Introduction

Although this book focuses on events that occurred in Syria[1] between October 1918 and July 1920—the period during which an Arab government ruled in Damascus—I have neither structured it as a narrative account nor intended it to be one. Such narratives have already been written, with greater or lesser success.[2] The purpose of this book is much different: it is an examination of contending constructions of nation and nationalism in early twentieth-century Syria and of the origins and early evolution of mass politics and popular nationalism in the same region. The need for such an investigation becomes evident by juxtaposing two incidents, separated by only a few months, that took place on opposite sides of the Atlantic.

On 20 July 1920, six days after the initial French ultimatum to the Arab government of Amir Faysal and four days before French troops entered Damascus to begin their quarter-century occupation, insurrection erupted in the Syrian capital. Throughout the city, petit-bourgeois mer-

1. I shall be using the term *Syria* to refer to several different geographic areas. Usually, it will refer to the territory under the administration of Occupied Enemy Territory Administration—East (OETA-E). At other times, particularly in discussions of contemporaneous notions of geographic divisions, *Syria* refers to "Syria within its natural boundaries"—the territory that comprises present-day Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Israel, the "Palestinian Entity," the Israeli occupied territories, a small section of the Republic of Turkey south of the Taurus Mountains and the province of Alexandretta, and western Iraq. The reader should be able to determine which definition is appropriate from the context.

2. See, for example, Malcolm Russell, *The First Modern Arab State: Syria under Faysal 1918–1920;* Khairia Kasmieh (Khayriyya Qāsimiyya), *al-Ḥukūma al-ʿarabiyya fī Dimashq bayna 1918–1920;* ʿAlī Sulṭān, *Tārīkh Sūriyya 1918–1920: Ḥukm Fayṣal b. Ḥusayn;* Zeine N. Zeine, *The Struggle for Arab Independence: Western Diplomacy and the Rise and Fall of Faisal's Kingdom in Syria.*

chants, neighborhood toughs, unemployed youths, refugees from the Biqaʿ Valley, and recently demobilized soldiers from the regular Arab army took to the streets, while former members of the prorogued Syrian General Congress, ulama, and political agitators denounced the government that had acceded to French demands from minbars and street corners. Popular leaders raised sanjaks[3] and distributed leaflets that warned of conspiracies threatening the nation and described atrocities committed by French soldiers stationed to the west. Newspapers, printed as broadsheets, taunted the enemy with patriotic bluster: "Tell the Pope, the clericalists, the capitalists, and the politicians who aim at conquest," *al-Kināna* announced in a two-page, bold-faced spread, "that young Syria will never submit to old France."[4] In the quarters of Shaghur and the Maydan, where less than two weeks before residents had disarmed and beaten military policemen who had attempted to enforce the Arab government's despised conscription policy, the same residents now attacked a contingent of troops loyal to the traitorous (*khāʾin*) amir because they believed him to be collaborating with the enemies of the nation.[5]

When the Arab government tried to retake the streets, fighting broke out between regular army units (such as the bedouin and Yemeni troops that had fought alongside the amir during the Arab Revolt) and the population. One group of insurrectionists, shouting anti-Faysal slogans, attacked the royal palace (on the roof of which the amir, anticipating rebellion, had placed machine guns). Another group stormed the Damascus citadel where arms and ammunition were stored and where, the rebels assumed, the government had interned the popular leader Kamil al-Qassab, along with other political prisoners. According to British estimates, over

3. A sanjak consisted of a broad banner which was suspended from a wooden crossbeam. The crossbeam was carried by one man, while two others assisted by holding ropes attached to the bottom of the cloth to ensure that the news or slogan printed on the banner could be read. Sanjaks were usually displayed in areas of heavy traffic, near mosques, or in cemeteries. Ḥasan al-Amīn, *Dhikrayāt, al-Juzʾ al-awwal: Min al-ṭufūla ilā al-ṣibā*,27.

4. MD 4H114/695, "Renseignements," n.d.; MD 4H114/4/691, Cousse to Gouraud, 13 July 1920; MD 4H114/5/282–283, Cousse to Gouraud, 15 July 1920; al-Amīn, *Dhikrayāt*, 27; Iḥsān Hindī, *Maʿrakat Maysalūn*, 59–60.

5. MD 4H114/4/662, Cousse to Gouraud, 8 July 1920; FO 371/5037/E8509/74, Mackereth (Beirut) to FO, 16 July 1920; MD 4H114/5, Cousse to Gouraud, 20 July 1920; FO 371/5037/E8880/80, Mackereth to FO, 23 July 1920; MD 4H60/1, "Bulletin quotidien 1270," 23 July 1920. According to Ghalib al-ʿIyashi, the crowd also called for the downfall of *murrāq* (turncoats) and *mutaʾāmirūn* (conspirators). al-ʿIyāshī, *al-Īḍāḥāt al-siyāsiyya wa asrār al-intidāb al-faransī ʿalā Sūriyya*, 105–106.

100 Damascenes died in the clashes; Faysal himself later estimated 120 killed and 200 injured.[6]

The next day, a similar insurrection, launched by the local committee of national defense and inspired by events in Damascus, broke out in Aleppo. Mobilized by the district governor, the chief of police, and popular leaders, an estimated four thousand men from the mostly lower-class district of Bab al-Nayrab—estimated to be about one-third of the population of the district—attacked the citadel of Aleppo and looted and distributed the weapons found within. A raid by another group of rebels on an arms depot the following morning triggered an explosion that reportedly claimed between five and six hundred casualties.[7]

On the afternoon of 21 July, popular leaders toured the quarters of Damascus, encouraging residents to assemble at Baramki Station to await transportation west to Khan Maysalun, where General Yusuf al-ʿAzma was organizing a stand against the invading French. At Baramki, Shaykh Kamal al-Khatib led evening prayers and, in anticipation of the coming battle, prayers for the dead. Of the seventeen hundred volunteers from one Damascus neighborhood, only seven hundred carried weapons. Many of the volunteers who had earlier resisted conscription into the army of the Arab government now departed for the front, anticipating heroic death in *"al-jihād al-waṭanī."*[8]

6. MD 4H114/5, Cousse to Gouraud, 20 July 1920; MD 4H60/1, "Bulletin quotidien 1266," 20 July 1920; MD 4H60/1, "Bulletin quotidien 1270," 23 July 1920; IO L/PS/10/802/P5841, GHQ to WO, 24 July 1920; Maḥmūd al-Charkas, *al-Dalīl al-muṣawwar lil-bilād al-ʿarabiyya*, vol. 1, 119–121; Asʿad Dāghir, *Mudhakkarātī ʿalā hāmish al-qaḍiyya al-ʿarabiyya*, 122, 139–142; Muḥammad ʿAlī al-ʿAjlūnī, *Dhikrayāt ʿan al-thawra al-ʿarabiyya al-kubrā*,98; Hindī, *Maʿrakat Maysalūn*, 59, 61–62.

7. Jules Kersante, "Syrie: L'occupation d'Alep," 172–173; Dāghir, *Mudhakkarātī*, 139; MD 4H114/9/70SP, Cousse to GCC, 21 July 1920; IO L/PS/10/802.P5841, GHQ to WO, 24 July 1920; FO 371/5039/E10316/38, J. B. Jackson (U.S. Consul, Aleppo), 30 July 1920; MAE L:SL/vol. 33/107–305, Gouraud, "Note au sujet des rapports entre le haut commissionaire de la République Française en Syrie-Cilicie et l'emir Fayçal," 22 September 1920; *al-ʿĀṣima*, 13 November 1919, 6; Sulaymān Mūsā, *al-Murāsalāt al-tārīkhiyya*, vol. 3: 1920–1923, 144. For higher estimates of casualties in Damascus, see FO 371/5040/E11756, Gertrude Bell, 6 August 1920; John de Vere Loder, *The Truth about Mesopotamia, Palestine and Syria*, 78. Insurrections also broke out in Homs and Hama. For details of the former, see P. G. Angelil, "L'occupation d'Homs: Angoisses et délivrance."

8. Interviews with Muhammad Rida al-Khatib, descendant of Kamal al-Khatib (6 January 1990); Kamil Daghmush (2 November 1989) and Abu Ribah al-Jazaʾiri (15 November 1989), veterans of the Battle of Maysalun; Hindī, *Maʿrakat Maysalūn*, 113; Ilyās al-Fāḍil and Rāmiz Ḥīthāwī, *al-Kitāb al-dhahabī lil-mujāhidīn*

Just five months after these events, Stephen P. Duggan of the Institute of International Education delivered an address to the American Historical Association in which he outlined the evolution of nationalism in Syria from the late nineteenth century through the first months of French occupation.[9] Duggan's lecture had what Hayden White, drawing from the work of Northrop Frye, has described as the "pre-generic plot-structure" of tragedy.[10] He thus began by tracing the auspicious origins and early promise of "Arab nationalism" (the nineteenth-century Arab literary renaissance, the appeal of "the principles of liberty, equality and fraternity under a national and representative government"), pursued his narrative through false hopes (the Arab Congress of 1913, the Arab Revolt, the Anglo-French Declaration of November 1918, the King-Crane Commission) and trials (repression by the Committee of Union and Progress [C.U.P.], the defensive politicization of the movement through secret societies, the *seferberlik*,[11] the passion of the Syrian martyrs), and concluded by recounting betrayal and, ultimately, disaster (the wartime agreements, Zionism and the Balfour Declaration, British abandonment and French occupation).[12] Duggan failed to mention the July insurrections in his remarks: since every plot-structure circumscribes and defines the array of options available to the historian—from the questions to be investigated to the selection and organization of data—Duggan could only regard the July events, if he regarded them at all, as irrelevant or anomalous. Insurrectionists who had claimed the title "*thuwwār*" (revolutionaries) subsequently became "extremists," or "the mob" to the infrequent historian who did include them in his or her account.

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al-sūriyyīn; Jān Alexān, "Zaynab fī Maysalūn," *al-Jundī,* 19 April 1960, 32–33. Neither historians nor contemporary observers agree on the number of volunteers who fought at the Battle of Maysalun. Amir Faysal, for example, put the number at two thousand. See "The Case of Emir Feisal."

9. Duggan's speech was later published under the title "Syria and its Tangled Problems."

10. See the discussion of the use of "pre-generic plot-structures" in the writing of history in Hayden White, "Interpretation in History," 51–80.

11. "*Seferberlik*" (literally "travel by land") refers to the suffering endured by Syrians during the period of World War I, including famine and deportation. See L. Schatkowski Schilcher, "The Famine of 1915–1918 in Greater Syria," 229–258.

12. To underscore Duggan's conceptual plan, the editors of *Current History* subtitled his article, "Story of the Allies' Promises, Mustapha Kemal's Ambitions, Emir Feisal's Disappointment, the Franco-British Rivalry and the Zionists in Palestine—French Difficulties in Syria."

Duggan's address is not noteworthy because of its novelty; to the contrary, Duggan's address is noteworthy because it represents one of the earliest examples of the predominant strategy that has been used to emplot the story of nationalism in the Arab Middle East from the *nahḍa* (the Arab literary renaissance of the late nineteenth century) through the mandate period. Not only did Duggan's colleagues—historians and advocates of "the Arab cause" such as T. E. Lawrence, John de Vere Loder, Hans Kohn, Richard Coke, and Elizabeth P. MacCallum—also situate their accounts within the selfsame narrative structure, but after more than seventy years, many contemporary historians of nationalism in the region continue to do so as well.[13] As a result, the various assumptions and inferences derived from the application of this structure—including the tendency to treat the history of nationalism in the Arab world as intellectual (idealist) history and to look to a select group of indigenous elites as the sole originators, carriers, and disseminators of nationalism—are shared by several generations of historians.

Both idealist and elitist assumptions have served to circumscribe historical inquiry. In the process of privileging an essentialized "Arab nationalism" above all other constructions of nationalism, idealist historians have taken the claims of its proponents at face value. This has, in effect, predisposed them to accept the existence of a nationalism that is rooted in an immutable and singular Arab identity—what sociologist Anthony D. Smith would call an Arab *ethnie*.[14] According to Zeine N. Zeine, for example,

> Nationalism has undergone several changes in meaning during the course of its evolution in various states. But if we take into consideration, basically, the racial, cultural, and spiritual elements of nationalism, we find that Arab nationalism is one of the oldest nationalisms in the world. The true birth of Arab nationalism took place with the rise of Islam. . . . What the educated and enlightened Arabs were waking up to [at the turn of the century] was not to Arab consciousness, which had never "slept" but to an independent political life.[15]

13. T. E. Lawrence, "Emir Feisal II: The Sykes-Picot Treaty, Impatient Arabs," *Times* (London), 11 August 1920, 9; T. E. Lawrence, *Evolution of a Revolt;* Loder, *Truth About Mesopotamia;* Hans Kohn, *A History of Nationalism in the East;* Richard Coke, *The Arab's Place in the Sun;* Elizabeth P. MacCallum, "The Arab National Movement." Edward Said makes a similar point but draws different inferences; see *Culture and Imperialism,* 252.

14. Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity,* 19–42.

15. Zeine N. Zeine, *The Emergence of Arab Nationalism with a Background Study of Arab-Turkish Relations in the Near East,* 129–130, 133.

Because the full recovery of the Arab *ethnie* merely awaited the proper speculative advancement and political conjuncture, historians of nationalism in the region have spent an inordinate amount of time attempting to uncover the contributions made by various intellectuals to the "rediscovery" and elucidation of that identity, the chain through which an Arab "protonationalism" and nationalism were transmitted from generation to generation, and the timing of the diffusion of a paradigmatic nationalism throughout the population of the Arab Middle East.

The preoccupation with this narrow range of issues has provided the narrative focus for countless expositions about the "rise of Arab nationalism," including *The Arab Awakening* of George Antonius, perhaps the most famous and influential treatment of the movement's origins and early history.[16] In his work, Antonius cites many of the same predicates and utilizes the same narrative structure as had Stephen P. Duggan almost two decades before. Although briefly alluding to the "false starts" that preceded the authentic evolutionary path followed by the "Arab national movement"—Antonius finds what might be called a "proto-protonationalism" in the Wahhabi movement of Arabia and in the propaganda disseminated by Muhammad ʿAli and his son Ibrahim during their conquest of Syria—his tale really begins with Christian Arab circles whose attraction to nationalism was a natural outgrowth of their affinity with the West and Western ideas; thus, "[t]he story of the Arab national movement opens in Syria in 1847, with the foundation in Bairut [sic] of a modest literary society under American patronage."[17] According to Antonius, in the decades following its initial crystallization and articulation, Arab protonationalism and nationalism traversed communal boundaries and began to percolate through the larger Muslim community.

