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Formování arabského národního myšlení v Levantě  
The Formation of Arab National Thought in Levant

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*I do solemnly declare that I have written the presented research thesis by myself. Where I have used thoughts from external sources, directly or indirectly, published or unpublished, this is always clearly attributed. Furthermore, I certify that this research thesis or any part of it has not been previously submitted for a degree or any other qualification in the Czech Republic or abroad.*

*In Prague 17.8.2016*

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## Abstract

This thesis studies the process of formation of Arab nationalist ideas in the period from the second half of the 19th century to 1914. According to the theoretical works on nationalism of Miroslav Hroch and Ernest Gellner it examines the causes and influences, as well as the most important milestones of the development of the Arab nation building process. The work traces the origins of Arab nationalism in the evolution of predecessor ideologies such as Islamic modernism, Ottomanism and Arabism, and studies their mutual relations. In addition to that, it conducts the study of the social aspects of early adherents of Arabism and Arab nationalism. The research is based on primary sources of the participant on the Arab national movement as well as on secondary historical works.

## Abstrakt

Práce sleduje proces formace arabských nacionalistických myšlenek v období od druhé poloviny 19. století do roku 1914. Na základě teoretických prací o nacionalismu od Miroslava Hrocha a Ernesta Gellnera zkoumá příčiny a vlivy a rovněž také nejdůležitější milníky vývoje procesu formování arabského národa. Práce dokumentuje počátky arabského nacionalismu jako nástupce jemu předcházejících ideologií, jako je například islámský modernismus, osmanismus a arabismus a studuje jejich vzájemné vztahy. K tomu je také přidružena studie sociálních aspektů raných přívrženců arabismu a arabského nacionalismu. Výzkum je založen na dobových pramenech zpracovaných účastníky arabského národního hnutí a rovněž také na odborné literatuře.

## Keywords

Arab Nationalism, National identity, Arabism, Ottomanism, Secularism, Islamic modernism,

## Klíčová slova

arabský nacionalismus, národní identita, arabismus, osmanismus, sekularismus, islámský modernismus

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## Introduction

Nationalism has been one of the most influencing ideologies that shaped the modern history of humanity and its impact is related not only to our past, but to our present as well. In the age of continuing globalization it might seem that nationalism is losing its importance as ethnic and national differences gradually dissolve. In reality, nationalism continues to be a major factor of global developments today.

In the academic community, there has been an increased interest in nationalism since the 1990s. This is a result of erupting national conflicts and civil wars that followed the collapse of communism and the dissolution of multinational empires such as the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia. When this kind of dissolution occurs, oftentimes nationalist ideologies emerge.<sup>1</sup> The Ottoman Empire was not exception and during its last years and after its fall, various nationalist ideologies from Turkish and Arabic to Greek and Serbian, emerged.

No ideology has shaped Arab history of the 20<sup>th</sup> century more than the ideology of Arab nationalism, which gained momentum after the fall of the Ottoman Empire and then lost some of that momentum after the Arabs lost the war against Israel in 1967. While much research has been invested in Arab nationalism of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, fewer scholars have investigated the social and political circumstances that led to the emergence of this ideology.<sup>2</sup> The purpose of this work is to analyze the ideological foundations and the social backgrounds that accompanied the development of Arab nationalism in the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire before World War I.

The aim of this work is to answer the following five questions, which are linked to the emergence of Arab nationalism: 1) Where did the ideology of Arab nationalism come from and to what extent it is an import of Western ideas, or is it the result of the evolution of Arabic thought and Arab intellectuals? 2) To what extent did Arab nationalist ideas spread by 1914, and what was the influence of Turkish policy on the development of the Arab national movement? 3) According to the theoretical works on nationalism, which are listed in chapter one, what were the objective components of the Arab national consciousness? 4) How do we examine the subjective features of the Arab nation building process? Is Ernest Gellner's theory of nationalism as an accompaniment of modernity applicable to Arab nationalism? 5) According to Miroslav Hroch's periodization, how

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1 Miroslav Hroch, *Národy nejsou dílem náhody: Příčiny a předpoklady utváření moderních Evropských národů*, (Praha: Slon, 2009), 55.

2 Philip S. Khoury, *Urban Notables and Arab Nationalism: The Politics of Damascus 1860-1920*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983) ix.

can we determine which stages the Arab nation building process went through during the studied period (from the movement's beginning to WWI)?

In order to answer these questions it was imperative to first become familiar with the major theories on nationalism and the methodological approaches towards this term. Here I choose Gellner, one of the most prominent academics of the modernist approach, and his definition as the analytical tool to evaluate Arab nationalism and examine its development until 1914. According to him "*It is a political principle in which cultural similarity is the major social bound and therefore it is an effort to statehood and an effort for political reality to correspond with cultural reality*"<sup>3</sup>

Secondly, it was necessary to research the history of the Ottoman Empire and its Arab provinces from primary and secondary historical sources, and to study scholarly works dealing with Arab nationalism. Applying the methodology of the theoretical approaches to nationalism I identified the critical turning points in the development of the Arab nation building process and the nationalizing tendencies of the Arab world.

Chapter one deals with defining the terminology that is used in the subsequent parts of the work and the terms that play a key role in the nation building process. Here, the various approaches towards nation and nationalism are introduced, from the primordial to the modernist theories. Chapter two explores how factors such as the European expansion and the Ottoman reformation influenced the social structure in the Arab lands. This chapter also studies the intellectual reactions to the switch of power balance between the East and the West and traces the seeds of nationalist ideas among them. In chapter three, the ideological and power struggle between Ottomanism and Arabism (the predecessor of political Arab nationalism) in the crucial second constitutional Ottoman period 1908-1918 is discussed. In this part, I analyze the social factors of Arabism and apply Gellner's theory.

Before proceeding to the work itself, it is necessary to mention the previous research that has been done on this subject, and which constitutes the core of this work's sources. The study of Arab nationalism began with the works of early participants of its movement, such as Sati' al-Husri, Amin Sa'id and George Antonius. These men were participants and witnesses of the Arab national movement, therefore their work is considered to be primary sources. Almost every study on this subject that emerged from that time, includes a reference to Antonius's *The Arab Awakening* that shaped the study of Arab nationalism and its history for at least twenty years since it was published

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3 Ernest Gellner, "Nacionalismus," in *Pohledy na národ a nacionalismus*, ed. Hroch Miroslav (Praha: Sociologické nakladatelství, 2003), 405.

in 1938.<sup>4</sup>

Antonius saw the beginnings of Arab nationalism in the 19<sup>th</sup> century literary movement and within intellectual societies, where mainly Christian Arabs, who were exposed to the teachings of Western missionary schools, revived the Arab nationality long suppressed by the Turks. The Christian Arabs then led their Muslim brothers to base the political unit on nationality, instead of religion.<sup>5</sup> This process culminated in the Arab Revolt of 1916 and incidents after it.

In the 1950s and 1960s a new generation of scholars called Antonius's notions into question. Since then, it has generally been accepted that Antonius overemphasized the link between the literary Nahda and the early emergence of nationalist feelings in the period of 1908-1918.<sup>6</sup> Additionally, the influence of the missionary schools as the bearers of modern secular learning among the Christian Arabs was rebutted. Those who opposed this view, stated that these schools were mainly oriented on religious and sectarian education.<sup>7</sup> Among the writers of this generation were Sylvia G. Haim, Zeine N. Zeine, Hisham Sharabi, Bassam Tibi, and Albert Hourani.

Albert Hourani partially maintains Antonius's argument of missionary schools and claims, that the Christian Arabs, unlike their Muslim counterparts did not have the problem of accepting Western ideas without feeling a sense of betrayal to their cultural Islamic heritage.<sup>8</sup> On the other hand, Hourani also claims that this movement was of limited influence on the development of the nationalist ideas.<sup>9</sup>

Among the first scholars to question Antonius's secular liberal origin of Arab nationalism and to attribute the patronage of this nationalism to the role of Islamic modernism was Zeine, who stressed that reviving Islam helped to develop Arab consciousness.<sup>10</sup> Similarly, but with a slight difference, Haim sees in Arab nationalism "the outcome of the severe intellectual crisis that Islam experienced during the 19<sup>th</sup> century"<sup>11</sup>. This quote suggests an interpretation, that it was the failure of Islamic modernist thinking to respond to the decline of the East and the modernity of the West, which allowed the ideology of nationalism to overtake its place.

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4 George Antonius, *The Arab Awakening* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1938); Sati' al-Husri, *Al-Bilad al-'arabiya wa al-dawla al-'utmaniya* [The Arab Countries and the Ottoman State], (Beirut: 1960); Amin Sa'id, *Al-Thawra al-'arabiya al-kubra* [The Great Arab Revolt], Vol. 1 (Cairo: 'Isa al-Babi al-Halabi, 1934).

5 Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*, 55-60.

