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OTTOMAN MODERNITY, COLONIALISM, AND INSURGENCY IN THE INTERWAR ARAB EAST

Abstract

The foundations of both Arab and Turkish nationalism lay in the late Ottoman mass education and conscription project and in the region-wide struggle against colonial rule in the 1920s and 1930s. The anticolonial insurgencies of the 1920s and 1930s have passed into history as the formative expressions of new nations: the Turkish War of Independence, the Iraqi revolt of 1920, the Syrian Battle of Maysalun, the Great Syrian Revolt, and the Palestinian uprisings of 1920, 1929, and 1936. But all insurgents of the 1920s had been Ottoman subjects, and many and probably most had been among the nearly three million men mobilized into the Ottoman army between 1914 and 1918. The Ottoman State, like all 19th-century European powers, had made mass education and conscription a centerpiece of policy in the decades before the Great War.

Syria, Transjordan, and Palestine were governed justly as one country under the Ottoman State. The State of Syria was divided into three parts after the occupation. The mandate in all these countries [intends to weaken] the spirit of nationalism, kill the common Arab feeling, and plunder their wealth. It is certain they also intend to destroy the country and shed the blood of its people. We ask, “Did any year pass after the occupation without bloody revolutions where our blood was shed and our rights were swallowed?”

—Friday Sermon at Nablus, 7 February 1936¹

In late 1935 a British patrol ambushed a small group of guerilla fighters in the hills near Jenin in the British Mandate for Palestine. The group’s leader, ‘Izz al-Din al-Qassam, was killed in the fusillade. Al-Qassam had already achieved legendary stature among the Arabs of Palestine, where he had been organizing fighters against both Zionist colonization and the Mandate. A veteran popular leader who had first organized a force of village youth to fight the Italian invasion and occupation of Ottoman Libya in 1911, al-Qassam had served in the Ottoman army during the Great War as a chaplain of the Damascus military preparatory school and garrison. After the war he participated in guerilla campaigns against the French occupation of coastal Syria near his native village and fled to Palestine after French authorities issued a warrant for his arrest. In the months following his death in 1935, the countryside of Palestine erupted in general revolt against Zionism and the Mandate. Leaders of the revolt, many of whom were Ottoman World War I veterans, came from throughout the region and included twenty-one-year-old ‘Abd

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al-Qadir al-Husayni, from the notable Jerusalem family, and Fawzi al-Qawuqji, roving insurgent and decorated veteran of the Ottoman army.²

Nearly a year after al-Qassam's death, a platoon of Scottish rifles surprised and ambushed another group of guerilla fighters near al-Khadr south of Bethlehem after a Royal Air Force (RAF) airplane spotted them. The ambush wounded 'Abd al-Qadir al-Husayni and killed his comrade Sa'ïd al-ʿAs.³ Al-ʿAs was born in the central Syrian town of Hama and educated in Damascus and Istanbul. He had fought in all the wars of the final Ottoman decade and had joined his friend Fawzi al-Qawuqji in the Great Syrian Revolt (1925–27). Born in Ottoman Syria, trained in Istanbul, dispatched to the Balkans, Anatolia, the Russian frontier, and elsewhere, and a participant in the insurgencies of the early postwar period in eastern Anatolia and Syria, he had spent the late 1920s and early 1930s in Transjordan under exile from a French death sentence. The death of al-ʿAs, a seasoned insurgent commander, strategist, and, like al-Qassam, an Ottoman army veteran, was a damaging blow to what would come to be called the Great Palestine Revolt. The Palestinian political leadership declared an end to the six-month-long general strike a week later. Like al-Qassam, al-ʿAs became a popular martyr to the cause of Arab nationalism and the struggle for Palestine. Despite their deaths defending Arab Palestine, both had spent their formative years in Ottoman education and army service. What made people like al-ʿAs and al-Qassam fight in one uprising after another in the decades following the defeat, occupation, and partition of the state they had been trained to serve?

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The foundations of both Arab and Turkish nationalism lay in the late Ottoman mass education and conscription project and in the regionwide struggle against colonial rule in the 1920s and 1930s. Popular revolts shook the Middle East between 1919 and the 1940s. Tens of thousands of colonial citizens challenged the postwar settlement and hoped to drive Britain and France from the region. All such rebels had been Ottoman subjects; many and probably most had been among the nearly three million men mobilized into the Ottoman army between 1914 and 1918. Tens of thousands became rebels against the colonial partition of the Ottoman realms, but wartime mobilization had touched everyone and conditioned millions to the notion of nationalism and collective struggle. French and British colonial forces continued to fight remnants of the Ottoman army for more than two decades.

The anticolonial uprisings of the 1920s and 1930s have passed into history as the exemplary expression of new nationalisms: the Turkish War of Independence, the Iraqi revolt of 1920, the Syrian Battle of Maysalun, and the Palestinian uprisings of 1920, 1929, and 1936, to mention only a few of the best known. And yet the revolts do not fit neatly into the narratives of “national awakenings” posited by the intellectual histories of the region. Schoolchildren from the Balkans to Baghdad are taught that the heroes of the last Ottoman decade fought mightily for the independence of the nation, never mind that the “nation” in question may have been only recently conceived in Paris or London. Thousands of people fought and died in the revolts, their struggles given posthumous meaning in the foundation myths of nation-states they may never have heard of. But what were they fighting for if not Syria, Turkey, Palestine, or Iraq?

The usual narratives of Turkish or Arab nationalism explain the revolts by reference to recently awakened national consciousness.⁴ The uprisings mobilized vast numbers of passive or active participants among populations starved, devastated, and traumatized by continuous war between 1910 and 1920. British and French military occupation imposed the colonial settlement of new borders and states, but the inhabitants challenged the new order with already familiar Ottoman ideas of religion, nation, and homeland. As practical ideologies of anti-imperialism, these identities had been nurtured in Ottoman State military and civil schools and the army between around 1880 and 1913.⁵ Ottoman officers and veterans led all the movements of armed resistance and national liberation, however defined or articulated, between 1918 and 1948 in the Middle East.

Many were products of the free and subsidized late Ottoman military education system in schools from Libya, Yemen, the Arab regions, and Anatolia to the Balkans. They graduated from the military-service academies in Istanbul and served the Ottoman State in Libya, the Balkans, and during the Great War. The late Ottoman State had made extensive free education of prospective military officers a central, but heretofore unstudied, priority. Cadets were drawn from the upper peasantry and lower middle-class urbanites. When they graduated and returned to their regions, again as a matter of state policy, they retained the ability to communicate with and mobilize members of the subaltern classes from which they had emerged.

Colonial chroniclers claimed armed resistance against the colonial state was unrepresentative, fragmentary, and criminal. The motives and agency of indigenous insurgents were often beyond contemplation, and forms of subversion, ridicule, and passive or active resistance were ascribed to unrepresentative fringe elements of the colonized society. But tens of thousands fought in the revolts, often crossing the still unacknowledged and illegitimate “national” borders. Many more were passive participants.

Colonial and nationalist historiography in the Ottoman successor states conspired to erase the common Ottoman genealogy of armed struggle, nationalism, and patriotism after 1918. Those eventually identified as the heroes of Turkish, Iraqi, Syrian, Palestinian, and Kurdish patriotism and nationalism were all products of the late Ottoman State and all veterans of the Great War. The postcolonial nation–state appropriated their stories as part of uncomplicated narratives of national struggle and awakening.⁶ But abundant evidence, including living popular memory, suggests that rebel participants—collective veterans of wars to save the Ottoman State—did not view the post-Ottoman revolts as separate movements of national liberation but rather as locally conditioned elements of a single, undifferentiated struggle. The uprisings, their participants, and the circumstances that surrounded them seem to share more in common than they differed in detail—most particularly the experience of Ottoman military education, Ottoman army service, and the trauma of the final wars for the survival of the Ottoman State.

