

Envisioning Turco-Arab Co-Existence between Empire and Nationalism

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Abstract

The idea of a continued Turco-Arab co-existence under the Ottoman Sultanate might appear counterfactual or marginal – if not nostalgic – from the sober vantage of knowing “the end of history”. The Ottoman Empire neither survived the Great War nor made way for a multinational co-existence of Turks and Arabs. For contemporaries, however, different models of federalism and multinationalism offered solutions to save the Ottoman Empire and safeguard Turco-Arab co-existence. While the federalist ideas of Ottoman Arabs are far better known in the academic literature, in regards to Ottoman Turks, the commonplace interpretations follow the teleology of the Turkish nation-state formation. In order to correct this misperception, I will illustrate the existence of corresponding Turkish voices and visions of federalism and multinationalism. Envisioning Turco-Arab co-existence was a serious feature of policy debates, especially in the years of crisis from the Balkan Wars to the settlement of post-Ottoman nation-states in the aftermath of the First World War.

Keywords

Arabism – Turkism – Ottomanism – Federalism – Decentralism – Young Turks

Introduction¹

“My friend, this country can only survive like the Austro-Hungarian Em-

1 This article was written independently from Adam Mestyan's forthcoming article “Austria-Hungary in Ottoman Arabic Political Thought: Ottoman Dualism, Imperial Comparison, and Ancillary History, 1867-1914”. I am grateful for the chance to exchange our manuscripts in the later stage of revisions. Neither could I fully utilize the most recent and comprehensive con-

pire.”² According to the memoirs of Muḥammad Kurd ‘Alī, Cenab Şehabeddin, a prominent Ottoman-Turkish writer, uttered these words to his fellow Ottoman-Syrian journalist while they were participating in an Ottoman propaganda tour across the Arab provinces after the outbreak of the Arab Revolt of 1916. If we are to believe Muḥammad Kurd ‘Alī’s recollection, their consensus was that a new model of imperial co-existence had to be adopted in order to save the empire. What they could not have known at that time was that not only the Ottoman Empire, whose doom was on everyone’s lips, but also the Habsburg Empire would not survive the end of the Great War.³ In a matter of a few years, multinational empires would be replaced by a multitude of post-imperial nation-states. But contemporaries like Şehabeddin and Kurd ‘Alī viewed alternative outcomes on the “horizon of expectation” as possible.⁴ They saw potential in ideas that would later fail or become irrelevant. They considered future paths that eventually no one would take or that went nowhere. The idea of a continued Turco-Arab co-existence under the Ottoman Sultanate might therefore appear counterfactual or marginal – if not nostalgic – from the sober vantage of knowing “the end of history”, in which the Ottoman Empire would neither survive the Great War nor make way for a multinational co-existence of Turks and Arabs. For contemporaries, however, the different models of federalism and multinationalism could still save the Ottoman Empire.

The Habsburg Empire was one of various models of federalism and multinationalism proposed by many contemporaries to solve the Ottoman dilemma in

tribution by Ü. Gülsüm Polat, *Türk-Arap İlişkileri: Eski Eyaletler Yeni Komşulara Dönüşürken (1914-1923)* (Istanbul: Kronik Kitap, 2019), which was published during the last revisions of this paper. I would like to thank Mustafa Aksakal, Remzi Çağatay Çakırlar, Talha Çiçek, Süreyya Emre, Ramazan Erhan Güllü, M. Şükrü Hanioglu, Murat Kaya, Hasan Kayalı, Maryam al-Khasawneh, Jazaa Khodair, Ömer Koçyiğit, Nicholas Kontovas, Soumaya Louhichi-Güzel, Leyla von Mende, Ramazan H. Öztan, Alp Eren Topal, Kerem Uygun, and Florian Zemmin for helping me in various ways. Unless cited otherwise, I am responsible for all translations. In addition to the three anonymous reviewers, editor Rainer Brunner provided a detailed review that made the final manuscript decisively better. Despite all the help, I am alone responsible for the remaining errors and misjudgments.

- 2 Muḥammad Kurd ‘Alī, *al-Mudhakkirāt* (Damascus: Maṭba‘at al-Taraqqī, 1948-51), I, 145. See also Ali Bilgenoglu, *Osmanlı Devleti’nde Arap Milliyetçi Cemiyetleri* (Antalya: Yeniden Anadolu ve Rumeli Müdafaa-i Hukuk Yayınları, 2007), 89-90, note 259.
- 3 The idea that the Habsburg Empire was “doomed to destruction” was not as popularized as the “sick man of Europe” cliché about the Ottoman Empire. Nevertheless, after the end of the Habsburg Empire, this teleology of collapse came to dominate the historiography of Austria-Hungary. John Deak, “The Great War and the Forgotten Realm: The Habsburg Monarchy and the First World War”, *The Journal of Modern History* 86:2 (2014), 336-80.
- 4 Reinhart Koselleck, “‘Erfahrungsraum’ und ‘Erwartungshorizont’ – zwei historische Kategorien”, in *Vergangene Zukunft: Zur Semantik geschichtlicher Zeiten* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1979), 349-75.

dealing with the question of nationalism. For instance, the British journalist and expert on the Balkans George Frederick Abbott wrote in 1909 that the Young Turks' "model, in dealing with these national problems, should not be France or Germany but Austria".⁵ Although the simultaneous collapses of the Ottoman and Habsburg empires surely deserve further attention,⁶ in what follows, I will rather discuss how Ottoman opinion makers debated various scenarios of Turco-Arab co-existence described with reference to various federative and imperial models.⁷ The fact that some Turks and Arabs envisioned co-existence complicates the historiographical narratives at the nexus of empire and nationalism.⁸

The existing historiography has indeed taken note of such contemporary references to the Austro-Hungarian model or to other federal or fraternal ideas of Turco-Arab co-existence. However, as Feroz Ahmad recently concluded, this debate over a Turco-Arab "dual monarchy has not been taken seriously by modern scholars".⁹ The fact that the most dedicated (and largely idealized) study on Ottoman-Arab federalism is a book by Hassan Saab, written at a time when the United Arab Republic was still featured on world maps, reveals the

5 George F. Abbott, *Turkey in Transition* (London: Edward Arnold, 1909), 99-100.

6 For such comparative studies, see Karen Barkey, "Changing Modalities of Empire: A Comparative Study of Ottoman Decline and Habsburg Decline", in *Empire to Nation: Historical Perspectives on the Making of the Modern World*, ed. Joseph Esherick, Hasan Kayali and Eric van Young (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006), 167-97; Fikret Adanır, "Religious Communities and Ethnic Groups under Imperial Sway: Ottoman and Habsburg Lands in Comparison", in *The Historical Practice of Diversity: Transcultural Interactions from the Early Modern Mediterranean to the Postcolonial World*, ed. Dirk Hoerder, Christiane Harzig and Adrian Shubert (New York, NY: Berghahn Books, 2003), 54-86.

7 How Ottomans (and Egyptians) imagined the Habsburg dual monarchy is discussed in Mestyan, "Austria-Hungary in Ottoman Arabic Political Thought". For a general overview of federalism in the Ottoman Empire, see Elektra Kostopoulou, "Autonomy and Federation within the Ottoman Empire: Introduction to the Special Issue", *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies* 18:6 (2016), 525-32. See also the forthcoming conference volume: Olof Heilo and Johanna Chovanec, eds., *Viribus Unitis: Myths and Narratives of Habsburg and Ottoman Multinationalism 1848-1918*. URL: <https://www.academia.edu/37780651/Viribus_Unitis_Myths_and_Narratives_of_Habsburg_and_Ottoman_Multinationalism_1848_1918_conference_programme_and_abstracts> (accessed 30 November 2019).

8 For some of the challenges of such an approach, see Alexander Semyonov, "The Ambiguity of Federalism as a Postimperial Political Vision", *Ab Imperio* 3 (2018), 23-30. How studying "ecumenical" co-existence in the Middle East deconstructs the sectarianism paradigm is discussed in Ussama S. Makdisi, *Age of Coexistence: The Ecumenical Frame and the Making of the Modern Arab World* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2019), 3-6.

9 Feroz Ahmad, *The Young Turks and the Ottoman Nationalities: Armenians, Greeks, Albanians, Jews, and Arabs, 1908-1918* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2014), 118-19.

sociology of historiography.¹⁰ The commonplace verdict of historiography so far has been to point out the marginality and triviality of Turco-Arab federalism in face of the inevitable collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the unstoppable emergence of Turkish and Arab nationalisms in a mutually antagonizing fashion. Many historians made references to Arab proposals to adopt the Austro-Hungarian model, but only to showcase the retrospectively surprising loyalty of many self-proclaimed Arab nationalists to the Ottoman Empire – either because of their devout commitment to Islamic unity or due to their deficient national consciousness. Others appreciated the nostalgia of such missed opportunities, which could have potentially made liberal and cosmopolitan futures possible.¹¹ My assertion is that we can make sense of visions of Turco-Arab co-existence in the Ottoman Empire only if we establish a critical-historiographical approach that avoids teleological bias and methodological nationalism which see the foreshadowing of future nation-states in every accident of history.

Processes of transformation from multinational empires to nation-states – including the historical case of the Ottoman Empire – have attracted considerable scholarly attention in the last few decades. Yet, most studies confirm the conventional conceptual dichotomy between empires and nation-states. Furthermore, they do not break with the cause-or-consequence dilemma between empire and nationalism.¹² Recent studies in the historical sociology and comparative history of empires illustrate commonalities between empires and na-

10 Hassan Saab, *The Arab Federalists of the Ottoman Empire* (Amsterdam: Djambatan, 1958). Saab's book consists of a compilation of the literature based on an idealized understanding of a distinct Arab culture of federalism since the dawn of history that had its missed moment in the early twentieth century. According to a harsh review of the book by Bernard Lewis, it was "an example of how one modern writer views and presents the past", in *BSOAS* 23:1 (1960), 147-48. For the popularity of the topic of Arab federalism in the late 1950s, see also Abdul Khuzayim, "Trends toward Federalism among the Arab Peoples" (MA thesis, University of Southern California, 1958). In Turkey, the history of Turco-Arab federalism received some popular attention only after Turkey's military interventions into Syria. See, for example, Doğu Perinçek, "Atatürk'ün Suriye ve Irak ile Konfederasyon/Federasyon Girişimi", *Aydınlık*, 25 August 2019. URL: <<https://www.aydinlik.com.tr/ata-turk-un-suriye-ve-irak-ile-konfederasyon/federasyon-girisimi-dogu-perincek-kose-yazilari-agustos-2019>> (accessed 2 February 2020).

11 Çağlar Keyder, "The Ottoman Empire", in *After Empire: Multiethnic Societies and Nation-Building, the Soviet Union and the Russian, Ottoman, and Habsburg Empires*, ed. Karen Barkey and Mark von Hagen (Boulder: Westview Press, 1997), 38.

12 These issues are discussed in Wesley Hiers and Andreas Wimmer, "Is Nationalism the Cause or Consequence of the End of Empire?", in *Nationalism and War*, ed. John A. Hall and Siniša Malešević (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 212-54; Ellen Comisso, "Empires as Prisons of Nations versus Empires as Political Opportunity Structures: An Exploration of the Role of Nationalism in Imperial Dissolutions in Europe", in

tion-states, as well as between imperialism and nationalism.¹³ Despite its lingering underestimation in the historiography, Ottomanism constituted a crucial feature of the social construction and political reality of the empire.¹⁴

The conventional historiography of Arabs in the Ottoman Empire tells the story of foreign occupation and the oppression of Arabs under the so-called “Turkish yoke”, which resulted in the national liberation (actually, colonial separation) of Arab countries from the Ottoman Empire.¹⁵ This story, despite important revisions and corrections by international scholars, has been the dominant popular imaginary of Arab history.¹⁶ At the same time, my painting of a more fraternal picture of Turco-Arab co-existence is not meant to imply that hostile feelings among Turks and Arabs did not exist.¹⁷ On the contrary,

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- Empire to Nation: Historical Perspectives on the Making of the Modern World*, ed. Joseph Esherick, Hasan Kayalı and Eric van Young (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006), 138-66.
- 13 Krishan Kumar, “Nation-States as Empires, Empires as Nation-States: Two Principles, One Practice?”, *Theory and Society* 39:2 (2010), 119-43; Stefan Berger and Alexei Miller, eds., *Nationalizing Empires* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2015); Siniša Malešević, “Empires and Nation-States: Beyond the Dichotomy”, *Thesis Eleven* 139:1 (2017), 3-10.
 - 14 On Ottoman-imperial nationalism, see Michelle U. Campos, “From the ‘Ottoman Nation’ to ‘Hyphenated Ottomans’: Reflections on the Multicultural Imperial Citizenship at the End of Empire”, *Ab Imperio* 1 (2017), 163-81; Benjamin C. Fortna, “The Ottoman Empire and After: From a State of ‘Nations’ to ‘Nation States’”, in *State-Nationalisms in the Ottoman Empire, Greece and Turkey: Orthodox and Muslims, 1830-1945*, ed. Benjamin C. Fortna et al. (London: Routledge, 2013), 1-12.
 - 15 This narrative found its most popular formulation in the work of Lebanese author George Antonius, *The Arab Awakening: The Story of the Arab National Movement*, Reprint (Beirut: Librairie du Liban, 1969). For the impact and persistence of Antonius’ narrative in the historiography, see William L. Cleveland, “The Arab Nationalism of George Antonius Reconsidered”, in *Rethinking Nationalism in the Arab Middle East*, ed. James P. Jankowski and Israel Gershoni (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 65-86.
 - 16 Rifaat A. Abou-el-Haj, “The Social Uses of the Past: Recent Arab Historiography of Ottoman Rule”, *IJMES* 14:2 (1982), 185-201. Moving beyond the denial and neglect of the Ottoman past, the study of Ottoman Arab lands is a growing research field: Albert H. Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1991); Hasan Kayalı, *Arabs and Young Turks: Ottomanism, Arabism, and Islamism in the Ottoman Empire, 1908-1918* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Jane Hathaway, *The Arab Lands under Ottoman Rule, 1516-1800*, trans. Karl K. Barbir (New York: Routledge, 2008); Eugene L. Rogan, *The Arabs: A History* (London: Allen Lane, 2009); Bruce A. Masters, *The Arabs of the Ottoman Empire, 1516-1918: A Social and Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Frederick F. Anscombe, *State, Faith, and Nation in Ottoman and Post-Ottoman Lands* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).
 - 17 M. Şükrü Hanioglu, “The Young Turks and the Arabs before the Revolution of 1908”, in *The Origins of Arab Nationalism*, ed. Rashid Khalidi et al. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 31-49; Eliezer Tauber, “Turkish Dominance in the Eyes of the Arab Minority in the Late Ottoman Empire”, in *Dominant Culture as a Foreign Culture: Dominant Groups in*

there were indeed serious tensions between Turks and Arabs surrounding questions of sovereignty and solidarity. The defeats and the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire were the condition and context for such tensions. Given this, it is not surprising that there were visions of possible futures that very much contradicted ideals of a Turco-Arab co-existence. Some Turkish nationalists viewed the Habsburg Empire as a model only to justify the dominant role of Turks as the ruling nation of the empire.¹⁸ Some Ottoman Turks adopted what may even be described as Orientalist or colonialist attitudes towards the Arabs, whom they considered uncivilized.¹⁹ By the same token, many Arabs upheld Orientalist and racist ideas that antagonized the Turks as a barbaric race of despots in the tradition of the Mongols.²⁰ An Islamic federative model proposed by Muslim reformer and Arab nationalist ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Kawākibī in his fictional pan-Islamic congress protocols, for instance, explicitly opposed the Ottoman Caliphate and antagonized Turks.²¹ After the end of the Ottoman Caliphate, the process of mutual antagonization between Turks and Arabs reached its zenith.²²

More fraternal approaches to Turco-Arab co-existence saw promise in federalism, multinationalism, and Muslim solidarity. Envisioning models of

the Eyes of Minorities, ed. Janusz Mucha (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 63-78.

