nationalism at the initial stage was apolitical. It emerged out of a concern with Arabic culture and modernisation of national languages, encouraged by the missionaries particularly the Americans. Nasif al-Yazije (1800-1871) (the Greek Catholic linguist), Ahmad Faris al-shidyaq (1801-87) and Butrus al-Bustani (1819-83) who dominated the intellectual life of the period were associated with American missions.

The brilliant works of the period though devoid of any superior political insights were the scholarly attempts to re-invigorate Arab culture by “making Arabic a suitable means of expressing the life and ideas of modern world”. Their untiring advocacy of a revival of old literature, cultural assimilation with Europe and religious tolerance through an anti clerical element in their writing helped them build a new national culture. “It is no accident that Arab nationalism in its early phase took the

whereas the French catholic missions followed an openly colonialist policy. However, the role of missions should not be exaggerated. The religious activities of the foreign missions also roused suspicions and fears among the majority of Muslims. They fanned the flames of denominational and sectarian rivalries that at times resulted in the intervention of foreign powers. For the activities of the missionaries and the competition among them, see A.L. Tibawi, American Interest in Syria, 1800-1901: A Study of Educational Literary and Religious Work (London, 1966); Derek Hopwood, The Russian Presence in Syria and Palestine 1843-1914: Church and Politics in the Near East (London, 1969). On the role of the Christian Arabs in the advancement of learning and language see A.L. Tibwai, A Modern History of Syria (London, Macmillan 1969), pp. 144-46.

form of literary renaissance not based on political theories, which was generated exclusively by linguists and men of letters”.  

Yazije and Bustani with American mission assistance founded the first literary society in the Arab world, Jamiiyat al-Adab wal-ulum (The Literary and Scientific Society) in 1847. This was followed by the formation of oriental society in 1850 and then superseded by al-Jamiiyya al-Ilmiyya al-surriyya (The Syrian Scientific Society) in 1857 that included Arab personalities of all creeds. This society was the first outward manifestation of a collective national consciousness. It was in this society that the first cry of the infant Arab national movement was uttered.

The first Arab national writer whose patriotic qasida (form of an ode) gave an incitement to Arab insurgence was Ibrahim Yaziji, the son of Nasib Yaziji. At a secret meeting of the Syirian Scientific Society he recited this qasida that declared the Arabs in no unambiguous terms as one independent cultural nation. It sang the glories of Arabs and their literature, and denounced the sectarian strifes and called upon the Arabs to throw off the Ottoman yoke. “With its utterance the movement for political emancipation sang its first song”.

The early Arab nationalists, however put emphasis on the emergence of an independent Arab cultural nation by dissolving the sectarian difference as well as by

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50 Tibi, op. cit., p. 78.

51 Al Bustani played a leading role in the formation of this society. He is regarded as the founder of Nafir Surriyya (Appeal to Syria). The magazine al-Jinan that he published in 1870 was shut down by Abdul Hamid. The motto of al-jinan was “hubb al-watan mil al-iman” (Love of Country is an Article of Faith). He also founded al-Madrasa al-wataniyya (The National School) in 1863, the first secular school in Syria. With his cooperation the American missionaries established the Syrian Protestant College in 1866, later known as the American University of Beirut (AUB). It was in this college the first secret society was founded in 1875.

52 Antonius, op. cit., p. 55.
enriching the indigenous literature. This is equally true in case of the first political theorist of Arab nationalism, Adib Ishaq⁵³ (1856-85) who gave in the treatise al-Durar (the Pearls) a definition of the nation that transcended literature. Ishaq though regarded love of country as a virtue that found expression in freedom, never questioned the existence of the Ottoman Empire. "He was proud of being an Arab", according to Dawn, "but his pride in the Arabs was subordinated to his Ottomanism and Easternism".⁵⁴

The formation of the first revolutionary secret society by the students of the Syrian protestant college in 1875 with the sole objective to get rid of the Turkish domination was largely the logical continuity of the Arab literary renaissance. Long before it was dissolved, many more had sprung up in Syrian cities. Through revolutionary placards and posters these societies raised their battle cry of 'urubah'⁵⁵ (Arabs) and appealed to wataniyyah (patriotism) in order to rally both Muslim and Christian Arabs to fight for emancipation from the Turkish misrule.

Taken together all these societies, spread out in Syria and Lebanon, alongside their pleas for Arab character by stressing fervently on the virtues of unison and concord as means of salvation marked a historically notable transition from an

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⁵³ Adib Ishaq was one of the first western educated Arab intellectuals to adopt the French idea of elective nationality. He sees the nation not in the sense of a cultural community speaking the same language, but as the practical expression of the will to live together. Ishaq considers watan as identical with liberty. See H.Z. Nuseibh, The Ideas of Arab Nationalism, (2nd Edition), (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1959), pp. 142-145.


⁵⁵ The idea of urubah has been dealt with comprehensively by Ismail Ragi A al-Faruqi, On Arabism: Urubah and Religion (Amsterdam, 1962), pp. 195-220.
'independent Arab cultural nation’ to a political nation. Such a political ferment was not confined to the villayet of Syria alone. The symptoms of Arab insurgence were already discernible in the distant North Africa, Arabian peninsula and along the shores of the Arab Gulf. “Thus the signs of unrest in the early eighties were the first manifestation of new ideas, which, born in Syria had drifted in haphazard flight over the vast surface of the Arab world and fanned discontent with Turkish rule into episodes of separate flares, like incidental bonfires in a vast landscape of hills”.  