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In 1893 Ottoman Sultan ‘Abd al-Hamid II sent a gift to Great Britain and the United States. The gift, a series of photo albums, consisted of 1,800 professionally produced images of the imperial realms.⁷ The albums are a self-conscious representation of modernity and state power, portraying modern state institutions, including police stations, hospitals, fire brigades from various cities, and schools—hundreds of schools. There were schools

for the blind, for the deaf, for law, for higher studies in social and political sciences, for religious studies, for industrial arts, for girls and women, for prospective high civil bureaucrats, for boys from tribal regions, and most prominently, for prospective military officers. By 1894 there were more than fifty military middle schools and preparatory schools throughout the empire, from the Balkans to Yemen to what is today Libya, preparing students for the Imperial Military Academy in Istanbul.⁸

Studies of late Ottoman education have most often focused on missionary education or Ottoman State civil education. Historians have long argued that Arab and Turkish nationalism first emerged in such elite schools. Missionary education in the form of the Syrian Protestant College, founded in 1866 in Beirut, contributed mightily to the Arabic literary renaissance of the 19th century, or the *nahḍa*. George Antonius and many others argued the *nahḍa* was the wellspring of modern Arab culture and identity. Missionaries founded many lesser known schools in Ottoman Syria in the middle decades of the 19th century.⁹ Ottoman State civil education has received scarcely less attention. The celebrated elite Galatasaray Lycée, founded in 1868 in Istanbul, has enjoyed great prominence. The Galatasaray School, once also known as the Mekteb-i Sultani, eventually became a twelve-year preparatory school on the French model, and in the final Ottoman decades often sent its graduates to the Mekteb-i Mülkiyye-i Şahane, or Imperial Civil Service School.¹⁰

The missionary colleges opened in the mid-1860s, and, in direct response, the Galatasaray Lycée opened in 1868.¹¹ The prospect that prominent Ottomans, especially Muslims, might send their children to be educated by missionaries was particularly troubling. In 1869, the government issued a new educational law establishing a multi-tiered civil education system, including elementary schools (*ibtidaiyye*), middle schools (*rüşdiyye*), and finally an Imperial Sultani Lycée (*idadiyye*) preparatory school in every provincial capital.¹² The plan was ambitious, and implementation was slow. In Beirut a Sultani Lycée (Mekteb-i Sultani) opened in 1883 and moved into a splendid new building in the Basta quarter outside central Beirut. The school soon enrolled the sons of the most prominent and wealthy Beirut families.¹³ Students could board at the school or attend during the day, and fees were expensive, at up to fifteen Ottoman gold lira annually. The Damascus Sultani Lycée opened two years later in 1885, and the two schools soon enrolled close to 1,000 boys between them. By sultanic decree, students were exempted from military service, a valuable benefit considering the low regard Ottoman-Arab elites held for military careers.¹⁴

Damascus' Maktab 'Anbar and the Beirut Sultani have storied legacies in Arab nationalist historiography. Many historians have written that Maktab 'Anbar was the first modern preparatory school in Damascus. But these claims are mistaken: there was a state preparatory school in almost continuous operation in Damascus fifty years before Maktab 'Anbar opened its doors. Its existence has almost totally escaped the notice of historians.

Ottoman State education began with military academies in the imperial capital. The School of Military Sciences (Mekteb-i Ulum-i Harbiyye) opened in 1834. Military preparatory schools in the capital soon followed.¹⁵ But Ibrahim Pasha of Egypt had already opened the first state educational institution in all of Greater Syria in 1832—two years before the establishment of a similar school in the imperial capital. The Damascus military school opened in a large Mamluk mosque in the Marja quarter, which Mamluk

governor Amir Sayf al-Din Tankiz had built in 1317.¹⁶ The school temporarily closed in 1840, when Ibrahim Pasha was expelled from Syria.

Countless Ottoman, Mandate, and independence-era military and political leaders passed through the school. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk taught there as a young staff officer posted to the 5th Ottoman Army in Damascus between 1905 and 1907. Famous anticolonial revolutionary Fawzi al-Qawuqji attended prior to his travel to the Imperial Military Academy. Palestinian national icon ʿIzz al-Din al-Qassam was appointed Ottoman chaplain there in the years before World War I. Lebanese president Fuad Chehab was educated there during the French Mandate, when it was the principal military academy for the French-Syrian Legion. With a few interruptions, it would remain the principal higher military academy of greater Syria until 1932, when the Mandate government moved the Syrian military academy to Homs, where it remains to this day.

In 1845 the Ottoman government decreed that all provincial capitals housing an army corps headquarters should have a military preparatory school.¹⁷ Damascus was the first army headquarters outside Anatolia or Rumelia to open a school, and by 1850 the Damascus military preparatory school had reopened in the Tankiz mosque.¹⁸ Reform of the civil school system followed the military system, and after the education law of 1869, the military and civil educational systems came to be based on a similar set of assumptions and goals. The state placed priority on military schools, however, and they opened sooner, received more funding, and were better organized. The law called for an elementary school in each village, a middle school in each town, and a middle school and preparatory school in each provincial capital. At the middle-school level and above, schools were divided into either military (*ʿaskariyye*) or civil (*mülkiyye*) systems. The elementary and middle schools were often combined to provide a total of six years of instruction. The next step, the preparatory school, which boarded students in the provincial capitals, provided an additional three years of instruction. The most promising students would continue their studies in an imperial-service academy in Istanbul.¹⁹

Famed reformer Midhat Pasha assumed the governorship of Baghdad province in 1869 and quickly opened a series of government schools.²⁰ The military middle school opened in 1869, and the military preparatory school opened in 1871. Staff officers of the Ottoman 6th Army taught at both schools, and both offered free tuition to qualified students. The Baghdad civil middle school (*rüşdiyye mülkiyye*) opened in 1871, and the civil preparatory school opened in 1873.²¹ By 1900, however, the number of students attending the civil preparatory school had reached only ninety-six.²² By contrast, the Baghdad military preparatory school had enrolled 256 boys. The lower-level Baghdad military middle school alone enrolled 846 boys that year, about the same as the combined total of all private, missionary, and state-run middle schools in Baghdad, Mosul, and Basra provinces.²³ Over three-fourths of the Iraqi prime ministers from 1920 to 1958 were graduates of the Baghdad military preparatory school.

Prominent families in Baghdad, Beirut, and Damascus lobbied tirelessly for elite state civil educational institutions.²⁴ But in each city the state built and opened military schools before the civil schools. According to Ottoman Ministry of Military Education documents, the state, then on the verge of bankruptcy and insolvency, opened nine major provincial military middle schools in 1875 alone.²⁵ By 1900 there were scores of military middle and preparatory schools enrolling tens of thousands of students from Yemen to

the Balkans. In comparison with civil schools, military schools were opened earlier, housed in better buildings, received more funding directly from the state treasury, and enrolled more students. They also did not charge tuition. Schools opened in the civil system under the Ministry of State Education, by contrast, opened slower and were built and operated with a greater concentration of local funds and charged very high tuition fees. The civil schools were prestigious and drew their students from the families of established Ottoman elites.

Boys entered state military schools in far-flung towns and villages throughout the empire. Central and local officials actively sought children from rural regions where the state had often been unpopular and its role intermittent.²⁶ Many rural and pastoral regions had opposed by arms the demands of the state for revenue, registration, census taking, and conscription. But local schools quickly became popular and oversubscribed; the policy of attracting the children of influential local families enjoyed rapid success, and by 1897 there were twenty-eight provincial military preparatory schools, with 7,433 students. Three times as many boys were simultaneously enrolled in the military middle schools throughout the empire.²⁷ By 1899, over 25 percent of the Ottoman officer corps of 18,000 had been educated and commissioned through the military educational system.²⁸

OTTOMAN MILITARY EDUCATION

The Imperial Military Academy in Istanbul was the final educational destination for young men from the provinces. By the time students arrived in the capital they had spent up to nine years in the Ottoman military education system without expense to their families. Boys six to eight years old would first attend a primary school in their town or village for a period of three years. They were taught to read and to write in their native language (Arabic, Kurdish, Greek, or Turkish), followed, when necessary, by instruction in spoken Turkish. All students were taught the rudiments of Arabic grammar. They received Islamic religious instruction, learned basic math skills, and were taught physical fitness drills and basic hygiene.²⁹

Military middle schools were located in larger provincial towns and all provincial capitals. Each town of 500 houses was supposed to warrant a middle school, a goal that was generally met in the final Ottoman decades. The instructional curriculum changed at the middle-school level. Students not only studied Arabic and Ottoman Turkish grammar, reading and writing, and math but they also received instruction in engineering, record keeping, geography, Islamic history, spoken Turkish, and French.³⁰ Students received limited religious instruction at the beginning of the first year, but as Benjamin Fortna has demonstrated, the religious and ideological worldview of the Ottoman State permeated all government education. At higher levels the curriculum became increasingly practical and scientific. In 1901 there were 507 students enrolled in the Damascus military middle school, 740 in Baghdad, and thousands more in provincial towns throughout the empire.³¹

Military preparatory schools were open in every provincial capital by the 1890s. The average literate Ottoman in 1905 had probably passed through the system, and admittedly unreliable statistics from the period record literacy rates increasing from low single digits to above 10 or 15 percent. In the late 19th century, preparatory school

graduates were considered highly educated in most countries, including the Ottoman realms.

The journey to distant schools was arduous. For Ja'far al-ʿAskari, future Iraqi prime minister, the journey from Mosul to attend the Baghdad military preparatory school took days sailing downriver on the Euphrates on a large raft made from inflated animal skins. The journey from Baghdad to the Istanbul military academy took weeks, first by land to Aleppo and Alexandretta and then by steamship to Istanbul.³² By the first decade of the 20th century, students traveled by train. They arrived at the military academy, where cadets from the Balkans, the Turkish regions, Libya, Yemen, Syria, Iraq, and Kurdistan lived and studied together.