6 Rashid Khalidi, "Ottomanism and Arabism in Syria Before 1914: A Reassessment," in *Arab Nationalism*, ed. Rashid Khalidi et al. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 51.

7 Ernest Dawn, "The Origins of Arab Nationalism," in *Arab Nationalism*, ed. Rashid Khalidi et al. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 4.

8 Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age 1789-1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 95.

9 Albert Hourani, *The Emergence of the Modern Middle East* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), 204.

10 Hasan Kayali, *Arabs and Young Turks: Ottomanism, Arabism, and Islamism in the Ottoman Empire 1908-1918* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 11.

11 Sylvia G. Haim, *Arab Nationalism: An Anthology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 6.

All of these scholars generally agree that the second constitutional period of the Ottoman Empire that started with the coup of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) in 1908, was crucial for the growth of the Arab national movement. The policy of Turkish nationalism adopted by the CUP after gaining power made the Arabs lose their illusions about achieving equality with the Turks and effectively drew them even closer to Arab nationalism.<sup>12</sup>

The biggest challenger to this concept is Ernest Dawn, who argues that the inclination of the CUP towards Turkish nationalism was overemphasized and that their policy remained generally Ottomanist until the end of the war. Therefore, he denies that Arab nationalism is a response to the CUP's Turkification policy and argues, that Arabism stayed a minority movement until 1918. In the struggle between Arabism and Ottomanism, he sees an inner elite struggle of rival Arab notables for power.<sup>13</sup>

While most authors accept Dawn's arguments that Arabism continued to be a minority movement until 1918, his thesis that the CUP did not adopt the ideology of Turkish nationalism before 1918, does not garner quite as much support. Hasan Kayalı, who studied the Arab-Turkish relations of the 1908-1918 supports his arguments<sup>14</sup>, but Hanioglu, who examined secret correspondences of the inner leading circle of the CUP party, proves that the movement has been more intensely Turkish nationalist from an earlier stage, than most scholars expected.<sup>15</sup>

Dawn's revisionist theory has been revised and made less contradicting to the traditionalist theories by scholars of a third generation, such as Khalidi and Philip Khoury<sup>16</sup>. Dawn's theory that most of the Arabs before 1918 were Ottomanist, which he used to base his study of the notables of Damascus, was questioned by Khalidi, who argues that in the coastal regions of the Levant, which were ignored by most of the scholars and where was a more busy trading activity, a new middle class was emerging. This class adopted the rival ideology of Arabism simply to challenge the traditional leading class, the majority of whom stayed loyal to the Ottoman Empire.<sup>17</sup>

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12 Bassam Tibi, *Arab Nationalism: Between Islam and the Nation-State* (London: Macmillan Press, 1997), 109; Hisham Sharabi, *Arab Intellectuals and the West: The Formative Years 1875-1914* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1970), 88-89, 115.

13 Ernest Dawn, *From Ottomanism to Arabism* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1973), 122-179.

14 Hasan Kayalı, *Arabs and Young Turks*, 12.

15 M. Şükrü Hanioglu, *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008).

16 Khalidi, "Ottomanism and Arabism in Syria Before 1914," 50-69; Philip Khoury, *Urban Notables and Arab Nationalism*, 58-74.

17 Khalidi, "Ottomanism and Arabism in Syria Before 1914," 55.

## 1. Definitions and Terminology

### 1.1. Definition of the Term Nation

The efforts to find a unified, objective and universal definition for the term nation, had always faced difficulties and there is no general consensus on this matter so far. The main reason for it is, that the term comes from the Latin word *natio* and had acquired various meanings in different languages and throughout the ages.<sup>18</sup>

The nation became a subject of scholarly interest already in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, which is the period when modern nations as we know them today were just being formed. Therefore, there is a visible impact of the regional and geographical background of the scholars on this matter. For example in Western Europe, where states have existed in the middle ages, approximately overlapping the territories of later nation states such as France and England, the scholars considered the existence of a nation community as a natural and obvious matter. The term nation was so, usually connected to the state and statehood. In Central Europe, however, where a process of struggle for national unity had to proceed the emergence of nation states, the scholars had to find a unified characteristics and features to define a community (nation) and differentiate it from the others. Hence, nation was here connected with terms as language, culture and territory.<sup>19</sup>

What these theories had in common, was their primordial character. Simply, because these intellectuals who studied a nation were also a part of it, or very often part of a national struggle, they identified themselves with this primordial concept. This was common in that period and was a main point of nationalist theories. It is a belief, that the nation is a universal and always present category in human history. As Ernest Gellner, whose theory is that nor nationalism, neither nations are universal, would say that “these early scholars studying the nation were deeply addresses by nationalism”<sup>20</sup> and could not distinguish nationalist ideas as theories and not universal concepts (as proclaimed by nationalists). Based on this concept there was an effort to define the nation by objective and universal features that could be applicable to all the nations in the world.

However, since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century scholars resigned on this approach postulating, that it is not possible to find such features due to the variety of nations and the characteristics which are dominant for each one of them.<sup>21</sup>

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18 Miroslav Hroch, *Národy nejsou dílem náhody*, 16.

19 *Ibid*, 17.

20 Ernest Gellner, *Nationalism*, (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1997), 5.

21 Hroch, *Národy nejsou dílem náhody*, 18.

The theories emerging since, could be divided in two major streams. The first one was trying to find objective, but not universally applicable characteristics for nation, to define it as language, culture, territory and history. Among these were Friedrich Meinecke who divides the nations in two types, *Kulturnation* and *Staatsnation*, based on whether their core is mainly a common culture or whether it is the force of common political history.<sup>22</sup> A similar approach had another scholar named Otto Bauer, who saw the historical development as an objective feature that forms each nation as a “community of destiny” and by which each nation acquires its own and personal nature.<sup>23</sup> The second stream of thought was of a lesser popularity at first, but eventually and mainly after the second world war dominated the academic field on this matter. Its main idea was that nations should be defined not by their objective features, but by the will of its potential members and their sense of belongingness to one nation. A predecessor of this group was a french philosopher Ernest Renan who said at his famous lecture in 1882 at Sorbonne, that the nation is a spiritual principle, which arose from changes and developments of history. Thus, it is a spiritual community and not a group of people bound to a land or soil. It is formed by two things: common ownership of rich memories and approval and a wish to live together.<sup>24</sup>

Despite the differences, the distinction between these two streams is not strict. Scholars trying to define nations by objective characteristics were aware of the necessity of the self-awareness of its members. Similarly, scholars of the other stream knew there can be no self-awareness, if there are no common features that would make the members of a community feel, that they have something more in common with each other than with other people.

What has changed in the academic field on this topic in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, is first of all the abandonment of the primordial concept of nations. Secondly, between the objective and subjective approach to define a nation, there has been a general transfer towards the subjective approach and a consensus, that the nation can not be defined only ethnically and without a sense of self-awareness among its members. Lastly, and as an impact of the first point, if nations are not something eternal and universal, than they had to appear or come to existence in some point in history. Here, most scholars start to see nationalism as a premise or condition for the existence of the nation. Therefore, many authors have given up on the need to find a definition of the nation and the focus has since then, the focus has been pointed to the study of nationalism itself. These are

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22 Friedrich Meinecke, “Oběcne o národu, národním státu a světoobčanství,” in *Pohledy na národ a nacionalismus*, ed. Miroslav Hroch (Praha: Sociologické nakladatelství, 2003), 47.

23 Otto Bauer, “Národnostní otázka a sociální demokracie,” in *Pohledy na národ a nacionalismus*, ed. Miroslav Hroch (Praha: Sociologické nakladatelství, 2003), 37.

24 Ernest, Renan, “Co je to národ?” in *Pohledy na národ a nacionalismus*, ed. Miroslav Hroch (Praha: Sociologické nakladatelství, 2003), 33.

more or less features of a wider range of approaches, generally referred to as modernist theories, which this work will be based on.

Belonging to these modernist theories can be seen the work of Hans Kohn, whose scholarly interest brought up new looks on the ideology of nationalism (these will be discussed in the next chapter), but his definition of the nation as a “creation of nationalism” had a big impact on the next generation and was fully developed and promoted later by Ernest Gellner<sup>25</sup>, who influenced many others by the conception, that the nations were made by the ideology of nationalism. However, often overlooked is the fact that Gellner studied the social conditions of the societies, where it led to nationalism. He saw industrialization, or the social changes affected by it as a major predisposition to its emergence. For Ernest Gellner, culture is universal and eternal, nations are not. Culture is a shared means of verbal expression, mimics, gestures, attitudes, way of dressing, cuisine habits, and many others.<sup>26</sup> Everyone has a culture and culture had always been. The variety of cultures in the world is, however, huge. Number of cultures in the world defined by language is around 8000. The number of nation states is only about 200.<sup>27</sup> So what is the difference? Is it that some cultures are also nations and some are not? What is the process that a culture has to go through to become a nation? According to Gellner’s work, some cultures by their dominance and predispositions spread and absorbed other smaller cultures to form a modern nation. Other cultures somehow merged together and created a new modern nation formed by all of them.