Although historians writing in the wake of *The Arab Awakening* have generally accepted Antonius's methodological presuppositions, they have continually fussed with the details of his narrative. In contrast to Antonius, Hisham Sharabi and C. Ernest Dawn, for example, have posited very different roots and evolutionary course for "Arab nationalism," counterposing their contention that (in the words of Dawn), "[t]here is convincing evidence that the prevailing ideology of Arab nationalists in the twentieth

16. George Antonius, *The Arab Awakening: The Story of the Arab National Movement*. See also Albert Hourani, "*The Arab Awakening* Forty Years After." For an insightful description of Antonius's milieu and motives, see Edward Said, "Third World Intellectuals and Metropolitan Culture."

17. Antonius, *Arab Awakening*, 13.

century was formed in the 1920s, at the latest, from Islamic modernist roots."[18] Still others, such as Bassam Tibi and Sylvia Haim, have combined the trajectories outlined by Antonius and Sharabi/Dawn, thereby tracing a chain of transmission that synthesizes Christian secularism and Islamic modernism.[19] Whatever the source and the path chosen by historians, however, they have commonly ignored or glossed over fundamental differences that divided proponents of the Arab cause—and the ideologies that they advocated—from one another. As a result, nationalism in the Arab Middle East has achieved a retrospective homogeneity and coherence through their works that it had never achieved in actuality.[20]

The focus placed by historians on the activities of a small elite that played a conspicuous role in the synthesis and dissemination of nationalist ideology has, over the past two decades, been reinforced by the work of historians such as Dawn, Philip S. Khoury, and Rashid Khalidi, who have analyzed the social strata from which many of the earliest advocates of the Arab cause emerged.[21] According to Dawn and Khoury, the strongest proponents of "Arabism" (the precursor to "Arab nationalism") in Syria came from a thin fraction of the urban-based, landowning-bureaucratic notability that "had failed to achieve power and influence commensurate with their expectations."[22] These elites expressed their dissatisfaction by rein-

18. C. Ernest Dawn, "The Origins of Arab Nationalism;" Hisham Sharabi, *Arab Intellectuals and the West: The Formative Years 1875–1914*, 58–60, 64–65.

19. Bassam Tibi, *Arab Nationalism: A Critical Enquiry*, 58–68; Sylvia Haim, *Arab Nationalism: An Anthology*, ix–x, 25–27.

20. One recent effort to revise this ascription of homogeneity is Eliezer Tauber's three-volume history of nationalism in the Arab Middle East from the founding of the early nationalist societies through 1920. Rather than privileging "Arab" nationalism, Tauber identifies four competing nationalist strands: "Arabism," "Syrianism," "Lebanonism," and "Iraqism." While a step in the right direction and a rich source of detail, Tauber's books still maintain the elitist bias of their predecessors. Furthermore, his analysis does not recognize the conditional nature of identity. His substitution of four essential nationalist strands for one is thus reminiscent of attempts made by pre-Copernican astronomers to save the Ptolemaic map of the universe by proposing additional epicycles to explain "irregular" planetary behavior. See Tauber, *The Emergence of the Arab Movements; The Arab Movements in World War I; The Formation of Modern Syria and Iraq.*

21. See in particular C. Ernest Dawn, *From Ottomanism to Arabism: Essays on the Origins of Arab Nationalism;* Philip S. Khoury, *Urban Notables and Arab Nationalism: The Politics of Damascus 1860–1920.*

22. Khoury, *Urban Notables*, 67–68. Coined by Dawn, the term *Arabism* is a rather loose conception. Dawn first used the term in counterposition to the doctrine of "Ottomanism" to which, he maintained, it was a reaction. While both ideologies germinated from the common root of Islamic modernism, Dawn traces the distinct lineage of Arabism from Rifa'a Rafi' al-Tahtawi through Muhammad 'Abduh and

terpreting the doctrine of "Ottomanism" (according to which all localist, religious, and ethnic identities within the empire would be subsumed in a distinctive Ottoman identity), by rejecting the centralization policies of the Committee of Union and Progress, and by supporting policies that promised looser administrative controls that would increase local autonomy.

In contrast to Dawn and Khoury, Khalidi has persistently championed the part played by a circle of professionals, particularly journalists, in the development and promotion of Arabism.[23] This circle comprised the "new middle classes," the "middle strata," or perhaps less agreeably, the "marginal men" whom Western historians of nationalism have frequently credited with defining national goals, sparking nationalist agitation, and organizing nationalist movements throughout the late colonial world. As Khalidi and others demonstrate, those who might be included in this circle were not elite in the sense that they held positions of economic, social, or political preeminence. Indeed, because these professionals often hailed from less than prestigious social backgrounds, scholars of nationalism have frequently attributed their nationalist activities, like those of Khoury's landowning-bureaucrats, to resentments engendered by their exclusion from positions of influence.[24] Whatever their motivation, their relatively modest social background underscores the fact that it was privileged access to Western-style education, characteristic worldview, and self-ascription—determinants that did not necessarily coincide with birthright—that distinguished those who might be included in the category "nationalist elites."

Although some of the findings of idealist historians, when applied with circumspection, have contributed to the understanding of select intellectual currents extant in the Arab world during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the attempt to locate nationalism in the region solely within the domain of nationalist elites is essentially ill-conceived. While the role played by these elites in nationalist politics cannot be dismissed, it

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Rashid Rida, defining Arabism as a doctrine that maintains that the Arabs "were a special people who possessed peculiar virtues and rights." See Dawn, *From Ottomanism to Arabism*, 122–123, 133, 136–140, 142–144, 147–148. Rashid Khalidi has added that Arabism was a "protonationalism rather than full-fledged nationalism" and that Ottomanism and Arabism were not mutually exclusive, but instead were "ideal types" separated by a fluid boundary. See "The Origins of Arab Nationalism: Introduction," ix; "Ottomanism and Arabism in Syria before 1914: A Reassessment," 51, 61–63.

23. See Rashid Khalidi, "'Abd al-Ghani al-'Uraisi and *al-Mufid:* The Press and Arab Nationalism before 1914"; "Society and Ideology in Late Ottoman Syria" (particularly 123).

24. See Elie Kedourie, *Nationalism in Asia and Africa*, 80–92.

was, notwithstanding the formidable powers attributed to "charisma" and to the efficacy of vertical mobilization, far from comprehensive. Because the capacity of these nationalist elites to define and dominate the political field was ultimately circumscribed by the ability of their ideas to articulate with the aspirations of other elements of the population, histories that place nationalist politics solely within the domain of these elites fail because they present only one moment of the nationalist dialectic. They omit the other moment, the domain of popular politics, the manifold attributes of which cannot entirely be ascribed to elite designs. The reintegration into the nationalist dialectic of political movements that included this moment, such as those represented by the July insurrectionists, their predecessors, and their successors, as well as an exposition of the contributions made by these movements to a consequent nationalist synthesis, are the subject of this book.

The book is divided into three sections. In Part I, I discuss how the nature of political organizing changed in Syria before, during, and after World War I. In the wake of these changes, complex and comprehensive political organizations frequently replaced, marginalized, or recontextualized traditional and parochial modes of organization, facilitating the programmatic mobilization of large numbers of constituents. These organizations not only induced the expansion of political participation, they broke the monopoly on authority held by the previously dominant categories of elites and redefined and politicized the ties that bound non-elites to their leaders. As a result, mass politics not only became possible in Syria during the immediate post-World War I period, it became inevitable.

Because the new popular organizations were comprehensive and ideological, and because they incorporated their followers through a variety of customary and original bonds of loyalty, they acted to verify, intensify, actualize, and hone the possible meanings that could be derived from a coherent set of symbols that were frequently distinctive. Those associated with the popular groups thus were not an amorphous "mob," but were rather members of a discretely constituted discursive community that, although very different from the discursive community composed of members of the Arab government and its supporters, must also be considered part of the nationalist tendency. In Part II, I compare the two main nationalist discursive communities that arose in Syria during the Faysali period. Through the use of leaflets, graffiti, newspaper editorials, speeches, rumors, and other texts, I compare the most important symbols ("key symbols") and slogans and the fields in which these symbols and slogans were situated to trace the evolution of these rival discursive communities.

Part III, a discussion of activities such as demonstrations, public celebrations, and theater carried out in public/symbolic space integrates themes that were developed separately in the first two parts. Because ceremonies balance in various proportions celebratory and didactic elements, and because they not only contain symbols but act as symbols, I use the analysis of ceremony to add a new dimension to the understanding of the efficacy of competing integrated symbol systems promoted by political rivals to instruct their political base or to enlist political support. Furthermore, through an analysis of public ceremonies, I outline the unique attributes that allowed the new political formations to attract a mass following and the process by which competing political factions contributed—both intentionally and unintentionally—to the creation of the new political public.

Before these particular analyses can be undertaken, however, it is necessary to address two preliminary tasks. Since, as discussed above, previous histories of the origins and early evolution of nationalism in the Arab Middle East have been too encumbered by idealist, essentialist, and elitist assumptions to present anything but a narrow and distorted glimpse of what they have sought to examine, the first task is to formulate a replacement paradigm that avoids these pitfalls. The second task is somewhat more prosaic: the presentation of an outline of the most important political, diplomatic, social, and economic events that took place in Syria during and immediately following World War I, events that formed the context for the phenomena analyzed in the subsequent chapters.

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The past two decades have witnessed a veritable renaissance in the field of nationalist studies. As a result of the introduction of new methodological strategies (ranging from world-systems and neo-Marxist approaches to postmodern and postcolonial critiques) and the proliferation of interdisciplinary and comparative studies, not only have suppositions previously accepted as certainties been called into question, but essential categories, including "nation," "nationalism," and "national identity," have been subjected to renewed scrutiny and/or subsumed in heretofore unconventional analytical frameworks. Four aspects of the current debate about nationalism and national identity are particularly relevant to the argument presented in this book.

First, for the past twenty years, scholars studying nationalism have approached the object of their research with heightened skepticism. Numerous recent contributors to the field of nationalist studies have directed their efforts toward deconstructing official national histories and deflating the

teleological pretensions of state-supported nationalisms that represent themselves as the inevitable and singular historically inscribed expressions of national destiny. Others have made the hegemonizing process itself, as well as resistances to it, the object of their scrutiny. As a result, phrases such as "the invention of tradition," and "peasants into Frenchmen" have by now become a familiar part of the academic discourse on nationalism. Because of these efforts, the ferreting out of less successful and frequently neglected alternative constructions of nation and national identity, such as those held by groups subordinated on account of social status, gender, class, ethnic or religious affiliation, and/or geographic placement, has become a virtual cottage industry as social scientists and historians have increasingly approached nationalism not as it has been presented in official histories but rather, in the words of Prasenjit Duara, as "the site where different representations of the nation contest and negotiate with each other." [25] This book conforms to this deconstructive agenda.

Second, most observers now agree that nationalisms are "Janus-faced." Like the ancient Roman deity, nationalisms bear two faces, one looking backward to the past, the other looking ahead to the future. On the one hand, nationalist movements represent themselves as the heirs to an ancient and distinctive national history. In keeping with this principle, they reconstruct ("revive") ancient national glories, traditions, symbols, and myths. On the other hand, such movements simultaneously embrace Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment rationalism and its progressive and universalist pretensions, thereby situating themselves within the global modernist project.[26]

It is necessary to add, however, that while nationalist movements combine both the past and the future, uniqueness and universalism, the manner in which they unite these seemingly contradictory elements varies from movement to movement. For some nationalist movements, such as secular Zionism, the modernist component nearly overwhelms the traditionalist component, whose presence in nationalist discourse provides little more than an historical pretext for the modernizing effort. Even the resurrection of the ancient language of Hebrew was largely undertaken for the purpose of differentiating secular Zionists from their more "backward" Yiddish-speaking brethren in the Jewish diaspora. In contrast, other nationalist movements—among which some contemporary Islamicist move-

25. Prasenjit Duara, *Rescuing History from the Nation: Questioning Narratives of Modern China*, 8.

26. See Tom Nairn, "The Modern Janus."

ments must be counted—emphasize their traditionalism, in the process obscuring the fact that the very principles that enable their movements are themselves anything but traditional. As will be seen below, in the aftermath of World War I, rival nationalist factions in Syria effected the reconciliation of the "traditionalist" and "modern" faces of nationalism in disparate ways, in effect constructing distinct but coincident nationalist movements that competed for the loyalty of the Syrian population.

Third, most contemporary scholars also argue that identity is circumstantial. In other words, identity is not permanently fixed ("primordial"), nor does the assertion of a national identity necessarily preclude an individual from asserting other forms of identity. Nevertheless, periods of national crisis and/or mobilization may effect a temporary reification of the boundaries separating self-ascribed national subjects from an external "other" and induce those subjects to privilege the bonds of nation over other attachments.[27] As I shall argue in the following pages, one such period occurred in the Arab Middle East in the immediate aftermath of World War I.

Finally, the shift from primordialist to constructivist theories of national origins—from the belief that nations are natural and ancient entities to the belief that nations are created and a relatively new phenomenon in world history—has inspired a number of studies exploring the social and historical conditions necessary for the emergence and propagation of the nation form and nationalist ideologies. As Benedict Anderson, Ernest Gellner, Etienne Balibar, and others argue, nationalism appertains to a specific framework for the organization of social relations and social reproduction, and by implication, for the diffusion and allocation of power.[28] To understand the emergence of nationalisms in the Middle East or any other region, therefore, it is necessary to step outside the nationalist narrative and to focus on those factors that prompted the transition from a social system that was not conducive to nationalism to one that was apposite to the ideology. This is where I shall begin.

The appearance of nationalisms in the Middle East can be traced to the same preconditions that foreshadowed the appearance of nationalisms in

27. See, for example, Stuart Hall, "Ethnicity: Identity and Difference"; John L. Comaroff, "Of Totemism and Ethnicity"; Duara, *Rescuing History from the Nation*, 55, 65–66; Zdzislaw Mach, *Symbols, Conflict, and Identity: Essays in Political Anthropology*, 15–16.