The military preparatory schools were not the only path to the imperial academies. There was also the Tribal School in Istanbul (Aşhret Mekteb-i Hümayunu), which recruited the sons of influential nomadic and rural families. The school boarded boys from the provinces and provided a more highly structured curriculum than the provincial schools. The larger provincial schools boarded some students, but most lived with their families. The Tribal School, by contrast, operated in the imperial capital and virtually imprisoned students within the school compound. Boys from the un-governed frontier regions attended by nomination, and once at the school they underwent a “civilizing” process to turn them into loyal Ottomans. After arriving in Istanbul by land and steamship from Iraq, Yemen, the Syrian desert, Hijaz, or Libya, boys were normally greeted in a special ceremony attended by imperial dignitaries.³³ Tribal School students received a much heavier dose of basic religious instruction and behavioral conditioning than students in the regular preparatory schools.³⁴ They received remedial schooling in reading, writing, and languages, to compensate for their lack of preparation relative to other provincial students. Most of the provincial middle schools and some preparatory schools also offered remedial courses of study, however, an obvious nod to their function as laboratories of state integration and social leveling.

Cadets at the military academy began an intensive three-year education culminating in their commission as Ottoman military officers. The academy curriculum followed and refined the practical scientific character of the military middle and preparatory schools. Military drills, field medicine, surveying, fortifications, reconnaissance, and communications were added to the study of French, German, and Russian, geography, and math.³⁵ Ottoman, Islamic, and European history was taught, and students prayed together daily, but there was no study of Islamic sciences or legal theory offered. Sixty to seventy percent of the students came from the Anatolian, Turkish, and Balkan regions, but Sultan ʿAbd al-Hamid was anxious to increase representation of the non-Turkish provinces and actively recruited young men from the Arab and Kurdish regions. A retired Arab-Turkish officer later described the policy as part of the sultan’s efforts to “draw the people closer to himself.”³⁶

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Ramadan Shallash benefited greatly from the integrationist policies of the Hamidian era.³⁷ He was born around 1879, a son of the shaykh of the upper Euphrates tribe al-Bu-Saraya. His father sent him to attend the first class at the Tribal School, from which he graduated in 1898. Shallash may have been an old student upon his arrival in

Istanbul, and he certainly would have needed the specialized remedial curriculum of the Tribal School. After his five-year course of study, with its emphasis on religion, Ottoman history and culture, and basic reading and writing skills, he may still have had difficulty competing on an equal footing with military academy students, many of whom were younger than he and had already received eight or nine years of intensive schooling to his five years.³⁸ Sultanlic favor and imperial affirmative-action policy may have played a role in ensuring that students like Ramadan graduated, though nearly 10 percent of students washed out of the Imperial Military Academy.³⁹

There is no evidence in his fragmentary biography that the experience of the Tribal School or military academy embittered Shallash. He served the Ottoman army well into the Great War; composing an autobiographical entry fifty years later, he used by then deeply unfashionable lofty honorific titles to refer to the Ottoman State and its sultan.⁴⁰ He eventually graduated and was commissioned a captain (*yüzbaşı*) in the Ottoman army. Once again Shallash may have benefited from sultanlic favor or imperial policy favoring the sons of rural shaykhs. The average graduate would have been a twenty-year-old second lieutenant (*mülazım-ı sani*), while Shallash claimed to be commissioned as a captain at graduation and could have been as old as thirty. He was soon dispatched to Libya to fight the Italian invasion of that Ottoman province. There he met, or become reacquainted with, the three most prominent commanders of the defense, all provincial products of the Ottoman education system: ‘Aziz ‘Ali al-Misri, Enver Paşa, and Mustafa Kemal Paşa.⁴¹ Other young officers such as Sa‘id al-‘As, Fawzi al-Qawuqji, Yasin al-Hashimi, and Ja‘far al-‘Askari were probably already known to Ramadan from his eight years of schooling in the imperial capital.

After the Italian occupation of Libya, Ramadan Shallash fought in the first Balkan war of 1912, where he commanded a unit of Palestinian soldiers.⁴² His early Great War experiences are unclear. In the 1950s he claimed that he joined Sharif Husayn’s revolt upon its declaration in 1916 and received a command appointment from Husayn. Whatever the case, Ramadan clearly maintained good and admiring relations with his Ottoman comrades into the 1920s and 1930s, and he publicly evoked Ghazi Mustafa Kemal as an example while mobilizing Syrian villagers to revolt against France in 1925. By the end of the war Shallash had returned to his home region and tribe near Dayr al-Zur. University of Chicago orientalist and archeologist James Henry Breasted reported that in 1919 he was on the payroll of the Arab government in Damascus and was actively channeling those funds and whatever resources he had to Kemal’s rebels in Antatolia.⁴³ Between 1920 and 1941, Shallash took part in continuous battles against the French and British colonial military forces in regions that became part of Syria, Turkey, and Iraq.

Yasin al-Hashimi was a better known product of the Ottoman military education system. A two-time Iraqi prime minister, he served with distinction in the Ottoman army, joined Faysal in Damascus after the Ottoman defeat, traveled to Baghdad, and occupied a major role in Iraqi interwar history until his death in 1937.⁴⁴ Al-Hashimi was born in 1884, the son of a neighborhood headman (*mukhtār*) in Baghdad. Neighborhood headmen, then and now, are the bottom rank of local officials. A headman would, however, be well acquainted with the potential benefits of government education and higher employment, and al-Hashimi senior enrolled all three of his sons in subsidized, tuition-free local military schools. Yasin attended military middle and preparatory schools in

his native city, and after eight or nine years, at the age of eighteen, he traveled to the imperial capital to begin study at the military academy.⁴⁵

Yasin al-Hashimi completed his studies near the top of his class after three years, around 1902. He was immediately selected to attend the general staff college (Erkân-i Harbiyye Askeriyye) for an additional two years, an honor accorded to the top cadets. While the military academy enrolled over 1,000 and graduated 500 or more cadets per year, the staff college enrolled fewer than fifty students at any given time.⁴⁶ Among al-Hashimi's classmates were Mustafa Kemal, who graduated alongside him from the staff college in 1905 in a class of fewer than twenty officers, and 'Aziz 'Ali al-Misri, who had graduated the previous year and was posted to Macedonia.⁴⁷ Yusuf al-'Azma graduated from the staff college the following year in 1906. All were secret members of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP).⁴⁸ Al-Hashimi was sent to Mosul, and Kemal was sent to Damascus, where he started the first CUP-affiliated secret society in that city. Yusuf al-'Azma, later minister of war in Faysal's short-lived Damascus government, and first martyr of the French Mandate at the Battle of Maysalun, was sent to Germany for further training. He became the supreme symbol of interwar Syrian Arab patriotism and is widely believed to have joined the Arab revolt, but he actually served as a decorated Ottoman frontline officer until October 1918. As young staff officers, among their first assignments was to teach in the provincial military schools from which they had come, a duty each seems to have fulfilled. The young staff officers hailed from mostly modest backgrounds and served as role models to students from their regions.

Yasin al-Hashimi spent the next thirteen years, until the end of 1918, in Ottoman service. He was a member of several secret political organizations during this period, including the CUP and al-'Ahd, the grouping of young Ottoman officers that came to be associated with the Arab movement.⁴⁹ Later nationalist myth claimed that the CUP was a "Turkish" club and al-'Ahd was an "Arab" club and that each served as the seedbed for Turkish and Arab nationalist movements. Both organizations, however, had Arab, Turkish, and Kurdish military students and young officers among their ranks, and none of the secret societies had the doctrinal and ideological rigidity or the ethnic chauvinism later claimed for them. 'Aziz 'Ali al-Misri, founder of al-'Ahd, later reported that the aim of al-'Ahd was to foster Ottoman unity and *heal* rifts between Arab, Anatolian, and Balkan officers.⁵⁰ Al-Hashimi's various secret memberships seemed not to have harmed his career, and in 1914 he was appointed a staff officer of a division in Syria. He then served as chief of staff in the army corps that defended Gallipoli under Mustafa Kemal and later fought as a successful field commander against the Russians in eastern Anatolia and in the final defense of Palestine against British and Arab revolt forces. By this time, al-Hashimi was an Ottoman major general.⁵¹

Al-Hashimi escaped the British capture of Dar'ā, near today's Syrian-Jordanian border, in command of an Ottoman column that slipped away from the city. He was wounded on the 100-kilometer retreat to Damascus and went into hiding with other Ottoman soldiers after the total collapse of the defense. Nuri al-Sa'id, 'Ali al-Jawdat, and Jamil al-Midfa'i, former Ottoman officers from Iraq who had joined Faysal, searched Damascus until they found al-Hashimi and persuaded him to join the new government of Amir Faysal. Al-Hashimi had rejected a number of earlier entreaties to abandon the Ottoman forces and join the revolt. In October of 1918, however, there seemed to be no Ottoman State left to serve, and former officers had few options. Having found

al-Hashimi, his old comrades and adversaries probably had little difficulty persuading him to join them.⁵² Faysal named al-Hashimi military chief of staff and he set about raising guerilla fighters to counter the looming French threat from Lebanon. Al-Hashimi never reconciled to British and French occupation of the former Ottoman realms, and he quickly ran afoul of Faysal and his British sponsors, a situation that changed little until his exile from Iraq in 1936.