One of the exceptions from the mentioned trend in this era was the attempt to define the nation by Anthony Smith, who merges the modernist and traditionalist approach. He defines it as a population that shares a historical territory, common myths, historical memories, mass culture, common economy and common legal rights and duties obligatory for all its members.<sup>28</sup> This definition was rare in this period, due to the stress on objective features mentioned to define a nation.

The difference of Smith’s approach from his contemporaries can be mainly seen in the contrast to subjective definitions of Deutsche “community of complementary social communication”<sup>29</sup> and Benedict Anderson, which describes it as a “political community created in the imagination, a community bonded and sovereign in its essence”. It is imaginary, because the members of this community imagine the connection, which they have with the other members of the community, who they will never meet.<sup>30</sup>

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25 Hroch, *Národy nejsou dílem náhody*, 23.

26 Gellner, *Nationalism*, 1.

27 Ernest Gellner, *Nacionalizmus*, (Brno: Centrum pro studium demokracie a kultury, 2003), 8.

28 Anthony Smith, *National Identity* (London: Penguin Books, 1991), 14.

29 Hroch, *Národy nejsou dílem náhody*, 27.

30 Benedict Anderson, *Představy spoločenství: Úvahy o pôvodu a šírení nacionalismu*, (Praha: Karolinum, 2008), 22.

The approach of my work will be mainly based on the modernist theory, mostly on the concepts of Gellner and Hroch. However, and despite the fact that the objective criteria were, as a key factor, overcome in these modernist theories, they can be viewed as a predisposition to the formation of national identity and they present a major role in the construction of an imagined community. For that, I will be trying to identify the objective criteria, which were crucial in the Arab nation building process in forming what later would become the modern Arab nation. And also, I will be examining the attitude of early members of the Arab movement towards these criteria.

## 1.2. Defining Nationalism

Similarly to the term nation, the nationalism is not any less hard to capture or provide a consensus on it as a term, or as a phenomenon. Different approaches of scholars on this matter are rooted in their different attitude to nationalism on the scale from being primordial to constructivist and also in the diversity of nationalism, or nationalisms in term of usefulness and harmfulness. Hence, there has been difficulties with working with this term as a neutral analytical tool and there was always a distinction between the positive and negative side of nationalism. Most influential was the dichotomy of Hans Kohn, which distinguishes western and eastern nationalism as progressive and reactionary, where the first one is positive, liberal and democratic and the second one is backward.<sup>31</sup>

Another such distinction is diachronic, where nationalist ideologies of the 19<sup>th</sup> century represent the liberal progressive version and the 20<sup>th</sup> century nationalism is the negative aggressive form of the originally progressive ideology.<sup>32</sup>

This distinction is present in the works of all authors. An example of that is Ernest Gellner, in whose work this distinction does not have a central role, however is present as various features and conditions of the same ideology in different times and places. These are portrayed in his division into time periods and geographical zones.<sup>33</sup>

Anderson does not provide a specific definition of nationalism. He criticizes the notion to look upon nationalism as just another one of the ideologies and suggests to look upon it as form of modern religion. He sees nationalism not as something that replaced the old religious order in its process of gradual disintegration, but rather that it grew out of it. More specifically out of its two cultural systems (religious communities and dynastic empires) and distinguishes itself from them.<sup>34</sup> Accordingly, instead of trying to define the term, it is more fruitful to try to understand the historical and cultural roots that led to its foundation. This approach is very suitable for the situation of the Arab nationalism, which grew on the grounds of the Islamic religious communities and the dynastic Ottoman Empire. To what extent it incorporates the values and features of these two cultural systems and how it distinguishes itself from them, will be seen in the following parts of the work.

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31 Hans Kohn, "Nacionalismus," in *Pohledy na národ a nacionalismus*, ed. Miroslav Hroch (Praha: Sociologické nakladatelství, 2003), 87.

32 Hroch, *Národy nejsou dílem náhody*, 32.

33 Gellner, *Nationalism*, 37-58.

34 Anderson, *Představy spoločenství*, 28.

To use one word (nationalism) to cover the two aspects of the phenomenon is what causes the hard gripability and vagueness of the term. Hence, among the works of many, the term nationalism got stabilized on its more negative side as it can be also seen in Miroslav Hroch's book, where he works with it as national egoism.<sup>35</sup>

For the positive side of it, new terms are often occurring to distinguish it as patriotism, used by Otto Dann.<sup>36</sup> John Armstrong, in his research of nation building processes extending all the way to the middle ages, was aware that using nationalism is out of place, as it was not present in that time and due to the general consensus, that it is connected with the modern age. Therefore, he used the term national identity, which more suitable to work with this periods of history and also more neutral.

Proceeding with this approach was the work of Anthony Smith and his concept of multiple identities. National identity is one of the identities that the person can identify himself with. National identity is closely linked with the ethnic identity and is mainly formed by the feeling of continuity across the generations, i.e. subjective aspects as myths of common origin and common history.<sup>37</sup>

Smith combines the modernist and traditionalist approach. He criticizes the modernists as Gellner and Anderson for marking the nations as a construct of modern world and not acknowledging the importance of pre-modern cultures and the ethnic ties of modern nations.<sup>38</sup> Nevertheless and despite of Smith's focus on the objective criteria, his approach is not primordial. He focuses on the ethno-cultural attributes of national identity. According to him, national identities are usually focused around five fundamental features, which are as follows:

1. a historic territory, or homeland
2. common myths and historical memories
3. a common, mass public culture
4. common legal rights and duties for all members
5. a common economy with territorial mobility for members<sup>39</sup>

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35 Hroch, *Národy nejsou dílem náhody*, 34.

36 *Ibid*, 33.

37 Anthony Smith, "Etnický základ národní identity," in *Pohledy na národ a nacionalismus*, ed. Miroslav Hroch (Praha: Sociologické nakladatelství, 2003), 276.

38 Anthony Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 9.

39 Smith, *National Identity*, 14.

The conceptions of Gellner and Anderson however do not differ radically from Smith's. They all focus on the predispositions of formation of modern nations. The difference is, which factors they favor. While Smith focuses on national mythology, Anderson prefers the development of communication means, capitalism and colonialism. Gellner prioritizes economical and social conditions of the industrial period.

In my work I will try to stick to working with nationalism as a neutral analytical tool based on Gellner's theoretical definition of it as: "*It is a political principle, in which cultural similarity is the major social bound and therefore it is an effort to statehood and for political reality to correspond with cultural reality*".<sup>40</sup> In the periods before the Arab national movement got its political aims, I will be using the concepts of Smith and John Armstrong of national and ethnic identity and Otto Dann's term of patriotism, as well.

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40 Gellner, "Nacionalismus," 405.

### 1.3. Origins of Nationalism

The different concepts and approaches in the academic field that were presented in the previous two chapters can be reflected in the attitude towards the formation and emergence of nationalism. The scholars, who see in nationalism a creating force for nations, maintain the idea that nations are cultural constructs, a creation of intellectuals and politicians. This statement, however, will merge a wide range of different approaches, which vary in the degree of their radicalism i.e. to what extent they acknowledge the importance of the objective features, and how they explain the spread of the ideology from the places where it originated to the other parts of the world.<sup>41</sup>

It is also important to understand, that the distinction between the modernists and primordialists is not that radical. Not all the interpretations that consider nations to be created by nationalism are constructivist theories. For example Hans Kohn who is the predecessor of this approach, also acknowledges the relevance of the objective cultural and historical characteristics, which were in fact the reason for that different paths of western and eastern nationalism. That is the key point of his theory.

An extremist approach can be seen in the work of Ellie Kedourie, who is on the edge of the spectrum of academic research on this matter, and is rather a minority voice amongst academicians. The first sentence of his article is expressing his approach completely. "Nationalism is an ideology that was invented in Europe in the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century".<sup>42</sup> Kedourie says it is not a universal phenomenon, but a product of European thought in the last 150 years.<sup>43</sup> In his theory, nationalism connects two human natural emotions. The first one is love for the land, where someone lives and for his own group or community. The second one is xenophobia, dislike for strangers and unwillingness to accept them to their group. These two emotions do not have any anthropological cause, nor do they posit any relation between the state and the members. Nationalism claims these two emotions, justifies them anthropologically and makes them the cornerstone of a political principle.

Ernest Gellner openly distinguishes himself from Kedourie. He acknowledges, that their theories have one common feature, which is that nationalism is not universal or natural phenomenon. Gellner says, that Kedourie made this fact most clear and apparent. Gellner also

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41 Hroch, *Národy nejsou dílem náhody*, 41.