28. See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*; Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*; Etienne Balibar, "The Nation Form: History and Ideology."

other regions. During the nineteenth century, two interconnected processes induced far-reaching economic, political, and social changes within the Ottoman Empire. First, the accelerating rate of integration of the empire into the periphery of the capitalist world system hastened, albeit unevenly, the ongoing integration of local marketplace economies into a broader market economy.[29] The salience of commercial relations and associated institutions thus increased for many inhabitants of the empire who now produced crops destined for regional and international markets, competed with workers overseas, sold their labor, loaned or borrowed money at usurious rates, and participated as middlemen and factors in foreign trade. The expansion of commercial relations was facilitated by the second phenomenon, the attempts made by the Ottoman government throughout the century to strengthen and rationalize central control. While the regulations promulgated in Istanbul often had desultory and even antithetic effects when applied in the provinces (perhaps the most notorious example being the application of the Ottoman Land Code of 1858), over the course of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries they enabled government on all levels to expand substantially its role in society and its control over the citizenry. Furthermore, because government policies promoted the construction of institutions that were congruent with those of Europe, they abetted the further penetration of European capital and, consequently, the diffusion of commercial relations throughout the empire.[30]

The spread of the market economy and the expansion of state authority effected a variety of well-documented consequences. For example, the twin processes altered the size and nature of cities. Coastal cities and extramural urban areas expanded as a result of shifting economic patterns and migration. As a result of the growth of international trade, Beirut expanded from a "rather insignificant" town of 6,000 in the last quarter of the eighteenth century to a city of 120,000 at the beginning of the twentieth. Although

29. I have borrowed this phrase from Winifred Barr Rothenberg, *From Market-Places to a Market Economy: The Transformation of Rural Massachusetts, 1750–1850.*

30. See, inter alia, Roger Owen, *The Middle East in the World Economy, 1800–1914*, 153–179, 244–272; Moshe Maʿoz, "The Impact of Modernization on Syrian Politics and Society during the Early Tanzimat Period"; Shimon Shamir, "The Modernization of Syria: Problems and Solutions in the Early Period of Abdulhamid"; Gabriel Baer, "Village and Countryside in Egypt and Syria: 1500–1900"; Linda Schatkowski Schilcher, *Families in Politics: Damascene Factions and Estates of the 18th and 19th Century*, 60–86; James Anthony Reilly, "Origins of Peripheral Capitalism in the Damascus Region, 1830–1914."

definitive data are lacking, it appears that the population of Damascus increased 60–100 percent or more between the mid-nineteenth century and 1917.[31] Newcomers to cities frequently settled in neighborhoods (such as the Maydan in Damascus and al-Kallasa in Aleppo) in which ties of patronage were tenuous at best. In addition, the construction and reconstruction of cities (sometimes, as in the case of districts of Cairo and Istanbul, along European lines) and urban renewal efforts (such as those undertaken in Damascus before and during World War I[32]) transformed the nature of urban space, facilitated the breakdown of quarter-based loyalties, and created public areas in which, for example, ceremonies could take place, thereby expediting, to borrow a phrase from historian George L. Mosse, the "nationalization of the masses." [33]

In addition, urbanization and the expansion and intensification of commercial relations encouraged the proliferation of newpapers, literary salons, private clubs, and coffeehouses, through which news was disseminated and information exchanged. In conjunction with the efforts of the Ottoman state to reconstitute the foundations of its legitimacy through the promulgation of official secular and religiously-based Ottomanist ideologies,[34] the literary salons and political clubs that turned political neophytes into political activists; the newpaper headlines that shouted on street corners in Beirut, Damascus, and other cities; and the didactic theatrical productions written for and performed in coffeehouses all contributed to a

31. See Y. Eyup Ozveren, "Beirut"; Schilcher, *Families in Politics*, 5–6; Owen, *Middle East in the World Economy*, 244.

32. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the map of the central rectangle of Damascus was deliberately redrawn, and tramway, telegraph, and telephone systems and municipal lighting were installed. Shari' Nasr, one of the major arteries of Damascus, which during the Faysali period would be used for public demonstrations, was built by the Ottoman administration during World War I; simultaneously, the Ministry of Awqaf ordered the destruction of all houses and other buildings surrounding the Umayyad Mosque, creating huge areas suitable for ceremonial space. See *al-Qibla*, 22 dhu al-ḥijja 1334, 4; Muḥammad Adīb Āl Taqī al-Dīn al-Ḥuṣnī, *Kitāb muntakhabāt al-tawārīkh li-Dimashq*, 1:286. For other physical changes, see Nazīh al-Kawākibī, "al-Maẓhar al-'umrānī li-Dimashq fī al-muntaṣaf al-thānī lil-qarn al-tāsi' 'ashr"; Qatība al-Shihābī, *Dimashq: Tārīkh wa ṣuwar*.

33. See George L. Mosse, *The Nationalization of the Masses: Political Symbolism and Mass Movements in Germany from the Napoleonic Wars through the Third Reich*.

34. Kemal H. Karpat, "The Transformation of the Ottoman State, 1789–1908"; Selim Deringel, "Legitimacy Structures in the Ottoman State: The Reign of Abdulhamid II (1876–1909)."

heightened political atmosphere and the emergence of an ever-widening modern "public sphere" in Syria. It was within this emergent public sphere that a small but steadily increasing number of Syrians at the turn of the century began to contest a multiplicity of ideas and ideologies, including a variety of nationalist ideologies.

The spread of commercial relations and the attempt to impose a uniform apparatus of power throughout the Ottoman Empire concurrently induced the redrawing of boundaries that had previously divided state from civil society. The state imposed new obligations, such as the much-detested policy of conscription, and with varying degrees of commitment and success took charge of functions that had previously been outside its domain, including education and certain types of public works. Government on all levels even supervised a variety of welfare policies, such as the provision of poor relief and agricultural assistance and the payment of pensions to widows and orphans.[35] The expansion of the breadth and magnitude of the jurisdiction of government, and its assumption of responsibilities associated with modern states, contributed to the rending of parochial loyalties and, again in the words of Mosse, helped make "political action into a drama supposedly shared by the people themselves."[36]

Finally, the transformation of Ottoman society, particularly in the second half of the nineteenth century, affected both the role and the composition of local economic and political elites. In coastal cities such as Beirut, for example, the size and economic power of the so-called Christian bourgeoisie swelled as European governments extorted favorable terms for trade and special privileges for their clients from the Ottoman government. In Damascus, Aleppo, and the smaller cities of Syria, the status and prerogatives of those families that both derived their wealth from landed investment and fostered good relations with the central Ottoman administration in Istanbul—the absentee landowning-bureaucratic elite mentioned above—also expanded, eclipsing in status and prerogatives those families that lacked one asset or the other. Concurrently, the "middle strata," composed of the skilled professionals, belletrists, civil servants (those whom Nietzsche aptly called the "state nomads without homes"[37]), and trained military officers whose skills both were made possible by and were neces-

35. These policies (and their breach) are discussed on the pages of such Syrian newspapers as *al-Bashīr* and *al-Muqtabas*.

36. Mosse, *Nationalization of the Masses*, 2.

37. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 40.

sary for the continued expansion of market relations and the administrative apparatus, emerged.[38]

According to most conventional narratives, what attracted one or more of the above categories of elites to Arabism, "Arab nationalism," and the antecedent literary/cultural revival (the previously mentioned *nahḍa*) was the inherent appeal of "the principles of liberty, equality and fraternity"; elective ties of affinity rooted in the common religious affiliation, education, or experience that bonded Middle Eastern elites to their European counterparts; or an instinctive aversion to alien (i.e., Turkish, European) control. However, while it is unarguable that over time many from these social categories did align themselves with various nationalist currents, explanations based solely on deliberate choice or instinctive anti-imperialism are inadequate. What at these narratives fail to take into account is that nationalism is not fare to be selected or rejected freely from an ideological menu, and that while elective ties frequently strengthened the bonds connecting Middle Eastern elites with their counterparts in the West and with derivative nationalist tenets, these ties were themselves adjunctive.

Because the so-called Christian bourgeoisie, the landowning-bureaucratic elite, and the middle strata all originated as the result of the expansion of peripheral capitalism and the attempt to introduce uniform institutions of governance throughout the Ottoman Empire, the specific categories and constellation of categories used by individuals within these groupings to organize their world and order their society naturally cohered with, and in some cases even duplicated, those enjoined by the dominant culture within the *métropole*. These categories sanctioned a multiplicity of fundamentally analogous ideologies—Ottomanism, Arabism, Phoenicianism, and so on—the survival and propagation of which depended on factors external to the ideologies themselves (the degree to which the ideology was institutionalized, the resources available to those who promoted the ideology, and the political environment in which competing ideologies were situated). As a result, the fundamental ideological divide within Middle Eastern society during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries did not separate Ottomanists from Arabists; rather, the fundamental ideological divide separated Ottomanists, Arabists, and their ilk from the remainder of society, whose transformation and integration had been less thoroughly accom-

38. See Leila Tarazi Fawaz, *Merchants and Migrants in Nineteenth Century Beirut;* Khoury, *Urban Notables;* Khalidi, "Society and Ideology"; Ruth Roded, "Ottoman Service as a Vehicle for the Rise of New Upstarts among the Urban Elite Families of Syria in the Last Decades of Ottoman Rule."

plished or whose experience of the transformation was less felicitous. For example, according to historian James Reilly,

> Engineers formed part of a new civil service elite who lived well and earned high salaries. . . . The contrast between these engineers, versed in modern technology, and agricultural laborers in the Ghuta who labored with traditional tools for 3½ piasters a day, underscores the uneven development which had begun to take root in Damascus and Syria by the First World War, eventually creating an historically unprecedented gap between town and country that would color the political and economic history of Syria in the twentieth century.[39]

As will be seen in Parts II and III of this book, many of the nationalist elites that were affiliated with the Arab government of Amir Faysal during the immediate post-Ottoman period themselves recognized the centrality of this cleavage. Not only did they, through discourse and ritual activity, divide the Syrian population between those fit to rule (a select group of notables and a self-identified grouping drawn from the middle strata, the so-called "men of culture" [*mutanawwirūn*, etc.]) and the vast majority of the population that was fit only to be ruled, but the descriptions of the Syrian future that they proffered reflected their Comteanism and technocratic pragmatism:

> [Looking into the future,] I saw . . . the people now turning their attention to the founding of schools and colleges until no village remained without an excellent primary school. I saw prosperity spreading throughout the country and railroads connecting populous villages and farms. I saw farmers using the most modern agricultural techniques, extensive trade, and flourishing industry. Damascus appeared to me to be the most advanced of cities in terms of its construction. Its streets and lanes were paved with asphalt and the Barada River was like the Seine, traversing the city from east to west. On its banks was a corniche on which towering buildings stood. I saw Aleppo: its water, brought by canals from the Euphrates, sustained its gardens and parks and anointed its waterless desert. . . . Factories were founded throughout the kingdom so that the country had no need for manufactured goods from the West, but instead exported its products to China, India, and Africa. Its people grew rich, its power increased, and it moved to the forefront of advanced nations.[40]

These aspirations for the Syrian future cohered with a host of other attitudes, including the advocacy of free market economics, the celebration of "self-made men" (*ʿiṣāmiyyūn*) and "republican motherhood," and denun-

39. Reilly, "Origins of Peripheral Capitalism," 174.
40. *al-ʿĀṣima*, 7 May 1919, 1–2.

ciations of worker indolence and amusements that were pronounced daily in speeches and disseminated through print by those nationalist elites allied with the Arab government of Amir Faysal.[41] For the nationalist elites active after World War I, according to Albert Hourani, "[t]o be independent was to be accepted by European states on a level of equality, to have the Capitulations, the legal privileges of foreign citizens, abolished, to be admitted to the League of Nations. To be modern was to have a political and social life similar to those of the countries of Western Europe."[42] Yet because these nationalist elites infused their discourse with appeals to such recondite concepts as "progress" and "secularism," and because of the narrow range of interests their discourse represented, their ideology not only appeared to be "imported" and "imitative," but lacked resonance for many Syrians more attuned to the discourse emanating from their adversaries within the nationalist tendency.

The aforementioned elites were not, of course, the only strata to be affected by the transformation of Ottoman society. Over the course of the nineteenth century, particularly after the onset of the Great Depression of 1873, non-elites within the empire who increasingly found themselves at the mercy of market and state vented their rage by undertaking acts of resistance that ranged from draft evasion and emigration to open rebellion. Strikes for higher wages were common among Damascene journeymen weavers, who were threatened not only by a decline in real wages but by the weakening of guilds and guild-sponsored welfare programs, proletarianization, and unemployment or employment in sweatshops. In the Hawran, the grain-producing region of Syria south of Damascus, the decade of the 1890s brought increased taxation and more efficient tax collection, a severely depressed international market for wheat, and the restructuring of land tenure and the renegotiation of cultivation rights. As a result, peasants abandoned their harvests, withheld taxes, and even fought pitched battles with Ottoman troops deployed into the region to quell the disturbances—in one case inflicting more than six hundred casualties.[43]

41. See, for example, *al-Kawkab*, 13 January 1919, 11; *al-ʿĀṣima*, 7 May 1919, 1–2; *al-ʿĀṣima*, 16 June 1919, 1–2; *al-ʿĀṣima*, 25 August 1919, 1–2; *al-ʿĀṣima*, 28 August 1919, 5–6; *al-ʿĀṣima*, 11 September 1919, 1; *al-Kawkab*, 30 September 1919, 7–8; *al-Kawkab*, 21 October 1919, 7–8; *al-Kawkab*, 28 October 1919, 7–8; *al-Kawkab*, 11 November 1919, 11; *al-ʿĀṣima*, 5 February 1920, 5; *al-ʿĀṣima*, no. 24 (n.d.).

42. Albert Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples*, 343–344.

43. Reilly, "Origins of Peripheral Capitalism," 120, 155–158; Sherry Vatter, "Militant Journeymen in Nineteenth-Century Damascus: Implications for the

Strikes, tax revolts, and the wholesale abandonment of villages are examples of what Charles Tilly calls "reactive collective actions." Undertaken to defend a customary social order or moral economy, these acts of resistance lack both the political program and organizational structure that would enable participants to maintain large-scale, long-term mobilization.[44] But the very factors that provoked reactive collective actions in Syria also presaged the appearance of conditions necessary for programmatic and complex mobilization. The expanding influence of the "merchants and statemakers" and the policies with which they were associated contributed to the breakdown of the parochialism and verticality that, according to most historians, had previously characterized the predominant pattern of political and social relations in the Middle East. Simultaneously, the weakening and/or dissolution of customary bonds of patronage and consanguinity brought about by, for example, increased physical mobility and the aforementioned status revolution, facilitated the emergence among Syrians of horizontal and associational ties whose boundaries were delimited only by the furthest extent of regional market relations and informal migratory circuits. Particularly during periods of crisis, such as during the second year after the establishment of an Arab government in Damascus, these recast ties came to rival, subsume, and even replace the narrower vertical ties that were incompatible with the transformed social and economic landscape.[45]

Urban areas in which vertical ties of patronage were particularly weak or absent as a result of immigration and/or rapid growth often served as epicenters for sustained political mobilization. For example, because the Maydan quarter of Damascus increasingly assumed the role of entrepôt for grain and immigrants from the Hawran during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the quarter contained a large population of newcomers and transients whose connections with the rural hinterland from which they had come frequently superseded those within their new urban

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Middle Eastern Labor History Agenda"; Aḥmad Ḥilmī al-ʿAllāf, *Dimashq fī maṭlaʿ al-qarn al-ʿishrīn*, 137; Linda Schatkowski Schilcher, "Violence in Rural Syria in the 1880s and 1890s: State Centralization, Rural Integration, and the World Market."