Sa'ïd al-ʿAs, whose death in combat opens this article, belonged to a slightly younger generation of Ottoman officers. He was born in modest circumstances in 1889 in Hama.⁵³ He attended the Damascus military middle and preparatory schools and then went to Istanbul, where he graduated from the military academy as a second lieutenant in 1907. He was immediately posted to Damascus, where he taught a year in the military preparatory school he had attended. There al-ʿAs met Mustafa Kemal, who was posted to the school and 5th Army headquarters between 1905 and 1907. As noted, Kemal also took part in the first Damascus chapter of the secret society *Watan*, a constituent part of the Committee of Union and Progress.⁵⁴

In 1908, al-ʿAs was accepted to the staff college and returned to Istanbul. In the imperial capital he witnessed the 1908 Constitutional Revolution and graduated a staff officer in 1910.⁵⁵ Between 1911 and 1913 he fought in the Balkan wars, first against guerilla forces, under the command of ʿAziz ʿAli al-Misri, and finally against the regular armies of the Balkan states. Al-ʿAs later noted that his views on the effectiveness of guerilla warfare were formed in this period. In 1913 he became the director of the military preparatory school at Damascus under the command of Yasin al-Hashimi, who inducted him into the secret society of al-ʿAhd.⁵⁶

Al-ʿAs' memoirs and his few chroniclers are mostly silent about his Ottoman wartime service. He fought the Russians in eastern Anatolia and took part in the defense of Gallipoli in 1915.⁵⁷ The following year he was posted to Syria, and in 1917 he was tried and convicted for his political activities, which included writing pseudonymous articles critical of the Ottoman government. The court martial took place at the summer headquarters of Cemal Paşa at Aley in Mount Lebanon. Al-ʿAs was sentenced to hang, like the others tried at Aley, but his sentence was commuted, and he spent six months in prison in Aley and one year at the citadel in Aleppo. He was released the day Faysal arrived in Aleppo in October 1918.⁵⁸ Upon his release from prison, Sa'ïd al-ʿAs ended his career as an Ottoman officer and began a two-decade career as a legendary guerilla fighter. Between 1918 and his death in Palestine in 1936 he fought in armed revolts and participated in politics in Syria, Lebanon, Anatolia, Transjordan, Iraq, and Palestine.

Products of the Ottoman educational system, plucked from their towns and villages, were posted to their original provinces as a matter of policy. They served as active duty officers and often as instructors at the same preparatory schools from which they had graduated years earlier. From the 1890s until 1918, they joined secret political societies, which focused on opposition to a sclerotic political system and the preservation of the Ottoman State. The military educational system was the best and most comprehensive education available, and its student-officers were highly politicized and sensitive to the failings and vulnerabilities of the government they served. The system created a class of people of modest origin deeply committed to the preservation of the state and its symbols: the caliph and sultan, the glorious and historic cities, and the greatest and last unconquered and uncolonized bastion of Islam.⁵⁹

After the Great War, Britain and France occupied most of the Ottoman realms. Many former Ottoman officers chose to go on fighting, either in their Turkish, Arab, or Kurdish home provinces or in the places they had last served or in some cases, in many regions, one after another, through the 1920s, 1930s, and even later. Tens of thousands of former Ottoman conscripts joined them. They invoked the bonds developed through schooling, collective experience, and the suffering of the final Ottoman decades, in their conceptions of what should emerge from the ruins of the Ottoman imperial order and the struggle against the colonial occupation of their homelands.

POSTWAR INSURGENCY

The Great War brought the end of the Ottoman Empire after more than six centuries. Ottoman statesmen, many of whom were products of the military educational system, entered the war hoping to reverse the defeats of the recent past.⁶⁰ Few in Britain or France expected to encounter serious resistance from the Ottoman forces, and the public of each country took the Ottoman entry into the war as something of a joke. Newspapers and cartoons mocked the alleged backwardness and disorganization of the Ottomans.

The Ottoman State mobilized nearly three million men between 1914 and 1918. Contrary to the expectation of the French and British high commands, the Ottoman military proved a formidable opponent, and the Entente powers suffered notable defeats at Gallipoli, Iraq, and elsewhere. The British army and its allies of the Arab Revolt finally captured Damascus in October 1918 after a difficult eighteen-month march from Egypt. Mustafa Kemal—Ottoman general, provincial product of the military education system, and hero of the defense of Gallipoli—commanded an orderly retreat from Damascus to just north of Aleppo, with the intention of regrouping for other battles against the Entente. Ramadan Shallash returned to Dayr al-Zur. Yasin al-Hashimi, wounded, went into hiding in Damascus. Sa'īd al-ʿAs was in jail in Aleppo. Hundreds of thousands of soldiers began the long walk home to their villages and towns across a devastated and famine-stricken landscape.

The sultan's government signed the armistice, and the allied partition of the Ottoman realms proceeded. British forces occupied Syria, Iraq, and Palestine. French forces occupied southeastern Anatolia and the Syrian coastal strip, soon to be called Greater Lebanon. Forces of the Arab Revolt began to set up a British-supported government in Damascus. Italian forces moved into south-central coastal Anatolia, and Greek forces landed at Izmir and marched east.

The armistice and allied partition was not only the end for the Ottoman Empire, but it was also the beginning for the various insurgent movements. The first Societies for the Defense of National Rights (*Mudafa'at al-Huquq*) formed in those regions under threat of partition or attachment to some other entity. Renegade Ottoman officers convened a series of congresses to organize resistance to the allied occupation. The congresses and the successful armed resistance movement they fostered have been written into the official history of the Turkish Republic as marking both the birth of the Turkish nation-state and the final break with the Ottoman past. Yet the proclamations, contemporary writings, and actions of many participants suggest nothing of the kind: the nation to be saved was a vaguely defined collection of Ottoman Muslims under continuous threat from local and international forces of European imperialism.⁶¹

In 1919 and 1920, organized opposition movements and armed resistance emerged in all the former Ottoman provinces. In October 1918 the Ottoman governor of Damascus surrendered to the forces of the British army and the Arab revolt led by Faysal ibn Husayn. The vast majority of Arab Ottoman officers had remained in Ottoman service through the war, but a contingent of former Ottoman officers had joined Faysal's revolt either by choice or after capture by the British or Arab forces.⁶² These officers bore the responsibility of creating an effective guerilla force. But once the war ended and Faysal arrived in Damascus with his staff of Arab officers, he attracted other defeated and suddenly unemployed veterans. Former soldiers, both comrades and adversaries, doubtlessly hoped that Faysal would be the person to salvage something from the disaster and wreckage of the war, as Mustafa Kemal and others were beginning to do in Anatolia.

The bonds formed by education and service overcame any lingering bitterness over who had joined the revolt and who had remained in Ottoman service through the war. Many war veterans of modest origin joined Faysal and were welcomed despite having fought against the Arab Revolt only months earlier. Faysal appointed Yasin al-Hashimi chief of staff and Yusuf al-ʿAzma minister of war. Al-ʿAzma was a rarity among Ottoman officers because he came from a landowning notable family of Damascus rather than from the usual modest background. As a decorated and loyal Ottoman general from Damascus, he was an obvious choice for minister of war.

Damascus' big landowners and the Ottoman civic elite of the city viewed Faysal and his officer supporters with suspicion. Some saw Faysal as a traitor against the Ottoman caliphate, some worried that he and his officer followers would upset the status of the notable families in politics and economic life, and some considered him a stooge of the British with poor nationalist credibility. At least a few influential Damascenes quietly welcomed the French who came to end Faysal's short-lived government eighteen months later, by which time Yusuf al-ʿAzma was dead on the field of battle and no longer able to help Faysal calm the nerves of Damascus' leading citizens.⁶³

Faysal's government, supported first by British subsidy and second by ex-Ottoman junior officers and nationalist activists, quickly attracted the hostile attention of France. As Faysal scrambled desperately during 1919 to ensure continued British support and to mollify French government officials, his followers in Damascus and the wider region began to organize on the model of the resistance emerging in Anatolia. Popular Committees in opposition to French occupation and partition formed, echoing the organizing efforts of the Defense of Rights committees in Anatolia and eventually focusing their ire on Faysal himself.⁶⁴ Armed revolts emerged in the ʿAlawi coastal region under the leadership of Shakh Salih al-ʿAli and in the countryside of Aleppo under former Ottoman officer Ibrahim Hananu. Both Hananu and Salih al-ʿAli drew weapons and support from Kemal's Anatolian insurgents and from officers in Faysal's government, and Yusuf al-ʿAzma toured the northern regions at least once before the end of Faysal's government.