These clandestine expressions of rebelliousness against Turkish misgovernment notwithstanding, the “Arab Question” never figured prominently until Abdul Hamid’s tyranny was overthrown; and succeeded by Young Turks. There was though no eruption of an “organised Arab plot” to break away from the Ottoman Empire, the anti Turkish sentiment in the Arab lands had definitely gathered momentum, so much so that it just fell short of breaking into open rebellion.

Hamidian Despotism

In the thirty-three years of Abdul Hamid’s reign the Ottoman Empire entered the most decisive phase of its history. Once great Empire of the Ottoman suffered a greater dismemberment than ever before and hence witnessed its steady decline and ruin. “Fear of the disintegrating effects of the external pressures exerted by the great

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56 Some of these societies wedded to this idea were “Society of Good Intentions” and “Society for the Protection of the Rights of the Arab Ummah”.

57 Based on the reports by foreign observers and corroborated by the leaflets found in those areas and the evidence of contemporary Arab witnesses, Antonius concluded that the unrest had spread to other parts of the eastern Arab world. Antoiius, op. cit., p. 91.

Some of the immediate causes for the anti-Turkish stirrings were: reconquest of Yamen province by fighting the Arabs, conscription of Arab soldiers for the service in the peninsula in the event of Russo-Turkish war in 1874, and revolt of Urrabi pasha in Egypt in 1882 and Mahdi in Sudan in 1885.
powers and fear of internal rebellion made the Hamidian regime more tyrannical”. 58

He was particularly disturbed by the anti-Turkish agitation in his “Asiatic possessions”. 59

As the political activities of the secret Arabs-organisations showed no sign of diminishing despite Hamid’s benevolent gestures towards them, specially the Arab-Muslims, he was persuaded 60 to adopt the policy of pan-Islamism in order to stimulate loyalty to his throne. His “Pan-Islamism policy was largely designed to restore the Caliphate to its proper place, to identify it with the Sultanate in the popular mind and use it, when thus rehabilitated, now as a prop and then as a lever for the attainment of political lends”. 61

At that time the important political objective was to protect Ottoman sovereignty over the Arab provinces, still unaffected by the Russo-Turkish war of

58 Ibid., p. 54.

59 When Abdul Hamid ascended the throne, his Arab possessions in Asia were Syria, Iraq and the Arabian Peninsula. In the Arab gulf side, the Turkish rule was limited to the coastal province of al-Hasa that was brought under military occupation in 1871. In the interior peninsula Turkish authority was practically non-existent, particularly in the principalities of Najd and Shammar. Besides, Istanbul had lost Muscat, Aden (1839) and island of Perim (1857) to the British crown permanently.

60 The prominent Ottoman Muslims who were supposed to have persuaded Hamid with the idea of Pan-Islamism have been listed by Hourani. Hourani, op. cit., p. 107.

61 Antonius, op. cit., p. 70. Abdul Hamid invoked the power of religion not only to strengthen Sultanate internally, but also to make it the edifice of his foreign policy to buttress Turkey’s position internationally. Because, the imposition of the Treaty of Berlin followed by the Russo-Turkish war, the European provinces of the Empire were already affected considerably by the germs of separatism. In brief, Pan-Islamist idea was intended to forestall the vicious design of dismemberment of the Empire.

1877. This was exemplified by the construction of the Hejaz Railway line between Demascus and Medina, largely with monetary contributions of the Muslims. He established a theological college for the training of his missionaries and recruited many Arabs into his personal service at the places such as a Syrian Arab, Izzat Pasha. Alongside his policy of favours and blandishment, Abdul lHamid also had recourse to most autocratic means to stifle the non-conformists. After having suspended the constitution in 1876, he unleashed a rein of repression and censoroship in order to put a curb on the spread of separatist ideas. The internment of Hussain ibn Ali, a scion of the House of Bani-Hashem, the sharif of Mecca in Istanbul was one of exemplary punishments by the Hamidian regime.

Abdul Hamid’s extensive propaganda for pan-Islamism served as a counterpoise to the separatist phenomenon in the Arabic-speaking parts of the Empire. In the face of the pan-Islamic movement, the idea of establishing an alternative independent sovereign Arab state failed to evoke much support of the Arabs despite all the emotive appeals and secret campaigns by the non-Muslim Arabs. Moreover, the Muslim intellectuals were by and large concerned with preserving the Empire in the face of the western colonial expansionist menace as the last imperial vestige of the Muslims. Not unnaturally, many of them became the votaries of Pan-Islamism for it promised to strengthen the Empire through administrative reforms and return to pure Islam.

Of the great Pan-Islamic apostles, the most renowned was Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1839-97), who along with his pupil Muhammad Abduh (1849-1905) pioneered the revivalist movement, that has been characterised as “Islamic modernism”. Confronted with the overpowering politico-cultural domination of the

62 Tibi, op. cit., p. 65. Al-Afghani, known in Arabic literature as the ‘Sage of the East’ was the first “to use the concepts of ‘Islam’ and the ‘West’ as connoting
West, al-Afghani tried to attune Islam to the contemporary European idea of the nation with a view to protecting Islam as a potent anti-colonialist ideology. The political expression of this modified adaptation of the European idea was the Pan-Islamism that declared all Muslims as a single nation.

Although his name has often been associated with the idea of Muslim unity, al-Afghani’s aim was neither to unite all Muslim lands under one ruler nor to restore glory to Islam. When Abdulhamid used Islam as a national movement for all Muslims in order to project himself as a symbol of unity, al-Afghani dropped his idealisitic vision of Pan-Islamic unity.