42 Ellie Kedourie, "Nacionalismus," in *Pohledy na národ a nacionalismus*, ed. Hroch, Miroslav (Praha: Sociologické nakladatelství, 2003), 101.

43 *Ibid*, 104.

admits, that he did not openly criticize the supposition of universality of nationalism before reading Kedourie's book.<sup>44</sup> For all that, on the scale of being modernist or primordial, both these authors are regarded modernist. They picture the ideology as a phenomenon of the modern world and not a universal concept, although, Gellner does not consider nationalism an accidental occurrence of European history. So on the scale on seeing nationalism as accidental (as Kedourie) or necessary (as primordialists), he stands in the middle. Nationalism is not a necessary phenomenon, it does not lie in the nature of human being, but is also not an accident.<sup>45</sup> It is rather necessary consequence of specific social conditions.

Nationalism occurs when special conditions are found. It is not obligatory, that these conditions occur, but when they do it is inevitable or at least understandable and logical, that it leads to nationalism. Gellner refers to these conditions as industrialism. In my understanding, what Gellner here means by industrialism is not the mechanical production and factories itself as a precondition to nationalism, but rather the social conditions that industrialized society creates. These are the loss of bond between people. The social hierarchy of the feudal age, where every person was bound to the society by his social status and religious affiliation came to an end with the modern age. Qualified labor demanded a huge scale of job opportunities, where candidates could not be assigned according to their social status, but according to their skills. This required education in a mass level which in return required a codified and united language and a level of literacy among the ordinary people. In short, this produced high culture among masses and social mobility. Thereto the physical mobility, represented in urbanization and movement towards the centers of industry and formal equality of all the citizens made life for ordinary people markedly different. The poor peasant who barely knew in which kingdom he was living, and for who the edge of known world was the local landlord and the priest, suddenly became directly and without an intermediary, connected to the state.

In that world, formal equality did not mean there was no difference between rich and poor, but the difference was present in the position people had in the bureaucratic system or in their bank accounts. This difference, however, does not penetrate to the depth of human soul and does not create social statuses for people. The differences of social positions in the modern society are spread along some kind of continuum and have no specific boundaries affirmed by any rituals or habits.<sup>46</sup>

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44 Gellner, *Nationalism*, 10.

45 *Ibid*, 11.

46 *Ibid*, 27.

The identity of enlightenment in this era rested in something universal. It lacked any connection with cultural or political borders.<sup>47</sup> Theoretically, it could lead to a universal global culture. All the cultural nuances in the world would merge as drops of rain into one puddle.<sup>48</sup> That is what all the internationalist- universalists would expect. However, for the human kind it is natural to merge into groups, to identify themselves with a body larger than themselves and distinguish themselves from others. Therefore, the drops of rain do not merge into one big puddle, but create many various, large, often mutually hostile puddles.<sup>49</sup>

The enlightenment universalistic society created a vacuum of social bound i.e. it tore down the old bounds and did not create new. That is a fertile ground for some new bounding ideology to take place and give people a new, more emotional identity. Nationalism, as a product of reactionary romanticism, found in this vacuum a perfect ground to spread.

Gellner stresses the casual effect of the social conditions on nationalism, but as we saw now social conditions themselves did not lead to nationalism, but created space for the spread of nationalism, as an ideology from above. This is another objective characteristic, even though Gellner does not attribute it such importance. It is possible to picture it is as two equal causes happening at the same time. The ideology would not emerge, if there would be no social conditions demanding for it on one hand. On the other hand, if the ideas of the thinkers of romanticism did not appear, perhaps an ideology based on something different than ethnicity would seize this vacuum and set different principles of identification and self-determination.

This characteristic of nation formation which Gellner provides is centralized on western Europe. It gives an explanation how the first modern nations were formed in states such as France and England, but sometimes it is hardly applied for the other parts of Europe and the world. The author himself is aware of the shortage of this conception on countries such as Greece.<sup>50</sup> And so, one of the goals of this work will be to find, whether Gellner's theory can be applied to the situation of the Arab world. For that purpose, it is necessary to see whether the features that Gellner describes as the social conditions of the modern world (the loss of social bond and social structure of the pre-modern society, the appearance of anonymity, mobility, semantic nature of work, context-free communication and mass education) could be found in the Arab world, in the period before Arab nationalism became a leading ideology. The time when Arab nationalism reached its fulfillment, is here considered to be the brief period of King Faysal's rule in Syria in 1919-1920 and the formation

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47 *Ibid*, 67-68.

48 *Ibid*, 33.

49 *Ibid*, 33-34.

50 *Ibid*, 41.

of two elected bodies- the Syrian General Congress and the Syrian Cabinet, which adopted the ideology of Arab nationalism. Because of that, the period for the study of Gellner's social conditions will be approximately from the half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the end of WWI.

Anderson is often considered to be a follower of Gellner's theory. Nevertheless, he distinguishes himself from his conception, that nationalism creates nations where they do not exist<sup>51</sup> (Gellner, despite of what we analyzed previously asserts, that some times nationalism creates nations out of nothing, e.x. Estonia). Other than that, Anderson is also criticized for explaining how the ideology could spread, but not explaining why it spread. Reading his book carefully, we see that the bigger part is devoted to the cultural and historical predispositions that outpaced the formation of nations independently on the hopes of nationalists.

On the example of these scholars we can see how nominally different approaches do not really differ that much in their essence. Miroslav Hroch says that it is for the sake of originality, that every scholar promotes his conception to be original and distinguishes himself from many other scholars.<sup>52</sup> Most of the times, the real difference in various approaches rests only in stressing different causes as a key factor to the formation of nationalism.

Most of the academic works takes into consideration and questions the role of all the features below on the formation of nationalism:

1. Ties with the past
2. Language and ethnicity
3. Modernization
4. Conflict of interest
5. Emotions and identity

In the following parts of the work I will identify the objective criteria which constitute points one and two, and analyze how they formed the features of the modern Arab nation. Subsequently, I will be analyzing how modernization, embodied in Gellner's concept of the social conditions of the modern world, shaped the stages of the Arab nation building process. Lastly, I will examine the power struggle and conflict of interests that accompanied the emergence of Arab nationalism, and find how this conflict influenced some of the Arab elite in adopting the ideology of Arab nationalism. Emotions and identity in the 5<sup>th</sup> point, are features which are linked to to the last

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51 Anderson, *Představy spoločenství*, 22.

52 Hroch, *Národy nejsou dílem náhody*, 42.

phases of nationalism and describe the stage when it becomes a mass movement and the majority of population adopts the national identity. In the period studied in this work, which ends with WWI, Arab nationalism did not reach that phase, therefore this feature will not be analyzed.

#### 1.4. Different Scenarios of Forming a Nation

The path towards modern nations had different model scenarios. In Europe alone, scholars usually recognize three or four regional zones.<sup>53</sup> The first one is western Europe where, as we mentioned earlier, pre-modern dynastic kingdoms existed for centuries overlapping with borders of culturally similar ethnic groups. This is the zone where the modern nation was established through an inner revolution.<sup>54</sup>

The second zone is represented by countries as Germany and Italy, situated in a central stripe of Europe reaching from the North to the South. Here, high culture, official language and literature were present for a long time and the population was ethno-geographically quite compact. But they did not have a state. Therefore, formation of these nations went through a process of national struggle, where the goal was to unite, but not to liberate.<sup>55</sup>

The last third zone are the multi-ethnic empires of eastern Europe: Habsburg, Ottoman and Russian Empire. Here, in the process of national struggle, non-ruling ethnic groups had to split from the unit. What differentiated these ethnic groups from a modern nation was, that they lacked a full social composition and culture in their native language.<sup>56</sup>

The Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire can apparently not be compared to the first zone in Europe. But it is also visible that they do not adopt fully for neither the second, nor the third zone. Therefore, I will study which features had the Arab world in common with these two scenarios.

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<sup>53</sup> Hroch recognizes three zones (page 48 in *Národy nejsou dílem náhody*) and Gellner four (pages 52-54 in *Nationalism*). The fourth zone are countries of the communist block, therefore are not concerned in this work.

<sup>54</sup> Hroch, *národy nejsou dílem náhody*, 48.

<sup>55</sup> Gellner, *Nationalism*, 52-54.

<sup>56</sup> Hroch, *Národy nejsou dílem náhody*, 50.

## 1.5. Periodization of the Path Towards a Modern Nation

Based on Miroslav Hroch's conception, I will be also using his chronological periodization of the nation building process. Here as a criterion is chosen the nation, defined as a stage when all or almost all of the potential members agree, that they belong to it. To achieve this state, the nation building process had to go through three stages, which are defined by Hroch as stages A, B and C.

As a first premise for identification with a nation, it is necessary to define the homeland, study the history, codify the language, characterize national culture and traditions and specify the members of the nation or an ethnic group. This was usually done by scholars on the rulers demands or out of personal interest. Their researches and findings were important for the later phases of the nation building process, but it would be exaggerated to assume that their intentions were to start a nationalist movement. This stage is called phase A.