Saʿid al-ʿAs participated in battles all over the region that became southern Turkey and northern Syria. He fought first alongside Ibrahim Hananu after his release from prison and then went to the mountain districts west of Damascus, where he helped to organize a popular war council and a guerilla campaign against the French occupation of Zabadani, Baalbek, and other areas in what became the State of Greater Lebanon.

Faysal soon began to lose the support of the veteran officers. Some later ridiculed Faysal and the Hashimites as fools for abandoning the Ottoman State and joining the British, because Ottoman rule, for all its iniquities and injustices, had been better than partition and domination by the European imperialists.⁶⁵ In March 1920, the Syrian National Congress met in Damascus and proclaimed Faysal king almost in spite of himself. Iraqi activists held a joint congress in Damascus calling for an independent Iraq under the rule of Faysal's brother 'Abdallah.⁶⁶ Faysal had briefly returned to Damascus to attend the congress after petitioning one European capital after another for help against increasingly truculent French demands. The congress, with a clear view of armed revolts and events in Anatolia, Syria, and Iraq, proclaimed a unified Syria, including Palestine, rejecting the claims of the Zionists and calling for an end to the government of military occupation. Their actions were more radical than Faysal desired or than the French would tolerate.⁶⁷ Guerilla conflicts against France continued in the northern coastal region and on both sides of the eventual border with Turkey. Both the coastal movement led by Salih al-'Ali and the Aleppo insurgency led by Ottoman officer Ibrahim al-Hananu received weapons and inspiration from Kemal and the movement he led. In late 1919 Mustafa Kemal addressed a proclamation to the Syrians:

Respected Brothers,

I speak to you with a beseeching voice, emanating from a heart full of sorrows, caused by the oppression, torment and treachery of the enemy, and the divisions between the sons of one religion . . . Let us put an end to this misunderstanding, and point our arms towards the traitors who wish to tear up Islam . . . Our mujahidin [Muslim warriors] will very soon be the guests of their Arab brothers, and by their union they will conquer and destroy their enemies. Long live our brothers in religion and may the enemy be conquered.

Mustafa Kemal came to be the father of the Turkish Republic and paragon of militantly secular Turkish nationalism. But the proclamations of 1919 subvert the official story and reveal much about the durable appeal of liberation movements led by former Ottoman officers. Kemal repeated the familiar ideological pillars of the Ottoman military educational system in evoking the language of Ottoman patriotism and the duty to defend Muslim lands. A leaflet distributed in both Aleppo and Damascus in late 1919 read in part:

We do not want to have a war with foreigners.

We do not want to have a foreign Government in our country.

We shall defend the rights of our nation until death, in order to avoid its fall into the hands of the foreigners.

We wish to join together the parts [of the Ottoman State] against Wilson's principles.

Let everyone keep to his work and business. Our aim is justice.

We shall put to death without mercy everyone who stands against what we have already mentioned, whether he be a Muslim or a Christian.

The Muslims who love our Sultan, have a right to the Caliphate.

Our nation have taken up arms for this cause, from east to west . . .⁶⁸

The French government considered the Sykes–Picot Agreement of 1916 with Britain binding on the postwar Middle East and the British promises to Faysal and his father of no consequence. In November 1919, threatened by a breach in Anglo–French relations, the British government removed the subsidy and British military force supporting Faysal's government. Government functionaries claimed fiscal strain in their correspondence

with Faysal, but the actual cause was French pressure. Six months later, after continuous guerilla fighting on the border with the French-occupied coastal region, newly named Greater Lebanon, a French army marched east to Damascus and defeated a ragtag army on the plain of Maysalun just east of Damascus. The quarters of Damascus had been emptied of young men as crowds walked west, some armed only with swords or sticks, to meet the mechanized French column. Several leading war veterans, including Minister of War Yusuf al-ʿAzma, were killed during the battle.⁶⁹

As France prepared to occupy Syria in June 1920 and claim the Mandate promised by Britain and agreed to at the peace conference, a massive armed revolt erupted in British-occupied Iraq. Ramadan Shallash had left for the Euphrates region from Aleppo in late 1919. Yasin al-Hashimi had convened a war council, probably against the wishes of Faysal, and appointed Shallash military governor of the district of Raqa and the Euphrates.⁷⁰ Shallash met with Hananu in the countryside of Aleppo and proceeded to defeat a British garrison and occupy the upper Euphrates town of Dayr al-Zur in January 1920. When Faysal, then seeking diplomatic support in Europe for his new government, was informed that the town had been captured in the name of the Arab government, he disavowed the action and instructed his brother Zayd in Damascus to repudiate and initiate arrests against the “rebels.”⁷¹

Shallash’s capture of the garrison and the threat of a wider uprising led British authorities to jail Yasin al-Hashimi in Palestine. Both French and British officials feared al-Hashimi could become the leader of an insurgency on the model of Mustafa Kemal. Allenby had already resolved to withdraw from Syria in advance of France, because he feared an outbreak and wanted to avoid being forced to combat a nationalist insurgency alongside French forces. When the French refused to take custody of al-Hashimi, Allenby ordered his release, noting publicly that he was complying with a French request.⁷² Once back in Damascus, both al-Hashimi and Yusuf al-ʿAzma complained bitterly that they faced an impossible task in organizing defense, made all the more difficult by Faysal’s refusal to seriously contemplate and prepare for military confrontation.⁷³ While Faysal looked in vain to his British former patrons for help, the officers looked to the example of Mustafa Kemal in Anatolia.

In Baghdad, news of Shallash’s capture of Dayr al-Zur barely preceded news of the Syrian and Iraqi national congresses in Damascus. The people of Baghdad were wildly excited by both events, but the protests did not immediately threaten British control. In the months that followed, a major revolt, inspired by events at Dayr al-Zur and other former Ottoman lands and led by ex-Ottoman Arab officers and war veterans, spread along the river towns from the north to the south of the country, nearly leading to a British evacuation and to a major crisis of confidence in London. A secret telegram noted that “we now require an army to hold Mesopotamia as large as that required to take it from the Turks.” Forces of the government of India and the RAF eventually suppressed the insurgency, as “countless towns and villages were destroyed.”⁷⁴ Air power served as the principal tool of counterinsurgency, and villages along the rivers were bombed and strafed from the air. The rebellion and costly suppression led to a British effort to draft Faysal as king of Iraq, a job he evidently welcomed after his expulsion from Syria.⁷⁵

Three months earlier, in March 1920, the Syrian National Congress had declared the Zionist colonization of Palestine illegitimate and Palestine an indivisible part of united

Syria. In the course of the Nabi Musa procession on Easter Sunday, 4 April 1920, battles broke out between Arabs and Jews in Jerusalem. British intelligence blamed an impassioned speech from ‘Arif al-‘Arif with inciting the crowd. Al-‘Arif was from a Jerusalem family and edited the nationalist newspaper *Suriya al-Janubiyya*. He had been educated in literature in Istanbul and served as an Ottoman army officer during the Great War. In 1915 he was captured by the Russians in eastern Anatolia and spent three years in a Siberian prison camp, where he published a newspaper and learned Russian and German.⁷⁶ As the Nabi Musa procession paused, he urged the crowd to resist the injustice of British and Zionist occupation and partition of their country. A portrait of recently crowned King Faysal was on display. Al-‘Arif soon fled to Damascus, where he joined his fellow former officers Yasin al-Hashimi and Yusuf al-‘Azma in the Battle of Maysalun.

The countryside and region generally was already in a state of unrest, and raids on Zionist settlements and British garrisons had taken place in the area between the French and British zones. Fighting and demonstrations spread within the region and lasted several days. British inquiries into the disturbances reported that while authorities had promised just rule, Palestinians were well aware of Zionist intentions, expressed widely in newspapers in Europe and reported in the Arabic press, to displace the indigenous populations and take full possession of the country. A month before the uprising, Israel Zangwill proclaimed in a widely publicized speech in London, “If you shirk exodus, you are confronted by Numbers. Palestine contains 600,000 to 700,000 Arabs . . . Are we literally to re-create Palestine and then to be told it belongs to the ignorant half-nomadic tribes who have planted their tent poles or their hovels there?” Four days before the riots, the Zionist Executive wrote to the Foreign Office about Zangwill: “We are aware that these utterances, which cannot fail to obtain wide publicity, are likely to exercise a disturbing influence on the situation in Palestine.”⁷⁷

The struggles of 1920 continued in all the former Ottoman realms under colonial rule. The Anatolian resistance emerged victorious but in the process was forced to limit the support for former comrades in the British and French Mandates. Yasin al-Hashimi followed his brother Taha and tried to rejoin the Ottoman army in early 1921.⁷⁸ Taha al-Hashimi had ended the war as a colonel in Yemen. Between 1919 and 1920, he traveled from Yemen to Istanbul, then Syria, then back to Istanbul, and spent parts of 1920, 1922, and 1923 as an officer in the Ottoman army, mostly on active duty in the regions of Mosul and Aleppo. Taha was the likely liaison between Mustafa Kemal, Yasin al-Hashimi, and Ramadan Shallash. Taha then traveled to Baghdad and took a job in Faysal’s Iraqi government.⁷⁹ Yasin tried to rejoin the Ottoman army but was refused on the grounds that he had exceeded the allowable time out of service since the Armistice. After Maysalun he traveled from Syria, a fugitive from the French, to Iraq, where he held a succession of offices despite his criticism of Faysal and his anti-British views. Sa‘id al-‘As fled the French Mandate and went to work for Amir ‘Abdallah as a police constable in Amman. Ramadan Shallash continued to attack British outposts until mid-1920, when Faysal sent him as an emissary to ‘Abd al-‘Aziz al-Sa‘ud.⁸⁰ After Maysalun, he took up residence in Transjordan as a fugitive from the French Mandate.