In short, for al-Afghani Islam was an instrument and not the end, to liberate Muslims from oppression, internal as well as external. His political theory was in essence, an Islamic response to the imperialist threat, and as an ideology it was meant to “strengthen its position as a focus of identity and solidarity against the attacks of the Christian West”.

Along with al-Afghani, his principal disciple Muhammad Abduh is considered as a precursor of Arab nationalism. Abduh, however, unlike his master was never a political agitator, and maintained that Islam could be revitalised through cultural rather than political activities. Abduh’s ideas of Islamic reform were based on two fundamental assumptions: the inescapable role of Islam in the nation-building


64 H.A.R. Gibb has described Muhammad Abduh as “the greatest of the real reformers of Islam who wanted to free the mind from the fetters of tradition”. Gib, _op. cit._, p. 33. For a better analysis of his ideas, see Malcolm H. Kerr, _Islamic Reform: The Political and Legal Theories of Muhammad Abduh and Rasid Rida_ (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966).
process and the need for absorbing the new western institutions and technical skills in order to overcome the fossilised Islam of the Ulema.

To conclude, both al-Afghani and Abduh seemed convinced that Islam was in a state of decadence though it had the capacity for progress. Majid Khaduri writes, "the concept of 'decadence' in the Afghani-Abduh scheme of thought implied the pressing need for 'progress' and 'development' if Islam were to catch up with the west". This novel concept of reform in Islamic thought clearly contrasts with Wahhabism that called for the restoration of the ideal Islamic standard because western ideas were incompatible with Islam. In this sense, the major differences lay in the fact that Islamic modernism analyses changes in society in terms of social forces rather than in transcendental values.

**Wahhabism and Islamic Modernism: An Assessment**

There is a clear distinction between Wahhabism and Islamic modernism as they differed substantially over their approaches to achieve an identical goal, the revitalisation of Islam. The historical significance of the two movements, however, is underlined by their contributions to the germination of Arab consciousness of a collective identity and solidarity. In fact, a relationship exists, though indirect, between three Muslim scholars – Ibn Abd al-Wahhab, al-Afghani and Abduh – and Arab nationalism, premised on opposition to foreign domination, whether Ottoman or European, and an emphasis on the Arab origin of Islam. “Both movements must

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therefore be considered an inherent part of the national movement in the Middle East, although in the minds of their protagonists they were not nationalists but Muslims".  

The reformist and activist spirit of Islam thus, provided a renewed awareness and sense of pride in Islamic history and identity and "gave Islamic religious sentiment a politically-charged coloring. This Islamic activism played a significant part in the early formulation of Arab nationalism". However, it is still contentious to call al-Afghani and Abduh as the precursors of Arab nationalism.  

On the contrary, Haim traces the "intellectual burgeoning of Arab nationalism" in the arguments of Salafiyya by the Syrian Rasid Rida (1865-1935), the well-known disciple of Muhammad Abduh. He regarded the Ottoman Caliphate as a makeshift solution, since the holder of office was not from among the Quraishi tribe and had not mastered Arabic, the language of the book of God. On this ground, he defended the Arabs' claim to the spiritual guidance defiantly by blurring national loyalties. Hence, Islam for Rida is the justification of Arabs' independence from the

66 Tibi, op. cit., p. 68.


68 According to Haim, "if both are essential to the understanding of a phenomenon such as Arab Nationalism, it is as well to emphasize that they nevertheless be considered as its initiators. To do so would be to run the risk of confusion by dissolving the linemeant of a clear-cut ideology and a specific into armorphous speculation and loose generalisation". Haim, op. cit., p. 19.

69 The term Salafiyya means "a return to the ways of the prophet, his companions and the Muslim of the early centuries, when Islam was in its pure state and the Arab Caliphate in the heyday of its glory". Ibid., p. 21. Implicit in this argument was the glorification of Arab Islam and a depreciation of the Ottoman Islam. The concept of Salafiyya has been further elaborated by John L. Esposito’s Islam and Politics (N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1987), pp. 60-64.
Doubtless, Arab feeling was implicit in his doctrine from the beginning “but it was only gradually and under the pressure of political circumstances that it led him to become an advocate of Arab national independence”.

Like Rashid Rida, in the political ideas of his Aleppin disciple al-Rahman al-Kawakibi, the Arab nationalism was mingled with the idea of Islamic unity, and Arab reform as an integral part of general Islamic reform. Described as a radical Muslim thinker, al-Kawakibi attacked the despotic Ottoman rule, extolled the superiority of Arabs over Turks and called for returning the centre of gravity to Arabia by wrestling Islam from Turks.

Al-Kawakibi's idea of nationalism “represented but a transition from the ecumenical to the national stage”. For his objective was to make politics as an

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70 In the article “Al-Turk Wail-arab” (The Turks and the Arabs) Rida wrote, “Most of the lands which Turks conquered were a burden on Islam and the Muslims, and are still a warning of a clear catastrophe ... A little knowledge of past and present history shows that most of the countries where Islam established were conquered by the Arabs who were the active agents of the propagation of Islam”. *Al-Manar* III (Cairo, 1900), p. 172, (edited by Muhammad Abduk), Ibid., p. 23. While opposing Ottoman rule, however, Rashid Rida rejected any tendency towards establishing Arab state based on non-Islamic solidarity in the Islamic world”. Najim Bezirgan, “Islam and Arab Nationalism”, *Middle East Review*, vol. 11, no.2, (Winter 1978), p. 38.