The second phase B is when a specific group of people of the ethnic group, usually more educated or people with the local power, start to spread national awareness and identity to all the members of the ethnic group. This phase has an agitation character and advocates mainly cultural, linguistic and social goals and only rarely political ones.

Only when the phase B gains most of the population for the nationalist course and has a materialized power, the agitation character changes to a mobilization character of the phase C. During this phase, the movement acquires a political program. The movement or national struggle is successful, when it reaches autonomy or independence.<sup>57</sup>

I will work with this periodization and will define through which phases went the Arab nation building process during the studied period, from its beginning until WWI.

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<sup>57</sup> *Ibid*, 54.

## 2. The Middle East and the New World Order

### 2.1. The Ottoman Empire and the West

The key to the intellectual crisis of the Eastern Muslim world can be found in the shift of power relations between Europe and the Ottoman Empire, from the 16th to the 20th century. In 1453 when the Ottomans conquered Constantinople, turning it into the new capital of their Islamic Empire Istanbul, and after their successful advance into the heartlands of Christian Europe and brief conquest of most of the Arabic territories from Iraq to eastern Morocco, their power seemed unstoppable.<sup>58</sup> The Ottomans were like most of the Turkish dynasties Sunni Muslims, but their Sunni character was mainly underlined by gaining the holy cities of Islam- Mecca and Medina and the base of Sunni Islamic thought Al-Azhar in Cairo under their territories, and was strengthened by their opposition to the Shia Safavid Persian Empire. By this rapid expansion of the Ottomans, the Sunni Islamic world seemed to be revived in its glory and far ahead of Europe.

During the 16th and 17th century the Ottoman Empire presented a dominant political force due to its two main military bodies. The first was a powerful navy based in Istanbul from where it dominated the Black Sea and the Eastern Mediterranean and secured a lucrative sea trade. The other was a tremendous land army using the latest innovations of gunpowder and siege weapons in the time when the feudal armies of Europe were equipped mainly with pikes.<sup>59</sup>

The factors that led to the shift of power between the East and the West in the following centuries can be divided in two major sets. One of them was the internal signs of weakness and developments inside the empire itself. After the death of the tenth sultan Suleyman the Magnificent<sup>60</sup> in 1566 the empire was confronted with several problems as unqualified rulers and economic difficulties. Inflation was causing that the army could not be properly paid and equipped and corruption and bribery spread among government clerks who witnessed cuts off of their salaries as well.<sup>61</sup>

The decay of power showed up on battlefields very soon. Since 1656 the Ottomans were defeated on sea by the Venetians, retreated from Vienna after a second attempt to capture the city, and lost territories in nowadays Hungary, Croatia, Romania and the northern coast of the Black Sea to the Habsburg and Russian empires.<sup>62</sup> In 1774 after a lost war against the Russians, the Ottoman

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58 William L. Cleveland and Martin Bunton, *A History of the Modern Middle East* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2009), 39.

59 *Ibid*, 42-43.

60 In the West commonly known as Suleyman the Magnificent, while in the East known as Kanuni (Lawgiver).

61 Hanioglu, *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire*, 22.

62 John Obert Voll, "Foundations for Renewal and reform: Islamic Movements in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth

Empire had to sign a treaty containing the loss of Romania and parts of the Crimean Peninsula and granting the Russians two vital privileges: access to the Turkish Straits and the patronage and protection of the Greek Orthodox Christians in the Ottoman Empire.<sup>63</sup> The second one proved later to be a useful tool for Russian interventions and later on interventions on behalf of the Great Powers who also found their protected people in the Ottoman Empire.

By the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the deplorable situation of the empire and its decline must have been obvious to every close observer. The Janissaries, who in the 16<sup>th</sup> century were one of the best armies in Europe had long ago lost their discipline and interest in fighting. These corps, were during the peak of the empire, formed of captured Christian boys from the Balkan who were converted to Islam and trained to be a professional and loyal fighting force. They were not allowed to get married, so that their loyalty to the sultan will not be disrupted by social bounds. However, the last enslaved Christians from the Balkan were in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and later on, the Janissaries were allowed to marry and their membership became hereditary.<sup>64</sup> Because of that, the Janissaries of the 18<sup>th</sup> century lacked training and were more drawn by commerce than fighting.

The decline of Ottoman power was also visible in the inability of the central government to control its provinces, where local leaders acquired power, set semi-autonomous governments and were granted the right of tax farming and no longer provided soldiers to the empire. What is more, the religious authorities also well acquired a degree of autonomy and started to act in an independent way.<sup>65</sup>

The second factor that caused the power drift between the East and the West had external character. Another movement that took place far behind the borders of Islam caused that the Islamic world found itself under the supremacy of Europe and the Western world. The Renaissance period which started as a cultural movement, is considered to be the bridge between the Middle Ages and modern history in Europe. This period brought new social and political orders and expansion in sciences. Among these, the most influential scientific novelties were the geographical discoveries that opened new naval routes for the Europeans to Asia around Africa, cutting off the Ottoman income from the trade passing through their empire. The discovery of America led to the flow of gold and silver from there to Europe, which then led to the raise of prices causing inflation in the Ottoman Empire. Above all, the industrial revolution which later in the history brought new manufacturing technologies, which were cheaper and faster than the traditional ones.<sup>66</sup>

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Centuries," in *Oxford History of Islam*, ed. John L. Esposito (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 510.

63 Cleveland and Bunton, *History of the Modern Middle East*, 53.

64 Christoph K. Neumann, *Dějiny Turecka* (Praha: NLN, 2014) 76-77.

65 Abul-Karim Rafeq, "A Different Balance of Power: Europe and the Middle East in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries," in *A Companion to the History of the Middle East*, ed. Youssef M. Choueiri (Malden: Blackwell, 2005), 232.

66 Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), 29.

These factors have strengthened the European economy incomparably to the Ottoman one. Until the 16<sup>th</sup> century, this would not have had such a strong impact on the Ottoman empire, because its economy was alike the other empires almost totally independent and self-sufficient. However this gradually started to change from the 16<sup>th</sup> century into a system of so called modern world economy. By the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Ottoman empire was completely integrated to this system and therefore could hardly resist the dominance of the European economy in an open market.<sup>67</sup> The cause of this, was the introduction of European capital to the Ottoman lands. The Ottoman craftsmen could not compete with the cheaper manufactured goods imported from Europe and the farmers, instead of producing for their own consumption, began producing cash crops as tobacco and cotton for the world market. Raw materials were exported from the Anatolian and Persian fields directly to Europe to be used in the production of manufactured goods and then sold back to the empire with profit.

This situation was accompanied by commercial agreements between the Ottoman and European governments called the Capitulations, which gave European merchants specific trade privileges, tax free status and low rates on import and export. More than that, in the 18<sup>th</sup> century which the European merchants had, were delegated on some of the local population of the Ottoman Empire as representatives who were always non-Muslim, usually Christians or Jews. This allowed these communities to prosper from the trade with Europe which created an unpleasant effect on the Muslim-Christian relations.<sup>68</sup>

Europe was advancing also in the intellectual field. The Protestant reform led by Martin Luther and John Calvin, eroded people's faith in the Papacy and questioned much of their traditional thought. This movement however, similarly to the Renaissance had no impact on Muslims, neither was noticed by them. The first intellectual movement of the West that had an actual effect on the world of Islam were the ideas of the French Revolution in 1789.<sup>69</sup>

As a result of all the above mentioned influences, the economical situation of the Ottoman Empire in the 18<sup>th</sup> century was not sustainable and the government in order to pay for imported goods fell into debt. By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Ottoman empire became a peripheral economy of the capitalist western Europe<sup>70</sup>. This evolution and developments caused that the empire was no longer a military threat to Europe. On the other hand, it suddenly became a problem for the Europeans in a different sense. This problem, in diplomacy known as the Eastern Question, was how to handle the “ill man on the Bosphorus” (a declining Ottoman Empire). If the empire

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67 James L. Gelvin, *Divided Loyalties: Nationalism and Mass Politics in Syria at the Close of Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 40.

68 Cleveland and Bunton, *History of the Modern Middle East*, 60-61.

69 Lewis, *Emergence of Modern Turkey*, 40.

70 Eduard Gombár, *Moderní dějiny islámských zemí* (Praha: Karolinum, 1999), 19.

collapsed it would affect the system of balance of power in Europe. The Russians were very keen on encroaching into the zones of influence of the Ottomans and extending their territories towards the straits and access to the Mediterranean, which worried the rest of Europe. But everybody wanted their share of cake and the rivalry could lead to disastrous consequences. Therefore, all the European governments were carefully watching whatever was happening in Istanbul.