Despite the many erasures of colonial and postcolonial nationalist historiography, the Anatolian insurgency provided a model that remained potent for decades.⁸¹ In Palestine,

major uprisings took place in 1921, 1929, and between 1935 and 1937. In Syria and Lebanon, simmering guerilla war continued until the Great Revolt (1925–27) nearly forced the expulsion of France. In Iraq, Faysal imposed a certain resignation on the officers and nationalists, but after his death in 1933, conflict between the colonial power and its opponents reemerged, culminating in the Anglo–Iraqi war of 1941. The war for Palestine (1947–48) was the final battle of the last Ottoman generation and the veterans of the Great War. Everywhere Ottoman army officers of modest origin, war veterans, and ordinary people challenged the colonial settlement of the Middle East until the 1940s.

Ramadan Shallash stayed in Transjordan until the outbreak of the Great Syrian Revolt in 1925. He fought in the revolt and mobilized peasants, nomads, and villagers throughout Syria with a complicated and apparently potent mix of nationalism, popular religious fervor, evocations of Arab honor, Kemalist enthusiasm, and class warfare against big landlords aligned with the French Mandatory government. French intelligence reported that Shallash rode into Christian hamlets in the anti-Lebanon mountains, admonishing the villagers to “make your village like Ankara in 1920 with Ghazi Mustafa Kemal!” Shallash claimed that “plots and tricks forced him to surrender” in 1926, and he was detained in Beirut until 1937.⁸² In 1941, during the Rashid ‘Ali coup and Anglo–Iraqi war, Shallash again led an uprising against the Mandate government near Dayr al-Zur and was captured and returned to jail in Beirut until 1946.⁸³

Sa‘id al-‘As lived in Amman in exile from French Mandate Syria from 1920 until 1925, when he, like Ramadan Shallash and others, returned to fight France during the Great Syrian Revolt of 1925–27. Al-‘As knew of his friend’s Fawzi al-Qawuqji trip with Sa‘id Haydar to Istanbul to seek help from Mustafa Kemal in 1927. Kemal received his old comrades cordially and treated them to a long night of shared memories and heavy drinking but was unable to help, extinguishing the fading prospects for the revolt against France.⁸⁴ After two years of guerilla warfare all over Syria, al-‘As returned to exile in Amman under a French death sentence. In 1936 he traveled with his friend Fawzi al-Qawuqji to Palestine to fight the British and Zionists during the Great Palestine Revolt in 1936. He was killed in battle in October 1936. Al-Qawuqji went on to fight in the Anglo–Iraqi war of 1941 and the war for Palestine in 1948, retiring on a tiny pension to live out his last three decades in a small Beirut apartment.⁸⁵

Yasin al-Hashimi, unlike the Ottoman officers of Syrian origin, rose to the highest offices of the new state of Iraq. Like some among his former comrades, he became an enthusiastic advocate of armed force and the army against internal critics and rebels. He attempted to create a permanent elite of educated, disciplined army officers as the vanguard of the new nation. As prime minister in 1935, two years after Faysal’s death, al-Hashimi ordered the Iraqi army to suppress tribal rebellions in the Shi‘i and Kurdish regions. The rebellions and their suppression closely matched late Ottoman patterns of rural resistance to conscription and revenue demands, followed by army operations and the establishment of local schools and the usually broken promise of government services. Both Yasin and his brother Taha openly admired Mustafa Kemal and maintained close relations with old friends in the Turkish general staff, but al-Hashimi failed in his efforts to emulate Kemal’s achievement, and he was forced to resign in 1936. He died in exile in Beirut in 1937, one year before his friend Kemal.⁸⁶

* * *

Both Turkish and Arab nationalisms came to claim complicated intellectual genealogies stretching far into the past. But in both cases the dominant nationalist strain emerged in the context of Ottoman defeat, collapse, and colonial partition. Revolts everywhere united former Ottoman subjects in struggles against the colonial partition of their country. Insurgent leaders mobilized ideology and language inculcated in the institutions of the late Ottoman education and conscription projects. Popular nationalism emerged in the region as a Turkish-Arabic-Ottoman language of resistance against imperialism and the enemies of the caliph, sultan, and the Islamic religion.

Ottoman state reform followed practices found in all centralizing states. During the 19th century, contact between the state and its citizens increased dramatically, and the state entered domains never before touched. Governments sought to create new forms of loyalty and mass participation in the state, its rituals, and its institutions. Everywhere state education, conscription, and military service were the mechanisms to draw people into the emerging nation. Historians of Europe's transformation long ago demonstrated the links between the rise of the nation-state, mass education, mass conscription, mass politics, and the world wars.⁸⁷ Like the Ottoman State, most European countries exempted the landed and educated classes from compulsory military service, and also like the Ottoman State, most developed a marked preference for an officer corps made up of the rural lower-middle classes. While Eugen Weber's France and George Mosse's Germany survived both world wars, the Ottoman State did not. The peculiar circumstances of Ottoman collapse and partition led to peculiar outcomes. A dozen colonial and postcolonial states emerged from the wreckage of the Ottoman State, but each inherited common Ottoman structures and social classes. All post-Ottoman nationalisms were built on, or responded to, Ottoman habits and structures. By 1914, Ottoman citizens, like their European counterparts, had been generally conditioned to patriotic sacrifice and the idea of membership in vast imagined communities.

By the 1930s, Arab and Turkish intellectuals, in common with nationalist intellectuals around the globe, embarked on a mission to reshape the past to match the present and justify the emerging postcolonial state and its new leaders. Intellectuals in the region agreed that the Ottoman past was a black mark on the present, to be ignored and erased if possible. Cosmopolitan intellectuals like Sati' al-Husri and George Antonius wrote the history of the Arab nation as a story of struggle against an ethnically defined Ottoman-Turkish occupation, followed by a struggle against European betrayal, partition, and occupation—obscuring in the process their own complicated, cosmopolitan Ottoman backgrounds and education. Ziya Gökalp had theorized a Turkish nationalist reinterpretation of his own Ottoman past a decade earlier, ironically creating a guide for his Arab contemporaries. They agreed that the still potent elements of Ottoman identity centering on Islam and the glories of the Ottoman past were obsolete and probably dangerous.

Popular memory everywhere immortalizes the heroes of the last Ottoman generation. They inhabit popular politics and culture from Baghdad to the Balkans, reemerging as exemplars of resistance and militancy in times of conflict. And yet, while Atatürk, Fawzi al-Qawuqji, Izz al-Din al-Qassam, and their more obscure comrades are remembered and reshaped to suit the times, the Ottoman structures that formed them and the world

they made have been willfully forgotten. The ideological needs of the colonial and the postcolonial state made it so.

NOTES

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¹British Government Foreign Office (hereafter FO) 371/20030, Royal Air Force (hereafter RAF) Secret Intelligence Summary, 26 February 1936. The translated text renders "Ottoman State" as "during the regime of the Turkish Government," almost certainly a mistranslation.

²See Abdullah Schleifer, "Izz al-Din al-Qassam: Preacher and Mujtahid," in *Struggle and Survival in the Modern Middle East*, 2nd ed., ed. Edmund Burke III and David Yaghoubian (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 2006), 137–51. Rashid Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity: The Construction of Modern National Consciousness* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 115, explains the significance of al-Qassam in Palestinian history.

³FO 371/20031, RAF Secret Intelligence Summary, 21 October 1920; "Battle Near Bethlehem," *The Palestine Post*, 9 October 1936.

⁴George Antonius' seminal exposition of the emergence of Arab nationalism, for example, has almost nothing to say about the revolts against colonial rule of the 1920s. *The Arab Awakening: The Story of the Arab National Movement* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1938). Compare Ziya Gökalp, *Türkçülüğün Esasları* (Ankara: n.p., 1920), trans. by Robert Devereux as *The Principles of Turkism* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1968), with the proclamations of Mustafa Kemal in 1919, to be discussed in this article. Gökalp claims the wide resonance of "Turkism," while Kemal, at literally the same historical moment, mobilizes ex-Ottoman conscripts with calls to Islamic solidarity and familiar calls for sacrifice for the Ottoman nation.