- 18 See, for example, M.A., “Osmanlı İttihad”, *Meşveret*, no. 5 (1. February 1897): 1, cited in Hanioglu, “The Young Turks and the Arabs before the Revolution of 1908”, 43.
- 19 On Ottoman Orientalism and colonialism see Christoph Herzog and Raoul Motika, “Orientalism ‘alla turca’: Late 19th / Early 20th Century Ottoman Voyages into the Muslim ‘Outback’”, *WI* 40:2 (2000), 139-95; Ussama Makdisi, “Ottoman Orientalism”, *The American Historical Review* 107:3 (2002), 768-96; Selim Deringil, “‘They Live in a State of Nomadism and Savagery’: The Late Ottoman Empire and the Post-Colonial Debate”, *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 45:2 (2003), 311-42; Thomas Kühn, “Shaping and Reshaping Colonial Ottomanism: Contesting Boundaries of Difference and Integration in Ottoman Yemen, 1872-1919”, *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 27:2 (2007), 313-29. For a critique of postcolonial approaches to the Ottoman Empire see Vangelis Kechriotis, “Postcolonial Criticism Encounters Late Ottoman Studies”, *Historein* 13 (2014), 39-46.
- 20 Ulrich W. Haarmann, “Ideology and History, Identity and Alterity: The Arab Image of the Turk from the Abbasids to Modern Egypt”, *IJMES* 20:2 (1988), 175-96.
- 21 ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Kawākibī, *Umm al-Qurā* (Cairo 1898), 154-55, cited in Wajda Sendesni, “The Young Turks and the Arabs in Egypt between Ottomanism, Pan-Islamism and Nationalism”, in *Penser, agir et vivre dans l’Empire ottoman et en Turquie: Études réunies pour François Georgeon*, ed. Nathalie Clayer and Erdal Kaynar (Leuven: Peeters, 2013), 42.
- 22 M. Talha Çiçek, “The Impact of the Sharif Hussein’s Revolt on the Nation-Building Processes of Turks and Arabs”, *Journal of Academic Approaches* 3:2 (2012), 98-111; Selim Deringil, *The Ottoman Twilight in the Arab Lands: Turkish Memoirs and Testimonials of the Great War* (Brighton, MA: Academic Studies Press, 2019), xiv-xv.

Turco-Arab co-existence went beyond the liberal and cosmopolitan political currents of administrative decentralism (in Ottoman-Turkish: *adem-i merkeziyet*; in Arabic: *lā-markaziyya*). Such decentralist ideas were proposed against the “Young Turk” regime of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) that was championing centralization. Although sometimes based on ideas of decentralism, Turco-Arab co-existence was an expression mostly of Muslim-nationalist sentiments and imperialist-conservative concerns about the future of the Ottoman Empire.²³ This Ottoman-Muslim conservatism was, however, not related to notions of traditionalism or religiosity, as most of its adherents were progressive and secular nationalists.²⁴ The conservative logic of a dual monarchy preserved the symbolic status of the Ottoman Sultan-Caliph and justified the legitimacy of the Ottoman state as the foremost Islamic empire in world politics, which would unite Turkism and Arabism under an imperial nation of Ottoman Muslims.

While the federalist ideas of Ottoman Arabs are far better known in the academic literature, in regards to Ottoman Turks, the commonplace interpretations follow the teleology of the Turkish nation-state formation. The Ottoman defeat in the First Balkan War in particular is considered a turning point of history, when the CUP decidedly tilted towards a radicalized version of Turkish ethnic-nationalism. As Ramazan H. Öztan recently cautioned in his historiographical intervention, “Such a teleological approach has essentially *homogenized* diverse Ottoman reactions to the Balkan defeat by reducing policy variations and disagreements to irrelevance.”²⁵ Even an otherwise well-informed scholar like Eyal Ginio defaults to the established formula that “the future desired connections between the Turks and Arabs [was] a topic that was marginal to the discussions in contemporary Turkish literature on the Balkan

23 On the one hand, this notion of conservative nationalism connects to Hanioglu's assertion that the Young Turks during the Young Turk Revolution of 1908 were ideologically seen as “conservatives” because their primary motivation was to save the empire. M. Şükrü Hanioglu, *Preparation for a Revolution: The Young Turks, 1902-1908* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 190, 204. On the other hand, this approach relies on Zürcher's conceptualization of Ottoman-Muslim nationalism as the policy-driving ideology of the Young Turk movement. Erik J. Zürcher, “Young Turks, Ottoman Muslims and Turkish Nationalists: Identity Politics, 1908-1938”, in *Ottoman Past and Today's Turkey*, ed. Kemal H. Karpat (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 151-79.

24 Cemil Aydin, “The Emergence of Transnational Muslim Thought, 1774-1914”, in *Arabic Thought beyond the Liberal Age*, ed. Jens Hanssen and Max Weiss (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 140.

25 Ramazan H. Öztan, “Point of No Return? Prospects of Empire after the Ottoman Defeat in the Balkan Wars (1912-1913)”, *IJMES* 50:1 (2018), 65-84 (italics in original).

Wars.”²⁶ In order to correct this misperception, this article will illustrate Turkish voices and visions of Turco-Arab co-existence. Envisioning co-existence was a major part of public debates surrounding the salvation of the empire. Such visions were especially popular in times of crisis and received vociferous support within conservative-nationalist circles.

In the following, this article will first showcase how a particular vision of a Turco-Arab state proposed by Colmar Freiherr von der Goltz travelled across time and space in the Ottoman realms. Second, by delving into the intense discussions among self-proclaimed Turkists about the nature of the Ottoman state after the defeats in the Balkans, it will be illustrated that many of them envisioned a Turco-Arab empire. Third, visions and voices of Turco-Arab solidarity will be traced within the contentious cacophony of wartime propaganda during the Arab Revolt of the First World War. Lastly, I will argue that a federalist moment took place in Turco-Arab relations during the post-war partition of the Ottoman Empire. In doing so, this paper shall assert that the history of transitional periods must take into consideration the assumptions and imaginations of historical agents – even if these failed to correctly envision the future awaiting them.

Colmar von der Goltz’s Vision of a Turco-Arab Empire

It is difficult to tell when the Ottoman Empire was first imagined as a Turco-Arab state.²⁷ Probably the first prominent person proposing such an idea was General Field Marshall Colmar Freiherr von der Goltz, the long-term German inspector at the Ottoman Military Academy and the so-called “father of the Turkish Army”.²⁸ As early as 1897, “Goltz Pasha” proposed that the Ottoman Empire could become a strong Turco-Arab empire instead of a weak Byzantium.²⁹ He divided the Ottoman Empire into two spheres, a Turkish and an

26 Eyal Ginio, “Making Sense of the Defeat in the Balkan Wars: Voices from the Arab Provinces”, in *War and Nationalism: The Balkan Wars, 1912-1913, and Their Sociopolitical Implications*, ed. M. Hakan Yavuz and Isa Blumi (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2013), 609.

27 For a more detailed investigation, especially in regards to ideas of duality of the Egyptian and the Ottoman empires in the late nineteenth century, see Mestyan, “Austria-Hungary in Ottoman Arabic Political Thought”.

28 F.A.K. Yasamee, “Colmar Freiherr von der Goltz and the Rebirth of the Ottoman Empire”, *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 9:2 (1998), 91-128. See also Josef van Ess, “Ein Jubiläum zum Jahre 2011: Colmar Freiherr von der Goltz”, in *Kleine Schriften by Josef van Ess*, ed. Hinrich Biesterfeldt (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 111/2262-87.

29 Colmar Freiherr von der Goltz, “Stärke und Schwäche des türkischen Reiches”, *Deutsche*

Arab one. There had been increasing animosity between Turks and Arabs, as he admitted. Yet, in his view, this animosity did not have deep cultural roots. He suggested that “the strong bond of common religion” would welcome an improvement in these relations. According to von der Goltz, “The question of the reconciliation of the Arab world with the Caliphate of the Ottoman Sultans was of greater importance for Turkey than a piece of Macedonia, Epirus or Thessaly.”³⁰ He made an important proposal – that the capital should be relocated to Konya or Kayseri in Central Anatolia, or even maybe as far south as Damascus, Mosul, or Baghdad.³¹ In the end, once the “Arab Question” was solved, as von der Goltz elaborated, the development of an “islamitischen Culturstaat” was possible.³²

Perhaps great minds think alike. Similar ideas were proposed by none other than Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā, the most famous Islamic reformer and Arab intellectual of the time. Concerned about the future of the Ottoman Empire and the current state of the Muslim world, Riḍā proposed in 1898 to culturally Arabize the Turks in order to create a unified, monolingual Muslim nation in the Ottoman Empire.³³ In an article from 1903, Riḍā repeated his idea to Arabize the Turks, and he proposed to surrender Constantinople and the Balkan provinces to Russia to receive their help in bringing Egypt back into the Ottoman state, which was reorganized after the federative model of the United States of America:

Then he [the Ottoman Caliph] has to make Damascus his capital and work to rebuild the Arab provinces that his predecessors have neglected or destroyed. Afterwards, he will make Arabic the official language of the state, will seek to Arabize all Turks, establish with them and Arabs of Iraq, Hijaz and Nedjd a regular army and apply shari’a law. If he does this, he will have a great kingdom with sure security, and he will have no fear of separatists who use the caliphate.³⁴

Rundschau 24:93 (1897), 95–119. This article was translated and published in Ottoman-Turkish translation by Zaimzade Hasan Fehmi as a booklet in 1906 in Cairo under the title *Devleti ‘Aliyenin Za’f ve Kuvveti*.

30 Ibid.

31 Ibid., 116.

32 Ibid., 118.

33 This idea was proposed by Riḍā as a counter-model to the multilingual Austro-Hungarian Empire. Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā, “al-İslāḥ al-dīnī”, pt. 1, *al-Manār* 1 (1898), 769–71, cited in Mahmoud Haddad, “Arab Religious Nationalism in the Colonial Era: Rereading Rashīd Riḍā’s Ideas on the Caliphate”, *JAOS* 117:2 (1997), 253–77.

34 Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā, “al-Dawla al-‘āliyya wa-Maqūdūnyā wa-ra’y fi l-islāḥ”, *al-Manār*, 24. August 1903, quoted in Sendesni, “The Young Turks and the Arabs in Egypt between

Meanwhile, Goltz Pasha himself repeated his own proposal on several occasions, probably most often to his favourite student, Pertev (Demirhan) Pasha of the Ottoman Army. In September 1906, he wrote to Pertev:

There [in Arabia] lies still a vast territory, which could be pulled back for the strengthening of Turkey. Once it is realized bringing all of Arabia more or less under the supremacy of His Majesty, the Sultan, only then, the losses the Empire experienced in the North at the European front in the last decades, will be replaced completely. It was only in the course of recent history that territorial shifts occurred, which will rather end up [working] for the benefit of Turkey.³⁵

When Pertev was appointed to Baghdad in early 1907, Colmar von der Goltz saw a great opportunity. In his letter to Pertev, he wrote that Pertev should “become acquainted with the Islamic-Arabic world more thoroughly”, because once “the Turkish government succeeds in reconciling the whole Arab element with His Authority and incorporating it, it would also be possible to a certain degree to reinstate the former Turkish power.” He continued the letter by repeating his idea that “the right capital for the Turkish Empire would be Damascus, where the Sovereign of both worlds which constitute the empire, namely that of the Turks and the Arabs, could unite them in a close relationship.”³⁶ In another letter dated 1907, Goltz Pasha urged Pertev on the importance of maintaining Turkish rule over the Arabs, because “the future of Turkey depends mostly on how the rule of the Sultan aligns itself with the Arab world. It must be first subordinated and then reconciled.”³⁷

The Young Turk Revolution of 1908 changed the prospect of living together within a multi-ethnic empire under a constitutional monarchy. Like many Ottomans, Arabs celebrated the return to the constitutional system.³⁸ Just as Ar-

Ottomanism, Pan-Islamism and Nationalism”, 43–44. On Riḍā’s approach to Turkish language in this period, see Rainer Brunner, “*Lātinīya lā-dīnīya*: Muḥammad Rašīd Riḍā über Arabisch und Türkisch im Zeitalter des Nationalismus”, in *Osmanische Welten: Quellen und Fallstudien: Festschrift für Michael Ursinus*, ed. Johannes Zimmermann, Christoph Herzog and Raoul Motika (Bamberg: University of Bamberg press, 2016), 82–88.