## 2.2. The Age of Reform in Istanbul

The Ottoman government realizing the inequality in the balance of power, tried to prevent the further decline of their lands by adopting some of the western style reforms and novelties. In order to introduce the reforms, it had to centralize the fractured provinces of the empire and bring the periphery under direct control. Sultan Selim III instituted the first reforms by the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, modernized the army on the European model, invited European specialists to train the army and opened the first Ottoman embassies in Europe.<sup>71</sup> However, opposition from the circles of elites who mostly benefited from the decline and decentralization of the empire and were keen to hold their positions, turned against him. In 1806 Selim III was deposed by the Janissaries.<sup>72</sup>

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century the Ottoman Empire started to face some serious problems in the Balkan which were accompanied by the European encroachment on its territory. The Christian subjects viewed the Ottomans as rulers who dominated their lands and differed from them, not only in language and ethnicity (this was not of significant importance until then) but mainly in adherence of another religion that viewed them as a second class citizens that had only limited rights in the country. Therefore, these Balkan Christians were easily prone to the new nationalist ideas of romanticism coming from Christian Europe and could promise them independence.<sup>73</sup>

In this age, Selim III's successor Mahmud II carefully tried to continue with the reforms when he felt secure ground under his feet. When the Janissaries opposed him as they did Selim III, he massacred them inspired by his vassal Muhammad Ali in Egypt who did the same to the Mamluks and got rid of the main obstacle standing in the way of reform. Afterwards, Mahmud II continued with reforming the country and brought European advisers to teach at the two newly established western style educational institutions: the Army Medical School and the School of Military Sciences. The language of instruction here was French. Beside the military, bureaucracy was also reorganized and new schools for the training of these officials to these posts were opened as well.<sup>74</sup>

The reforms reached their peak in the Tanzimat (reorganization) era stretching from 1839-1876. The new institutions, opened by Selim III and Mahmud II, had to be filled with trained officials and experts. These were not recruited from the graduates of the traditional religious schools anymore, but instead from the graduates of the new state schools.<sup>75</sup> These westernized bureaucrats

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71 Hanioglu, *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire*, 42-48.

72 *Ibid*, 53-54.

73 Cleveland and Bunton, *History of the Modern Middle East*, 75-76.

74 Voll, „Foundations for Renewal and Reform,” 523-525

75 Cleveland and Bunton, *History of the Modern Middle East*, 81-82.

then were the ones who promoted the reforms of the Tanzimat. The most prominent of them were Reshid, Ali, and Fuad Pasha. The political and ideological essence of the Tanzimat was summed in two royal decrees from 1839 and 1856 issued in the name of the Sultan to his people and a nationality law in 1869. The decrees and the nationality law together promulgated a principle of Ottoman citizenship.<sup>76</sup> These laws were purposely proclaimed to secure the loyalty of the Christian people of the Balkan, who were becoming increasingly prone to the above mentioned ideas of nationalism.

Applying the theories of nationalism and division of the different paths that led to the formation of modern nations in Europe, mentioned in chapter one, we can see that these Ottoman royal decrees and the nationality law were an attempt to imitate the western European (probably the French) model. In this model, various ethnic groups that had been ruled under one state for centuries, melted into one high culture and formed a modern nation. However, the historical developments in France in the previous centuries radically differed from those in the Ottoman Empire. While in France the different ethnicities influenced each other and mixed with each other for centuries, in the Ottoman Empire the attempt to introduce a unified nationality or something similar was never made until the Tanzimat period. On the contrary, the difference between the various ethnic and religious groups was underlined by the system of millets- a system of division of the non- Muslim people into partially autonomous societies, which was established from the conquest of the Christian lands. In the millets, the members could enjoy relative freedom, self governance, and legal matters inside their community were operated by their own laws. On the other side, they were not allowed to hold position in the Ottoman government and were banned from entry to the military. Because of this they never developed the conscience of being equal members of the Ottoman Empire but rather the once ruled by the Muslim majority. By the 19<sup>th</sup> century they were more aware of their difference than they were in the first years after the Ottoman conquest.<sup>77</sup> Therefore, by then it was too late to try to persuade them that they are an equal member of the empire and win their loyalty towards a unifying, religion exceeding identity.

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<sup>76</sup> Lewis, *Emergence of Modern Turkey*, 107, 116; Hanioglu, *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire*, 74.

<sup>77</sup> Hroch, *Národy nejsou dílem náhody*, 57-58

### 2.3. The Egyptian Reform and Rafi' al-Tahtawi

While the Ottomans were occupied by their decline and the shift of power towards Europe since the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Arab world lay in ignorance towards what was happening in Europe. After the great days of the Umayyad and Abbasid empires, the Arabs became ruled by non-Arab dynasties and military classes of former slaves from Turkish and Caucasian origins, and later by the Ottomans. They accepted the role of second class citizens ruled by other Muslims and were unaware of the decay of their civilization. They followed the same way of life as they did for centuries, confident that Islam provides them with all that is needed to live rightly.<sup>78</sup>

All this changed in 1798 when Napoleon Bonaparte in an attempt to threaten British access to India disembarked on the shores of Egypt, destroyed the Mamluk forces in the Battle of the Pyramids and briefly conquered the country. This was not only a display of military power but also the scientific advancement of Europe, as Napoleon brought with himself a team of scientists and orientalist. Despite the fact that the French occupation did not last long and Napoleon was driven out by the British and the Ottomans in 1803<sup>79</sup>, this event deeply affected the course of the forthcoming Arabic history.

Profiting from the chaos and vacuum of power caused by the retreat of the French army, Muhammad Ali, an Albanian officer of the Ottoman army, seized power. Realizing the practical advantages of the scientific novelties of the West, he decided to introduce reforms. For that purpose he got rid of the traditional forces of the country (the Mamluks) who reemerged after the French retreat and posed a competition for power for him. By eliminating them, he could use their wealth to facilitate his reforms.<sup>80</sup> This event later inspired the already mentioned Sultan Mamud II in his treatment of the Janissaries.

Muhammad Ali introduced military, agricultural and social reforms, opened technical schools, sent Egyptian students on missions to Europe to study and translate scientific and military books. His reforms were, however, aimed strictly at increasing the power of his country and increasing his power in it. He made no attempt to reform the political system and also discouraged the interest of students in politics and humanities and anything other than military and technical sciences.<sup>81</sup> Despite that, a gradual awareness of the life in Europe, its literature and ideas of Enlightenment began to emerge among the Egyptians. From this generation came the first modern Egyptian thinker Rafi al-Tahtawi.

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78 Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age*, 35-37.

79 Cleveland and Bunton, *History of the Modern Middle East*, 65.

80 Gombár, *Moderní dějiny islámských zemí*, 71.

81 Ladislav Bareš and Rudolf Veselý and Eduard Gombár, *Dějiny Egypta* (Praha: NLN, 2009), 415.

Rafi' al-Tahtawi, who was one of the most influential thinkers preaching these new ideas, belongs to the era which Albert Hourani classifies as the first generation of modern Muslim thinkers, that roughly stretches from 1830 to 1870. He belongs there with the Ottoman Tanzimat reformers Resid, Ali and Fuad. In their perception they were aware that the West has surpassed the East technologically, but the revelation of Islam was the last and the most perfect. Therefore, the Muslim and the Ottoman way of life was supreme to the European one and perfectly sound. There was no need to change anything in the fundamentals of that. It would only take to borrow certain things, that are not in contradiction with the Sharia, from Europe and the gap would be closed.<sup>82</sup>

Tahtawi introduced one Western idea to the Arab world that was not present yet and that is the idea of patriotism. In the world of Islam, love for the homeland was not an unknown concept, but it did not have political significance nor was nationality connected with territoriality.<sup>83</sup> Tahtawi spoke of the world formed by nations that are connected with specific countries and have their own characteristics. For Tahtawi, the fatherland was Egypt and the Egyptians were a nation. In the same time, his counterparts in the center of the Ottoman Empire were independently promulgating similar ideas. For them, the fatherland was the Ottoman Empire and all its inhabitants formed an Ottoman nation.<sup>84</sup>

It is interesting to see how the role of historical developments and statehood outmatched any linguistic or ethnic features in defining a nation. These thinkers accepted the role of the dynastic state and applied the concept of nationality from the French model on it.<sup>85</sup> The Ottoman Empire was an example of the state unit exceeding the ethnic units and was formed by many of them. Arabic speaking Egypt, which under Muhammad Ali functioned practically as an autonomous country, was on the other hand a state unit much smaller than ethno-linguistic unit of the Arabic speaking world. What these two concepts of nationality had in common, was the idea of a nation derived from the sovereignty of a state.

For the Ottoman thinkers, the idea of Ottomanism had clear political consequences. In the case of Tahtawi, his Egyptian patriotism could not have the same political implication because Egypt was not the protector of the whole Muslim Umma as was the Ottoman Empire and Egypt was nominally still part of it. In Tahtawi's work, his Egyptian identity is penetrated by his Muslim identity and his Egyptian patriotism is mixed with his Ottomanism.