⁵The best treatment of the ideological underpinnings of late Ottoman education is Benjamin Fortna, *Imperial Classroom: Islam, the State, and Education in the Late Ottoman Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

⁶Dhuqan Qarqut, *Tatawwur al-Haraka al-Wataniyya fi Suriya, 1920–1939* (Beirut: Dar al-Tali'a, 1975). For a corrective, see Aziz al-Azmeh, "Nationalism and the Arabs," *Arab Studies Quarterly* 17 (1995): 1–17.

⁷Gavin E. S. Carney et al., "Imperial Self-Portrait: The Ottoman Empire as Revealed in the Sultan Abdul Hamid II's Photographic Albums," *Journal of Turkish Studies* XII (1988), special issue. See also Selim Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains: Ideology and Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire, 1876–1909* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1998), 151–52.

⁸Library of Congress (hereafter LC), Abdul-Hamid collection, <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/ahii> (accessed 23 February 2011). See also Yıldız Saray Photo Archive, IRCICA, Istanbul. Istanbul University Archival Collection (hereafter IU), *Salname-i Nezaret-i Maarif-i Umumiyye*, h1316 (Administrative Yearbook of the Ministry of Education, 1899). *Mekاتب-i Askeriyye Şakirdanının Umumi, İmtihanlarının Neticeleri*, h1318 (Military School Gazette and Student Log Books, 1901), indicating all enrolled students, their cadet grade level, class standing, and marks in individual courses. I thank Dr. Mesut Uyar for his untiring help in locating and gaining access to these sources. This IU collection is based on the contents of the personal library of Sultan 'Abd al-Hamid in the Yıldız Palace.

⁹Abdul-Rahim Abu Husayn, "'The Lebanon Schools,' (1853–1873): A Local Venture in Rural Education," in *The Syrian Land: Processes of Integration and Fragmentation in Bilad al-Sham from the 18th to the 20th Century*, ed. Thomas Philipp and Birgit Schäßler (Stuttgart, Germany: F. Steiner, 1998), 205–20.

¹⁰See Fortna, *Imperial Classroom*; and Carter Findley, *Ottoman Civil Officialdom: A Social History* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1989), 154–57.

¹¹Deringil, *Well-Protected Domains*, 104–106.

¹²'Abd al-'Aziz Muhammad 'Awad, *al-Idara al-'Uthmaniyya fi Wilayat Suriya, 1864–1914* (Cairo: Dar al-Ma'arif, 1969), 254–56.

¹³Sawsan Agha Kassab and Omar Tadmori, *Beirut & the Sultan: 200 Photographs from the Albums of Abdul Hamid II (1876–1909)* (Beirut: Editions Terre du Liban, 2002), 60.

¹⁴Kassab and Tadmori, *Beirut*, 60; and Antonius, *Arab Awakening*, 41.

¹⁵Selçuk Akşin Somel, *The Modernization of Public Education in the Ottoman Empire, 1839–1908: Islamization, Autocracy and Discipline* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2001), 24–29.

¹⁶Abdul-Latif Tibawi, *American Interests in Syria, 1800–1901: A Study of Educational, Literary and Religious Work* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), 68–69. Thanks to Professor John Meloy for details on Tankiz. The mosque was also the birthplace of the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood. The Syrian government razed and rebuilt the structure after a fire in the 1960s, and today only the tomb and minaret are original. A model of the original building is on display in the Museum of Damascus History adjoining the Syrian National Archives.

¹⁷Somel, *Modernization*, 23.

¹⁸LC, Abdul-Hamid collection, “Statistical abstract of third-year military high schools for adolescents.” This is actually a list with enrollments and opening dates of provincial *idadi askeriyye* schools in 1893, LOT 9519, no. 4, LC-USZ62–81073 (black and white film copy negative).

¹⁹Somel, *Modernization*, appendices 4–6 (curricula of İbtidai, Rüşdiyye, and İdadi schools 1904), 297–309; and Tahsin ‘Ali, *Mudhakkirat Tahsin ‘Ali 1890–1980* (Beirut: al-Mu‘assasa al-‘Arabiyya li-l-Dirasat wa-l-Nashr, 2003), 15.

²⁰Midhat, *Life of Midhat Pasha*, 49–50; and *al-Zawra* (Baghdad newspaper), no. 1, 5 Rabi‘ al-Awwal, 1286 AH (1869), quoted in Abdul-Wahhab Abbas al-Qaysi, “The Impact of Modernization on Iraqi Society During the Ottoman Era: A Study of Intellectual Development in Iraq, 1869–1917” (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 1958), 34.

²¹Qaysi, *Impact*, 58–59.

²²IU, *Maarif Nezareti Salnamesi*, 1316 AH (1898 CE).

²³Ibid.

²⁴Jens Hanssen, “The Birth of an Educational Quarter,” in *History, Space and Social Conflict in Beirut*, ed. Hans Gebhardt et al. (Wuerzburg, Germany: Beirut Orient Institut, 2005). Donald Cioeta, “Islamic Benevolent Societies and Public Education in Ottoman Syria, 1875–1882,” *Islamic Quarterly* 26 (1982): 46–47.

²⁵LC, Abdul-Hamid collection, “Statistical abstract of fourth-year military high schools for adolescents Rusdiyye.” This is actually a list of *rüşdiyye askeriyye* schools in 1893, LOT 9519, no. 1, LC-USZ62–81070 (black and white film copy negative).

²⁶Deringil, *Well-Protected Domains*, 100–101.

²⁷LC, Abdül-Hamid photo collection, “Statistical abstract of fourth year.”

²⁸Merwin Griffiths, “The Reorganization of the Ottoman Army under Abdül-Hamid II 1880–1907” (PhD diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 1966), 115.

²⁹IU, *Maarif Nezareti Salnamesi*, 1318 AH (1901).

³⁰IU, *Mekatib-i Askeriyye*, 1318 AH (1901).

³¹IU, *Maarif Nezareti Salnamesi*, 1318 AH (1901), 1180–84.

³²Tahsin ‘Ali, *Mudhakkirat*, 15. Ja‘far al-‘Askari, *Mudhakkirat Ja‘far al-‘Askari* (Surrey, U.K.: Dar al-Lam, 1988), 25–26.

³³Eugene Rogan, “Aşiret Mektebi: Abdülhamid II’s School for Tribes (1892–1907),” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 28 (1996): 83–107. Rogan’s article is the best investigation of the Tribal School.

³⁴IU, *Mekatib-i Askeriyye*, 1318 AH (1901), 35.

³⁵IU, *Mekatib-i Askeriyye*, 1318 AH (1901).

³⁶Griffiths, “Reorganization of the Ottoman Army,” Annex I, 175–77. Born in Libya and retired in Istanbul, Fehmi Doğrusöz served in combat continuously between 1910 and 1923. Merwin Griffiths interviewed him in the 1950s.

³⁷Jurj al-Faris, *Man Hum fi al-‘Alam al-‘Arabi* (Damascus: Maktab al-Dirasat al-Suriyya wa-l-‘Arabiyya, 1957), 344–45; Sa‘id al-‘As, *Safahat min al-Ayyam al-Hamra‘: Mudhakkirat al-Qa‘id Sa‘id al-‘As 1889–1936* (Jerusalem 1935; reprint, Beirut: al-Mu‘assasa al-‘Arabiyya li-l-Dirasat wa-l-Nashr, 1988), 109; Rogan, “Aşiret Mektebi,” table 1, 88. Shallash is listed in the first graduating class.

³⁸Rogan notes in his article that most students entered the Tribal School between the ages of twelve and sixteen. Shallash’s self-reported birth date of 1869 and his appearance in the first class (1892–98) make him twenty-three years old at the beginning of his eight-year Istanbul education. It is likely that his biographical dictionary entry contains a misprint, and he was born in 1879 or later. Faris, *Man Hum*, 344; and Rogan, “Aşiret Mektebi,” 86.

³⁹IU, *Mekatib-i Askeriyye*, 1318 AH (1901). Seventy-four entering students out of a class of 811 failed and washed out.

⁴⁰Faris, *Man Hum*, 345.

⁴¹Ahmad Djemal Pasha, *Memories of a Turkish Statesman, 1913–1919* (New York: George H. Doran, 1922), 63.

⁴²Faris, *Man Hum*, 344.

⁴³James Henry Breasted, “The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago—A Beginning and a Program,” *American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures* XXXVIII (July 1922): 265. For his Kemalist enthusiasm, see Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, Archives Diplomatiques-Nantes, carton 1704, BR 213, 7 November 1925.

⁴⁴U.K. Colonial Office (hereafter CO), 730/150/06, “Profiles and Assessments,” 1932; and Phebe Marr, “Yasin al-Hashimi: The Rise and Fall of a Nationalist (A Study of the Nationalist Leadership in Iraq, 1920–1936)” (PhD diss., Harvard University, 1966). Peter Wien’s article in this issue of *IJMES* updates the record on al-Hashimi.