71 Hourani, *op. cit.*, p. 301. Rida’s political record shows the shift in his career, from Ottomanist to Arab nationalist and finally return to Islamist of Wahhabi type. He was an activist of the Decentralisation Party, founding member of the secret society called Jamivyat al-Jami al-arabiyya, and one of the advocates who sought British help to found an Arab state. For details, see John J. Donohve and John L. Esposito (ed.), *Islam in Transition: Muslim Perspectives* (New York: Oxford Press, 1982).

72 Rodinson believes that al-Kawakibi “was strongly influenced by W.S. Blunt (1840-1922) a renowned British poet. As an anti-colonialist he gave vent to similar ideas in his book *The Future of Islam in 1881*”, Rodinson, *op. cit.*, P. 93.

73 Khaduri, *op. cit.*, p. 16. Interestingly Elie Kedourie has drawn attention to certain evidences tending to show that umm al-qura in which Kawakibi had advanced a claim for Arab Caliphate was probably a piece of Khedival propaganda in order to
autonomous activity divorced from divine prescriptions – that is an essential requisite of nationalism. The ideas of al-Kawakaibi were given more precision by Nejib Azoury, a Syro-Palestinian Christian in his book entitled Le Revival de le Nation Arabe published in 1905. Nejib Azouri was the first to make an open demand for secession of Arab lands from the Ottoman Empire but his appeal calling upon the Arabs to rise in revolt evoked lukewarm response as evident from the absence of any Muslim Arabs in his organisation, The League de la Partie Arabe. However, Azoury’s writings showed the first signs of an explicit Arab nationalism as a movement with political objectives. No wonder, “during first years of the twentieth century the existence of Arab Question became known here and there in the Western world”.

Emergence of Arab Nationalism Under the Young Turks: 1908-1914

The political activities of the Arab separatists and reformists were largely channelled in general movements either through press or secret societies throughout the reign of Abdul Hamid. But the situation changed drastically with the Young Turk Revolution in July 1908, and then the deposition of Abdul Hamid in 1909.

The reaction of Arab intellectuals to the revolution was initially enthusiastic. Although they were not an important element in the Committee of Union and


75 Zeine, op. cit., p. 75. By the time, Azoury’s strongly worded manifesto addressed to Great powers for the creation of “New Arab Empire” was published in 1905, a couple of secret societies and journals were already floated in European capitals mainly in Paris mostly by the Christian Arabs.
Progress (CUP), many of the Arab army officers had worked hand-in-glove with its leaders, not as Arab nationalists but as Ottoman citizens.\textsuperscript{76} The fraternity between them was consolidated further with the formation of a new society called Ottoman Arab Fraternity (al-Ikha al-Arabi al-Uthmani) in Constantinople. In addition, as a gesture of goodwill the CUP decided to end the sixteen years exile of Sharif Hussain Ibn Ali and appointed him as the Grand Sharif of Mecca.

The Arab-Turkish honeymoon was short lived. As soon as their common aim of overthrowing Abdul Hamid was achieved in 1909, their union of interests began to break up. In fact the years between 1909 and 1914 when the C.U.P. was in full control proved decisive in determining the fate of the Empire. The centuries old Arab-Turkish symbiosis slowly got ruptured to finally culminate in the secession of the Arab lands.

Partly it was the mutual suspicion between them, and still in greater part, the “inherent contradictions of the young Turk movement”,\textsuperscript{77} that together gave rise to the Arab separatism based on ethno-national identity. On the Turkish side, many unionists suspected the Arabs’ support against Hamidian despotism as a reflection of their political ambition to establish the Arab Caliphate. Another factor for Turkish mistrust was that Abdul Hamid had surrounded himself with Arab councillors. “In

\textsuperscript{76} Arab officers of the Ottoman army, mainly of Iraqi origin were represented in the CUP. In 1909, for example two senior Arab officers, the Egyptian Aziz al-Misri and an Iraqi, Muhammad Shaukat Pasha led the march against the Hamidian counter-revolution in Constantinople. See, Antonius \textit{op. cit.}, p. 104; and Feroz Ahmad, \textit{The Young Turks} (Oxford, 1969), Chap. II. Ideologically, their cooperation against Hamidian despotism was based on their interpretation of Ottomanism that envisaged the creation of a multi-national constitutional monarchy, a Turko-Arab Ausgleich, (this settlement was a contract made by Austria and Hungary in 1867 separately with the Sovereign House of Habsburg that accorded to the Germans and the Magyars a parity of power for half a century.

\textsuperscript{77} Hourani, \textit{op. cit.} P. 280.
denouncing these officers, the young Turks may have denounced Arabs in general as reactionary tools of ... Abdul Hamid". 78

So far as the impact of 1908 movement is concerned what seems to be intriguing is that the Arabic-speaking areas, especially the interior regions were ‘quiescent’ on the eve of the July revolution. The absence of enthusiasm among the local notables and ulema and their apathy towards the restoration of the constitution shows that "they were by no means dissatisfied with the Hamidian regime". 79

This coalition of opposition forces grew in strength steadily as the centralisation policy of the CUP alienated many erstwhile supporters of the Young Turks. Alongside the mutual antagonism, the varied interpretation of the constitution drove the wedge between the Arabs and Turks. Although the constitution among other things, guaranteed freedom and equality, without the distinction of race or creed, the ruling Young Turks allegedly pursued the partisan policy that ensured the Turkish hegemonism.

For Arabs, liberty and equality meant retaining the rights of their community and strengthening the autonomy of the provincial administration. Moreover, the establishment of a constitutional regime already opened the floodgates of change and freedom (Hurriet). While changes in the system broadened participation in politics

78 Haim, op. cit., p. 31. Some of those dismissed officers consequently headed the Arab societies as anti-Turkish platforms. For example, Shafiq al-Azm, a high official after his dismissal led the Arab Brotherhood Society in Constantinople and Sayyid Talib organised opposition in Mesopotamia.