44. Charles Tilly, Louise Tilly, and Richard Tilly, *The Rebellious Century, 1830–1930*, 50, 253–254; E. J. Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels: Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movement in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, 1–10, 108–125.

45. Schilcher, "Violence in Rural Syria," 76; James L. Gelvin, "The Social Origins of Popular Nationalism in Syria: Evidence for a New Framework."

environment. As a result, during the months preceding the French invasion of inland Syria, Maydanis provided reliable, and often enthusiastic, support for organizations that pioneered unmediated and horizontal forms of political mobilization, and Maydani volunteers, trained and equipped in Damascus, joined guerrilla bands, such as the Druze-led units operating in the areas surrounding Rashaya and Hasbaya and a squadron of cavalry led by Mahmud Faʿur in the Golan, raised to harass the French army occupying the Syrian littoral. The Maydan, designated a *"faubourg révolutionnaire"* by French diplomats, continued its anti-French resistance after most other quarters of Damascus had been "pacified," and residents of the quarter played a prominent role in the 1925 Syrian Great Revolt as well.[46]

Thus, by the first decades of the twentieth century, a social and economic framework that would permit sustained and proactive political mobilization was in place throughout much of Syria. Accordingly, in the wake of the economic and political crises that engulfed the Faysali state in the autumn of 1919, a broad coalition of Syrians—antigovernment intellectuals and professionals (many of whom who resented a government that they claimed was controlled by outsiders, i.e., Hijazis, Iraqis, and Palestinians), lower-middle-class religious dignitaries and shopkeepers, local toughs, conservative notables, and textile and grain merchants from a wide range of socioeconomic backgrounds—could unite to form popular committees such as the Higher National Committee (*al-lajna al-waṭaniyya al-ʿulyā*), local branches of the Higher National Committee (*al-lijān al-waṭaniyya al-farʿiyya*), and committees of national defense (*lijān al-difāʿ al-waṭanī*), which successfully solicited the active participation of non-elites in politics. Through their mobilization of dense familial, market, and geographically derived networks, these organizations not only provided their constituents with a model for political community appropriate to the radically altered circumstances in which Syrians found themselves, they also sanctioned the

46. MAE L:SL/12/32–38, Cousse to HC, 6 April 1919; AD 2344/C1/305–306, Cousse to Picot, 31 October 1919; AD 2344/C1/311, Cousse to Picot, 3 November 1919; AD 2430/dossier confidentiel—départ/325–326, Cousse (?) to HC, 10 November 1919; AD 2375/chemise: division de la Syrie 1919–1920/442/2, Arlabosse to gen. cmdt. div. Syrie, 25 January 1920; AD 2375/chemise: division de la Syrie 1919–1920/445/2, Haak to GCC, 26 January 1920; MD 4H58/2, Haut commissionaire et armée du Levant état-major (deuxième bureau), "Rapport hebdomadaire," 503, 29 July-4 August 1920; Schilcher, *Families in Politics*, 9, 11, 16; Philip S. Khoury, *Syria and the French Mandate: The Politics of Arab Nationalism, 1920–1945*, 180, 191, 291–292; Albert Hourani, "Ottoman Reform and the Politics of Notables," 53; Jean-Paul Pascual, "La Syrie à l'époque ottomane (le XIXe siècle)," 39.

reappropriation by civil society of a variety of tasks, from the guaranteeing of a "fair price" for grain to the mustering of volunteer militias to provide internal security and national defense—tasks that had previously been entrusted to or commandeered by the state or state-connected notables. The July insurrection might be seen as a natural consequence of the mobilization and propaganda efforts of these committees.

Perhaps most tellingly, the popular committees that appeared in Faysali Syria displayed the same attributes that, according to historian Eric Hobsbawm, characterized the "mass parties-cum-movements" that had accompanied the popularization of politics in Europe during the late nineteenth century.[47] As with their European counterparts, a schematic rendering of the structure of the Syrian popular organizations would show a pyramid, with neighborhood committees at the base, municipal and regional committees at midsection, and a national committee at the summit. This structure not only expedited the mobilization of large numbers of constituents, the coordination of their activities, and their democratic participation (albeit within controlled conditions), it redirected their focus away from local concerns to the national arena. Thus, like other popular movements, the Syrian popular mobilization "shattered the old localized or regional framework of politics, or pushed it to the margin, or integrated it" into a wider context.

Furthermore, through a combination of replacement and co-optation, the popular committees (with the earlier assistance of the Faysali government, which, as will be seen in Part III, had both wittingly and unwittingly initiated this process for very different reasons) broke the monopoly of political authority held by local elites and substituted in its stead an arrangement in which factions of the older elites and the educated "middle strata," on the one hand, and organizers for the popular committees, on the other hand, shared, often uneasily, urban political power. Thus, as noted by Hobsbawm, the ensuing nationalization of politics partially transformed the role of the traditional local notability, which now had to reach a modus vivendi with upstart "bosses" attached to a national political machine.

Finally, the popular organizations were ideological, offering their constituents a "total vision of the world." This enabled the organizations to incorporate members by taking advantage of multiple and complex bonds of loyalty, including the familial, market, and spatially derived networks that combined vertical and emergent horizontal linkages and that facilitated the

47. Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire, 1875–1914*, 92–94.

synthesis of a new model of political community. It also endowed the organizations with a capacity for symbol generation and symbol acquisition far greater than that of simple pressure or special-interest groups.

Thus, except perhaps for supplying a rich and seemingly bottomless mythopoetic wellspring from which both nationalist historians and subsequent regimes in the Arab Middle East might draw, the most enduring legacy of the Faysali years in Syria was the formation of these popular committees, committees that not only displayed in microcosm the social and political transformation that Syrians had experienced during the preceding three-quarters of a century, but acted to expedite the emergence of mass politics.

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Syria had been part of the Ottoman Empire for nearly four hundred years when the government in Istanbul made the ill-fated decision to enter World War I on the side of the central powers. The effects of this decision, and of the ensuing war-related economic and political turmoil, had enduring consequences for all inhabitants of Syria.

From 1914 through 1918, economic crises buffeted the popular classes of Syria, simultaneously lowering their standard of living and widening the gap that separated rich and poor. Prices for all basic commodities rose during the war, while other goods, such as coffee, sugar, and rice, were virtually unobtainable.[48] At the same time, the scarcity of labor and transport, the impounding of farm animals by the Ottoman Fourth Army headquartered in Damascus, and a series of natural disasters—a ruinous drought during the harvest of 1914–1915, a locust plague in 1915, and a crop-destroying heat wave in 1916—reduced harvests in the interior. The entente naval blockade of the eastern Mediterranean, which had particularly devastating effects on coastal cities and which remained in place in one form or another through February 1919, further exacerbated food shortages, while currency depreciation, speculation, and forced government requisitioning drove commodity prices even higher.[49] In July 1917, at a time when

48. FO 371/2771, "Arab Bureau Intelligence Survey 10," 14 July 1916; FO 371/3058/137867, "Internal Conditions," 11 May 1917.

49. FO 861/63, Vice Consul, Aleppo to L. Mallet, 31 August 1914; *al-Muqtabas*, 23 June 1915, 2; FO 371/2770/104598/296, "Internal Conditions: Enemy Countries (Athens)," 28 May 1916; FO 371/2771, "Arab Bureau Intelligence Survey 10," 14 July 1916; FO 371/2781/193557, "Information from Two Arab Officers Recently Arrived in England from the Caucasus and Examined by Sir M. Sykes," 25 September 1916; *Arab Bulletin*, 4 December 1916, 504–507; FO

Ottoman paper currency was worth approximately 25 percent of its face value, Hawrani farmers resisted selling wheat for anything but gold. By 1918, when the value of Ottoman currency fell to approximately 14 percent of its face value, merchants commonly refused to accept Ottoman paper even when threatened with harsh penalties, thus restricting most transactions to barter.[50]

For many, life in the interior cities of Syria was nightmarish. The Ottoman government frequently denied widows, orphans, state functionaries, and pensioners all or part of their customary stipends. Even when disbursed, stipends were paid in depreciated Ottoman paper currency and were therefore hardly sufficient for subsistence.[51] Lower nutritional levels (aggravated both by the common practice of adulterating flour and, after 1916, by a system of rationing that reduced per capita consumption) and a breakdown of municipal services opened up the coastal and interior cities of Syria to epidemics of dysentery, typhus, smallpox, diphtheria, malaria, and cholera.[52] The press reported a rise in the rates of suicide, crime, and vagrancy in Damascus. By midwar, gangs of deserters from the Ottoman army threatened the security of villages surrounding the city and all but smothered local trade. Rural insecurity, in turn, loosed a flood of refugees on the city, raising the size of the urban population (according to one probably exaggerated account) to as many as half a million. Overcrowding, combined with speculation in real estate, also boosted the cost of housing both inside the walls of Damascus and in the immediate environs so high that by 1918, the average rate of profit on urban real estate had doubled from 4 percent to 8 percent.[53]

371/3058/137867, "Internal Conditions," 11 May 1917; FO 371/2783/221220, "Report of an Inhabitant of Athlit, Mt. Carmel, Syria," n.d.; MAE L:SL/vol. 78/1840, Amiral Gauchet to président de la république, 21 February 1919.

50. See Schilcher, "Famine of 1915–1918"; FO 371/2771, "Arab Bureau Intelligence Survey 10," 14 July 1916; FO 371/3050/142519, "Notes of an Interview with Mr. Edelman," 6 July 1917; FO 371/3050/158286, William Yale, "Palestine-Syria Situation," 10 July 1917; DU SA 493/15/85–98, G. B. Stewart (Treasurer, Syrian Protestant College) to Sa'id Shuqayr, 7 June 1919.

51. *al-Muqtabas*, 15 March 1915, 2; *al-Muqtabas*, 13 June 1915, 2.

52. *al-Muqtabas*, 10 January 1915, 2; *The Near East*, 28 April 1916, 701; *Arab Bulletin*, 30 June 1916, 2; *Arab Bulletin*, 14 July 1916, 3–4; FO 371/2779/165094, "Arabian Report N.S. No. V. (Week Ending August 16, 1916)"; FO 371/2779/170425, Dr. Franklin Hoskins, 29 August 1916; FO 371/3058/117734, "Memorandum of Conversation with Mr. Samuel Edelman, U.S. Consul at Damascus," 10 June 1917.

53. *al-Muqtabas*, 16 January 1915, 1; *al-Qibla*, 12 rajab 1335, 2; *al-Qibla*, 16 rajab 1335, 3; FO 371/2783/221220, "Report of an Inhabitant of Athlit, Mt. Carmel,

While generally devastating for the popular classes, the war had a mixed effect on the upper classes. On the one hand, the Ottoman government exiled the families of "economic criminals" (speculators), political criminals, and deserters, and confiscated their property.[54] In December 1916, for example, according to a report in the (pro-Sharifian) Meccan newspaper *al-Qibla,* Ottoman authorities arrested 150 Damascene notables and sent 100 families into exile in Anatolia. By November 1917, according to another report in the same newspaper, 450 families had been exiled and their property confiscated.[55] On the other hand, some merchants did grow rich from speculation, smuggling, and the sale of supplies to the Ottoman Fourth Army. According to journalist Muhammad Kurd ʿAli, "Many of the merchants, functionaries, and middlemen in the administration became wealthy. . . . [Gold came into Damascus through disbursements to both the Ottoman and Arab armies] until the country became, in the last two years of the war, a nation of ease and opulence."[56]

In addition to the direct social and economic effects that the war had on the lives of the inhabitants of Syria, two relevant political effects followed from the outbreak of hostilities. First, in anticipation of the defeat of the central powers and the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire, Britain, France, and other entente powers entered into a series of secret agreements that outlined plans for the orderly partition of the Ottoman Empire. One such agreement, the Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916, stipulated the division of the Arab provinces of the empire into areas of direct and indirect British and French control.[57] Although later modified to accommodate con-

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Syria," n.d.; MAE L:SL/vol. 64/20, "Note sur les finances municipales, les travaux urbains, et la nécessité d'un crédit communal," 8 January 1920(?); Schilcher, "Famine of 1915–1918," 241. According to the newspaper *al-Kawkab,* after the establishment of the Arab government, the municipal government of Damascus attempted to formulate some sort of rent control program because "[i]t is true that rent increases in this city crowded with thousands of people has become the subject of widespread chatter and gossip." *al-Kawkab,* 28 October 1919, 10.

54. *al-Muqtabas,* 9 April 1915, 2; FO 371/2779/165094, "Arabian Report N.S. No. V. (Week Ending August 16, 1916)"; FO 371/3050/161668, "Mr. (William) Hall's Report on Syria," 1 August 1917; Schilcher, *Families in Politics,* 17.

55. *al-Qibla,* 15 ṣafar 1335, 2; *al-Qibla,* 16 muḥarram 1336, 3.

56. Muḥammad Kurd ʿAlī, *Khiṭaṭ al-Shām,* 4:255; FO 371/3050/161668, "Mr. (William) Hall's Report on Syria," 1 August 1917; FO 371/3413/179133, "Translation of a Document Captured by Desert Mounted Corps During Operation 19th to 21st September 1918."

57. For the text of the Sykes-Picot Agreement and subsequent modifications, see J. C. Hurewitz, *The Middle East and North Africa in World Politics: A Documentary Record,* 2:60–64, 118–128, 158–166.

tingencies unforeseen at the time of its negotiation, the Sykes-Picot Agreement provided the rationale for rival national claims and diplomatic maneuverings during the immediate postwar period.