⁴⁵Marr, “Yasin al-Hashimi,” 54.

⁴⁶From statistics compiled by Griffiths, “Reorganization of the Ottoman Army,” 105.

⁴⁷The cadet books show class standing and marks of individual cadets. IU, *Mekattib-i Askeriyye*, 1318 AH (1901). Cemal Paşa mentions him with admiration as well as exasperation in his memoir. Djemal Pasha, *Memories*, 60–61.

⁴⁸Phebe Marr interviewed Taha al-Hashimi in 1959. Marr, “Yasin al-Hashimi,” 63. Majid Khadduri interviewed al-Misri in the 1950s in Cairo. Al-Misri confirmed his Unionist membership. See Khadduri, “‘Aziz ‘Ali al-Misri and the Arab Nationalist Movement,” Albert Hourani, ed., *Middle Eastern Affairs*, no. 4 (London: St. Antony’s Papers, No. 17, 1965), 140–63. For Kemal, see Ernest E. Ramsaur, *The Young Turks: Prelude to the Revolution of 1908* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1957), 95. For al-‘Azma, see Adham al-Jundi, *Ta’rikh al-Thawrat al-Suriyya fi ‘Ahd al-Intidab al-Fransi* (Damascus: Matba‘at al-Ittihad, 1960), 168.

⁴⁹Marr, “Yasin al-Hashimi,” 68.

⁵⁰Khadduri, “‘Aziz ‘Ali al-Misri,” 149.

⁵¹CO 730/150/6, “Profiles and Assessments,” Yasin Pasha Al Hashimi, 1932.

⁵²Nuri al-Sa‘id, *Mudhakkirat Nuri al-Sa‘id ‘an al-Harakat al-‘Askariyya li-l-Jaysh al-‘Arabi fi al-Hijaz wa-Suriya, 1916–1918: al-Fariq al-Rukn Nuri al-Sa‘id ‘ala Tullab Kulliyat al-Arkan bi-Baghdad fi Mayis 1947* (Beirut: al-Dar al-‘Arabiyya li-l-Mawsu‘at, 1987). See also Marr, “Yasin al-Hashimi,” 71.

⁵³See Laila Parsons, “Soldiering for Arab Nationalism: Fawzi al-Qawuqji in Palestine,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 36 (2007): 33–48.

⁵⁴Ramsaur, *Young Turks*, 95.

⁵⁵Jundi, *Ta’rikh*, 253–56; and Muhammad Sa‘id al-‘As, *al-Tajarib al-Harbiyya fi Harb al-Thawra al-Suriyya* (Beirut: Dar Fikr li-l-Abhath wa-l-Nashr, 1990). For al-Misri, see Khadduri, “‘Aziz ‘Ali al-Misri,” 147.

⁵⁶Jundi, *Ta’rikh*, 253–54; CO 730/150/6, “Profiles and Assessments,” Yasin Pasha Al Hashimi.

⁵⁷Fayiz Sara, *Sa‘id al-‘As, 1889–1936: Hayatahu-Kifahahu* (Damascus: Wizarat al-Thaqafa, 1993), 35.

⁵⁸Jundi, *Ta’rikh*, 254.

⁵⁹See Hasan Kayali, *Arabs and Young Turks: Ottomanism, Arabism, and Islamism in the Ottoman Empire, 1908–1918* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1997). Many of the memoirs and sources cited in this article attest to these basic themes. See, for example, Cemal Paşa’s memoirs, interviews with Taha al-Hashimi and ‘Aziz ‘Ali al-Misri, and the memoirs of Sa‘id al-‘As, Fawzi al-Qawuqji, and many others. See also the Ottoman history textbooks used in the military academy. Mizanci Mehmet Murat, *Muhtasar Tarih-i Umumi* (Istanbul: Kitabçı Garabet, 1884).

⁶⁰I owe this revisionist insight to the work of Mustafa Aksakal, *The Ottoman Road to War in 1914: The Ottoman Empire and the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

⁶¹Erik-Jan Zürcher, “The Vocabulary of Muslim Nationalism,” *International Journal of the Sociology of Science* 137 (1999): 81–92.

⁶²Dr. Mesut Uyar has demonstrated definitively that officers of Arab origin served with loyalty and distinction in the Ottoman army and that many fought in the first insurgency of the era, the “Turkish War of Independence.”

⁶³Philip S. Khoury, *Syria and the French Mandate: The Politics of Arab Nationalism, 1920–1945* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1987), 98.

⁶⁴James Gelvin, *Divided Loyalties: Nationalism and Mass Politics at the Close of Empire* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1998), 20–22.

⁶⁵Fawzi al-Qawuqji, *Mudhakkirat Fawzi al-Qawuqji*, 2 vols., ed. Khayriyya Qasimiyya (1975; reprint, Damascus: Dar al-Numayr, 1995), 15–20.

⁶⁶Sati' al-Husri, *Yawm al-Maysalun: Safahat min Ta'rikh al-'Arab al-Hadith* (Beirut: Maktabat al-Kishaf, n.d. [ca. 1947]), 83.

⁶⁷Khoury, *Syria and the French Mandate*, 99–105.

⁶⁸Circulars recovered in Aleppo, FO 406/41, no. 191, 2 December 1919. Both were translated into English from the Ottoman original. Kemal's "misunderstanding" was surely the Arab Revolt.

⁶⁹See al-Husri, *Yawm Maysalun*.

⁷⁰Faris, *Man Hum*, 344.

⁷¹British Government, *Review of the Civil Administration of Mesopotamia* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1920), 135.

⁷²FO 371/5033 and FO 371/5034.

⁷³Al-Husri, *Yawm Maysalun*, 123.

⁷⁴For the makeup of rebels forces, see FO 371/5229, 12 July 1920, report of Lt. Col. Leachman, who was killed a month later near Falujah, and the secret telegram on the cost of suppression, 30 August 1920.

⁷⁵U.K., War Office, 33/969, *SECRET: An Examination of the Causes of the Outbreak in Mesopotamia*, October 1920, 25.

⁷⁶FO 371/5119, Interim Report on the Events of 4th April 1920; biographical detail on al-'Arif from Khayr al-Din al-Zirikli, *al-A'lam: Qamus Tarajim li-Ashhar al-Rijal wa-l-Nisa' min 'Arab wa-l-Musta'ribin al-Mustashriqin* (Beirut: Dar al-'Ilm li-l-Malayin, 1990), 3:245–56.

⁷⁷*The Jewish Chronicle*, 27 February 1920, "Zangwill on Weizmann," with cover letter from the Zionist Organization, in FO 371/5117. Zangwill argued immigration alone could never make a Jewish majority in Palestine and that the only solution was the expulsion of the Arabs by force or persuasion. The article was evidently reported in Arabic translation.

⁷⁸CO, 730/150/6, "Profiles and Assessments," Yasin Pasha Al Hashimi.

⁷⁹Taha al-Hashimi, *Mudhakkirat Taha al-Hashimi, 1919–1943* (Beirut: Dar al-Tali'a, 1967), 66–69.

⁸⁰For al-'As, see Jundi, *Ta'rikh*, 254. For Shallash, see Eliezer Tauber, "The Struggle for Dayr al-Zur: The Determination of the Borders Between Syria and Iraq," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 23 (1991): 379.

⁸¹The main Damascus nationalist daily, *al-Muqtabas*, ran a weekly column during the 1920s titled "News from Istanbul," and in April and May 1926 *al-Muqtabas* ran an eight-part, serialized front-page feature titled "Mudhakkirat Mustafa Kamal."

⁸²See Michael Provence, *The Great Syrian Revolt and the Rise of Arab Nationalism* (Austin, Tex.: University of Texas Press, 2005), 116.

⁸³Faris, *Man Hum*, 345.

⁸⁴Professor Khayriyya Qasimiyya, editor of al-Qawuqji's memoirs, related this story to me. Al-Qawuqji's memoirs mention a trip to seek help in Anatolia, but he does not mention his visit with Kemal, although Munir al-Rayyis documents the visit. See al-Qawuqji, *Mudhakkirat*, 115. Munir al-Rayyis, *al-Kitab al-Dhahabi li-l-Thawrat al-Wataniyya fi al-Mashriq al-'Arabi: al-Thawra al-Suriyya al-Kubra* (Beirut: Dar al-Talica, 1969), 93.

⁸⁵Laila Parsons, "Soldiering for Arab Nationalism," 41.

⁸⁶For al-Hashimi's legacy and the circumstances of his death in exile, see the contribution of Peter Wien in this special issue of *IJMES*.

⁸⁷See, for example, Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); George Mosse, *The Nationalization of the Masses: Political Symbolism and Mass Movements in Germany from the Napoleonic Wars through the Third Reich* (New York: H. Fertig, 1975); and Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870–1914* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1976). Khaled Fahmy, *All the Pasha's Men: Mehmed Ali, His Army, and the Making of Modern Egypt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) traces the effect of conscription and military modernization on Egypt.