79 Elie Kedourie, "The Impact of the Young Turk Revolution on the Arabic-speaking Provinces of the Ottoman Empire" in Arabic Political Memoirs, p. 128. The events immediately after the coup in Mosul, Baghdad, Damascus and Beirut, even Basra, Kuwait, Hijas and Mecca provide sufficient indication of anti-CUP resentment, expressed in various forms of agitations led by the disaffected local notables and the Ulema.
by new sectors and strata, the freedom of press triggered an unprecedented proliferation of periodicals, newspapers and books in Arabic.\(^80\)

As the last European territories were lost, the Committee focussed attention on preserving and unifying what remained of the European, the Turkish and Arab provinces. The Young Turks naturally groping for a definition of Ottomanism that seemed to stress a Turkish input through a centralised administration. “But in the Arabic-speaking lands, the CUP’s centralising policy was construed as verging on Turkification and thus as a distinct break with Hamidian policy”.\(^81\)

Besides, the predominance of the Turkish element was manifested in the assertion of Turkish nationalism\(^82\) of the most chauvinistic type. Turkish nationalism based on Pan-Turanianism – a supra national propaganda for a

\(^{80}\) The aftermath of the July Revolution was marked by a new political process what one author calls, “the transition from traditional to modern politics” in the Arab world. This resulted in the growth of the “new intelligentsia” consisting of journalists, teachers, professionals and members of the military. The new intelligentsia formed the backbone of the Arab secret societies, and was instrumental in the development and dissemination of the nascent nationalist ideology. Moreover, with the lifting of the Hamidian censorship, the press became the most important medium for influencing public opinion. According to one estimation, there were nearly 35 Arabic language papers in Syria, about 60 in Beirut and 35 periodicals and dailies in Palestine between 1909 to 1914. Some leading journalists of al-Muqtabs al-Qabas and al-Mufid played a prominent role in promoting public opinion in favour of Arabism. See, Rashid Ismail Khalidi, “Social Factors in the Rise of the Arab Movement in Syria”, in Said Amir Arjomand (ed.), From Nationalism to Revolutionary Islam (Hongkong: Macmillan, 1984), pp. 54-57.


\(^{82}\) In this context, Hans Kohn’s contention seems very relevant. In his opinion, the revolution by the CUP was itself in reality a nationalistic outburst. As being nationalist, the Young Turks were determined not to sacrifice their non-Turkish territories. Hence, they were repellant to the idea of provincial autonomy and inclined to pursue the policy of Turkification. See Hans Kohn, Nationalism in the Middle East (Washington: M.E. Institute, 1982), pp. 61-63.
rapprochement between all Turkish-speaking people - was inconsistent with the
"doctrine of Ottomanism". It was equally inimical to Arab aspirations. The
aggressive and assimilating propensities of the Turkish nationalism stirred Arab fears
for losing their cultural heritage. Zeine remarked, "As far as Arab political
nationalism is concerned, it can safely be asserted that it was the national and racial
policies of the Young Turks which fanned its flames." 84

As a response to the CUP's campaign for 'Turkification', Arabism
developed as a new ideological weapon by a 'coalition of disparate forces' to battle

83 The doctrine of Ottomanism in the words of Hisham Sharabi "represented an
essentially consistent force; its fate was inextricably bound up with that of
Ottoman polity". He further adds "Ottomanism meant different things from
different standpoints - according to whether one was Egyptian, a Muslim Arab, a
Christian Arab or a non-Arab Muslim. The aspect of Ottomanism that was most
meaningful from all standpoints was its supranational, supra-religious, supra-
ethnic character". Hisham Sharabi, Arab Intellectuals and the West: The
Formative Years: 1875-1914 (London: John Hopkins Press, 1970), p. 107. Ottomanism being formally neutral as far as ethno-religious factor was concerned
aimed at the fusion of different races of the Empire into one nation on the basis of
equality for all.

84 Zeine, op. cit., p. 93.

85 The alleged Turkification was manifested blatantly only in the fall of 1909 when
the CUP undertook the administrative reforms. The sweeping replacement and
transfer of officials as well as the appointment of the local officials who were
mostly Turks antagonised the Arab upper class for being deprived of their earlier
power and positions. Even within the ranks of the CUP there was discrimination
against the Arabs by their non-inclusion. Furthermore, the Ulema were hostile
towards the Young Turks for the translation of Koran into Turkish, the
secularisation measures affecting the religious establishment and attempts at
making a sentimental cult of pagan-Turanian conquerors. Finally, what roused the
average Arab anger was the imposition of Turkish as the language of education
and for official use. All these changes whether detrimental or advantageous and
whether motivated by Turkish nationalism or a desire for efficiency “meant to
Arabs the culmination of the policy of Ottomanisation into new policy of
Turkification”, Hassan Saab, op. cit., p. 220.

86 'Coalition of disparate forces' is referred to the forces opposed to the CUP,
composed of the 'new intelligentsia', members of religious establishment and
many disgruntled officials. This disorganised opposition bloc gradually began to
against the Young Turks within the fold of Ottomanism. Arabism at the beginning did not advocate for separation; it was, on the contrary, an assertion of Arab identity that could be maintained by political and administrative decentralisation. Barring a few instances where demand for Arab Caliphate or independent Arab watan was raised, the keynote of the years between 1909 to 1914 was the word Islah (reform). This period, however, witnessed the formation of a good number of Arab political parties and secret societies in Iraq with explicitly nationalist ideas.