The second relevant political consequence of the war was the installation of a representative of the Hashemite family of Mecca in Damascus. In 1916, as part of the larger campaign against the Ottoman Empire, the British encouraged the rebellion of Sharif Husayn and his sons against their Ottoman overlords—the highly-touted "Arab Revolt." In an exchange of letters, the British pledged their support for the military campaign and for the establishment of an independent Arab state or states after the termination of hostilities.[58] One of the sharif's sons, Amir Faysal, was placed in charge of the Northern Arab Army, which participated in the British-led campaign that drove north from the Hijaz through Palestine to present-day Syria. According to prevailing assessments (in this case, that of an American observer who wrote his summary sketch shortly after the amir entered Damascus), Faysal was "pleasing of manner and appearance, liberal minded and kindly disposed to all parties. But he is not a strong man and is surrounded by clever, shrewd, and unscrupulous politicians, who can easily influence him."[59] Although after the capture of Damascus the chain of command linking the British, Faysal, and the appointed military governor of Syria was confused, British recognition, in conjunction with familial (sharifian) and military prestige and, initially, the judicious use of force, endowed the young amir with sufficient leverage to establish himself as the "supreme authority over all Arab matters in Syria, both administrative and military."[60]

This arrangement was not uncontested. By the time British, Australian, and Arab troops entered Damascus, the Turks had already abandoned the city.[61] To maintain order during the brief interregnum, several groups at-

58. See ibid., 46–56.

59. USNA 165/112/2075–2088, U.S. Military Attaché (Cairo), "The Political Situation in Syria," 9 November 1918.

60. Russell, *First Modern Arab State*, 19.

61. The best description of the last days of Turkish government in Damascus and the events of late September 1918 is in Wajīh al-Ḥaffār, "al-Ḥukūmāt allatī taʿāqabat ʿalā al-ḥukm fī Sūriyya," *al-Shurṭa wal-amn al-ʿāmm* 1 (2 ramadan 1372): 12–13 and (3 shuwwāl 1372): 18–19, 47. See also Muḥammad Jamīl Bayhum, *Sūriyya wa Lubnān, 1918–1922*, 44–48; Elie Kedourie, "The Capture of Damascus, 1 October 1918"; Anwar al-Rifāʿī, *Jihād nuṣf qarn: Sumūw al-amīr Saʿīd al-Jazāʾirī*, 96–104; ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-ʿAẓma, *Mirʾāt al-Shām: Tārīkh Dimashq wa*

tempted to organize a governing authority in the city. With the fall of Damascus imminent, Jamal Pasha (al-Saghir), the last Ottoman governor of Syria, commissioned Sa'id al-Jaza'iri to form a civil guard from among his clients to maintain order. Although the Jaza'iris were relative newcomers to Damascus, the family had gained prominence in local affairs for its role in quelling the intercommunal riots that had racked the city in 1860.[62] Sa'id al-Jaza'iri enlisted the assistance of Shaykh Rida al-'Attar, an officer in the Ottoman army and scion of a prominent family of Damascus qadis, and Amin al-Tarabulsi, the leader of the local constabulary. Their efforts were soon joined by those of other distinguished Damascus residents, including Faris al-Khuri, Tahir al-Jaza'iri, 'Ata al-Ayyubi, Badi' al-Mu'ayyad, Shakir al-Hanbali, Sa'ada Kahala, Amin al-Tamimi, and Shaykh 'Abd al-Qadir al-Khatib, the former *khaṭīb* (preacher) at the Umayyad Mosque whom the Jaza'iris appointed president of the Damascus municipality. Several of these men had previously met in the home of Mahmud al-Barudi, one of the wealthiest landowners in Damascus, where they established a "national committee" (*lajna waṭaniyya*) to secure the peaceable surrender of the city to the advancing Anglo-Arab army. After the national committee had negotiated an agreement between Sa'id al-Jaza'iri and a representative of the Arab army, Shukri al-Ayyubi,[63] al-Jaza'iri appointed a government from among the above-mentioned individuals with himself as "President of the Syrian Arab government," his brother, 'Abd al-Qadir al-Jaza'iri, as commander of the Arab cavalry, and Shukri al-Ayyubi as military governor.

The true attitude of the Jaza'iris and their government to Faysal and the Arab Revolt will probably never be known; likewise, it is difficult to assess whether or not the two sides might eventually have been able to reach some form of accommodation had they been shielded from British interference.[64] Whatever the possibilities, this did not occur: T. E. Lawrence,

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ahlihā, 235; Sulṭān, *Tārīkh Sūriyya 1918–1920*, 18; FO 882/7/352ff., T. E. Lawrence, "The Destruction of the Fourth Army"; FO 371/3383/169562/559ff., Clayton to FO, 8 October 1918.

62. Sa'id al-Jaza'iri's grandfather, 'Abd al-Qadir al-Jaza'iri, had led the Algerian resistance to French colonial ambitions in the 1830s. After his capture, he settled in Damascus in 1855. See John Ruedy, *Modern Algeria: The Origins and Development of a Nation*, 57–66.

63. According to al-Haffar, the leader of the departing Ottoman army had also designated al-Ayyubi to secure the city.

64. Al-Haffar claims that, while outwardly pledging their support for the Hashemites, the Jaza'iris were, in fact, preparing for civil war. See al-Ḥaffār, "al-Ḥukūmāt allatī ta'āqabat" 1(3 shuwwāl 1372): 47.

whose role as British liaison with the Arab army belied the extent of his influence on the young amir, regarded the Jaza'iris and their Damascene and "Moorish" supporters as a threat to his protégé, and thus treated the brothers and their government with undisguised contempt. "They are both insane, and as well pro-Turkish, and religious fanatics of the most unpleasant sort," he wrote.

> In consequence I sent for them, and before the beladiyeh and the sheukh el harrat, announced that as Feisal's representative I declared Shukri el-Ayubi Arab Military Governer (Ali Riza, the intended governer, missing) and the provisional civil administration of the Algerians dissolved. They took it rather hard and had to be sent home.[65]

Although Faysal and his followers were soon able, with British assistance, to eliminate their rivals from positions of power (ʿAbd al-Qadir al-Jaza'iri was shot and killed under disputed circumstances soon after the arrival of the Anglo-Arab army in Damascus, while the British exiled Saʿid al-Jaza'iri to Haifa), many prominent Damascenes remained resentful of their new rulers who, they felt, had been imposed on them by force of arms.

After the Anglo-Arab army entered Damascus, units of the Arab army raced north to seize control of Homs, Hama, and Aleppo. Concurrently, the British army relinquished control of Amman in the south to a local representative of the amir. On 22 October 1918, General Sir Edmund H. Allenby, commander of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force that conducted the Syria campaign, divided the former Ottoman territories under his authority into two administrative districts. He placed the inland territory stretching from the Hijaz north through Damascus and Aleppo under the authority of the Occupied Enemy Territory Administration—East (OETA-East). To the west, Allenby created a coastal zone that included the prewar Ottoman province of Beirut and, initially, the inland towns of Hasbaya, Rashaya, Muʿallaqa, and Baʿalbak, to be supervised by the Occupied Enemy Territory Administration—West (OETA-West). While this second zone came under French administration, the British sanctioned the establishment of a temporary Arab government under Amir Faysal in the inland (eastern) zone.[66]

65. FO 882/7/352ff, T. E. Lawrence, "The Destruction of the Fourth Army," n.d.

66. A third authority, Occupied Enemy Territory Administration—North, was established in January 1919. Both the British and the Arab governments claimed jurisdiction over Palestine. See Russell, *First Modern Arab State*, 17–21, 26–27. Perhaps the most readable account of the diplomatic maneuvering that took place after World War I is David Fromkin's *A Peace to End All Peace: The Fall of the*

Even before the Arab administration was fully functioning, Faysal, his closest associates from the Arab army, and a select group of nonmilitary appointees attempted to win popular favor and establish direct links with the inhabitants of their zone. Faysal's government recommenced Ottoman welfare programs that had been suspended during the war and resumed the payment of pensions to war widows, orphans, and former Ottoman functionaries and their families.[67] The government also attempted to maintain the stability of prices and prevent food shortages in urban centers by buying grain directly from farmers in the Hawran, establishing committees in each quarter to oversee distribution of foodstuffs, and periodically dispensing grain from captured granaries to the urban poor and distributing seed to impoverished farmers.[68]

To ensure that the population understood who was responsible for the largesse disbursed by the Arab government, high-ranking officials, often joined by a retinue of bureaucrats, journalists, and even poets who had been commissioned to compose and recite paeans to Amir Faysal or the government, visited the quarters of Damascus and other cities and traveled the countryside where they distributed gifts in ceremonies designed to solemnize the occasion. For example, ʿAli Rida al-Rikabi, the first military governor of the eastern zone, toured Syria in January 1919. According to an account written by the journalist who accompanied him, upon entering a village, al-Rikabi convoked the local cultivators to discuss conditions and problems, urging them to petition him directly if they suffered any grievance. In Homs, al-Rikabi announced a general amnesty for criminals, awarded honors, and distributed money for the transport and settlement of those Syrian soldiers returning from Anatolia who had fought in the Ottoman army. In Hama and Aleppo, he distributed seed to local villagers, offered a moratorium on farmers' debt, contributed to local charities, and or-

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Ottoman Empire and the Creation of the Modern Middle East. For the division of the occupied territory, see 338–339.

67. *al-ʿĀṣima,* 17 April 1919, 3; DU SA 493/16/13–15, Saʿid Shuqayr, "Points to Be Discussed with Col. Waters-Taylor at Haifa on the 11th August, 1919"; *al-ʿĀṣima,* 23 February 1920, 4; DU SA 493/15/5, n.d.

68. FO 371/3412/180073/148, Clayton to FO, 28 October 1918; FO 371/3412/189713/184, Clayton to FO, 14 November 1918; FO 371/4143/104019, Major General Sir Walter Lawrence to Commander in Chief (Egypt), 13 May 1919; DU SA 493/15/28–9, General Director of Agricultural Bank to Minister of Finance, 9 July 1919; *al-ʿĀṣima,* 1 December 1919, 7; *al-ʿĀṣima,* 29 December 1919, 2; *al-ʿĀṣima,* 10 June 1920, 2; Suhayla al-Rīmāwī, *al-Tajriba al-fayṣaliyya fī bilād al-Shām,* 41.

dered the installation of public works.[69] Al-Rikabi continued his travels as late as spring 1920. During his last recorded tour, once again made in the presence of journalists, al-Rikabi visited various quarters of Damascus, inspecting bakers' ovens. When he discovered the use of adulterated flour or short weights, he publicly ordered the arrest of those responsible. Other high government officials, including Amir Faysal himself, made similar tours.[70]

The Arab government did not direct its beneficence and propaganda only at the peasantry and urban masses, however. British officials frequently complained that too much of the subsidy that they were paying to the Arab government was being used to buy the loyalty of wealthy and powerful Syrians as well. The government paid off leaders of tribes, politicians, members of political and cultural associations, religious leaders, and journalists. The records of the financial adviser to the Arab government, Sa'id Shuqayr, are replete with notations of political payoffs: 16,000 Egyptian pounds (P.E.) distributed to notables at Junia; 100 P.E. to the grand rabbi of Damascus; 25,000 P.E. for propaganda work in Beirut; 1,500 P.E. to the Orthodox church in Damascus.[71] For the month of June 1919 alone, Shuqayr recorded as "Donations" or "Irregular or Extraordinary Expenditures" payments to Nasib al-Atrash, 'Adil Arslan, and other Druze leaders; shaykhs of the al-Diab, Dahamisha and Majalib tribes; 'Awda Abi Tayah and Ibn 'Awda Abi Tayah of the Huwaytat tribe; Nuri al-Sha'lan of the Ruwalla tribe; the Greek Catholic Club, Moslem-Christian Committee, Alliance Committee (*Alliance israélite?*), and Literary Society; 'Abd al-Qadir al-Khatib; Yusuf al-'Azma, whom Faysal later appointed head of the Arab government's war council; Arab Club activists Fa'iz al-Khuri and Murad (Muhammad?) Rushdi; Gabriel Haddad, head of the gendarmerie (records indicate this payment was "for furniture"); various bedouin delegations visiting Damascus (for food and lodging); and newspaper proprietors, among others. Similar payments made the following month reached 22,378 P.E.—approximately one-tenth of projected government revenue.[72]

69. A complete account of 'Ali Rida al-Rikabi's trip is in Khalīl Mardam Bek, *Dimashq wal-Quds fī al-'ishrīnāt*, 24–66.

70. *al-'Āṣima*, 5 April 1920, 5; MD 4H112/dossier 2b/68, "Renseignements d'officier liaison d'Alep," 10 June 1920; AD 2346/c1a/sous-dossier 19: Voyage Fayçal à Alep/73, "Renseignements d'officier liaison d'Alep," 15 July 1920; AD 2346/c1a/sous-dossier 19: Voyage Faysal à Alep/77, "Renseignements d'officier liaison d'Alep," 22 July 1920; Angelil, "L'occupation d'Homs."

71. DU SA 493/13/25–35, Shuqayr to Waters-Taylor, 3 September 1919.

72. DU SA 493/14/31–32; DU SA 493/13/4, Appendix to letter from Shuqayr

In spite of its efforts, however, the Arab government was able to maintain only a thin veneer of authority outside Damascus. The government apparatus that had been established to oversee the eastern zone was clumsy and inefficient: it actually consisted of a tangle of vaguely drawn and, at times, contradictory lines of authority connecting Allenby, Faysal, al-Rikabi, and the bureaucracy. Furthermore, the local governments that supervised the administration of most cities continued to be controlled by indigenous notables whose concerns and interests frequently clashed with those of the Arab government and its representatives sent from Damascus. This local urban leadership was jealous of the attention the Arab government showered on the capital city, fearful of the centralization policies planned by those whom it perceived to be upstarts and foreigners, and resentful of a government that not only arrogated to itself both domestic and foreign sources of revenue but seemed to match inefficiency with arrogance.[73] Relations between notables of Aleppo and the government in Damascus, aggravated by differences over issues of foreign policy and trade, were particularly tense. When the amir made his first trip north in 1918, he openly recalled the lack of assistance offered to the Arab Revolt by the inhabitants of the city, then dismissed the local administrative council (*majlis al-shūrā*) and appointed a governing committee composed of his supporters. Relations remained so strained that in the spring of 1920 a delegation of prominent Aleppans arrived in Damascus during the celebration of Faysal's coronation as king of Syria, reportedly demanding autonomy for their city and the surrounding countryside.[74]

Nevertheless, it might have been possible for the Arab government to circumvent or procure the endorsement of recalcitrant local leaders and to

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to Waters-Taylor, 3 September 1919; DU SA 493/14/33; DU SA 493/13/5, Appendix to letter from Shuqayr to Waters-Taylor, 3 September 1919; DU SA 493/13/7, Appendix to letter from Shuqayr to Waters-Taylor, 3 September 1919; DU SA 493/9/19, "Statement of Estimated Expenditure Submitted to H.H. Emir Faisal on 5th June, 1919." The estimates for revenue include the monthly 150,000 P.E. stipend from the British government. It should also be noted that one British expert who studied the figures used the word *farcical* to describe Arab government revenue projections. FO 371/5032/990/93–97, "Report by Col. Waters-Taylor on his visit to Beirut, and interviews with General Gouraud and the Emir Feisal," 21 January 1920.