35 von der Goltz, letter to Pertev, September 1906, quoted in Pertev Demirhan, *Generalfeldmarschall Colmar Freiherr von der Goltz: Das Lebensbild eines grossen Soldaten. Aus meinen persönlichen Erinnerungen* (Göttingen: Göttinger Verlagsanstalt, 1960), 98–99.

36 von der Goltz, letter to Pertev, 10 January 1907, quoted in *ibid.*, 101–02.

37 von der Goltz, letter to Pertev, 2 September 1907, NL (Nachlass) Goltz 10, Bundesarchiv Militärarchiv, Freiburg im Breisgau.

38 Although the Arab reactions to the Young Turk Revolution were framed with greater scepticism in Elie Kedourie, “The Impact of the Young Turk Revolution on the Arabic-

abs were members and supporters of the CUP, many Turks joined Arab organizations.³⁹ The enthusiasm of the revolution was, however, soon crushed after a series of international events. First, on October 5, 1908, Bulgaria declared its independence from the Ottoman Empire. Second, only one day later, on October 6, the Austro-Hungarian Empire unilaterally annexed Bosnia-Herzegovina, which had been under Habsburg administration since the Berlin Congress of 1878. One day after the Bosnian crisis, and two days after Bulgarian independence, Goltz Pasha wrote a letter to his protégé Pertev, once again pointing out that the future of the empire lay in strengthening its position in the Arab provinces. After adding that Bulgaria's declaration of independence should be regarded as a relief to the Ottoman Empire, he wrote:

The future Turkey will, I hope, in general assume a quite different form from that to date and occupy itself more with its Asiatic interests than with the petty European Balkan questions, which are of subordinate significance for the Empire's existence. All labour and effort should now be devoted to the strengthening of army and fleet. If these two progress observably, then Turkey's prestige will also rise, regardless of the coronation in Tirnowo and the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Once Turkey is strong enough to demand Egypt back, and to bring Arabia entirely under its sceptre, then all the losses of recent times will be more than made up for.⁴⁰

Goltz Pasha's appreciation for the idea of a Turco-Arab empire was based on his cultural pessimism about the decay of European civilization. In turn, he cultivated a fondness for the conservative notions of authority, masculinity,

Speaking Provinces of the Ottoman Empire", in *Arabic Political Memoirs and Other Studies*, ed. Elie Kedourie (London: Frank Cass, 1974), 124-61, recent scholarship illustrates genuine local initiatives in celebrating the revolution, especially in cosmopolitan-urban centres of the eastern Mediterranean: Bedross D. Matossian, *Shattered Dreams of Revolution: From Liberty to Violence in the late Ottoman Empire* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014), 23-48; Michelle U. Campos, *Ottoman Brothers: Muslims, Christians, and Jews in Early Twentieth-Century Palestine* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), 26-34; Ilham Khuri-Makdisi, *The Eastern Mediterranean and the Making of Global Radicalism, 1860-1914* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 82-83.

39 Michael Provence, *The Last Ottoman Generation and the Making of the Modern Middle East* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 45.

40 von der Goltz, letter to Pertev, 7 October 1908, NL Goltz 10. Partly quoted also in Yasamee, "Colmar Freiherr von der Goltz and the Rebirth of the Ottoman Empire", 110-11. See also Demirhan, *Generalfeldmarschall Colmar Freiherr von der Goltz*, 120.

and martialism of Muslim cultures.⁴¹ His perspective was surely eccentric and marginal within the Orientalist mainstream in Europe. Most Orientalists imagined that Arabs and Turks were set apart by their racial differences. Following the scriptural teachings of Islam, some Orientalists even supported the idea that Arabs should not accept a non-Arab as their Caliph.⁴² Nevertheless, von der Goltz was no less an Orientalist in his assumptions. According to him, the Ottoman Empire had no business in Europe, because it was an Asiatic empire. It should stop trying to become a European nation. Even the Ottoman capital, Constantinople, was not Asian enough, but rather decadent in the Byzantine sense. Hence, he advised Turks to finally come to terms with their Oriental and Islamic descent and unite with their more conservative and authentic Arab co-religionists. This idea, proposed by Goltz Pasha on several occasions, did not necessarily initiate a major public discussion in the Ottoman Empire, but, as I will illustrate later, it remained in the political imaginary of many.

Turkism and Arabism United after 1913

In the aftermath of the constitutional revolution, ideas of federalism and regional autonomy were in fact major themes of debate among the Ottoman public. Some Arabs even initially mistook the CUP as the harbinger of Ottoman decentralism.⁴³ In the course of the heated centralization-versus-decentralization debates, the wide spectrum of the Young Turk coalition had long fallen into rival factions that were now established as oppositional parties. On the one hand, the liberal faction of the Young Turk movement was led by Prince Sabahaddin and formed the Liberal Entente (*Ahrar Fırkası*). The Liberal Entente upheld policies of liberal and cosmopolitan decentralism by supporting the administrative autonomy of provinces and liberalism in economic and social developments, as well as cooperation with international monitoring missions. On the other hand, the militant cadre of Young Turks had dominated the political party of the CUP since the revolution. The CUP supported ideas of administrative centralism, imperial state-building, and revolutionary patriotism to safeguard the sovereignty of the Ottoman state. Prominent members of

41 Yasamee, "Colmar Freiherr von der Goltz and the Rebirth of the Ottoman Empire", 122.

42 For Orientalist debates on returning the Caliphate to the Arabs, see Ş.T. Buzpinar, "Opposition to the Ottoman Caliphate in the Early Years of Abdülhamid II: 1877-1882", *WI* 36:1 (1996), 59-89.

43 Salim Tamari, *The Great War and the Remaking of Palestine* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2017), 120; 'Abd-al-'Aziz Duri, *The Historical Formation of the Arab Nation: A Study in Identity and Consciousness* (London: Croom Helm, 1987), 267, note 55.

the CUP were, therefore, initially against the Austro-Hungarian and other federalist models. Instead, they advocated an assimilating imperial nationalism under the rule of the Muslim Turkish revolutionary elite.⁴⁴ One prominent member the CUP, and one of its most chauvinist proponents, Dr Nazım, made clear that he vehemently rejected Prince Sabahaddin's version of decentralism:

Prince Sabahaddin is dead; he exists no more; his programme of decentralization, of autonomous nationalities and provinces is abandoned. The Committee of Progress and Union wants centralization and a Turkish monopoly on power. It wants no nationalities in Turkey. It does not want Turkey to become a new Austria[-Hungary]. It wants a unified Turkish nation-state with Turkish schools, a Turkish administration, [and] a Turkish legal system.⁴⁵

In 1911, Emrullah Efendi, the former minister of education and a CUP member, asked Prince Sabahaddin in a public letter, "Do you perhaps want to establish autonomous governments in Arabia, Macedonia, Albania within the Ottoman realm, imitating the government of Austria-Hungary [...]" He explained his objection against decentralism as follows:

If this decentralization you imagine, which you regard as the only cure for our homeland, is the decentralization that is prevalent in Switzerland and Austria-Hungary, our homeland is not resilient enough to adopt a decentralization that makes way for political discord in place of unity of legislation.⁴⁶

Many CUP members coming from the Macedonian guerrilla cadre of the Young Turk movement were obsessed with the dangerous entrapments of the

44 Howard Eissenstat, "Modernization, Imperial Nationalism, and the Ethnicization of Confessional Identity in the Late Ottoman Empire", in *Nationalizing Empires*, ed. Stefan Berger and Alexei Miller (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2015), 455-59; Ramazan H. Öztan, "Nationalism in Function: 'Rebellions' in the Ottoman Empire and Narratives in its Absence", in *War and Collapse: World War I and the Ottoman State*, ed. M. Hakan Yavuz and Feroz Ahmad (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2016), 161-202.

45 Nordau to Wolffsohn, Paris, 25 November 1908, Central Zionist Archives Jerusalem, W 96/1, quoted in Hanioglu, *Preparation for a Revolution*, 260.

46 Emrullah, 'İdare-i Vilâyat 1,' *Yeni Muhi'tül Maarif Gazetesi*, no. 1 (14 Nisan 1327 [27 April 1911]): 6-13, quoted in Şehbal Derya Acar, "Bir Meşrutiyet Aydını Emrullah Efendi'nin Gözüyle Türk Kamu Yönetiminde Merkezîyet, Adem-i Merkezîyet ve Tevsi-i Mezuniyetin Genel Görünümü", *Yakın Dönem Türkiye Araştırmaları* 7:13/14 (2008), 107-28.

geopolitics of the Eastern Question in such struggles for regional or communal autonomy.⁴⁷ They distrusted any decentralist attempt for autonomy as a step towards imperial disintegration.⁴⁸ Nevertheless, the CUP made investments into the Arab lands in order to spread its associate clubs and to propagate the benefits of the revolution.⁴⁹ For instance, Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk) was one of the CUP members sent to Libya after the Young Turk Revolution of 1908, where he reorganized the existing clubs of exiled Young Turks by including Arabs among their ranks.⁵⁰ The Italian occupation of Ottoman Libya in 1911 gave the CUP a chance to demonstrate its commitment to the integrity of the Ottoman Empire against foreign aggression. Indeed, many famous Young Turk activist officers volunteered to conduct guerrilla warfare alongside Libyan tribal warriors.⁵¹ The Libyan experience had a tremendous impact on the Young Turks' understanding of the prospects and limits of Ottoman-Muslim anti-colonialism.⁵² As Benjamin Fortna put it, "The engagement in Libya symbolized the vision of defending the beleaguered Ottoman Empire by drawing on Muslim 'national' unity – in other words, Muslim nationalism."⁵³

Under the new Freedom and Accord Party (*Hürriyet ve İtilaf Fırkası*), all supporters of liberal and cosmopolitan decentralism united and created a serious opposition against the CUP. Decentralism was one of the major debate points in the electoral competition. Nonetheless, Hasan Kayalı contends that support for local deputies was based on personal or tribal relations and not due to ideological party preferences: "The decentralization-centralization debate had only a weak ideological content."⁵⁴ The 1912 elections could perhaps have

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- 47 Erik J. Zürcher, "The Young Turks: Children of the Borderlands?", *International Journal of Turkish Studies* 9:1-2 (2003), 275-86.
- 48 Murat Kaya, "Western Interventions and Formation of the Young Turks' Siege Mentality", *Middle East Critique* 23:2 (2014), 127-45.
- 49 Kayalı, *Arabs and Young Turks*, 60-64.
- 50 Rachel Simon, "Mustafa Kemal in Libya", in *Atatürk and the Modernization of Turkey*, ed. Jacob M. Landau (Boulder: Westview Press, 1984), 20-21.
- 51 For example, Enver realized that it did not matter to Arabs in Benghazi that he was the "hero of freedom" of the Young Turk Revolution or a major in the Ottoman Army's General Staff; he was respected only because he was the son-in-law of the Ottoman Sultan-Caliph. Like many fellow Ottoman officers dispatched to the Italian-Ottoman war, Enver spoke very highly about the bravery of the Libyan warriors and peasants. Diary entry, 16 November 1911, in Enver Pasha, *Um Tripolis*, ed. Friedrich Perzyński (München: Bruckmann, 1918), 22.
- 52 Jonathan C. McCollum, "The Anti-Colonial Empire: Ottoman Mobilization and Resistance in the Italo-Turkish War" (PhD thesis, University of California Los Angeles, 2018).
- 53 Benjamin C. Fortna, *The Circassian: A Life of Eşref Bey, Late Ottoman Insurgent and Special Agent* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 81.
- 54 Hasan Kayalı, "Elections and the Electoral Process in the Ottoman Empire, 1876-1919", *IJMES* 27:3 (1995), 265-86.

brought the Liberals into a majority, if the elections had not been rigged by the CUP's intrigues and intimidations.⁵⁵ The Italian naval attacks against Beirut and the CUP's war propaganda, which generated feelings of Ottoman and Islamic solidarity, were certainly influential in confusing the Arab public's perceptions of the CUP.⁵⁶

The war against Italy was interrupted by the outbreak of the First Balkan War in 1912, which ended in a devastating defeat for the Ottoman Empire. The CUP took over the government after a violent coup d'état and could only recapture symbolic and neighbouring territories in Thrace during the Second Balkan War in 1913. Practically, Ottoman Europe was all but lost. History had now proven Goltz Pasha's pessimism right. The Balkans had indeed become a lost cause, and the empire was geographically more Asiatic and demographically more Muslim. In an article in the Austrian newspaper *Neue Freie Presse*, Colmar von der Goltz wrote:

[With the construction of the Baghdad Railway] the Turkish half of the Empire will be related to the Arab half, both will be brought into a closer connection and exchange with each other. Since the loss of the Balkan provinces, this is the most important matter – an existential matter of the first-order – for the empire.⁵⁷

Again, he urged the necessity of relocating the Ottoman capital to the Fertile Crescent. He admitted that the Ottoman elites “would resist [the idea of] leaving ‘paradise on earth’ [Istanbul] and resettling in Aleppo or Damascus.” He added: “The great statesman who would accomplish this would earn himself a timeless achievement for the Empire.” Regarding fears of a re-emergence of an Arab caliphate, von der Goltz reassured that:

The fear that the Caliphate, which has been under the House of the Ottoman Sultans since the times of Selim I, could become Arab because of this replacement is ill-founded. This threat is greater the more north the Caliph stays, and the more the gleam of his power pales away after unfortunate wars.⁵⁸

55 Rashid I. Khalidi, “The 1912 Election Campaign in the Cities of Bilad Al- Sham”, *IJMES* 16:4 (1984), 461-74.

56 McCollum, “The Anti-Colonial Empire”, 36-37.

57 Colmar Freiherr von der Goltz, “Die Türkei nach dem Frieden”, *Neue Freie Presse*, 18 May 1913, 2.

58 Ibid.

After the devastating Balkan defeats, at least two books by Colmar von der Goltz were published in Ottoman-Turkish, which were translated collections of his German articles on the matter.⁵⁹ It is remarkable that Ottomans discussing this idea of a Turco-Arab empire were directly referred to Goltz Pasha. German ambassador Hans Freiherr von Wangenheim reported on May 29, 1913, that his articles attracted so much attention that the government soon prohibited any public discussion about the relocation of the capital. According to Wangenheim, the grand vizier, Mahmud Şevket Pasha – another apprentice of Goltz Pasha and an Ottoman Iraqi – was a champion of this idea of a Turco-Arab rapprochement. However, his vision took the form not of a change of the capital but instead of the founding of a second imperial residence in Aleppo in order to reconnect with the Arabs.⁶⁰ After the assassination of Mahmud Şevket Pasha, this idea of relocating the capital was dropped.⁶¹ Ottoman-Turkish novelist Halide Edib (Adivar) noted in her 1930 book that the idea “to come to an understanding with the Arabs and create a dual monarchy with separate Parliaments and the Sultan Caliph, on the model of Austria and Hungary” had been one of the popular political ideas of that time. She remembered the popular impact of von der Goltz’s suggestion to relocate the capital to Aleppo.⁶² Elsewhere, Halide Edib blamed the CUP leadership for not seizing that special moment:

When they came to power the thing that leaped to the eye was that the reduced Empire could not last. It could be strong enough to resist the overwhelming forces arrayed against it only through a close understanding between the Turks and the Arabs. It is true that the Arabs were already seized with the nationalist fever, but there was an idea ascribed to Mahmoud Shevket Pasha, himself of Arab origin, which was worth a trial. It was the creation of a dual monarchy, Arabo-Turkish, with the seat of government at Aleppo. Whether it could have prevented Moslem disintegration or not, one cannot be certain, but the experiment should have been made.⁶³

59 Colmar Freiherr von der Goltz, *Osmanlılar Muharebeleri Nasıl Gaib Ettiler? Şimdi Nasıl Telaflı ve Terakki Edebilirler?*, ed. Adil Nami (Istanbul: Sancak Matbaası, 1331 [1913]); Colmar Freiherr von der Goltz, *Genç Türkiye'nin Hezimetini ve İmkan-ı İtilası*, ed. H. Cevdet (Istanbul, 1332 [1914]).