Frustrated by its failure to win even a modicum of political concessions because of the inflexible and suppressive nature of the Committee as well as the ideological rift within the Arab political elite, the ‘liberal opposition’ turned to clandestine activities to achieve its goal. Constantinople resorted to suppressing the swell as it assumed a coherent platform of Arab parliamentarians and the erstwhile supporters of Young Turks.

87 The editor of the Beirut newspaper al-Ahwal, for example, expressed the eagerness of the local population for British occupation in case of a break-up of the Empire. In the same year 1909 the editor of Damascus journal al-Muqtabas, Kurd Ali was put on trial for printing a heretical article that called for an ‘Arab Caliphate’. See, Rashid Ismail Khalidi, British Policy Towards Syria and Palestine, 1906-1914 (London: Ithaca Press, 1980), pp. 214-16.


89 Efforts were made in 1913 by the Turkish authorities to secure a consensus on the nature of reforms. But the notables were split along CUP and liberal opposition lines, the former content with the status quo and the latter for a more decentralised form of government.
anti-CUP organisations such as the Decentralisation Party and Beirut Reform Society in 1913 for harbouring the idea of creating British tutelage for the Arabs.90

Coming in response to the tough line taken by the Committee, the incipient movement assumed a more determined and intractable course. The historic Arab Congress held in Paris in June, 1913 by the Arab community (al-Jaliyal al-Arabiyyah) was probably the last collective effort by the Arabs to secure administrative decentralisation within the framework of the Empire. The Congress resolution did not contain any expression as regards the secession of ‘Arab nation’ from the Ottoman crescent. It rather comprehensively articulated the view for “a government in which all communities of the Ottoman Empire have equal rights and duties”.93

After having failed to dampen the effects of the Paris Congress, the CUP prompted by the fear of British and French meddling accepted virtually all the demands. The concessions granted in the ‘Young Turco-Arab Pact’ were more apparent than real. In the Sultan’s irade which made new law in August 1913, all the important points of the agreement were hedged around with qualifying conditions.

90 The historical records indicate British involvement in the Khedive’s machinations for an Egyptian annexation of Arab provinces under British auspices. Some leaders of the Decentralisation Party were encouraged by the British agents based in Cairo to campaign for an Anglo-Egyptian tutelage in opposition to the Christians’ support for Syrian protection. See Khalidi, op. cit., pp. 266-280.

91 The Arab Congress was organised by some Syrian intellectuals and students, sponsored by the Cairo-based Ottoman Decentralisation Party and Paris based Al-Fatat with twin objectives; 1) to attract Western sympathy and 2) to unite the Christian and Muslim Arabs on a nationalist basis. Sharabi, op. cit., p. 118.

92 The participants in the Congress unambiguously defined the term ‘Arab Nation’ (al-ummah al-Arabiyya) as the Arabic-speaking Asiatic portion of Ottoman Empire that excludes North Africa. Bassam Tibi, op. cit., pp. 84-85.

The duplicity on the part of the CUP in implementing the agreement dismayed an overwhelming section of Arabs. But, the CUP was successful, albeit temporarily, in its efforts to neutralize the Arab reform movement by rewarding some of its leaders and discrediting the rest. The CUP in the words of Antonius “having won the hand by a piece of chicanery went on to press their advantage by a singularly ill-advised piece of severity”.

It was the arrest of Major Aziz Ali in February 1914 that provoked many Young Arab nationalists and even turned the pro-CUP notables against the Turks. The sudden shift from cynical manoeuvres to repression was attributed to the revival of military character of the Empire. With the consolidation of the military dictatorship within the CUP, its “leaders concentrated on the military means which would save the Empire from catastrophes similar to the ‘Balkan and Libyan experiences’.

In fact, the calamitous Balkan wars reinforced Turkish nationalism and rendered the Ottoman universalism, the reigning ideology of the Empire virtually

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94 Following the backdoor compromise with the Young Arabs from Syria in mid-1913, the CUP made a concerted attempt to sow dissension among the liberal Arab reformers. Firstly, some of the prominent leaders of the Congress including the President of the Decentralisation Party were offered high offices or parliamentary seats. Secondly, those still opposed to Porte were maligned by the local pro-CUP notables as the British or French agents. Naturally the agreement was criticised by the reformers such as Sayyid Talib of Basra Reformist Committee, the notables from Medina and al-Ahd leader, al-Masri.

95 Antonius, *op. cit.*, p. 118.

96 Major Aziz Ali was one of the officers who was an unionist turned Arabist and the founder of the revolutionary al-Ahd Society. His arrest on the ground of conspiracy caused a wave of revulsion in Syria. For the external pressures particularly the intervention of British agent Kitchener he was released. See, Khalidi, *op. cit.*, pp. 341-46, and Antonius, *op. cit.*, pp. 118-20.

obsolete. In the words of Halide Edib “the Balkan disaster aroused in the Turk an entirely new sense of himself. It intensified the feeling that he was different from the others in the Empire, and curiously isolated as well”.

In such a state of despair and shock, the CUP leaders realised that they could save the Empire from further disintegration with the support of the Turkish people alone. Evidently this explained the swing of the Committee after the mid-1913 away from its earlier conciliatory lines to an uncompromising commitment to Turkish nationalism and Ottoman centralism. Until the outbreak of the Arab revolt of 1916 and Ottoman defeat, the CUP strictly adhered to a policy, a peculiar combination of both appeasement and heavyhandedness.