73. *Arab Bulletin*, 11 July 1918, 200; FO 371/3385/199351/16, Sykes to FO, 2 December 1918; FO 371/3386/208324, Sir L. Mallet, Minutes to Telegram 11457 and 11513, 18 December 1918; FO 371/4143/39115, Lt. Col. R. W. Graves, "Finance in OETA-East," 27 December 1918.

74. Kāmil Ghazzī, *Nahr al-dhahab fī tārīkh Ḥalab*, 3:655–656; USNA 59/890d.00/9/473, J. B. Jackson to U.S. Secretary of State, 13 March 1920.

manufacture popular consent over the long term had it acquired international support, maintained reliable access to economic resources, and presided over an economic recovery. It was, however, unable to do any of these things. From its inception, monetary and fiscal problems plagued the eastern zone. When entente forces entered Syria, a variety of coins and paper money was in circulation. To put an end to the monetary chaos, General Allenby mandated the use of the sterling-backed Egyptian pound as legal tender. It was a logical choice: the Egyptian-based British army occupying Syria was paid in the currency, and the alternative—maintaining Ottoman currency as legal tender—would have meant sanctioning the use of a currency issued by a government that no longer existed and backed by the worthless German mark. But Allenby's order created a host of unforeseen problems. Because the British authorities had initially restricted the circulation of Egyptian specie as a guard against inflation, it was scarce in areas outside Damascus and urban Palestine. Furthermore, Syrians were hardly enthusiastic about the new currency: many encountered difficulties converting from one system of valuation to another, and merchants trading with Anatolia and the coast feared being cut off from markets outside Syria.[75] To make matters worse, the local value of the Egyptian pound depreciated steadily for a year after the war before plummeting in the autumn of 1919.

Syrians thus continued to circulate Ottoman and foreign coins, appraising their worth on the basis of their metallic content. This proved to be impractical as well: relative currency values fluctuated wildly, often in response to decisions taken in London, Paris, Istanbul, and even Baghdad. When, for example, the British administration in Iraq declared the circulation of Turkish silver and nickel coinage illegal, Damascus was flooded with the coins, causing an abrupt depreciation that, according to one British observer, inflicted "great hardship to the population."[76]

Entente actions, bureaucratic shortcomings, and fiscal policies enacted by the Arab government also diminished government income. Not only had the Ottoman government already collected the taxes for the upcoming year by the time the Anglo-Arab army reached Damascus, but the new administration lacked sufficient authority in most areas of Syria to gather

75. FO 371/3383/169803, Adam Block and Mark Sykes, addendum to minutes for 17 October 1918; FO 371/3413/188081/Q.K.T. 4826, GHQ to WO, 10 November 1918; WO 106/189/75957, WO to GHQ, 7 March 1919; FO 371/4171/63664/395, India Office Bank to FO, 24 March 1919.

76. FO 371/4140/104076/E. A. 2588, GHQ to WO, 13 July 1919; AD 2347/12350/427, Adel Arslane [sic]to Cousse, 11 December 1919.

revenue. In addition, revenue agents of unquestioned competence and loyalty were uncommon. "I much regret that the accounts for June cannot possibly be forwarded to you by the middle of this month," Saʿid Shuqayr wrote to his British overseers in the summer of 1919,

> owing to the fact that accountants in Districts are very incapable and their accounts are deplorably behind hand. On my arrival here in May last, I found that neither the accounts for the past year (October to December) nor those for the first quarter of this year had been finally closed. . . . I may mention that some of the accountants have recently been discharged either for incapacity or corruption. They are being replaced by others, and it is hoped that in future the accounts will be kept in a better manner.[77]

Even *al-Kawkab*, a newspaper normally supportive of the Arab government, acknowledged that functionaries did "not have a command of writing in Arabic and are not even able to express their thoughts without error."[78] Furthermore, the government's revenue needs ran afoul of its strategy for securing popular support. Because the Arab government had initially sought to win over the Syrian population through tax relief, it abolished two of the most hated Ottoman taxes: *wīrkū al-ḥarb*, which, among other things, had increased taxes on salaries by 3 percent and taxes on real property by 25 percent, and the special taxes that had originally been imposed in 1911–1912 to supplement revenues. Finally, certain revenues, such as tithes for the sanjaks of Damascus, Aleppo, and Hama and the *aghnām* (tax on sheep) for Aleppo were unavailable to the Arab government since they had already been pledged to the Ottoman Public Debt Administration to repay debts incurred by the previous government.[79]

To make up for revenue shortfalls, the British extended the Arab government a monthly subsidy of 150,000 P.E. Because the subsidy provided Whitehall with the means to ensure both the financial solvency and unremitting loyalty of its wartime ally, British guarantees of a fixed sum payable in regular installments were perhaps an appropriate political solution to the Arab government's fiscal problems. However, these payments also created a debilitating economic problem: money injected directly into

77. DU SA 493/16/37/6/7762, Shuqayr, 7 July 1919.

78. *al-Kawkab*, 4 November 1919, 10.

79. DU SA 493/9/6, Proclamation of General Sir Edmund Allenby, 7 May 1918; FO 371/4143/39115, Lt. Col. R. W. Graves, "Finance in OETA-East"; MAE L:AH/vol. 3/98, Moulin, "Examen du budget de 1919. Zone Est," 7 February 1919; DU SA 493/6/71–2. "Revenues for 1919"; DU SA 493/6/35–41, Shuqayr, 15 January 1920.

the economy by the subsidy, augmented by sums spent by the British army of occupation, chased a limited amount of goods and consequently inflated prices. The prolongation of the entente embargo, restrictions on both interzonal trade and trade with Turkey, speculation, hoarding, and the insecurity of transportation, drove prices up even further.[80] In all, the inflation not only weakened the financial capabilities of the Arab government, but by presenting it with yet another seemingly insoluble problem that touched the day-to-day lives of those it governed, sapped its moral authority as well.

Faysal himself could spend little time in Syria dealing with either political or economic problems. On 11 November 1918, less than six weeks after the amir's arrival in Damascus, Sharif Husayn appointed his son as his emissary to the peace conference in Paris where the entente powers were deciding the fate of the former Ottoman territories. Faysal stayed in Europe five months. He returned to Damascus at the beginning of May 1919 to take charge of preparations for the arrival of the Inter-Allied Commission on Syria (hereafter, the King-Crane Commission), which had been appointed, at the insistence of President Woodrow Wilson, to "elucidate the state of opinion [in Syria] and the soil to be worked on by any mandatory"[81] and to make recommendations to the conference with regard to the future of Syria. In the aftermath of the ill-fated commission's visit, Faysal once again traveled to Europe, this time remaining four months. During Faysal's absences, Sharif Husayn delegated Faysal's twenty-one-year-old brother, Amir Zayd, to represent the family in Damascus. Zayd—described by British observers in terms like "soft in his ways and vague in his ideas," "malleable [and] much influenced by his surroundings," "very conscious of his own ignorance and overburdened by the anxieties of his present position," and "good material for the psychologist"—was such an uninspiring (and, according to several reports, debauched) ruler that the French liaison officer in Damascus advised the French government to stall

80. Russell, *First Modern Arab State*, 142–146; FO 371/3412/177154/3222, Clayton to FO, 22 October 1918; MAE L:SL/vol. 78/1586, Paul Cambon, 28 December 1918; *al-ʿĀṣima*, 26 April 1919, 7–8; FO 371/4143/104019, Major General Sir Walter Lawrence to Commander in Chief (Egypt), 13 May 1919; FO 371/4228/111406, Balfour to Curzon, 21 July 1919; FO 371/4228/120623/EA2612, GHQ to WO, 6 August 1919; FO 371/4228/156929/501, Meinertzhagen to FO, 25 November 1919; MD 4H114/2/261, Cousse to Gouraud, 3 April 1920; MD 4H112/2b/25, "Renseignements du 24 au 30 avril [1920]."

81. Hurewitz, *Middle East and North Africa*, 2:191. See also Arthur S. Link, ed., *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 56:116.

negotiations with Faysal in Paris so that Syrians, increasingly exposed to Zayd, would come to loathe the entire Hashemite family.[82]

The announcement of the impending visit of the King-Crane Commission to the Middle East had repercussions for Syrian politics that neither the entente representatives meeting in Paris nor the Arab government in Damascus could have anticipated. Although nominally committed to "the establishment of national governments [in the Middle East] . . . deriving their authority from the initiative and free choice of the indigenous inhabitants,"[83] British and French representatives to the peace conference viewed the commission as little more than a nuisance and refused to appoint delegates to it or be bound by its findings. Even American support for the commission proved lackluster.[84] But whatever doubts Amir Faysal and his supporters may have privately held about the sincerity of the entente powers, they publicly grasped at this straw. In early June 1919, the amir convoked delegates to the Syrian General Congress and charged them with formulating a consensual list of demands to be presented to the American commission.[85] Soon afterward, the Arab government distributed *khuṭab* (sermons) to be read at Friday prayers and, in conjunction with political and cultural associations and government-sanctioned guilds, sponsored petition campaigns and mobilized demonstrations in support of the "Damascus Program" promulgated by the congress. It directed local political activists and quarter-based government functionaries (*makhātīr*, singular *mukhtār*) throughout Syria to compel homeowners and shopkeepers to placard their residences and storefronts with slogans demanding Syrian unity and absolute independence from the entente negotiators convened in Paris.[86] In

82. FO 371/2773/122968, Copy of report by Ronald Storrs, 10 June 1916; IO L/PS/10/802/11–13, Gertrude Bell, "Syria in October 1919," 15 November 1919. AD 2368/10/2, Rapports du capt. Pichon et du lt. col. Cousse 1919/66, Cousse to HC, 9 January 1919. According to another report, "Zayd displays no regret; without exaggeration, one hears of a thousand and one scandals concerning his private life, abominable orgies in Mazza, women tortured or killed, "licenses" demanded personally from certain merchants and exporters, etc. . . . He leaves Damascenes with the impression of a veritable savage." MAE 4H114/5/no no., Cousse to Toulat, 1 August 1920.

83. Hurewitz, *Middle East and North Africa*, 2:112.

84. See James L. Gelvin, "The Ironic Legacy of the King-Crane Commission," 13–14.

85. See Khoury, *Urban Notables*, 86–88; Yūsuf al-Ḥakīm, *Dhikrayāt*, 3:90–97; Safiuddin Joarder, *Syria Under the French Mandate: The Early Phase, 1920–1927*, 209–211.

86. MD L:SL/vol. 12/32–38, Cousse to HC, 6 April 1919; AD 2430/no no., Cousse to Dame, 18 April 1919; MAE L:AH/vol. 4/237–238, Picot to Pichon,

sum, while the entente powers had charged the commission with a simple fact-finding mission, its presence in Syria catalyzed a mobilization of the Syrian population that was unprecedented in scope.

The appointment of the King-Crane Commission had another unintended effect. The nationalist elites who prepared for the commission's arrival designed their demonstrations and propaganda campaigns for the purpose of presenting to an outside audience an image of a sophisticated nation eager and prepared for independence. But in the process of converting Syria into a large Potemkin village, they failed to integrate the majority of the population into their nationalist project. They never negotiated with the population about ideology or program, they never synthesized a political discourse that was compelling to non-elites, and they never established bonds with the population comparable to those established between nationalist elites and their future compatriots in other areas of the world. In short, the announcement of the formation of the King-Crane Commission and its subsequent visit to Syria initiated an unintended chain of events that culminated in the emergence of a popular nationalist movement dissociated from the direction of the Arab government and the nationalist elites. In this context, it is particularly ironic that the commission's report, finally published in 1922, never reached the peace conference.[87]

In September 1919, less than two months after the King-Crane Commission had left the Middle East, Amir Faysal received a second invitation to Paris. Concerned about tensions with France and excessive military expenditures, the British government had decided to withdraw its troops from Syria. According to the plan negotiated with its European ally, the British relinquished temporary control of the western zone (including the contested Biqa' Valley that lay between the eastern and western zones) to French military occupation and, pending the negotiation of a permanent arrangement between France and the Arab government, temporary control of the eastern zone to Faysal and his administration. The Anglo-French agreement (the so-called "September 15 Accord") precipitated what has been called the "Evacuation Crisis" by historians, the turning point in the history of Syria under the Arab government. The plan to substitute French

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22 May 1919; MAE L:SL/vol. 14/897, Picot to MAE, 17 June 1919; MAE L:SL/vol. 44/3D, Minault (Latakia) to administrateur du vilayet de Beyrouth, 18 July 1919; MAE L:SL/vol. 43/39–41, "Renseignements d'agent," 10–20 July 1919; MD 7N4182/4/340, Picot to MAE, 21 July 1919; AD 2430/dossier confidentiel—départ/240, 11 August 1919. For texts of sermons distributed 11 and 18 April 1919, see AD 2343/286, Cousse to HC, 24 April 1919.

87. Russell, *First Modern Arab State*, 99.

troops for British in the Biqaʿ Valley in particular was a political disaster for Faysal, for it was widely perceived that, "popular will" to the contrary, the French would eventually extend their control over all Syria. The strategy of the Arab government to win independence for an undivided Syria by demonstrating to the entente powers that Syrians both desired and were prepared for independence was thus shown to be bankrupt. The political crisis in Damascus reached fever pitch in January 1920, after Faysal initialed a comprehensive agreement with President Clemenceau of France. The agreement not only limited the sovereignty of the Arab state, it confirmed separate administrations in the territories of the western and eastern zones. To many Syrians, the Faysal-Clemenceau Agreement put an official imprimatur on the division of Syria.[88]

The economic implications of the September 15 Accord were as profound as the political implications. Decisions made by Britain and France pushed the Arab government to the brink of insolvency and reduced its capacity to provide basic services. The inability of the government to ensure security of life and property, formulate fiscal policy, patrol its borders, or meet its payroll precipitated a sharp curtailment of economic activity. To make matters worse, the Arab government attempted to compensate for its financial shortfall by imposing a variety of exactments on the inhabitants of the zone, further increasing their immiserization and disaffection from the government. In short, with the onset of the "Evacuation Crisis," the already ailing economy of Faysali Syria went into a slide from which it never recovered.