60 Wangenheim to B. Hollweg (Therapia), 29 May 1913, Political Archive of the German Minister of Foreign Affairs (*Auswärtiges Amt, Politisches Archiv*, AA PA), R 13193.

61 Kayalı, *Arabs and Young Turks*, 136–37.

62 Halide Edib [Adivar], *Turkey Faces West: A Turkish View of Recent Changes and their Origin* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1930), 124.

63 Halide Edib [Adivar], *Conflict of East and West in Turkey* (Lahore: S.M. Ashraf, 1935), 81–82.

The traumatizing and infuriating Balkan defeat had a great impact on public debates in the Ottoman Empire.⁶⁴ While conventional historiographical accounts continue to stress a conscious turn towards Turkish nationalism after 1913, there is contrary evidence that a more heterogeneous debate took place.⁶⁵ Immediately after the Balkan defeat, there were attempts by leading figures of the CUP to redefine the Ottoman Empire as a Turco-Arab state, even considering policies of decentralism.⁶⁶ In an interview given to the newspaper *Russkaya Molva* from St Petersburg, the official CUP publicist Hüseyin Cahit (Yalçın), normally known for his centralist views, urged decentralization in the Arab provinces. Hüseyin Cahit elaborated the CUP policies after the Balkan Wars as follows:

[The Committee of] Union and Progress did not support decentralism in the past in order to avoid helping the plans of those demanding decentralism only with the intention of separatism. After the war we were separated from those untrustworthy elements. The original elements of the Turkish state, Arabs and Armenians, can be dealt with in their favour. The interests of Turks and Armenians are not contradictory. Among the Arabs the development of a nationalist movement is apparent. As long as the Turks do not follow a too narrow policy, the excessive bond of Arabs towards their religion would hinder them from departing from the Turks and endangering their religion. With reasonable and fair concessions, the Turks can easily connect with the Arabs. The union of the two Muslim peoples, which constitute the majority of the Ottoman state, would also guarantee the protection of the rights of the Christians: Since the Christian minorities would not cause damage to parliamentary procedures, nothing can prevent the accomplishment of their desires. The time has come for the ushering of an era of order and mutual agreement. Therefore, the Young Turks need to embrace other elements in friendly terms and should quickly implement their political desires.⁶⁷

64 For a comprehensive study of the Balkan trauma in the Ottoman Empire, see Eyal Ginio, *Ottoman Culture of Defeat: The Balkan Wars and their Aftermath* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

65 For critical interventions in the last years against this dominant paradigm in the historiography, see Öztan, "Point of No Return"; Ebru Boyar, "The Impact of the Balkan Wars on Ottoman History Writing: Searching for a Soul", *Middle East Critique* 23:2 (2014), 147-56.

66 Following the teleological reasoning, for example, Bozarslan argues that there was a "Turkist turn" at this period after Balkan defeat – if not even earlier – that contributed to the rise of Arabism. Hamit Bozarslan, "The Ottomanism of the Non-Turkish Groups: The Arabs and the Kurds after 1908", *WI* 56:3-4 (2016), 317-35.

67 Hüseyin Cahit's Russian interview in *Russkaya Molva* is translated and quoted in T.Y.,

Within the CUP's intellectual circles, Babanzade İsmail Hakkı, a journalist from a noble Kurdish family in Iraq and a deputy of Baghdad, practically paraphrased Goltz Pasha when he proposed in the newspaper *Tanin* that "the Ottomans need to return to Asia, they need to become an Asian nation". He described the Ottoman Empire's lost territories in the Balkans "as a growing hindrance" which needed to be thrown away "like a ballast". Only then could "the state vessel sail safely to shore". Babanzade İsmail Hakkı's solemn plea was: "Didn't we come to Europe from Asia, in the first place? Consequently, it is necessary to go back there and to become Asians, as we could not become Europeans."⁶⁸

Similar ideas were expressed by no less than Ziya Gökalp himself, professor of sociology, a member of the Central Committee of the CUP, and the leading ideologue of Turkish nationalism. Gökalp's approach to the idea of a Turco-Arab state was, on the one hand, sociological in analyzing the relationship between the state (*devlet*) and the nation (*millet* or *ümmet*). According to Gökalp, *millet* was the linguistic nation and *ümmet* was the Muslim nation. On the other hand, his analysis was also based on "social realities" – namely, the historical and demographical context that followed the Balkan Wars. He proposed the following conclusion:

When we look at social realities, we cannot fail to see that an Islamic *ümmet*, an Ottoman state (*devlet*), Turkish or an Arab nation (*millet*) do exist. [...] For example, the Ottoman state is a Muslim state – that is, it is formed of Muslim nations. Two great nations, the Turks and the Arabs, by their numbers as well as by their culture and learning, served as the bases of the Ottoman state in such a way that the Ottoman state might be called a Turco-Arab state.⁶⁹

In contrast, a few pages later, Gökalp argued the necessity of purifying the Turkish language from Arabic and Persian elements or Turkifying the Qur'an.⁷⁰

"Osmanlı Devleti'nin Dahili ve Harici Siyasetine Dair", *Türk Yurdu* 3:8 (1329 [1913]), 248-52, here 248-49.

68 Babanzâde İsmail Hakkı, "Asyaya Avdet Nazariye-i Acayibesi", *Tanin*, 1 March 1914, quoted in Bünyamin Kocaoğlu, "Balkan Savaşlarının İttihat ve Terakki Politikalarına Etkisi", *History Studies* 5 (2013), 251-66.

69 Ziya Gökalp, "Millet ve Vatan", *Türk Yurdu* 6:6 (1330 [1914]), 2179-82. Later also published in his collection: Ziya Gökalp, *Türkleşmek, İslamlaşmak, Muasırlaşmak* (İstanbul: Yeni Mecmua, 1918), 49-53, here 52, quoted from the translation in Ziya Gökalp, *Turkish Nationalism and Western Civilization: Selected Essays*, ed. Niyazi Berkes (London: Allen & Unwin, 1959), 76-79.

70 Gökalp, *Turkish Nationalism and Western Civilization*, 85. See also M. Brett Wilson,

The one claim does not necessarily preclude the other.⁷¹ A follower of Gökâlp and a typical propagandist of pan-Turkism, Ömer Seyfeddin, came up with the same formula in 1914.⁷² "In Turkey, with regard to density and cohesion the majority is constituted by two nations: Turkish [and] Arab."⁷³ Seyfeddin further elaborated his understanding of the Ottoman nation as follows:

There is no material or moral reason to differentiate between the Turkish element, which constitutes the primary majority, and the Arab element.

The government of the "House of Osman" is an Islamic government. Like Turks, Arabs are Muslims and, therefore, there is no difference between them. The Turks and Arabs are entirely equal in the face of the government and the law. No one can argue otherwise. The national ideal of the Turks is advancing and strengthening themselves to save their blood brothers and finally to build the "union of Islam", namely the "Islamic international" in order to defend the Muslim nations against the Christian nations.⁷⁴

Another disciple of Gökâlp, and yet another prominent representative of Turkish nationalism in the historiography, Fuat Köprülü, followed the same logic. The Ottoman Empire had to be based on the Muslim foundation of Turks and Arabs. The emergence of Turkism and Arabism was a challenge for the Ottoman state, yet Köprülü argued that Turks and Arabs should stand "back to back" and support each other. Although an assimilationist "merger" of these two nations was out of the question, Köprülü noted that the "impossibility of fusion is not an obstacle in accomplishing the unity and alliance of these two elements."⁷⁵ To be sure, such Ottoman-Muslim nationalist overtures to Arabs

Translating the Qur'an in an Age of Nationalism: Print Culture and Modern Islam in Turkey (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 131, 148-150.

71 Historians rather tend to underline Gökâlp's Turkification policies because they neatly confirm teleological bias. See, for example, Muhammad Y. Muslih, *Origins of Palestinian Nationalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), 60. Revisionist scholars of a new generation, however, deal with greater serenity in making sense of Gökâlp's complex understanding of Islam, state, and nation. Alp Eren Topal, "Against Influence: Ziya Gökâlp in Context and Tradition", *Journal of Islamic Studies* 28:3 (2017), 283-310.

72 On Ömer Seyfeddin see Umut Uzer, *An Intellectual History of Turkish Nationalism: Between Turkish Ethnicity and Islamic Identity* (Salt Lake City: The University of Utah Press, 2016), 25-26.

73 Ömer Seyfeddin, *Millî Tecrübelerden Çıkarılmış Amelî Siyaset* (Istanbul: Matbaa-i Hayriye ve Şürekası, 1330 [1914]), 9.

74 Ibid., 15-16.

75 Köprülüzaade Mehmet Fuat, "Türklük, İslamlık, Osmanlılık", *Türk Yurdu* 4:9 (1329 [1913]), 701, quoted in Masami Arai, *Turkish Nationalism in the Young Turk Era* (Leiden: Brill, 1992),

did not mean a departure from the same authors' adherence to ideas of Turkish nationalism, pan-Turkism, and administrative centralism.

Envisioning Turco-Arab co-existence was especially popular among the conservative-nationalist circles of Turkists. A case in point is a faction of former CUP members who founded the National Constitution Party (NCP; *Milli Meşrutiyet Fırkası*), which constituted the only openly Turkist party of the Second Constitutional Period.⁷⁶ Contrary to received wisdom, Turkism did not exclude adherence to Ottomanism and pan-Islamism, nor dismiss Arabism.⁷⁷ A party manifest of the NCP proclaimed that they intended to unite Turkism and Arabism within an Ottoman-Islamic federation:

In our opinion, internal affairs must be based on the principles of Turkism within Turkey reaching from İzmir to Bayezid, from the Black Sea to the Arab deserts. This national policy must be followed.

Syria, al-Jazira [Iraq], and the Arab Peninsula could and must be administered entirely within the principles of decentralism. Why should Damascus, Baghdad, Mecca and Sinai not be the centre and source of life for the Arab national community?

For this reason, the National Constitution Party recognizes the Turkish and Arab nations as the two strong and solid pillars of the Ottoman state.

[...] A reasonably powerful Turkish nationalist policy in Turkey; In Arabia a nationalist decentralism, and an Ottoman Sultanate and Caliphate uniting these two nationalist forces. In a nutshell, this is the political agenda of the National Constitution [Party].⁷⁸

An NCP member, Abdürrahman Cami (Baykurt), wrote a series of articles published after the Balkan defeat in the party's periodical, *İfham*.⁷⁹ Cami, a former CUP deputy of Fezzan in Ottoman Libya, where he had lived for many years in exile, was relatively well-acquainted with Arabism. In his article, Cami referred directly to Goltz Pasha's idea as an inspiration: "From now on, the centre of

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76 Tank Zafer Tunaya, *Türkiye'de Siyasal Partiler 1: İkinci Meşrutiyet Dönemi 1908-1918*, 2nd ed. (Istanbul: Hürriyet Vakfı Yayınları, 1984), 351.

77 On this Turco-Arab "modus vivendi", see Djemal Pasha, *Memories of a Turkish Statesman: 1913-1919* (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1922), 97.

78 *İfham*, 27 January 1913, quoted in T.Y., "Osmanlı Devleti'nin Dahili ve Harici Siyasetine Dair", 249.