This generation of thinkers lived in a time when Europe did not pose danger to the East. These men were aware that the West had somehow surpassed the East, and were aware of the

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82 Dawn, *From Ottomanism to Arabism*, 126-127.

83 *Ibid*, 123.

84 *Ibid*, 124.

85 Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, 73.

necessity of reform.<sup>86</sup> Therefore, we call them reformers. They were however, sure that Islam and the Muslim way of life is essentially superior to the European one, and for that there is no need to reform the fundamentals. For that reason, they can be called conservative reformers.

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86 *Ibid*, 81.

## 2.4. The Second Generation of Thinkers: A Muslim Response to Imperialism

In the years 1870-1900, which by Hourani are classified as a second generation, western progress became associated with imperial ventures that marked the mutual relations between Europe and the East. The Europeans criticized the Muslim way of life calling it backward. Because of that, the Muslim intellectuals took a defensive position in response. In comparison with the era of Tahtawi, Europe posed a political and cultural threat to these thinkers.<sup>87</sup> The confidence that Eastern culture and Islam is superior to the West was gone. Most of the energy consumed by these scholars was on the “denial that Islam was inferior to Europe”.<sup>88</sup>

In Istanbul, an opposition to the blind folded imitations of the West and the autocratic government of Ali and Fuad Pasha emerged, when the inefficiency of the Tanzimat showed no results on the battlefields during the Eastern crisis of 1875-1878. Known under the name the Young Ottomans, they were journalists and intellectuals conversant with the ideas of the West, yet they were not wholehearted westernizers. They were aware of belonging to an Ottoman society that also included non-Turks and non-Muslims.<sup>89</sup> These men were Ottoman patriots who wanted to combine Western liberal system by demanding a constitution with Islamic values of their society. In 1876, they succeeded in deposing the Sultan Abdulaziz and proclaiming a constitution. The new Sultan Abdulhamid II was however committed to eliminate them and seizing an opportunity, he dismissed the parliament and suspended the constitution after two years.<sup>90</sup> For the next decades to come, he governed as an autocratic ruler.

The ideas of response to the West and a comeback to Islamic values present in the notions of the Young Ottomans got their fullest expression in the Islamic modernism of Jamal al-Din al-Afghani and his pupil Muhammad ‘Abduh. To the Western accusations that Islam is not compatible with modernity, they responded saying that Islam in its pure form is completely compatible with modern life.<sup>91</sup> Unlike the conservatives such as Tahtawi, they admitted that Islam of their day was in a regretful stage. But they still held opinion that Islam in its essence is superior. The reason for the desperate situation of Islam of their age was because the Muslims have departed from the right path of the original religion. And while the Muslims declined, the Europeans have been learning from the knowledge of the East which passed to them through Muslim Spain. By this explanation, the western progress was actually of Muslim origin. The remedy was to purify the primitive Islam of

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87 Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, 103.

88 Dawn, *From Ottomanism to Arabism*, 129.

89 Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, 68-69.

90 Hanioglu, *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire*, 169-174.

91 John L. Esposito, “Contemporary Islam: Reformation or Revolution?” in *Oxford History of Islam*, ed. John L. Esposito (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 647.

the early days and adopt the elements of modernity. By that, the East should regain its glory.<sup>92</sup> Both Afghani and ‘Abduh were advocates of the Ottoman state as a sole protector of the Islamic Umma, therefore, they were Ottomanists and in contrast to the conservatives, Ottomanist modernists.

In what ‘Abduh differed from Afghani a little bit was his slightly bigger stress on the role of Arabs when he spoke of early Islam. For him, only those who speak Arabic properly are capable of understanding the Qoran and therefore a revival of Arabic studies is needed. Both Afghani and ‘Abduh were advocates of the concept of a unified Islamic Umma at the expense of a nation state.<sup>93</sup> However, they planted the seeds of Arabism that would gradually start creating a gap between the Arabs and their fellow Muslim believers, the Turks.

A person who took this polemic a step further was ‘Abduh’s Syrian follower Rashid Rida. He accused the Turks of the responsibility of the decline of Islam and criticized the Muslim Arab caliphs who introduced Turkish mercenaries “enabling them to spoil the Umma”. In this statement and in one another saying: “they (the Arabs) are indeed the best Umma”<sup>94</sup> is a clear change in the meaning of the term Umma in his use. Traditionally, it meant the population of all Muslims, yet it seems that Rida suggested that only Muslim Arabs are part of the Umma. He goes on to state, that the Muslim unity was achieved by Arabs and can not be achieved by no one other than them. Therefore, to revive the Arabs is working for the Islamic union.<sup>95</sup>

Despite all that, Rashid Rida did not support Arab separatist movements until the Young Turk revolution in 1908. Only after their centralizing and pro-Turkish policies became clear, he became an advocate of Arabism and joined Arab separatist societies.<sup>96</sup>

To take the case of Arabs into advocating an autonomous political unit was left for another Syrian thinker, Abd al-Rahman al-Kawakibi. He claimed, that with the respect of the Ottoman Empire every nation should have its administrative autonomy. He took the glorification of Arabs as the best Muslims, to the glorification of the Arabs of the Arabian peninsula as the best of Arabs, because they were the closest to the original Muslims and were not polluted by the contact with the West. Because of this, a caliphate in Mecca should be established, with an Arab of the tribe of Quraysh as caliph.<sup>97</sup> This caliphate however was not to be a political, but rather a spiritual institution. Some sort of an Islamic papacy, that creates a pan-Islamic federation.<sup>98</sup> This was the first

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92 Sharabi, *Arab Intellectuals*, 72.

93 Adeed Dawisha, *Arab Nationalism in the Twentieth Century: From Triumph to Despair* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 20.

94 Haim, *Arab Nationalism: An Anthology*, 22.

95 Dawn, *From Arabism to Ottomanism*, 137.

96 Haim, *Arab Nationalism: An Anthology*, 25.

97 ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Kawakibi, *Umm al-qura* [The mother of Villages (one of the names for Mecca)] (Damascus: Dar al-Awa’il, 2002), 178-185.

98 *Ibid*, 182.

clear idea of secular department of the political power from the spiritual which was not present in the Islamic political thought before.

Rashid Rida and al-Kawakibi can be regarded as modernists, whose Arabism outraged their Ottomanism. We can see how the treatment of decline of the Islamic lands led to two streams of thought: conservatism and modernism. Both refused the idea that Islamic culture is inferior to the West, but while the conservatives repelled the idea of inferiority in general, the modernists explained the decline by the depart of the way of pure Islam. Some of the Arab modernists in their search for the remedy of the decline of the Eastern and Muslim society found the answer in Arabism. As a result, Arab nationalism grew out of Arabist modernism, which grew out of Ottomanist modernism.<sup>99</sup>

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99 Dawn, *From Arabism to Ottomanism*, 140.

## 2.5. The Second Generation of Thinkers: The Christian Response

The role of Christian Arabs in the formation of a nationalist self-view was emphasized in earlier works on Arab nationalism, mainly in George Antionius's book *The Arab Awakening* from 1938. Opinions on the degree of their influence vary from scholar to another. Hourani claims that the Christians of the Middle East, unlike their Muslim neighbours did not have those ideological difficulties with accepting ideas of the infidel West, and therefore were the first to adopt western ideas of nationalism and echo them in the Arab world.<sup>100</sup> But Hourani himself admits also that this Christian movement did not have a major impact on the course of Arab nationalism, mainly because it did not find followers among the Muslim population.<sup>101</sup> Ernest Dawn is an advocate who claims that the ideas of Arabism emerged in the works of Muslim Arab thinkers adopting western terms of patriotism to the Eastern conditions and in their search for the remedy of the Muslim world inclined to Arabism. Therefore, Dawn rejects the influence of Christians on the Arab nationalist self-view as a key factor. In fact, many Arab Christians like Butrus al-Bustani, Ahmad Faris al-Shidyaq and Adib Ishaq, instead of showing signs of sympathy to the West, shared the ideas of Islamic modernism in defending the Eastern culture against the patronizing arrogance of the West.<sup>102</sup>

The Christian Arabs however, played a key role in the Arab literary Renaissance (Nahda) in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This movement consisted of reviving the language, literature, history and arts of the Arab civilization, which entered a dark age and a period of stagnation since the 16<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>103</sup> These efforts laid the foundations of some coordinates with which, later on, national identity could be associated forming an idea of what a modern Arab nation is. These scholars were aware of their belonging to a specific Arab ethnic group and were devoted to the study and revival of its culture. It would be an ahistorical statement to claim that these scholars of the Nahda period spent their energy intentionally preparing for a national movement or wanted it to have any political consequences. If we use Hroch's classification from the first chapter, we can classify these efforts of mostly private individual patriots, who studied the history and culture of their ethnic group, into the phase A of the formation of a modern nation. They undertook these efforts with the passion of enlightened scholars for their subject of study, and without political intentions set grounds for the next steps of the nation building process.<sup>104</sup>

Despite the fact that this intellectual contribution of the Christian Arabs was mainly of

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100 Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, 95.