According to the September 15 Accord, both France and Britain agreed to share responsibility for the payment of the monthly subsidy to the Arab government. Because the government was not eager either to be or to be perceived to be on the French payroll, however, it at first refused to acquiesce to the new arrangement.[89] The fact that both the British and the French used the subsidy to guarantee good behavior by the government in Damascus further compounded the government's economic distress. The British withheld their subsidy for September 1919 until the Arab government halted the drive to recruit twelve thousand volunteers for the Arab army, and for October and November 1919, pending successful completion of the evacuation of British troops. Later payments were delayed pending a British investigation into the "Dayr al-Zur incident" (an attack by Arab irregulars on the border town currently in eastern Syria in which the British

88. For the negotiations and terms of the settlement, see ibid., 93–131.
89. IO L/PS/10/802/P967, Waters-Taylor, 5 January 1920.

suspected Arab government collusion[90]) and other incidents perceived as emanating from the Faysali government and aimed at weakening the British position in the Middle East. As a result, the Arab government received the British share of the subsidy for the month of January 1920 in June of that year.[91]

To deal with the shortfall of revenue, the Arab government attempted to increase taxes and fees. It raised taxes on earnings, the use of roads, and stamps by 100 percent and taxes on real estate, sheep, and proceedings of the courts of justice by 50 percent. At the same time, it proposed levying special taxes on all towns and villages in which there were government possessions; imposing new taxes on matches, cigarettes, and playing cards; and increasing the *tamattuʿ* (professional tax) and the *badal* (fee paid in lieu of military service). To add to the burden, the government's plan to collect taxes at official currency rates greatly undervalued the actual market value of the Egyptian pound, thereby adding, in effect, a 28 percent surtax to the above rates. In some cases, the government added to the misery of taxpayers by demanding the payment of taxes in gold.[92]

In spring 1920, with the treasury still empty, the government floated a loan that further increased the financial obligations of many Syrians. Although participation in the loan was in theory voluntary, the Arab government required government functionaries to invest one month's salary. Others were similarly persuaded: while gendarmes and local *makhātīr* visited merchants, notables, and even foreign residents to "encourage" their participation in the loan, agents of the clandestine order "The Watchful Eye" extorted money from the wealthy. Although little is known for sure about this latter group, it probably included associates of the popular leader Kamil al-Qassab, whom the government had shrewdly selected to head the committee that marketed the loan in spite of his reputation for what might charitably be called "financial indiscretions."[93]

90. See Eliezer Tauber, "The Struggle for Dayr al-Zur: The Determination of Borders between Syria and Iraq," particularly 366–371.

91. FO 371/4183/132831/EA2697, GHQ to WO, 20 September 1919; FO 371/5149/E564/7, Meinertzhagen to FO, 24 February 1920; FO 371/5149/EA3084, GHQ to WO, 25 April 1920; FO 371/5036/E8177/7749/89, Faysal to Allenby, 21 June 1920.

92. *al-ʿĀṣima*, 29 January 1920, 2; *al-ʿĀṣima*, 2 February 1920, 4; *al-ʿĀṣima*, 26 April 1920, 4; WO 106/196/39–41, Shuqayr, "Memorandum Drafted by the Minister of Finance in Damascus re: The Financial Position of the Syrian Government for 1920," 20 May 1920; Russell, *First Modern Arab State*, 145.

93. MD 4H114/4/471, Cousse to Gouraud, 18 May 1920; MD 4H112/2b/162, Riza Sulh [sic] to gouverneur d'Alep, 2 June 1920; MD 4H112/2b/167, Fares

The deepening impoverishment of the Arab government during its second year casts doubt on the reliability of lists cataloguing governmental accomplishments that often appear in histories of the period.[94] While the pages of the official newspaper, *al-ʿĀṣima*, were replete with plans formulated by the Arab government for administrative reform and for the establishment, expansion, and/or support of social, cultural, and educational institutions, for example, it should not be surprising that little evidence exists to confirm that the government realized most of them or even that it had ever appropriated sufficient funds to initiate them. Thus, although it is not the purpose of this introduction either to celebrate or to denigrate the achievements of the Arab government, overwhelming evidence points to the fact that, perhaps inevitably (considering the economic and political context), failure attended the efforts of the Arab government more frequently than success.

The sometimes ineffective, sometimes reckless attempts by the Arab government to stave off insolvency merely exacerbated the overall economic problems of the eastern zone. As the economy went into a virtual free fall, the crisis touched Syrians of every class. Among the hardest hit were merchants of all types, from wealthy factors to small-scale retailers. By the early spring of 1920, trade between Damascus, Aleppo, and their hinterlands had come to a virtual standstill. Contemporary observers attributed the collapse of commerce to a number of factors: currency fluctuations, an 11 percent customs duty imposed on all goods entering Mesopotamia and Turkey from Syria, and raids by bedouin, whose spoliations had previously been held in check by bribes that the government could no longer afford. "The rock that the Arab Government has split on is the Beduin [sic]," Gertrude Bell later wrote, reflecting on reasons for the fall of the Arab government.

> No attempt was ever made to control them, they harmed the outlying cultivation and Nuri [al-Shaʿlan] took toll of all merchandize going out and coming in and even levied tolls on the donkey loads in the streets. . . .

Khoury [sic] to gouverneur d'Alep, 5 June 1920; MD 4H58/1, "Rapport hebdomadaire 383/2: 15 au 21 juin [1920]"; FO 861/69, Dr. J. Bauer to J. B. Jackson, 1 July 1920; MD 4H114/4/671, Cousse to Gouraud, 7 July 1920; MD 4H60/1, "Bulletin quotidien 1260," 19 July 1920.

94. These lists appear in Abdul-Karim Rafeq, "Arabism, Society, and Economy in Syria, 1918–1920," 16–17; Kasmieh, *al-Ḥukūma al-ʿarabiyya fī Dimashq*, 233–247; Yūsuf al-Ḥakīm, *Dhikrayāt*, 3:43–44.

> The depredations and arrogance of the Beduin are the chief grievances. It was said in Damascus that Nuri not Faisal was Amir.[95]

In addition, security on railroads in and around Damascus was so bad that, in an official complaint addressed to Amir Faysal, the commander of the French forces in the Levant, General Henri Gouraud, listed more than twenty incidents of robbery, hijacking, brigandage, and extortion that took place on or near the lines between 9 December 1919 and 9 January 1920.[96]

In an attempt to ameliorate the effects of the commercial breakdown, the Arab government established a ministry of supply, which assumed responsibility for provisioning cities, fixing prices, and "breaking the back" of speculators and hoarders. The government also promulgated laws forbidding the export of gold and grain outside the eastern zone. None of these measures proved to be enforceable, and merchants reportedly engaged in a host of illegal activities, from smuggling to the establishment of underground cartels, to evade them. Frequently, they were assisted in these activities by the popular committees, which used their leverage with merchants to minister to their constituencies and subsidize their movement. Thus, not only did the new regulations fail to achieve their objectives, they further alienated merchants from the Faysali government.[97]

In addition to its punitive regulations, the Arab government estranged merchants by its apparent inability to mount an effective response to French fiscal policies in the western zone. In January 1920, rumors began to spread among merchants in both zones that the French were planning to impose a new currency, the Syrian pound, in their zone. The possibility that a new currency would be circulated on the coast presented merchants in the eastern zone with a dilemma. If the Arab government refused to au-

95. FO 371/5040/E11756/152–153, "Note by Miss G. L. Bell, C.B.E.," 6 August 1920. See also MD 4H114/dossier 5/277, Cousse to GCC, 14 July 1920.

96. FO 371/4214/103277, Baghdad to IO, 26 June 1919; *Sūriyya al-jadīda*, 27 December 1919, 1; AD 2330/A1a, Gouraud, "Memorandum des principaux faits relevés depuis l'arrivée du général h.c. jusqu'à ce jour," 13 January 1920; WO 106/195/21, Wratislaw (Beirut) to FO, 4 March 1920; AD 2330/A1a/134, Roux (Baghdad) to GCC, 16 March 1920; FO 371/5034/E3182/FO41CPO31, Meinertzhagen, 31 March 1920; FO 371/5035/E5690/35, Wratislaw (Beirut) to FO, 13 May 1920.

97. *al-ʿĀṣima*, 15 December 1919, 3; *al-ʿĀṣima*, 12 January 1920, 2; *al-ʿĀṣima*, 1 March 1920, 2; *al-ʿĀṣima*, 3 May 1920, 2–3; MAE L:SL/vol. 64/731, Gouraud to MAE, 26 March 1920; *al-ʿĀṣima*, 26 April 1920, 7–8; FO 371/5037/E8350, Gertrude Bell, 29 May 1920; Russell, *First Modern Arab State*, 168–169; al-Rīmāwī, *al-Tajriba al-fayṣaliyya*, 41.

thorize the use of the Syrian pound in inland Syria, trade with the coast would collapse. If, on the other hand, the Arab government surrendered to French demands and allowed the Syrian pound to circulate as legal tender in both zones, Syrian merchants could expect a curtailment of their trade with Iraq, Egypt, and Palestine and a flood of French imports in inland Syria. Compounding the currency problem was the fact that the proposed Syrian pound would be linked to the notoriously unstable French franc, the value of which had consistently depreciated since the armistice. The thought that the Arab government would even consider the use of the currency horrified merchants who were already alarmed by the amir's reluctance to discuss either his previous dealings with Clemenceau or his plans for the future.[98] In contrast with the indecision of the government, the popular committees responded to the anxieties of those engaged in trade outside the eastern zone by organizing demonstrations and petition campaigns against the new currency.

Merchants were not the only group threatened by government policies and economic downturn. The economic collapse precipitated by the Evacuation Crisis also victimized civilian and military employees of the government. Not only were government employees forced to subsist on fixed salaries during a period of high inflation, salaries were frequently late or withheld. By June 1920, salaries for functionaries and gendarmes were two months in arrears, while salaries for military officers were regularly fifteen to twenty days late.[99] According to a British report on the state of the Arab army, issued in December 1919,

> The proportion of officers to men is one to three—in fact, they are all officers in some places. These worthies are derelict Turks mostly of the type that came up to apply for the levies and are refused—they wear gorgeous uniforms and decorations and draw handsome salaries on paper—the army has not actually touched any cash for the last two months, however, and they informed me that the Amir now says they will get their pay by taxation—the villagers don't seem very keen about this, though they probably lack the true national spirit—There are some six hun-

98. AD 2347/1, Le président de la chambre de commerce et d'industrie (Beyrouth) to Lt. Col. Nieger, 13 January 1920; AD 2347/3as/d2, "Extraits du bulletin de renseignements du 10 avril [1920]"; AD 2347/12, "Extraits du bulletin quotidien du 12 avril [1920]"; MAE L:SL/vol. 64/823–826, Gouraud to MAE, 14 April 1920; MD 4H58/1, "Rapport hebdomadaire: 27 avril au 3 mai [1920]."

99. MD 4H58/1, "Rapport hebdomadaire: 11–18 décembre [1919]"; IO L/PS/10/802/P967, Report of Waters-Taylor, 5 January 1920; WO 106/196/663G, GHQ to WO, 7 June 1920.

> dred of these beauties in Damascus, about eighty of whom are said to be Baghdadis.[100]

When the Arab government did manage to pay salaries to its employees, wages were low and often garnished for no apparent reason. By early 1920, soldiers whose pay had been reduced 75 percent before inflation were observed in the suqs of Damascus selling their equipment and uniforms in order to buy food. Other soldiers reacted to their impoverishment by desertion, and in some cases, mutiny.[101] Morale among government functionaries plummeted to such an extent that the government posted notices in *al-ʿĀṣima* reminding its employees of their hours of work and warning them against joining antigovernment organizations.[102]

The penury of government on all levels made life difficult and even desperate for much of the remainder of the urban population. For example, although the city of Damascus had an accumulated debt of 200,000 P.E., the municipal budget during the first year of Arab rule was a paltry 35,000 P.E.[103] As a result, the municipal government of Damascus, like the municipal governments of other financially strapped cities in Syria, neglected to provide basic services such as fresh drinking water, public lighting, and sanitation.[104] "Incessant rains have turned the streets into rivers," one Damascus newspaper, usually supportive of the Arab government, complained in January 1920. "The lack of income has prevented the municipal government from spending on necessary repair projects."[105] Another observer wrote at the end of 1919:

100. IO L/PS/11/169/P1512/1920, Major C. A. Boyle, 3 December 1919.

101. *al-ʿĀṣima*, 1 January 1920, 2; AD 2380/5/21/184, Cdt. Rouchdi to cdt. de la troisième brigade de cavalerie (Alep), 25 October 1919; MAE L:SL/vol. 19/1573, Gouraud to MAE, 30 November 1919; AD 2372/837, TEO (zone ouest) to cabinet politique, 20 April 1920; MD 4H58/1, "Rapport hebdomadaire: 20 au 26 avril [1920]"; MD 4H112/2b/51, "Renseignements," 25 May 1920; MAE L:SL/vol. 33, Gouraud to Millerand, 22 September 1920.

102. *al-ʿĀṣima*, 8 January 1920, 3.

103. MAE L:SL/vol. 64/3–39/"Note sur les finances municipales, les travaux urbains, et la nécessité d'un crédit communal," 8 January 1920. According to *al-Kawkab*, the budget for Damascus was 40,000 P.E. *al-Kawkab*, 27 January 1920, 11.

104. For information on Damascus, see *al-Kawkab*, 6 January 1920, 6. For Aleppo, see IO MSS EUR F152 (Frank Lugard Brayne Mss.)/18b. "Palestine and Syria Autumn 1918," 19–22 November 1918; IO MSS/EUR F152 (Frank Lugard Brayne Mss.)/20, 9 February 1919; Mardam Bek, *Dimashq wal-Quds fī al-ʿishrīnāt*, 44–45.

105. *al-Kawkab*, 6 January 1920, 10.