79 Abdürrahman C. Baykurt, *Osmanlılığın Atışı: Düşmanları ve Dostları* (Istanbul: İfham Matbaası, 1331 [1915]). This book was originally published in the periodical *İfham* in 1913. See also Mustafa Aksakal, *The Ottoman Road to War in 1914: The Ottoman Empire and the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 33.

gravity of the Ottoman Empire is there where Turkish and Arab strength is generated. This fact did not escape von der Goltz's eyes even fifteen years ago."⁸⁰ The Ottoman Empire was once again becoming an "Asiatic empire", since it never succeeded in becoming a "European state". Asia has always been "the original homeland, the source of its life power, the centre of its gravity."⁸¹ According to Cami, the future prosperity of the Ottoman Empire as an Islamic-Asiatic empire was in Asia. The idea to move the capital was also repeated by Cami:

The relocation of the administrative and military centre of the Ottoman state to the border region of the Turkish and Arab countries, somewhere, where the Anatolian, Syrian, Iraqi and future Kurdistan railroads will cross each other, will occur as a result of political and military necessities.⁸²

Ahmet Ferit (Tek), the founding president of the NCP, also proposed his idea of a Turco-Arab empire. Moving the capital was an option, but rather within the Turkish sphere, such as Kayseri, since possible separatist tendencies among the Arabs could not be entirely ruled out. But according to Ahmed Ferit, the Austro-Hungarian *Ausgleich* was not the right model, but rather the "Austria-Galicia-Bohemia-Carinthia [model] provided a more appropriate analogy [...]"⁸³ Another prominent member of the NCP, and the yet another ideologue of Turkish nationalism, Yusuf Akçura, wrote in a review of the year 1913:

In fact, Turkish nationalists keenly desire that the Ottoman government accept the reasonable demands of the Arabs. It is one of the principle ideas of Turkish nationalists not to prevent the natural development of people which can constitute a nation without challenging the Ottoman unity. As we have said elsewhere, according to Turkish nationalists, Islam is a supranational [*fevka'l-milel*] religion of morality and divinity; the development of nationalism in the Islamic world will result in Islamic internationalism's [*beynelmileliyet-i İslamiye*] advent to power. Besides, Turkists consider religion as a historical element of the ideational composition of nationalism; they believe that as Muslim nations are maturing, the religion of Islam can also be revived. It is due to this principal

80 Baykurt, *Osmanlılığın Atışı*, 12.

81 Ibid., 6-7.

82 Ibid., 13.

83 The National Archives, Foreign Office Papers (hereafter FO) 195/2453, 2368, Lowther, report to FO, no. 475 (Pera), 26 May 1913, cited in Kayalı, *Arabs and Young Turks*, 137.

conviction that the circle of Turkism, which has never been political, has evolved into political reconciliation and engaged in a correspondence of reconciliation with the Arabic literary circles.⁸⁴

This Arabist turn by self-proclaimed Turkists was, of course, contingent on certain contexts and audiences. On other occasions, Akçura could have, and in fact had, easily alienated Arab nationalists with his pan-Turkism.⁸⁵ Nevertheless, among the self-proclaimed Turkists, who founded the NCP as a conservative-nationalist alternative to the CUP, a major item on the agenda was a reconciliation with Arab nationalists based on an understanding of Islam as a supranationalism that did not stand in the way of the development of Turkism or Arabism.⁸⁶

While prominent Turkist authors were eager to discuss the sociology of the Ottoman state in order to accommodate Turco-Arab co-existence, the debates in the Arab sphere of the empire were not much different. “Many Arab authors perceived the defeat and the loss of the Balkan provinces”, as Eyal Ginio concluded, “as an opportunity to reshape the Turco-Arab partnership on a more equal basis.”⁸⁷ Goltz Pasha’s influence was also observable in the Arab debates on the Balkan Wars. The Arabic journal *al-Muqataṭaf* referred to von der Goltz and stated that “it is currently incumbent [on the Turks] to reconcile with the Arab component, to come to agreement with it and to refrain from considering their sultanate as a European state, regarding it instead as simply an Asian state.”⁸⁸ Another prominent voice said: “It is necessary to leave behind all this Westernization in order to establish an Asiatic, military, nationalist force of Arabs and Turks.” These words were not of Goltz Pasha – at least not directly – but again that of Rashīd Riḍā writing in his journal *al-Manār* in Cairo. “Only then”, Riḍā argued, “will the people of the community be ready to fight and go

84 Yusuf Akçura, “Geçen Yıl: 1329 Senesinde Türk Dünyası”, *Türk Yurdu* 6: 3-5 (1330 [1914]): 2098-2104, 2135-2141, 2166-2169, here 2168.

85 For instance, in March 1917, Yusuf Akçura, as a Tatar emigrant to the Ottoman Empire, was working for the political cause of Turkic people of Russia. At a lecture he gave in Berlin, one of the auditors, Egyptian nationalist Muḥammad Farid, however, “was greatly astonished by the concern of the Turks for their brethren in the north [Turkic population of Russia] and by their lack of interest in the Arab question in Baghdad and the Peninsula. [...] This is an indication of the Turks’ lack of interest in Arab countries and their trust in their own remaining capabilities without the Arab countries being with them.” Quoted in Ralph M. Coury, *The Making of an Egyptian Arab Nationalist: The Early Years of Azzam Pasha 1893-1936* (Reading: Ithaca Press, 1998), 127-28.

86 Ahmad, *The Young Turks and the Ottoman Nationalities*, 121.

87 Ginio, “Making Sense of the Defeat in the Balkan Wars”, 612.

88 “Mustaqbal al-bilād al-‘uthmāniyya”, *al-Muqataṭaf*, 1 June 1913, quoted in *ibid.*, 608.

to war to defend the community". Yet, the problem was, as Riḍā practically voiced von der Goltz's verdict: "The Government was bewitched by the glory of Constantinople's fame and position."⁸⁹

Arab nationalists had long championed a federal solution with Turks under the Ottoman Caliphate. These ideas were similarly intensified after the Balkan defeat. Accusations of "Turkification" remained the major Arabist slogan in antagonizing and opposing the centralist policies of the CUP regime. Yet, there was no collective consensus among Arabists regarding a possible departure, either from Turks or from the Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman Party for Administrative Decentralization (OPAD; *Ḥizb al-Lā-markazīyya al-Idāriyya al-'Uthmānī*) was founded in Cairo in 1912 to represent Arab interests against the Turkification-cum-centralization policies of the CUP.⁹⁰ Even though the OPAD formally opted for the Swiss model in its constitution, its preservation of the status of the Ottoman Sultanate clearly resembled the role of the emperor (*Kaiser*) in the Austro-Hungarian model.⁹¹ At the First Arab Congress of opposition parties, in Paris in June 1913, major voices "affirmed the complete loyalty of the Arabs to the Ottoman Empire and expressed the wish that Arabs and Turks might live together in equality and harmony within a united Empire."⁹² The elected president of the congress, 'Abd al-Ḥamīd al-Zahrāwī, said in his opening speech:

Upon reflecting on what has become of this "Turkish" government today, in which the Turks have applied the majoritarian principle in their favour over all other groups within this union, the Arabs realized a great duty, overlooked by both the Arabs and the Turks – the need to join the two groups in governing the country. For it has become obvious that the Arabs have not benefitted from their lack of intervention and the loss of [Balkan] territory, nor have the Turks benefitted from bearing, alone, the burden of that heavy loss. It is my firm belief that cooperation in government is not the reason for the disintegration of the brotherhood between Arabs and Turks; rather, the reason for the disintegration of the

89 Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā, "al-Dawla al-'uthmāniyya", *al-Manār*, 6 February 1913. See also Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā, "al-Ḥarb al-balqāniyya al-ṣalibiyya", *al-Manār*, 8 January 1913, cited in *ibid*.

90 On the OPAD, see Eliezer Tauber, *The Emergence of the Arab Movements* (London: Cass, 1993), 121–34.

91 Eugene L. Rogan, *The Fall of the Ottomans: The Great War in the Middle East* (New York: Basic Books, 2015), 24–25.

92 David S. Thomas, "The First Arab Congress and the Committee of Union and Progress, 1913–1914", in *Essays on Islamic Civilization: Presented to Niyazi Berkes*, ed. Donald P. Little (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1976), 319; Tauber, *The Emergence of the Arab Movements*, 178–97.

brotherhood between Arabs and Turks is the fact that there is no cooperation in government. We have therefore become proponents of the decentralist position, which we believe is the most efficient means to highlight the need for this unity outside the capital (i.e., in the provinces).⁹³

In similar terms, yet explicitly against the possibility of foreign intervention in the Arab provinces, ‘Abd al-Ghanī al-‘Uraysī championed Turco-Arab solidarity at the Arab Congress.⁹⁴ While the Arab Congress carefully voiced solidarity with the Ottoman Empire and Turks in explicitly decentralist terms, other Arabs, who were in favour of the CUP regime, criticized the Arab Congress for creating disunity within the Ottoman-Muslim nation.⁹⁵ The fact that during the First World War both al-Zahrāwī and al-‘Uraysī were hanged by the CUP regime for allegations of Arab separatism should not disprove their fraternal ideas of Turco-Arab co-existence within the Ottoman Empire. Both Turkists and Arabists supported different models of a Turco-Arab empire after the defeat in the Balkan Wars. Despite distrusting the intentions of the Arab nationalists, the CUP regime made important concessions to the demands of Arabism in this period.⁹⁶ Their rising nationalist sentiments by no means contradicted the viability of the Ottoman Empire, but instead called for its reimagination.

The Cacophony of Solidarity and Sovereignty during the Great War

Following the Ottoman decision to enter the First World War, the viability of Turco-Arab co-existence became a major issue for all belligerent parties. Allied countries intended to incite Arab secessionism. Therefore, ideas of Turco-Arab solidarity became one of the major pillars of the Young Turk regime’s wartime policies. The Young Turk regime was deeply invested in major imperial state-

93 Quoted in R. al-‘Az̧m, *al-Mu’tamar al-‘arabī al-awwal: al-mun’aqad fī l-qā’a al-kubrā li-l-jam’iyya al-jughrāfiyya bi-shārī San Jarman fī Bārīs* (Cairo: Maṭba’at al-Būsūr, 1913), 36–37. For an excellent rereading of al-Zahrāwī’s Ottomanist thought, see Nobuyoshi Fujinami, “Abd al-Ḥamīd al-Zahrāwī and His Thought Reconsidered: An Intellectual Portrait of the Arab Nationalist as an Ottoman Politician”, *The Journal of Ottoman Studies* 51 (2018), 239–63.

94 On al-‘Uraysī’s thoughts on Turco-Arab unity, see Duri, *The Historical Formation of the Arab Nation*, 238–46.

95 Abdurrahman Atçıl, “Decentralization, Imperialism, and Ottoman Sovereignty in the Arab Lands before 1914: Shakīb Arslān’s Polemic against the Decentralization Party”, *WI* 53:1 (2013), 26–49.

96 M. Talha Çiçek, *War and State Formation in Syria: Cemal Pasha’s Governorate during World War I, 1914–17* (London: Routledge, 2014), 41.

building projects in the Arab provinces. The CUP regime's declaration of the "jihad" against the Ottoman Empire's enemies increased Muslim-nationalist propaganda also in the home front.⁹⁷ Despite all its efforts, however, accusations of "Turkification" continued to haunt the CUP's reputation in the Arab provinces.⁹⁸ What many Arabs considered Turkification was mostly the CUP's policies of centralization, as well as their chauvinistic and partisan behaviour.⁹⁹ Precisely because "the empire had become largely a Turco-Arab state", as Albert Hourani noted, "any attempt to emphasize the paramountcy of the Turkish element was bound to upset the balance between them [Turks] and the Arabs, and by reaction Arab nationalism gradually became explicit."¹⁰⁰ Instead of bringing an end, the crisis of the Great War only intensified the debates about Turco-Arab co-existence.

On May 6, 1916, Cemal Pasha, minister of the navy and wartime governor of Syria, ordered the execution of twenty Arab nationalist activists associated with the OPAD in Damascus and Beirut for charges of traitorous collaboration with the French authorities.¹⁰¹ This incident was a major catalyst for the manifestation of popular Arab sentiments against the CUP regime and in framing Cemal Pasha as the "blood shedder" (*al-Saffāh*).¹⁰² For the population of Greater Syria, the trauma of the so-called *seferberlik* (literally, "military mobilization"), in reference to the combined effects of forced displacement of young men by means of recruitment to the Ottoman Army and the wartime famine in the Levant caused by the Allied naval blockade and Cemal Pasha's maladministration, ultimately marked the collective memory of the war as a time of

97 Erik Jan Zürcher, ed., *Jihad and Islam in World War I: Studies on the Ottoman Jihad at the Centenary of Snouck Hurgronje's "Holy War Made in Germany"* (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2015).

98 Turkification allegations remain, regardless of revisions, one of the main pillars of modern Arab history in explaining the rise of Arab nationalism. Zeine N. Zeine, *The Emergence of Arab Nationalism: With a Background Study of Arab-Turkish Relations in the Near East*, Revised and reset ed. (Beirut: Khayats, 1966), 83; Hisham Sharabi, *Arab Intellectuals and the West: The Formative Years; 1875-1914* (Baltimore: Hopkins, 1970), 107; Rashid Khalidi, "Ottomanism and Arabism in Syria Before 1914: A Reassessment", in *The Origins of Arab Nationalism*, ed. Rashid Khalidi et al. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 53-54; Mahmoud Haddad, "The Rise of Arab Nationalism Reconsidered", *IJMES* 26 (1994), 201-22.

99 Kayali, *Arabs and Young Turks*, 82-96, 208-211; C.E. Dawn, "The Origins of Arab Nationalism", in *The Origins of Arab Nationalism*, ed. Rashid Khalidi et al. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 11-12.

100 Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples*, 307.

101 Eliezer Tauber, *The Arab Movements in World War I* (London: Cass, 1993), 45-56; Çiçek, *War and State Formation in Syria*, 47-56.