The net outcome of these developments was that the Arab “movement once grew around the language question in 1910, crystallised into a current of active opposition to the CUP in 1911 and 1912, and which after successive increase in size and popular support, culminating in the Arab Congress of 1913, was outmaneuvered, divided and defeated in the twelve months preceding the war”. The movement in


99 As Dawn has rightly pointed out the upper classes in Syria (the background of the leading reformers) were split over the issue of Arabism versus Ottomanism. The upper-class Arabs who led the Reform movement mellowed down after the elevation of some Arab leaders to high office in 1914. Djemal Pasha in this context, stated that the CUP’s “Arabian reforms meant nothing more than satisfying the ambitions of a few persons who were hankering after offices and dignities”. Djemal Pasha, Memoirs of a Turkish Statesman (London, 1922), p. 59. These young Arabists opposed to the CUP were threatened with acquiescence by none other than Djemal Pasha, the governor of Syria. He instituted a reign of terror through execution and deportation of many Arab leaders, suspected as ‘traitors’.
Syria became so weak and the leadership so demoralized that even the proclamation of the Arab revolt in the Hijaz failed to excite any sympathy in the Arab-heartland.

When Turkey entered the World War I on the side of the central powers in 1914, the CUP had retained a firm hold on Syria, the heart of Arabism, Palestine,\(^{101}\) the home of anti-zionist movement, and to a considerable extent on the Mesopotamia,\(^{102}\) coveted by the British. As the Arab movement in Syria became weak, premature and overly dependent on Europe, the scene shifted to the Hijaz, a

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100 Khalidi, *op. cit.* P. 370.

101 The Ottoman acceptance of Jewish immigration into the Sanjak of Jerusalem and the southern part of the vilayet of Beirut, the area of modern Palestine, was one of the key issues which turned many anti-zionist leaders against the CUP administration. Its failure to restrict the continuing Arab immigration and illegal land purchase encouraged leading Arab deputies like al-Asali, Kurd Ali and al-Khalidi to look for external help. The issue of Arab reaction to the growth of zionism has been discussed in the seminal work of N. Mandel, *The Arabs and Zionism before World War I* (Berkeley, 1976) and Y. Porath, *The Emergence of the Palestinian-Arab Nationalist Movement, 1918-1929* (London, 1974). On the subject of the attitude of Ottoman Government towards Jewish Settlement see, M. Maoz (ed.), *Studies on Palestine During the Ottoman Period* (Jerusalem, 1975), pp. 190-210.

102 Mesopotamia was yet another volatile region of the Empire because of the effective network of the Arab secret society called al-Ahd conspiring against the CUP either through military coup or with assistance of Britain. British policy in Mesopotamia was guided by three main interests: 1) Strategic – to maintain Britain’s supremacy in the Gulf thereby to protect India’s western flank; 2) Commercial – to preserve trade of the region for her merchants and to retain petroleum resources; 3) Political – Britain’s interest in the future complexion of Mesopotamian politics, that is, to ensure stability and friendship through British supervision but not self government of Arabs. See, V.H. Rothwell, “Mesopotamia in British War Aims, 1914-1918”, *Historical Journal*, vol. Xiii, no.2 (1970); Stuart A. Cohen, *British Policy in Mesopotamia, 1903-1914* (London: Ithaca Press, 1976) based on the *Report of the 1915 British de Bunsen Committee*, pp. 3-15; F. Ahmad, “Great Britain’s Relations with the Young Turks, 1908-1914”, *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 2, no.4 (July 1966) pp. 302-324 and A. Cunningham, “The Wrong Horse? – A Study of Anglo-Turkish Relations Before the First World War”, *Middle Eastern Affairs*, no.4, St. Antony Papers, no. 17 (Oxford, 1965), pp. 56-76.
comparative backwater where the last act in the drama between Turks and Arabs was to be played.

The Hijaz in the eastern Arabia, the site of Muslim Holy places remained the most potentially dangerous to the Turks since Sherif Hussein was appointed by the new regime in 1908. Sherif had shown various degrees of dissatisfaction towards the CUP’s move to encroach on his semi-autonomous status through centralisation. On earlier occasions his son Abdullah also had asked unsuccessfully for British assistance in his family’s continuing conflict with the Turks.\textsuperscript{103}

With the entry of Turkey into the war and Sultan’s call for Jehad, the Sherif’s position in the British politico-strategic considerations assumed prime significance. If British policy\textsuperscript{104} during the war saw in him an ally of traditional type with limited

\textsuperscript{103} In the spring of 1912, Emir of Mecca had made first ever contact with Cairo-based British agent Lord Kitchener through his son, Abdullah. Again in 1914, he sought British help to thwart Turkish move to extend the Hijaz railway to Mecca, and attempt of the new Vali to impinge on the power of the Amirate. On both occasions, Britain rejected the appeal; but this rejection was not final or irrevocable. The British ambivalence on this question was more in consonance with her long-standing policy of preserving “independence and integrity” of the Ottoman Empire. At the same time, it should be noted that the British agents never foreclosed other alternatives including the option of encouraging the Arabs to rally against the Turkish hegemonism in case of the Ottoman threat to her political and commercial interests in the region. For details, see Ellie Kedourie,\textit{ England and the Middle East}, pp. 9-28; Ernest Dawn, “The Amir of Mecca al-Husyn iba-Ali”, and Origin of the Arab Revolt” and “Abdullah ibn al-Husyan, Lord Kitchener and the Idea of an Arab Revolt”, in Dawn,\textit{ From Ottomanism to Arabism}, pp. 3-5 and 56.