> The most salient feature [of Damascus] was that the town was many degrees dirtier than it had ever been in Turkish times. The bazaars were littered with vegetable and other refuse and secluded corners were no better than receptacles for filth of all descriptions.[106]

The increase in crimes against persons and property further indicates the deterioration of the quality of urban life. Reportedly, gun battles between armed gangs and police were a frequent occurrence on the streets of Damascus. Foreign observers noted that most residents of the capital refused to leave their homes after sundown; those who did venture out at night did so heavily armed.[107] The increase in violent acts committed on the streets of Damascus caused such alarm that in the autumn of 1919 Muslim notables of the city met with their non-Muslim counterparts to formulate a petition demanding the construction of police posts in strategic locations and the reinforcement of police patrols by armed civilians. Ironically, a French dispatch reporting an improvement in security was belied by a story in a progovernment newspaper published two months later reporting that the Damascus municipality was seriously considering permanently stationing a doctor at police headquarters to care for the unprecedented number of gunshot victims.[108] Foreign observers reported similar crime waves in Latakia, Duma, and Dayr al-Zur, while the American consul stationed in Aleppo complained in February 1920 that "families absent from their homes but a few hours return to find them pillaged even in the daytime."[109]

Further reducing the quality of urban life was the overcrowding that had begun during World War I and that nurtured higher levels of crime, unemployment, and intercommunal tension. This overcrowding not only

106. IO L/PS/10/802, Gertrude Bell, "Syria in October 1919," 15 November 1919.

107. USNA 59/867.00/1036/1717, Young (Damascus) to Wallace (Constantinople), 5 December 1919; FO 371/4186/162128/495, Telegram from acting Spanish consul (Damascus), forwarded by Spanish ambassador (London) to Curzon, 11 December 1919; USNA 867.00/1045/1825, Young (Damascus) to Secretary of State, 13 December 1919; *The Near East*, 8 April 1920, 495; FO 371/5037/E8350/4, "Note by Miss G. L. Bell C.B.E.," 29 May 1920; Howard N. Sachar, *The Emergence of the Middle East: 1914–1924*, 274.

108. AD 2344/c1/août–décembre 1919/362, Cousse to HC, 21 November 1919; *al-Kawkab*, 27 January 1920, 11.

109. USNA Aleppo Consulate RG84/121/800, J. B. Jackson to Adm. Mark Bristol (Constantinople), 9 February 1920; *The Near East*, 18 March 1920, 390; IO MSS Eur F152 (Frank Lugard Brayne Mss.)/20, F. B. Hanano (YMCA, Aleppo) to Brayne (?), 21 March 1920; *The Near East*, 8 April 1920, 495; FO 371/5076/E8007/74–79, "Note by Miss G. L. Bell—May 22, 1920."

continued throughout the Faysali period but was exacerbated by an influx of refugees from Anatolia, the Biqaʿ Valley, and the eastern frontier. Refugees entered Damascus, Aleppo, and other cities in the eastern zone in two waves. The first occurred during and immediately after the war. While this wave included approximately twenty-one thousand soldiers demobilized from the Ottoman army[110] and Arab war refugees, by far the largest component consisted of Armenians uprooted by the 1915 massacres. Aleppo and Damascus sheltered the largest number of Armenian refugees, approximately seventy thousand and thirty to thirty-five thousand respectively.[111] Most entered Syria with few or no possessions (one report filed at the close of the war estimated that 78 percent of Armenian refugees entering Syria were impoverished). In Homs, for example, the British counted two thousand destitute Armenian refugees. Because of their straitened circumstances, many depended on charity provided by the British army and the Arab government. At a time when the Arab government was facing insolvency, it was spending almost 45,000 P.E. on Armenian relief.[112]

The second wave of refugees began arriving in Syrian cities soon after the onset of the Evacuation Crisis. Most decamped from the Syrian countryside as the collapse of rural security made village life precarious. From Amman to Aleppo, from Tartus to Dayr al-Zur and Tadmur, an assortment of Circassians and ʿAnaza, Banu Sakhr, Shammar, Haddaydin, and al-Mawali tribesmen took advantage of weakened governmental authority to settle old scores and to enrich themselves by pillaging now defenseless hamlets—in the process sending thousands into flight.[113] Other refugees

110. FO 371/4163/14536/74070, DMI to GHQ, 17 January 1919.

111. According to reports, approximately sixty-one thousand of these Armenians were repatriated from Aleppo during the period 1 January to 20 July 1919. During this period, seventy-four thousand Armenians were repatriated from Syria and southern Turkey, leaving an additional seventy-two thousand who awaited resettlement. USNA Aleppo Consulate RG84/vol. 112/840.1/395, 23 August 1919.

112. FO 371/3058/137867, "Internal Conditions," 11 May 1917; WO 95/4372/C374, Sykes to OGS, 22 November 1918; FO 371/4143/32104/EA2135, GOC to WO, 22 January 1919; FO 371/4143/724011, Clayton to FO, 9 May 1919; FO 371/4143/104019, General Sir Walter Lawrence to Commander in Chief (Egypt), 13 May 1919; DU SA/493/6/46, Shuqayr to Faysal, 20 March 1920. In Aleppo, a British-run soup kitchen fed up to fifteen hundred daily and more than eight thousand Armenians in the city received other forms of assistance. In addition, a British-run orphanage housed almost two thousand Armenian children while more than four thousand Armenians lived in barracks housing. See Paul Monroe et al., *Reconstruction in the Near East.*

113. See FO 371/4178/7094/264–268, Hogarth to Chief Political Officer, EEF, 18 December 1918; FO 371/4214/103277/3814, Telegram from Baghdad to IO,

fled from the depredations of deserters from the Arab army and brigands. Inhabitants of the disputed Biqaʿ Valley were particularly affected by the militarization of the countryside. Not only did competition between the French and Arab governments create opportunities for intervillage and intercommunal animosities to resurface in a deadly fashion, but villagers often found themselves trapped between the French army and nationalist guerrillas in an ongoing border war. From 6 December 1919 to 6 January 1920, armed gangs crossed the frontier separating the eastern and western zones and pillaged thirty villages in the region of Marjʿayun in contemporary Lebanon. In response to this and similar raids, the French bombarded the valley from the sea and the air. According to an official complaint lodged by Amir Faysal with the British government, one such reprisal raid against the Jabal ʿAmil in the eastern zone in early 1920 left twenty thousand homeless, many of whom eventually sought refuge inland.[114]

As they had done in earlier times, the popular classes responded to what appeared to them to be unwarranted economic hardship and governmental abuse or callousness with acts of individual and collective resistance. Even though this period might be distinguished from earlier ones by an unprecedented level of organized political mobilization, the populace continued to resort to styles of protest that were spontaneous and ephemeral. Damascus, for example, experienced a strike wave during which railroad workers, printers, tram workers, glass and textile workers, employees of the electric company, and even independent artisans abandoned their places

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26 June 1919; FO 371/4181/99833/512578, Col. French to WO, 7 July 1919; *The Near East*, 12 February 1920, 210; *The Near East*, 19 February 1920, 244; AD 2209/dossier: Bagdad jusqu'au 31 décembre 1920/47, Roux to GCC, 28 February 1920; FO 371/5034/E2539/18, British Consul General (Beirut) to Secretary of State, 17 March 1920; AD 2348/C15As/d1/9, Hussein Moudir (Meskine) to directeur général des télégraphes, 13 May 1920; AD 2348/c15as/d1/781, Gouverneur d'Alep to min. intérieur, Damas, 12 May 1920; IO L/PS/10/802/P5172/3–4, French report for the period May 25–31; FO 371/5188/E6197, Arabic Press Extracts for Week Ended May 31 1920; MD 4H114/4/491, Cousse to Gouraud, 3 June 1920; MD 4H58/2, "Rapport hebdomadaire 433/2: 29 juin à 5 juillet."

114. AD 2380/5/21/184, Rouchdi (cdt. de la 3ème div.) to cdt. de la 3ème brigade de cavalerie (Alep), 25 October 1919; AD 2330/A1a, Gouraud to Faysal, "Memorandum des principaux faits relevés depuis l'arrivée du général H.C. jusqu'à ce jour," 13 January 1920; FO 371/5035/5661/194–195, Faysal to Lloyd George, 1 June 1920; FO 371/5036/E7772/808, Shahbandar to Col. Easton (British liaison, Damascus), 5 June 1920. See also AD 2344/c1/août–décembre, 1919/149–150–151, 17 November 1919; FO 371/5035/E5690/35, Wratislaw to Secretary of State, 13 May 1920.

of work, demanding higher wages.[115] During the spring of 1920, bread riots erupted throughout the zone. In Hama, rioters chanting, "You offer grain to France while we starve," demanded that the government take action to lower the price of flour, break up monopolies, and prohibit the export of grain to the western zone. In Aleppo, protesters demanded that the government create a grain reserve modeled on the one created by the Beirut municipality.[116] Aleppo was also the scene of the bloodiest confrontation preceding the July insurrection. In February 1919, native-born rioters attacked the Armenian refugee community, leaving forty-eight dead and up to two hundred injured. Although subsequent accounts dispute the immediate spark that ignited the massacre, the conflagration was perhaps inevitable in spite of Aleppo's reputation for cosmopolitanism: the influx of refugees contributed to high rates of unemployment and overcrowding, and Aleppans reportedly resented the special treatment accorded the refugees by the entente powers, the Arab government, and private charities and feared the competition the refugees generated (one refugee camp alone housed four thousand looms).[117]

Without a doubt, however, the single most hated and provocative program initiated by the Faysali government—the program that sparked the most resistance—was conscription. Ironically, the conscription law, first enacted in December 1919 and further expanded and strengthened in May and June 1920,[118] was promulgated as a result of widespread alarm over French intentions and the increasingly popular demand for armed resistance. But Syrians quickly discerned the difference between voluntary participation in local militias and coerced service in an ill-equipped and ill-paid national army. In addition, because the leaders of the popular committees

115. *al-ʿĀṣima*, 16 June 1919, 1–2; *al-Kawkab*, 4 November 1919, 10; *al-ʿĀṣima*, 3 May 1920, 5–6.

116. *The Near East*, 8 April 1920, 495; MD 4H112/2b/23, "Renseignements," 29 April 1920; Russell, *First Modern Arab State*, 142–143; Kasmieh, *al-Ḥukūma al-ʿarabiyya fī Dimashq*, 231.

117. WO 106/189/30629/EA2269, GHQ to WO, 3 March 1919; AD 2342, "Rapport sur les troubles survenus le 28 février 1919 à Alep," 14 April 1919; MD 4H112, "Compte rendu du capitaine Gautherot sur la situation politique à Alep," 6 May 1920; FO 371/4143/104019, General Sir Walter Lawrence to Commander in Chief (Egypt), 13 May 1919; *Arab Bulletin* 89 (14 May 1918): 168–169; Kurd ʿAlī, *Khiṭaṭ al-Shām*, 3:163–165; Ghazzī, *Nahr al-dhahab fī tārīkh Ḥalab*, 716–718; Monroe, *Reconstruction in the Near East*, 12–13, 34–35.

118. *al-ʿĀṣima*, 25 December 1919, 3; *al-ʿĀṣima*, 29 April 1920, 4; *al-ʿĀṣima*, 20 May 1920, 1–2; *al-ʿĀṣima*, 24 May 1920, 1–2; MD 4H58/2, "Rapport hebdomadaire: 6 au 12 juillet [1920]."

rightly perceived that the Arab government intended to use the conscription law to co-opt the popular nationalist movement and to build an army that could crush its opposition, they obstructed its implementation.[119] The draft thus met with both individual and collective resistance throughout the eastern zone. Young men forged birth documents so they could prove that they were not draft-eligible; others fled town and even the country. Draft evasion occurred so frequently that the Arab government prohibited the emigration of young men of draft age from the eastern zone. Draftees, forced to join military units, deserted in droves; desertion was so rampant that Faysal himself later remarked that desertions from the army often outstripped enlistments. Anticonscription riots broke out in Darʿa, Hasbaya, and, of course, Damascus, where anonymous posters compared the government's policies to those of the Committee of Union and Progress. To quell the riots, the Arab government dispatched four hundred soldiers into the ever-troublesome Maydan.[120]

Clearly, over the course of 1920, the seemingly never-ending string of crises besetting Syria had all but collapsed the moral and political authority of Amir Faysal and the Arab government. As the arena for political activity increasingly shifted from the amir's palace to the streets, organizers for the popular committees moved in to fill the void left by the enfeebled government. As journalist Asʿad Daghir later wrote in his memoirs,

> In truth, the politics which followed in Syria was strange, inasmuch as the intellectuals, the leaders of public opinion, and the men of the government themselves stirred up, by all means possible, the excitement of the people and pushed it to the extreme. Then, all of a sudden, they retreated before the slightest obstacle which blocked their way. They abandoned the people who were perplexed, not knowing how to explain their position. On the one hand, they pressed for preparations to resist the French, and urged the population to resist [the enemy] by blocking their

119. *al-Kawkab*, 6 January 1920, 10; MD 4H114/2/38, Cousse to Gouraud, 18 January 1920.

120. *Sūriyya al-jadīda*, 27 December 1919, 2; AD 2375/chemise: division de la Syrie, 1919–1920/349/2, Lamothe to GCC (telephone message), 6 January 1920; AD 2375/chemise: division de la Syrie, 1919–1920/355/2, Arlabosse to GCC, 9 January 1920; *al-Difāʿ*, 13 January 1920, 2; WO 106/195/1845S, GHQ to DMI, 9 March 1920; WO 106/196, "GHQ Intelligence Survey," 15 May 1920; AD 2374/1032, "Rapport," 18 May 1920; AD 2358/dossier: renseignements politiques/444, Cousse to HC, 24 May 1920; IO L/PS/10/802/P5172, "French Report for the period May 25–31 [1920]"; MD 4H114/4/478, Cousse to Gouraud, 1 June 1920; MD 4H114/4/483, Cousse to Gouraud, 3 June 1920; MD 4H58/1, "Rapport hebdomadaire: 1 au 7 juin [1920]"; AD 2374/dossier: TEO zone ouest: adm., cabinet politique/1193/CP. "Zone est: situation générale," 15 June 1920.

> communications and setting up obstacles in their path. On the other hand, some of them adopted a policy of flattery and flexibility, and promised the French government that they would direct the country on a path which they had incited the country to oppose.
>
> This created a situation of enormous turmoil and squandered the trust which the people placed in their leaders. It made them openly accuse some of them of treachery so that gradually [their trust in them] was dissolved. The leaders to whom the people had entrusted the reins of government were not able to lead after the confidence [of the people] was torn away from them and they were scoffed at.[121]

Faysal recalled the Syrian Congress in early March. More a barometer than an architect of public opinion, the congress declared Syria independent on 8 March 1920. The entente powers naturally refused to recognize the validity of the declaration and, at the San Remo Conference convened two months later, awarded France the mandate for Syria. With the French army poised on the coast and a popular nationalism drawing extensive support at home, a clash became inevitable. On 14 July, General Henri Gouraud issued an ultimatum to the Arab government. Ten days later, French troops crossed the frontier, broke through Syrian defensive lines at Khan Maysalun, and occupied Damascus, ending the brief experiment in Arab rule and beginning a twenty-five-year period of French mandatory control of Syria.

121. Dāghir, *Mudhakkarātī*, 122.