102 Leila Tarazi Fawaz, *A Land of Aching Hearts: The Middle East in the Great War* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2014), 233-274.

suffering and oppression.¹⁰³ The transgressive behaviour of Turkish officials continued to alienate the local population of the Levant – including the Muslim Arabs.¹⁰⁴ The influx of the Armenian refugees who had survived death marches and massacres coupled the brutal reality of demographic violence in near-by provinces in Anatolia with the Turkification-centralization debates in Syria.¹⁰⁵ Moreover, Turkification accusations were closely linked with the popular assumption that the Young Turks were following a pan-Turkist agenda that neglected the Arab provinces.¹⁰⁶ Despite its clear expression in Arab collective memories as a “point of no return”, it remains, however, doubtful whether Cemal Pasha’s policies in Syria during the Great War directly triggered the Arab Revolt of 1916.¹⁰⁷

The Arab Revolt of Sharif Ḥusayn ibn ‘Alī al-Ḥāshimī of Mecca was mostly initiated, financed, and magnified by British military intelligence and never constituted a national-revolutionary movement in the core Arab provinces.¹⁰⁸ Sharif Ḥusayn’s political aims remained ambiguous throughout the war and

- 103 Najwa al-Qattam, “Safarbarlik: Ottoman Syria and the Great War”, in *From the Syrian Land to the States of Syria and Lebanon*, ed. Thomas Philipp and Christoph Schumann (Würzburg: Ergon, 2004); Linda Schatkowski Schilcher, “The Famine of 1915-1918 in Greater Syria”, in *Problems of the Modern Middle East in Historical Perspective: Essays in Honour of Albert Hourani*, ed. John P. Spagnolo (Oxford: Ithaca Press, 1992), 229-58.
- 104 Abigail Jacobson, “Negotiating Ottomanism in Times of War”, *IJMES* 40:1 (2008), 69-88.
- 105 Melanie S. Tanielian, *The Charity of War: Famine, Humanitarian Aid, and World War I in the Middle East*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2017), 243. There was in fact Turkification as a historical trajectory, but such policies differed depending on context – which is especially evident when one compares the CUP’s policies towards Armenians to those towards Arabs. Öztan, “Nationalism in Function”, 185-86; Erol Ülker, “Contextualising ‘Turkification’: Nation-Building in the Late Ottoman Empire, 1908-18”, *Nations and Nationalism* 11:4 (2005), 613-36.
- 106 When the Young Turk regime pulled resources from the Arab front in support of the Caucasus campaign in 1918, for instance, German military advisers blamed the Young Turks for following pan-Turkist policies. See, for example, Otto von Liman Sanders, *Five Years in Turkey* (Annapolis: The United States Naval Institution, 1927), 268-70. It is, however, doubtful whether the Caucasus campaign was motivated by pan-Turkism. Michael A. Reynolds, “Buffers, not Brethren: Young Turk Military Policy in the First World War and the Myth of Panturanism”, *Past & Present* 203:1 (2009), 137-79.
- 107 Mumtaz Ayoub Fargo, “Arab-Turkish Relations from the Emergence of Arab Nationalism to the Arab Revolt, 1848-1916” (PhD thesis, University of Utah, 1969), 239; Fawaz, *A Land of Achting Hearts*, 248.
- 108 Polly A. Mohs, *British Intelligence and the Arab Revolt: The First Modern Intelligence War* (London: Routledge, 2007). The harshest dismissal of the Arab Revolt is formulated in Efraim Karsh and Inari Karsh, “Myth in the Desert, or Not the Great Arab Revolt”, *MES* 32:2 (1997), 267-312. For more comprehensive histories of the Arab Revolt, see Rogan, *The Fall of the Ottomans*, 275-309; Joshua Teitelbaum, *The Rise and Fall of the Hashemite Kingdom of Arabia* (London: Hurst & Company, 2001), 74-125. For a collection of revisionist views

mostly intended to establish a regional suzerainty.¹⁰⁹ Notwithstanding, the Arab Revolt not only was effective in military terms, but also considerably challenged Ottoman legitimacy in the Arab provinces. The Arab Revolt created an ideological competition between Ottoman and Sharifian claims over Arab-Muslim solidarity and sovereignty.¹¹⁰

Arab support for Sharif Ḥusayn's revolt remained limited. While some Ottoman officers and soldiers with Arab nationalist sentiments joined the Arab Revolt, most Arabs in the Ottoman Empire opted for "loyalist federalism".¹¹¹ One of the most prominent figures in the Arab nationalist movement was 'Aziz 'Alī al-Miṣrī (who would later become Gamāl 'Abdel Nāṣṣer's mentor), a CUP member of Circassian-Egyptian origin who was discharged from the Ottoman General Staff and forced into exile in Egypt for falling out of favour with Enver Pasha before the war.¹¹² Despite being the figurehead of Arab nationalist secret societies, 'Aziz 'Alī did not fully embrace separatism. The secret society *al-Qaḥṭāniyya*, founded by 'Aziz 'Alī, had the policy goal of "turning the Ottoman Empire into a dual Monarchy." According to George Antonius, "The Arab provinces were to form a single kingdom with its own parliament and local government and with Arabic as the language of its institutions; the kingdom was to be a part of Turko-Arab empire similar in architecture to the Austro-Hungarian edifice."¹¹³ The Covenant (*al-'Ahd*), another secret, and more militant, society founded by 'Aziz 'Alī, had a similar programme.¹¹⁴ Its first clause declared the purpose of the society as "*internal independence* for the Arab countries

on the Arab Revolt by Turkish scholars of Ottoman history, see the special issue "Arap İsyani'nın 100. Yılı: İhtilal mi, İhanet mi?", in *Toplumsal Tarih*, no. 294 (2018).

- 109 Joshua Teitelbaum, "Sharif Husayn ibn Ali and the Hashemite Vision of the Post-Ottoman Order: From Chieftaincy to Suzerainty", *MES* 34:1 (1998), 103-22.
- 110 William L. Cleveland, "The Role of Islam as Political Ideology in the First World War", in *National and International Politics in the Middle East: Essays in Honour of Elie Kedourie*, ed. Edward Ingram (London: F. Cass, 1986), 84-101; M. Talha Çiçek, "Visions of Islamic Unity: A Comparison of Djemal Pasha's *al-Sharq* and Sharif Ḥusayn's *al-Qibla* Periodicals", *WI* 54:3-4 (2014), 460-82.
- 111 Saab, *The Arab Federalists of the Ottoman Empire*, 239. It is important to note that only those Arab officers joined the Arab Revolt who were recruited from prisoner-of-war camps, while desertion to join the insurgents was insignificant among the ranks. Mesut Uyar, "Ottoman Arab Officers between Nationalism and Loyalty during the First World War", *War in History* 20:4 (2013), 526-44.
- 112 On 'Aziz 'Alī al-Miṣrī, see Majid Khadduri, "Aziz Ali al-Misri and the Arab Nationalist Movement", *Middle Eastern Affairs* 4 (1965), 140-63.
- 113 Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*, 110. On *Qaḥṭāniya*, see Tauber, *The Emergence of the Arab Movements*, 98-100.
- 114 Eliezer Tauber, "Secrecy in Early Arab Nationalist Organizations", *MES* 33:1 (1997), 119-27. See also Tauber, *The Emergence of the Arab Movements*, 213-36.

provided that they remained united with the government of Constantinople as *Hungary is united with Austria*.¹¹⁵ ‘Aziz ‘Alī remembered that later *al-Ahd* “was dominated by Arabs whose objectives became openly revolutionary”.¹¹⁶ Young Turk leaders, such as Cemal Pasha, were informed about these ideas of the Austro-Hungarian model proposed by ‘Aziz ‘Ali and others; yet, it was rather the demand for an autonomous Arab army which was considered unacceptable.¹¹⁷ Iraq’s later president Nūrī al-Sa‘īd, who joined the Arab Revolt during British captivity, confessed many years later:

None of us thought of separation from the Ottoman Empire. Our thinking was directed toward obtaining a local Arab administration, the recognition of Arabic as an official language, and Turkish-Arab association in the administration of the general policy of the state [...] Some Turks, among them Mustafa Kemal [Atatürk] [...], were supporting this idea.¹¹⁸

During secret negotiations with Cemal Pasha beginning in late 1917, Emir Fayṣal, son of Sharif Ḥusayn and the commander of the Arab insurgents, demanded in return for his defection a settlement similar to the Austro-Hungarian model, if not the Prussian or Bavarian model in the German Reich.¹¹⁹ Meanwhile, there were even false rumours that Cemal Pasha was toying with the idea of coming to an agreement with the Allies and founding his own sultanate in Anatolia, the Levant, and Mesopotamia, with Damascus as the new capital.¹²⁰ If true, it was very much reminiscent of the Turco-Arab empire envisioned by Colmar von der Goltz, who had died of typhus in Baghdad in April 1916.¹²¹

115 Amin Sa‘īd, *al-Thawra al-‘arabiyya al-kubrā: Tārīkh mufaṣṣal jāmi‘ li-l-qaḍiyya al-‘arabiyya fi rub’ qarn* (Cairo: Maṭba‘at ‘Isā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1934), vol. 1, 46–47, quoted in Saab, *The Arab Federalists of the Ottoman Empire*, 236–37. Emphasis in the original.

116 Khadduri, “Aziz Ali al-Misri and the Arab Nationalist Movement”, 149–50.

117 Djemal Pasha, *Memories of a Turkish Statesman*, 60.

118 Nūrī al-Sa‘īd’s lecture on the military movements of the Arab army in the Hijaz and Syria, Baghdad 1947, quoted in William W. Haddad, “Nationalism in the Ottoman Empire”, in *Nationalism in a Non-National State: The Dissolution of the Ottoman Empire*, ed. William W. Haddad and William Ochsenwald (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1977), 19.

119 Çiçek, *War and State Formation in Syria*, 63–65; Isaiah Friedman, *British Miscalculations: The Rise of Muslim Nationalism, 1918–1925* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2012), 51; Karsh and Karsh, “Myth in the Desert, or Not the Great Arab Revolt”, 304–05.

120 David Fromkin, *A Peace to End All Peace: The Fall of the Ottoman Empire and the Creation of the Modern Middle East*, 20th year anniversary ed. (New York, NY: Henry Holt, 2009), 214–15.

121 How von der Goltz’s idea of relocating the Ottoman capital continued to inspire German observers is pointed out in Johann Strauss, “The Disintegration of Ottoman Rule in the

As part of the wartime propaganda machinery, Turkish-nationalist journals such as *Türk Yurdu* continued to uphold visions and ideals of Turco-Arab unity under the Ottoman Caliphate.¹²² A long poem by Celal Sahir (Erozan) was, for instance, published after a propaganda tour to Syria, Palestine, and the Hijaz. Celal Sahir's poem preached that "Turk and Arab are two brothers" and that the "homeland" belonged to both of them. For this shared homeland, Turkish and Arab bloods were "mixing [...] in competition".¹²³ Celal Sahir would later become one of the founding members of Atatürk's Turkish Language Association and play an important role in the Kemalist language reforms aimed at purifying Turkish from Arabic loanwords.¹²⁴ The Syrian-Arab intellectual Muḥammad Kurd 'Alī remained loyal to the Ottoman state throughout the war years.¹²⁵ In his publications, he propagated an "Ottoman commonwealth" in which the war effort created among Turks and Arabs "a nation of East and West, that combines the old and the new, which defends its domain by force to preserve its special character". Fascinated by the bilingual abilities of people in Adana, Muḥammad Kurd 'Alī stressed: "The best solution for the social-linguistic problem is for the Arabs to become Turkified, and for the Turks to become Arabized.... [T]his is inevitable, for Arabic is the tongue of Islam and is immersed in the history of Muslims, while Turkish is the language of politics and administration."¹²⁶ Ziya Gökalp also remained faithful to his understanding of the Ottoman Empire constituting in its social fundaments a Turco-Arab state

Syrian Territories as Viewed by German Observers", in *The Syrian Land: Processes of Integration and Fragmentation Bilād al-Shām from the 18th to the 20th Century*, ed. Thomas Philipp and Birgit Schabler (Stuttgart: F. Steiner, 1998), 308, note 3.

122 According to one recent study of *Türk Yurdu*, however, "the ideas about the development of the state upon Arab and Turkish elements began to be replaced, in conjunction with the war, by a model in which the Turkish element was the only dominant figure". Özgür Balkılıç and Deniz Dölek, "Turkish Nationalism at its Beginning: Analysis of *Türk Yurdu*, 1913-1918", *Nationalities Papers* 41:2 (2013), 316-33.

123 Celal Sahir (Erozan), "Kardaşlık Türküsü: Arab Gençlerine", *Türk Yurdu* 11:10 (1332 [1917]), 3297-3298. According to a footnote by the editors, the poem was also published in the Arabic newspaper *Beyrūt* (1916). See also Yusuf H. Bayur, *Türk İnkılabı Tarihi*, 3rd ed. (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 1991), 111d, 492.

124 Geoffrey L. Lewis, *The Turkish Language Reform: A Catastrophic Success* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 45-46.

125 On Muḥammad Kurd 'Alī during the war years, see Salim Tamari, "Muhammad Kurd Ali and the Syrian-Palestinian Intelligentsia in the Ottoman Campaign against Arab Separatism", in *Syria in World War 1: Politics, Economy and Society*, ed. M. Talha Çiçek (New York: Routledge, 2016), 37-60; Rainer Hermann, *Kulturkrise und konservative Erneuerung: Muḥammad Kurd 'Alī (1876-1953) und das geistige Leben in Damaskus zu Beginn des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 1990), 124-36.

126 Quoted in Tamari, *The Great War and the Remaking of Palestine*, 77.

and advised Talat to reorganize the Ottoman state accordingly.¹²⁷ Gökalp repeated his ideas in an article published in *Yeni Mecmua*, on March 14, 1918, while the Arab insurgents and the British Army were closing in on Damascus. At this critical hour, Gökalp argued in similar terms as he had done before the war. He defined Muslim nationalism as a prerequisite for Turkish and Arab nationalism in the face of colonial threats:

Within the Ottoman state, there are only two national countries that possess the ability for social synthesis, the first one being Anatolia as a Turkish country and the second, Arabia. These two countries, which are both peninsulas, are required to live under a political union due to their geographical situation. These geographical necessities go together with religious requirements. Because for Muslim nations, first religious independence must be secured before national independence. If Turks and Arabs are politically divided, the religious independence of both is in danger in the first place. However, these two nations have accepted that the spirit and essence of independence demand foremost not to be subjected to non-Muslim rule. Muslim nations can only consider national independence after religious independence is provided. This means, they first desire to be free as a community [*ümmetçe*] and then to be autonomous as a nation, because their common enemies are always waiting for the opportunity to take away their most holy religious independence.¹²⁸

Insomuch as there was a propagandistic motivation in such Ottoman-Turkish publications, it would be a fallacy to dismiss them only as a façade. They were part of a continued line of political thought since the Balkan Wars. Memories of the war lent credibility to the perceived potential of a settlement with the Arabs. One of the most influential voices in the formulation of the Kemalist historiographical narrative, Falih Rıfkı (Atay), who was Cemal Pasha's aide-de-camp in Syria and Mustafa Kemal's friend, did not fail to take note of the special place of Arabs in the eyes of the Young Turks, even during the later stages of the war. While the CUP's Turkism was irreconcilable with Armenian and Kurdish demands, as Falih Rıfkı argued, "It was not impossible to make a

¹²⁷ Çiçek, *War and State Formation in Syria*, 65. Ahmet Emin Yalman noted in 1930 that Gökalp "openly advocated Arabian independence and the formation of a new federation in which Turks and Arabs should participate as two independent states." Ahmet Emin Yalman, *Turkey in the World War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1930), 208.