\textsuperscript{104} In the eyes of the British, the Sherif’s religious prestige seemed valuable in view of Pan-Islamic appeals of the Sultan. Besides, his centre, the Hijaz, was suitable for the British war-time objectives of acquiring Palestine and other territories to the east of Egypt as were considered necessary to the defence of the Suez canal. Finally, the Allied Powers, with the Sherif’s help could attack the Empire through her Arab subjects while not upsetting the Anglo-French strategic applecart. That was precisely the reason again why Britain was more disposed towards the Sherif than the dedicated nationalists such as Rashid Rida or Aziz Ali al-Masri. For a discussion of motivation of Great Britain and its involvement in the Ottoman Empire, see Marian Kent, “Great Britain and the End of the Ottoman
ambition unlikely to demand share of war-spoils, the latter needed the material support of the British to realise his personal ambitions which bore little resemblance to those of the nationalists. In brief, the Anglo-Hashemite alliance of 1916-1918 ranged against the Turks was the marriage of convenience. It came in a series of vaguely worded British promises embedded in what is known as the “Hussein-McMohan Correspondence”.106

On the whole, the historical interpretations of the Revolt in the Hijaz by Sherif Hussein on June 10, 1916 are contradictory. On the one hand, in the traditional

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105 Although the revolt in the Hijaz was given ‘Arab nationalist ideological content’ it had its origin in the ambition of the Sherif. He was essentially driven by personal ambition to seek the Caliphate of all Muslims, and to secure his branch of the Hashemite clan the perpetual Amirate of Mecca, independent of Ottoman overlord. Dawn, op. cit., pp. 155-56; Elle Kedourie, op. cit., pp. 48-56.

nationalist version of the period, the Hijaz Revolt has been characterised as the Arab’s armed rising against the Turkish domination for independence. Many contemporary writers on the other hand, dispute the Arab nationalist character of the 1916 Revolt. In their views, the ideology of Arabism played relatively insignificant role in the origin of the Arab revolt though the revolt itself was a historic step in the growth of Arab nationalism before 1918.107

The story of the Arab revolt that started in Mecca and terminated triumphantly in Damascus in the fall of 1918 has been narrated by T.E. Lawrence in his literary masterpiece.108 Of its immediate results the most significant was the proclamation of the Sherif Hussein as the “king of the Arab countries” which was not acceptable to his European allies. He was recognised just as king of the independent Hijaz in January, 1917. Aside from legitimising the Hashemite tutelage in the Arab lands, Britain was also successful in securing support in the Arabian peninsula from Ibn Saud in the Najd and the Ruler of Kuwait along with a number of minor chieftains.

The Anglo-Hashemite alliance though fructified in the ostensible victory of the Arabs over the Turks, the consequent developments revealed its hollowness. It

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107 The traditional nationalist historians like Antonius, Zeine, and Amin Said (the author of al-Thama al-Arabiya al-kurba (The Great Arab Revolt) Cairo, 1934, vol. 1), have described it a popular Arab Revolt. Whereas authors like Elle Kedourie, Bassam Tibi, A.L. Tibawi, William Cleveland, Haim and even Marxist scholars Samir Amin have disputed this characterisation mainly on two grounds: 1) it was not all-Arab revolt as there was no rising in Syria till the fall of Damascus in 1918 and 2) the revolt was proclaimed in the name of preserving Islam not in the name of Arabism or the Arab nation.

108 For example, while discussing the role of Sherif Hussein, Lawrence writes, “The oppressed people of Mesopotamia and Syria, the Committee of the Ahd and Fatat were calling out to him (Hussein) as the Father of the Arabs, the Moslem of Moslems, their greatest prince, their oldest Notable to save them from the sinister designs of Talat and Jemal”, Lawrence, op. cit., p. 50. This is an exaggerated version of the history of the Revolt. It was deliberately distorted and dramatised in order to prove that the Revolt was not the handiwork of Great Britain and the Sherif was not the pawn in the game what as a matter of fact he was.
was all along seamed with betrayal and treason and above all a sad reflection on the Arabs, particularly its leadership. "Its results" Khalidi concludes, "for the people of Palestine and Syria were virtually without exception negative, and included the partition, alien occupation and implantation of a zionist colonial entity in Palestine". 109

The last year of the war saw the final collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the occupation of the Near East by the Allied armies. With the signing of the Armistice on 30th October, 1918 ended the war and the long phase of Ottoman-Turkish rule in the Arabic speaking provinces was over. What followed then has become an important part of Arab struggle for liberation. For the replacement of an Empire by the system of mandates was known to be arbitrary, and hence, incapable of providing stability. As an western scholar has pointed out, "having destroyed the old order in the region, and having deployed troops, armoured cars, and military aircraft everywhere from Egypt to Iraq, British policy makers imposed a settlement upon the Middle East in 1922 in which, for the most part, they themselves no longer believed". 110

However, the estrangement of the Arabs from the Ottoman Empire and their "treacherous role" in its break-up gave new directive in the foreign policy of the new Turkish Republic of Kemal Ataturk. This too in a great measure shaped overall Turkish attitude towards the nascent Arab nationalist movement till mid-1970s. To conclude with Jeremy Salt Observation, "While history joins the Arabs and Turks, it


also divides them and thus limits the lessons each can learn from the other.\textsuperscript{111}

Whereas the Arabs continue to believe that the Ottoman – Turkish rule led to the decline of Arab Civilization, Turks regard the Arabs as “untrustworthy”. From time to time, these historical perceptions have been augmented by political differences, which have served to keep Arabs and Turks at a wary distance.