¹²⁸ Ziya Gökalp, "Milliyetçilik ve Beynelmileliyetçilik", *Yeni Mecmua*, 14 March 1918, quoted in Bayur, *Türk İnkılabı Tarihi*, 111d, 493-495.

federation between the Arabs of the Hijaz, Syria and Iraq and the Turks of Anatolia and Thrace". When Mustafa Kemal visited him in Syria in 1917, Rıfıkı "realized, after listening to what Mustafa Kemal was saying, that he too was very inclined to these opinions".¹²⁹ In a secret letter to the commanding officer of the Fourth Army in Syria in the final months of the war, Fayşal repeated his plea to settle for a federative solution:

Arabs do not demand anything from the Turks. But they want to live in freedom. They wish to work together with the Turks. For this, they have recently made a very definitive and undisputable offer.

I am declaring this to your government. "The Arabs are demanding from you the status of Bavaria in relation to Prussia." This offer will unite the hearts of the two nations, and I call any other condition less than this the murder of these two Muslim nations. Because soon military courts and executions will resume. Through the hands of the foreigners, uprising against the sultan will be proposed, and false fatwas will be investigated. In the end, hardship and disasters will begin over and over again.

Sir, if the government of Turkey accepts the terms proposed by the Arabs, I respectfully declare that we are ready to negotiate.¹³⁰

Even if wartime propaganda muddled the waters, voices and visions of Turco-Arab solidarity were loud and clear in the cacophony and chaos of the Great War. Between the Young Turk jihad and the Arab Revolt, most Turkists sought reconciliation with the Arabs, while most Arabists were hoping to settle for a "decentralized Sultanate".¹³¹

The Federalist Moment in Post-Ottoman National Struggles

In November 1918, during armistice negotiations with the Seventh Ottoman Army in the city of Qatma, the aforementioned Nūrī al-Sa'īd from the British-Arab delegation gave a secret letter to a Turkish officer whom he had

129 Falih Rıfıkı Atay, *Çankaya: Atatürk'ün Doğumundan Ölümüne Kadar* (Istanbul: Pozitif Yayınları, 2004), 140-41.

130 Fayşal, letter to Mersinli Cemal, 12 August 1918, Library of Congress, Washington DC, John D. Whiting Papers, box 17, folder 9, quoted – by courtesy of Zachary Forster – in M. Şükrü Hanoğlu, "Arap Milliyetçilerinin Osmanlı'ya Son Teklifi: 'Siz Prusya Olun, Biz Bavyera'", *Derin Tarih* 28 (2014), 124-28. A slightly different version of the same letter is quoted in Cevat Rifat Atilhan, "Görünmeyen İnkılap [10]", *Büyük Doğu* 34 (1950), 10.

131 Masters, *The Arabs of the Ottoman Empire*, 223.

befriended. The letter was addressed to Grand Vizier Ahmed İzzet (Furğaç) Pasha, who took over the government after the Ottoman surrender, and the letter proposed a Muslim federation of Turks and Arabs against the colonial ambitions of the British and the French. These terms were practically a continuation of Fayşal's secret correspondence with Ottoman officials, given the fact that Nūrī al-Sa'īd was Fayşal's right-hand man. The commander of Qatma, Ali Fuad (Cebesoy) Pasha, however, dismissed it as British intrigue and did not forward the letter to the capital.¹³² What Ali Fuad did not know was that, at the same time, a similar proposal for the post-war settlement was presented by Grand Vizier Ahmed İzzet Pasha to the Allied forces. The second clause required that "Syria and Iraq will remain under our [Ottoman] rule with a special administration based on internal autonomy and an alliance in the form of pre-war Hungary with Austria."¹³³ This fleeting opportunity of establishing a Turco-Arab dual monarchy at the end of the First World War was missed. Yet, Turks and Arabs envisioned Turco-Arab co-existence in ever more federalist terms. Considering that the post-war period particularly marks an important episode in grand narratives of national awakenings, revisionist studies illustrate the connections that united Turkish and Arab insurgents in resisting the European occupation.¹³⁴ In the crisis of the post-Ottoman settlement, there was a brief federalist moment that defined the momentum of Turco-Arab relations between Anatolia, Syria, and Iraq.¹³⁵

In August 1919, British intelligence were informed of a secret treaty between Mustafa Kemal and Fayşal, signed by intermediaries on June 16, 1919, in Aleppo. British officials immediately assumed that it was a forgery fabricated

¹³² Ali Fuat Cebesoy, *Milli Mücadele Hatıraları* (Istanbul: Temel Yayınları, 2000), 84-85. See also Sina Akşin, "Turkish-Syrian Relations in the Time of Faysal (1918-20)", *Turkish Yearbook of International Relations* 20 (1980-81), 1-17. Nūrī al-Sa'īd was arguably still influenced by Ottomanist ideas of decentralism while he was trying to enact a pan-Arab federation in 1936 and 1943. Helmut Mejcher, "Der arabische Osten im zwanzigsten Jahrhundert 1914-1985", in *Geschichte der arabischen Welt*, ed. Ulrich W. Haarmann (München: C.H. Beck, 4th ed., revised and enlarged, 2001), 481.

¹³³ Ahmet İzzet Furğaç, *Feryadım*, 2 vols., ed. Süheyl İ. Furğaç and Yüksel Kanar (Istanbul: Nehir Yayınları, 1992-1993), 1, 205.

¹³⁴ Michael Provence, "Ottoman Modernity, Colonialism, and Insurgency in the Interwar Arab East", *IJMES* 43:2 (2011), 205-25; Alp Yenen, "The 'Young Turk Zeitgeist' in the Middle Eastern Uprisings in the Aftermath of World War I", in *War and Collapse: World War I and the Ottoman State*, ed. M. Hakan Yavuz and Feroz Ahmad (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2016), 1181-1216.

¹³⁵ This federalist moment was part of the "Pan-Islamic Moment of 1918-1924", as described in Cemil Aydın, *The Idea of the Muslim World: A Global Intellectual History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2017), 122-27. For a detailed history of Turco-Arab relations in this period, see Polat, *Türk-Arap İlişkileri*, 181-275.

by Cilician Armenians to provoke a European intervention, but there is reason to believe it was authentic.¹³⁶ Its first clause proclaimed that “the Turkish and Arabic races which have material, moral and religious bonds between them are in duty bound to help each other towards perfect agreement in matters of religion and country.”¹³⁷ “At the same time I do not believe that such a treaty exists”, commented a British intelligence officer in Cairo, “though C.U.P. would no doubt like to conclude it”.¹³⁸ This assumption was not wrong. The CUP, whose leaders had disappeared into a clandestine exile in Berlin, and its remnant underground networks in Turkey were busy organizing and mobilizing an armed resistance. Moreover, Arab leaders in Syria and the “Kemalist” leadership in Anatolia were working towards a Turco-Arab rapprochement in late 1919. Cevdet Pasha, the Commander of the Sixth Army (later Thirteenth Army Corps), described his political vision for the future of the Arab provinces in what one might call the United States of the Ottoman Caliphate:

Therefore, it is possible in every way for the Ottoman Government to come to terms with the formation of a confederation, once the peoples of Iraq, Syria, the Hejaz, and the Arab Peninsula have each formed their government and reaffirmed their attachment to the holy person of His Majesty the Caliph. Then, crescents of the Ottoman flag will symbolize the governments as in the stars of the American flag.¹³⁹

Cevdet Pasha was not alone in envisioning such a future, because most Young Turks, both the leaders of the CUP abroad and the Kemalist leadership in Anatolia, entertained similar ideas. Former Ottoman deputy of Hawran Emir Shakīb Arslān, who was trusted by the Young Turk leaders for being a CUP

136 Abdul-Karim Rafeq, “Arabism, Society, and Economy in Syria 1918-1920”, in *State and Society in Syria and Lebanon*, ed. Youssef M. Choueiri (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), 7-11, argues that “there are indications that the treaty could have been genuine.” Isaiah Friedman believes the treaty represented aspirations rather than a signed agreement. Friedman, *British Miscalculations*, 50-55. Hadiye Yılmaz showed that Mustafa Kemal had seen this treaty as a draft but did not sign it. Hadiye Yılmaz, “Mustafa Kemal Paşa-Emir Faysal Anlaşması ve Milli Mücadele Döneminde Suriye ve Irak”, *Cumhuriyet Tarihi Araştırmaları Dergisi* 10:20 (2014), 289-306.

137 English translation of the secret treaty between Mustafa Kemal and Fayşal, annex to FO, 371/4233, 123318, in Bilal N. Şimşir, ed., *British Documents on Atatürk (1919-1938)*, Vol.1: April 1919 - March 1920 (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 1973), 81-84.

138 French, telegraph (Cairo) to Curzon (London), 3 September 1919, FO, 371/4233, no. 417, in *ibid.*, 92.

139 Cevdet (Diyarbakir), letter to Committee of Representatives of Amasya, 16-17 October 1919, in Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, *Nutuk*, 10th ed. (Istanbul: Milli Eğitim Basımevi, 1969), 111, 1104.

loyalist and a pan-Islamic activist throughout the war, was approached by Fayşal's emissaries in Switzerland. Fayşal was by then the leader of the Syrian provisional government. The Syrian national government was looking for ways to get in touch with the Anatolian resistance movement. There was a great need for arms and ammunition in the Syrian resistance against the French occupation. Arabs were even ready to look for support from Soviet Russia.¹⁴⁰ British intelligence reported that Arslân declared in an intercepted letter to Maxim Litvinov, the leading Soviet diplomat in Europe, that "all [Arab] hatred against the Turk had been dispelled and all that was now wanted was mutual trust and combination in support of the common cause."¹⁴¹ One of the aforementioned leaders of the Arab Revolt, 'Azîz 'Alî al-Mişrî, visited Talat Pasha in Berlin in December 1919 and told him that, due to the poor governance of the Entente, it was now possible for the Arabs in Egypt, Syria, and Iraq to form "a federal government" with the Turks.¹⁴² Cooperation with Arabs in the form of a Muslim-nationalist league was one of the major items on the agenda of the exiled Young Turk leadership.¹⁴³ While having secret negotiations with British agents, Talat and Enver demanded that Turkey must be "fully independent" and "in the future, if Arabs desired, not to hinder a Turco-Arab confederation."¹⁴⁴ Talat believed that they could profit from men like 'Azîz 'Alî and even attached a message from the latter to his first letter to Mustafa Kemal.¹⁴⁵ Although 'Azîz 'Alî's letter is lost, Mustafa Kemal answered that 'Azîz 'Alî would be of great use in the "Arab affairs" of the Anatolian movement, but he could not provide any

140 Shakîb Arslân, letter (Berne) to Enver (Berlin), 11 December 1919, in Murat Bardakçı, ed., *İttihadçı'nın Sandığı: İttihat ve Terakki Liderlerinin Özel Arşivlerindeki Yayınlanmamış Belgeler ile Atatürk ve İnönü Dönemlerinde Ermeni Gayrimenkulleri Konusunda Alınmış Bazı Kararlar* (Ankara: Türkiye İş Bankası Yayınları, 2013), 475.

141 N.N.E. Bray, Preliminary Report on Causes of Unrest in Mesopotamia, September 1920, FO, 371/5230, E-12339, 4-5. For Shakîb Arslân's letter see India Office, report (Switzerland) to Foreign Office concerning the alleged intrigues of Fayşal with the Bolsheviks, 10 February 1920, FO, 371/5032, E-21.2.44, quoted in Zeine N. Zeine, *The Struggle for Arab Independence: Western Diplomacy and the Rise and Fall of Faisal's Kingdom in Syria* (Delamr: Caravan, 1977), 134-35.

142 Talat, letter (Berlin) to Cemal (Munich), 21 December 1919, in Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın and Osman Selim Kocahanoğlu, eds., *İttihatçı Liderlerin Gizli Mektupları: Bir Devri Aydınlatan Tarihi Mektuplar* (İstanbul: Temel Yayınları, 2002), 186.

143 Alp Yenen, "The Young Turk Aftermath: Making Sense of Transnational Contentious Politics at the End of the Ottoman Empire, 1918-1922" (PhD thesis, University of Basel, 2016, published online in 2019) URL: <<https://doi.org/10.5451/unibas-007110817>>.

144 Talat (Berlin), letter to Cavid (Switzerland), 6 December 1920, in Yalçın and Kocahanoğlu, *İttihatçı Liderlerin Gizli Mektupları*, 147.

145 Talat, letter (Berlin) to Mustafa Kemal (Ankara), 22 December 1919, in *ibid.*, 206.

material support due to lack of resources.¹⁴⁶ In his reply, Talat Pasha reported that the exiled Young Turks were approached by an emissary of Fayşal. According to Talat, “Arabs have been totally disillusioned after the armistice”, because:

The [Sykes-Picot] agreement signed in 1916 between the French and the English partitions the entirety of Arabia and makes a laughing stock of it [*parçalayıp kuşa benzetiyor*]. And for an independent Arabia it leaves nothing but desert behind. Someone from the entourage of Amir Fayşal said in a conversation with one of us in Switzerland that the Arab youth [*al-Fatât? AY*] would forget about the past and would prefer to unite with the Turks like old Germany or Austria-Hungary and cooperate [with the Turks] to hinder the occupation by the Allies.¹⁴⁷

Talat believed that Arabs should “demonstrate that they wish to unite with the Turks”, so that “the power of the Caliphate continues and survives in that area”. One policy option which Talat proposed to Mustafa Kemal was to “create an organization, which would make a Turco-Arab union possible by capitalizing the current desperation of the Arabs, and which would generally create a trend within the Muslim world for our [Turkey’s] benefit.”¹⁴⁸ Mustafa Kemal, in his answer to Talat, acknowledged ongoing Turco-Arab relations but was rather pessimistic about their actual promise:

For a long time, relations have been established with Syrians and Iraqis and joint actions are set against the English and French.

Decisions have been made with legitimate Arab delegates who approached us in order to proceed a joint operation under more strict principles. The formula that we proposed to the Arabs as before is as follows:

To unite in the form of a confederation, once each nation has established independence. Arabs delightfully accepted this principle.

Even Emir Fayşal’s trustees have approached us to unite under this principle. The thought and the possibility that Fayşal might be following a secret policy on behalf of the French makes us proceed cautiously.¹⁴⁹

Protocols of the closed session of the Grand National Assembly in Ankara attest that Mustafa Kemal signalled his readiness for “federative or

¹⁴⁶ Mustafa Kemal attached his answer to ‘Azîz ‘Ali in his letter (Ankara) to Talat Pasha (Berlin), 29 February 1920, in *ibid.*, 219.

¹⁴⁷ Talat, letter (Berlin) to Mustafa Kemal (Ankara), 22 December 1919, in *ibid.*, 205-06.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 206-07.

¹⁴⁹ Mustafa Kemal, letter (Ankara) to Talat (Berlin), 29 February 1920, in *ibid.*, 211-12.

confederative” solutions to Fayşal’s emissaries but had no resources to offer to their help.¹⁵⁰ As he later told a Soviet emissary, Mustafa Kemal supported Arab national struggles, but he was distrustful towards the monarchical ambitions of Fayşal.¹⁵¹ Meanwhile, Arab nationalists in Syria were sceptical of Fayşal’s policies and instead of him, *al-Fatât* (Young Arab Society) and other popular societies dominated local politics.¹⁵² Mustafa Kemal’s pragmatic approach to confederation of Muslim-nationalist movements in the neighbouring Arab lands was not much different from his feelings for fellow Turkic-Muslim struggles in the Caucasus:

As you can understand from the formula I used in the alliance with the Arabs and the instructions I gave to our friends in the Caucasus, what I have in mind is that we should provoke the various Muslim masses against those enemies of Turkey so that they obtain independence. By this means, their autonomous employment can lighten the burden of the pressure put on Turkey and can produce maximum advantage for its material and moral strength. Then in the future we can unite in a confederation with those Muslim masses that safeguarded their independence. So far, the work that was invested manifests a result that seems to be gratifying.¹⁵³

Shortly before, during the Arab raid on British troops in Dayr al-Zor on December 11, 1919, and the following Turkish campaign against French in Cilicia in January 20, 1920, there were many contacts between Turkish and Arab insurgents. Not without reason, British officials speculated that these two attacks were connected, if not coordinated.¹⁵⁴

150 Speech at the closed session of the Grand National Assembly, 24 April 1920, *Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi Gizli Celse Zabıtları*, Devre 1, Cilt 1, 3. See also Yılmaz, “Mustafa Kemal Paşa-Emir Faysal Anlaşması ve Milli Mücadele Döneminde Suriye ve Irak”, 300.

151 Y.Y. Upmal-Angarski, interview (Ankara) with Mustafa Kemal, 1 January 1921, in Mehmet Perinçek, *Atatürk’ün Sovyetler’le Görüşmeleri: Sovyet Arşiv Belgeleriyle* (İstanbul: Kaynak Yayınları, 2005), 259.

152 Eliezer Tauber, *The Formation of Modern Syria and Iraq* (Essex: Frank Cass, 1995), 11-48. On popular politics in pre-mandate Syria, see James L. Gelvin, *Divided Loyalties: Nationalism and Mass Politics in Syria at the Close of Empire* (California: University of California Press, 1999).

153 Mustafa Kemal, letter (Ankara) to Talat (Berlin), 29 February 1920, in Yalçın and Kocahanoglu, *İttihatçı Liderlerin Gizli Mektupları*, 213.

154 Polat, *Türk-Arap İlişkileri*, 247-48. See also Eisuke Naramoto, “An Introductory Note on Military Alliance between the Arab and Turkish Nationalists 1919-1920: Dayr az-Zür Raid and the Cilicia Campaign”, *Annals of Japan Association for Middle East Studies* 1 (1986),

The reasoning behind this federalist moment in the midst of national struggles was seen both by Turks and Arabs as a necessary strategy against colonial occupation and partition. In a report to the Ankara government, president of the Committee of the Defence of the National Rights of Syria and Palestine and the district governor of 'Ayntab, Özdemir Bey, reported that Arab nationalists had accepted the offer by Mustafa Kemal to establish a confederation with the Turks after recognizing their governmental deficit in the face of colonial occupation.¹⁵⁵ "Lloyd George's proposal to partition Turkey", a Turkish military intelligence note from February 1920 concluded, "will result in the revolt of the Muslim world and in the future [increase] the danger of a union of Turks with Bolsheviks and Arabs."¹⁵⁶

An emissary from the General Syrian Congress, Sa'īd Haidar, a member of the *Fatāt*, was sent in spring 1920 with a secret delegation to Turkey to contact Mustafa Kemal Pasha. In an interview Sa'īd Haidar stated later that, while in Istanbul, they met with representatives of Mustafa Kemal, who was by then in Anatolia, and agreed to fight the colonial occupation. The fourth and last point of the agreement said:

(4) In the event of the successful outcome of their efforts against the West, the Arabs and the Turks will live side by side in two independent states but their relations will be nearly in the same line as the relations of Austria and Hungary in the pre-War Austro-Hungarian Empire. This relationship will be governed by a Treaty to last for fifty years.¹⁵⁷

In the Turkish military archives, there is a five-point manuscript of a similar treaty of Turco-Arab cooperation guaranteeing that "Arabs are free to deter-

217-52; Eliezer Tauber, "Syrian and Iraqi Nationalist Attitudes to the Kemalist and Bolshevik Movements", *MES* 30:4 (1994): 898-907.

155 Quoted in M. Talha Çiçek, "Osmanlıcılık İdeolojisi ve Osmanlı Hakimiyeti Sonrası Türk-Arap İlişkilerinde Değişim ve Süreklilik", *Divan: Disiplinler Arası Çalışmalar Dergisi* 17:33 (2012), 173-92. On Özdemir see also Othman Ali, "The Career of Ozdemir: A Turkish Bid for Northern Iraq, 1921-1923", *MES* 53:6 (2017), 966-85.

156 İsmail (14. Army Corps), intelligence report to 20. Army Corps, 10 February 1920, Archive of the Institute of the Turkish Revolution History (*Türkiye İnkılap Tarihi Enstitüsü*), University of Ankara, kutu no. 318, gömlek no. 51.

157 Zeine, *The Struggle for Arab Independence*, 135. Whether this Sa'īd Haidar is Rustum Haidar from the *Fatāt* is not clear. Tauber, *The Emergence of the Arab Movements*, 90-97. This agreement was not ratified by Faysal, who allegedly feared a Bolshevik intervention through the Kemalists and that the Kemalists might come to an agreement with the French. FO, 371/5036, E-7174 in Bilal N. Şimşir, ed., *British Documents on Atatürk (1919-1938)*, Vol. 2: April 1919 – December 1920 (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 1975), 156-57. See also Rafeq, "Arabism, Society, and Economy in Syria", 10.

mine their own destiny” and that “Turkish and Arab nations accept only independence for their administration” in their struggle against “foreign invasion” (*ecnebi işgali*) by means of “joint operation” (*tevhid-i harekat ederler*) and “helping each other” (*yekdiğerine muavenet eder*).¹⁵⁸

Another attempt to establish a cooperation, if not a confederation, between Arabs and Turks during the Turkish War of Independence was initiated by Rashīd Riḏā. As a member of the Syrian National Congress, he sent a letter to Mustafa Kemal Pasha including a joint memorandum of the Syrian-Arab committees.¹⁵⁹ The letter was sent with a Syrian courier who had served under the command of Mustafa Kemal. In Mersin, he handed the letter to the head of military intelligence, to be delivered to Mustafa Kemal in Ankara. In this letter, Rashīd Riḏā advised Mustafa Kemal

to do whatever is required to strengthen the Turk, while still maintaining the bond of Islam, and cooperation with the Arabs states, because if that unity with the Arabs is lost, even if it were in Syria or Iraq alone, that would be disastrous for the Turks.¹⁶⁰

In face of the uncertainties of the armed struggles against the colonial settlement and the complex interplay with the Great Powers in the region, these negotiations between Turks and Arabs were probably discontinued or remained practically only on paper due to a lack of resources. Fayṣal was defeated by the French at the Battle of Maysalun on July 24, 1920. He was later crowned king in the British mandate of Iraq. With the Turco-French settlement in September 1921, the border between Turkey and the French mandate of Syria was practically drawn, even though cross-border relations between Anatolia and Greater Syria continued to connect the post-Ottoman territories during the interwar years.¹⁶¹ The border with Iraq remained disputed longer

¹⁵⁸ Archive of the Turkish General Staff's Directorate for Military History and Strategic Studies (*Genelkurmay Askeri Tarih ve Stratejik Etüt Başkanlığı*), Ankara, İstiklal Harbi Koleksiyonu, kutu no. 641, gömlek no. 103.

¹⁵⁹ A declaration of solidarity and alliance by Syrian nationalists was published in the official newspaper of the Turkish national movement, *Hakimiyet-i Milliye*, October 1920, cited in Metin Hülagü, *İslam Birliği ve Mustafa Kemal: İngiliz Gizli Belgelerine Göre Milli Mücadelede İslamcılık ve Turancılık* (İstanbul: Timaş Yayınları, 2008), 81.

¹⁶⁰ This episode is mentioned by Rashīd Riḏā in a letter to Shakīb Arslān, 28 January 1926, in Shakīb Arslān, *al-Sayyid Rashīd Riḏā, aw ikhā' arba'īn sana* (Damascus: Ibn Zaydūn, 1937), 435.

¹⁶¹ Keith D. Watenpaugh, *Being Modern in the Middle East: Revolution, Nationalism, Colonialism, and the Arab Middle Class* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 160-84;

due to the Mosul question, but it was eventually decided in 1926. On the eve of the Treaty of Lausanne, a delegation of Palestinians went so far as to demand “complete independence under the Turkish Mandate”.¹⁶² There was general mourning over the lost empire. Farid Qaṣṣāb, an Arab nationalist, noted with sorrow: “The Ottoman Empire should have been decentralized, not dismembered.”¹⁶³ Yet, post-Ottoman people continued their lives in new nation-states. The new regimes not only shaped the horizon of expectation but also forced a cleansing of memories of imperial multinationalism.

Conclusion

The CUP regime's agency was certainly at fault in the ultimate collapse of the Ottoman Empire and in the destruction and displacement of many Ottoman communities. The Ottoman-Muslim visions of a Turco-Arab co-existence intended to save the empire, yet they also accompanied the end of co-existence of Muslims and non-Muslims in an “ecumenical Ottomanism”.¹⁶⁴ Assuming that nationalism alone was to blame for the demise of Ottomanism falsely suggests that there was a struggle between political ideologies that determined the outcome of history. As such, the commonplace argument takes for granted that Turkish and Arab nationalism prevailed over Ottomanism, pan-Islamism, liberalism, and federalism because nationalism was the strongest and fiercest ideology of the time. In explaining the evolution of historical processes, however, one must address the fluidity and the multiplicity of identities as well as the role of contingencies, chaos, and complexities in forming ideas and ideologies. Hence, many nationalists, whether they were adherents of Turkism or Arabism, continued to uphold the Ottoman Empire and look for ways to unite and live with each other – especially, in times of crisis.

Contrary to received wisdom, envisioning Turco-Arab co-existence was not marginal or circumstantial. Instead, various models were considered, pro-

Cyrus Schayegh, *The Middle East and the Making of the Modern World* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2017), 132-91; Amit Bein, *Kemalist Turkey and the Middle East: International Relations in the Interwar Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 25-61.

162 Awad Halabi, “Liminal Loyalties: Ottomanism and Palestinian Responses to the Turkish War of Independence, 1919-22”, *Journal of Palestine Studies* 41:3 (2012), 19-37.

163 Stefan Wild, “Ottomanism versus Arabism: The Case of Farid Kassab (1884-1970)”, *WI* 28:1/4 (1988), 607-27.

164 Makdisi, *Age of Coexistence*, 86.

posed, and propagated by many prominent Ottoman opinion-makers – both Turks and Arabs. The peculiar trajectory of Colmar von der Goltz's proposal of a Turco-Arab empire and his call to relocate the Ottoman capital to Turco-Arab borderlands illustrate how and when such ideas travelled across time and space. Goltz Pasha's singular influence aside, envisioning models of Turco-Arab co-existence was obviously connected to times of crisis. Loss of territories to the West pushed both Arabs and Turks to reconsider their transnational relationship in defensive and conservative terms. Muslim-nationalist sentiments of solidarity and sovereignty were the motives for envisioning such models of Turco-Arab co-existence. This was the case after the Balkan Wars and during the colonial partition of the Ottoman realms after World War I. Going back to Hassan Saab's study of Ottoman-Arab federalists, the Austro-Hungarian model was popular because it resembled the familiar ideas of Muslim solidarity under the imagined Caliphate "as an institution theoretically centralized and practically decentralized, [...] because it made an empire 'at once a league and a unitary state'".¹⁶⁵

Self-proclaimed proponents of Turkism and Arabism expressed their political visions through a similar set of imaginary and terminology based on their collective experience in their shared political space. The interpretation that these opinion-makers were only ostensibly supporters of Turco-Arab co-existence, because they were nationalists at heart and opportunists in practice, is only another attempt to impose teleological bias and methodological nationalism. These multiple and entangled debates were anchored in the space of experience and horizon of expectation of their particular time. Writing on the commonplace dismissal of Ottomanism, Fabio Grassi brought up an empathic reminder:

Do these authors deserve to be overlooked? Are their writings no more than a patchwork of childish fancies? Maybe, but these must be, in the case, conclusions and not aprioristic convictions. And what if the project of a current, real European Union collapses? Shall we then consider the works of the European federalist thinkers and activists a patchwork of childish fancies devoid of any intellectual worth and interest?¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁵ Saab, *The Arab Federalists of the Ottoman Empire*, 242.

¹⁶⁶ Fabio L. Grassi, "An Anti-Nationalistic Dream: Ottomanism", in *Empires and Nations from the Eighteenth to the Twentieth Century*, ed. Antonello Biagini and Giovanna Motta (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014), 80.

“Thinking about what could have been”, as Erik Jan Zürcher noted, “makes us more sensitive to processes and contingencies that we too easily overlook when we already know how the story ends.”¹⁶⁷ Looking at paths not taken, ideas not followed, calculations miscalculated, intentions not put into action, and actions that have failed is one of the ways for historians to offer a more complex picture of post-imperial transitions.

¹⁶⁷ Erik J. Zürcher, “Turning Points and Missed Opportunities in the Modern History of Turkey: Where Could Things Have Gone Differently?”, in *The Young Turk Legacy and Nation Building: From the Ottoman Empire to Atatürk's Turkey* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010), 294-95.