101 Hourani, *The Emergence of the Modern Middle East*, 204.

102 Dawn, "The Origins of Arab Nationalism," 4.

103 Cleveland and Bunton, *History of the Modern Middle East*, 130.

104 Hroch, *Národy nejsou dilem náhody*, 53.

literally and cultural character, or politically consonant with the general ideas of Islamic modernism, there were exceptions. Ibrahim al-Yaziji, one of these Syrian Christians came to call for an Arab political independence and the overthrow of the Ottoman rule. His ideas were western secular nationalist that called for a political unity for the Arabs, Christian and Muslim alike, and the overthrow of the Turks.<sup>105</sup> For this purpose, in 1875 al-Yaziji founded with some other Christian colleges a secret society in Beirut. But after all, the society was dissolved in 1882-1883, after the approaches that were made towards the Muslims echoed no interest.<sup>106</sup>

In this period of time, al-Afghani was spreading his ideas of Islamic unity and Muhammad 'Abduh ideas of Islamic modernism. Thus, such ideas of separatism were rare and the Muslims were not prepared yet to get rid of religion as the main social and political bond in favor of nationality. Apparently, al-Yaziji's Christian Arabism was an addaption of Western secular nationalism which was acceptable for some Christians, but we can see how these ideas were refused by the Muslim majority and had no real influence on their evolution of thought.<sup>107</sup>

The Christian Arab movement will only be later used by scholars on Arab nationalism and Arab nationalists as George Antonius, to date the beginning of Arab nationalism much earlier than is its historical evidence. Such tendency, as Gellner says, is very frequent among early writers on nationalism, who have the uneasy feeling from the absence of nationalism in history, especially in regard of their own nation. Therefore, they attribute this absence to the sleep of the national feeling and try to locate the earliest, often historically incorrect, significations of its awakening.<sup>108</sup>

The ideology that influenced and led to the emergence on Arab nationalism was Arabism, which evolved from the defense of Islamic and Eastern culture against the dominance of the West.

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105 Dawn, *From Ottomanism to Arabism*, 132.

106 Haim, *Arab Nationalism: An Anthology*, 4.

107 Hourani, *Emergence of the Modern Middle East*, 204.

108 Gellner, *Nationalism*, 8-9.

### 3. Arab Nationalism

#### 3.1. Arab Identity and the Objective Features of the Arab National Consciousness

The Arab world today is a geographical region of various Arab states spreading from Iraq in the east to Morocco in the west. Despite the attempts to politically unify it in modern history, it remains more cultural than a political bond. The idea of belonging to an Arab nation was accepted by the majority of the population only since the half of the 20th century.<sup>109</sup> In the 19th century, such feelings were shared only by a part of the intellectual elite and even among them including only Arabs of Asia.<sup>110</sup>

In the Arab world, this identification is overlapped by many other identities that are not mutually exclusive and create what Anthony Smith describes as "the multiple identities".<sup>111</sup> An Arab can identify himself either regionally as a Syrian or Damascene, or with his family and tribe, or religiously as a Christian, Muslim, Shi'i or Sunni.

On the other hand, certain types of Arab identity existed in various extents throughout history at least since the 7th century. The Umayyad, Abbasid and Fatimid empires represented an example of a prosperous Arab civilization, whose capitals became a memory of its glory in the later centuries. However, since the 10th century Arabs began to lose their dominant position in favor of other Muslim ethnicities and gradually became ruled by them. In the 16th century, most of the Arab lands came under the rule of the Ottomans, although the Arab language (the language of the Koran and Islam) persisted as the official language of religion in the Arab provinces throughout the whole period of Ottoman rule.

Consequently, language and history are two features that influence a nation building process. As a result, the significance of these features is proven by every theory on the emergence of nationalism and modern nations. Language was typically an objective characteristic in defining the nation. Among other objective characteristics, such as cultural and territorial ties, it was in the central attention of primordial theories of nationalism. In the case of Arabic language, it never went extinct as an official language of Islam in the Arab provinces and therefore there was no need to codify it as in the case of some East European languages. Similar to the German model, the Arabs had a large body of high culture and literature written in their language with the Koran having a central position in it. Yet, Arab literature witnessed a stagnation since the 16th century. The

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109 Dawisha, *Arab Nationalism in the Twentieth Century*, 14-15.

110 Gombár, *Moderní dějiny*, 318.

111 Smith, *National identity*, 3.

importance of language for early stages of an Arab movement are demonstrated in the literary renaissance (Nahda) of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The study of the grammar and the revival of the literature was undertaken and also the language was modernized to be more compatible with the needs of the modern age.

The past or the ties with the history that influence the development of pre-modern ethnic and political relations are stressed as a key factor in the formation of nations by the advocates of the perennial approach. This is a term introduced by Anthony Smith to distinguish those who deduce nations from their historical development from those who define nations by their objective characteristics.<sup>112</sup> The Arab past, in the sense of past Arab glory, unlike the language, was not directly connected with the reality of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, neither was it present in it when the Arabs were ruled by the Ottomans. The significance of the past and the effort to connect with its glory can be indicated in the work of Jurji Zaydan. His contribution to the literary Nahda was raising the awareness of the Arab past in his popular historical novels.<sup>113</sup>

It is clear that language and history consist a predisposition of the formation of any modern nation, and have a central role in the primordial and perennial approaches to nationalism. However, in the modernist theories, which this work is based on, the nation building process is explained by the process of modernization, participation of its members, social and economic circumstances and conflict of interests.<sup>114</sup> These features will be determined in the following pages and in order to do so it is inevitable to look at the period which preceded WWI.

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112 Hroch, *Národy nejsou dílem náhody*, 42.

113 For more about Gurgi Zaidan see Thomas Philipp, *Gurgi Zaidan: His Life and Thought* (Weisbaden: Franz Steiner, 1979).

114 Hroch, *Národy nejsou dílem náhody*, 45.

### 3.2. Ottomanism, Arabism and Arab Nationalism

To define Arab nationalism, it is crucial to distinguish it from its predecessor – the ideology of Arabism. The term Arabism was first used by Ernest Dawn. Rashid Khalidi, his colleague and critic defines it as follows: it stresses Arab elements at the expense of other (Islamic, regional) elements.<sup>115</sup> In terms of Anthony Smith's vocabulary, this ideology should be classified as national identification.<sup>116</sup> As it lacks political or territorial significations, it can not be considered an ideology of nationalism.

The absence of political signification is the main difference between Arabism and the ideology of Ottomanism. From the name of Dawn's book *From Ottomanism to Arabism* one might assume that these are two competing ideologies of the same type that have two different centers of loyalty. In fact, these are two ideologies that do not contradict each other directly. (In the end, they derive from two words, which are from different spheres. Arab means ethnicity, a kind of people. Ottoman is the name of a dynasty and the state it rules.) While Ottomanism is an ideology with political signification, Arabism is not. An Ottomanist seeks to create one Ottoman nationality or citizenship shared by all the inhabitants of the political unit of the empire. This nationality is superior to various identifications with ethnic groups within the empire. An Arabist raises the Arabs to a position of pre-eminence, who live in the Ottoman Empire next to the Turks and other nationalities. Both of them want the preservation of the Ottoman Empire. Arabism as an ideology may demand some sort of autonomy or preservation of the Arab language and habits in the Arab provinces. But generally it is a cultural ideology, which is in political harmony with Ottomanism—the case of most of the Arabists before 1914. This approach basically is what distinguishes them from a minority movement of Arab nationalists, who advocated separation from the empire. Approximately around these years, the situation started to change.<sup>117</sup>

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115 Rashid Khalidi, "The Origins of Arab Nationalism: Introduction," in *Arab Nationalism*, ed. Rashid Khalidi et al. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), ix.

116 Smith, *National Identity*, 8-14.

117 Khalidi, "The Origins of Arab Nationalism: Introduction," ix.

### 3.3. The Arabs and the Young Turks

During the rule of Abdulhamid II, the Arab provinces in Great Syria witnessed a series of modernizing reforms. Infrastructure and communication means were upgraded, agricultural production and trade were expanding and modern educational system, including primary, technical, and military schools, was established. All this took place during an era of political stability. After losing more and more territory in Europe, the sultan's focus shifted to the Islamic element of the empire and started successfully leaning on Arabs as representatives in the Arab provinces. Some of these notables made it to his close circle of advisers in Istanbul. By doing so, Abdulhamid II secured the loyalty of the landowning-bureaucrat class in Syria, who then profited from their positions and modernizing reforms and identified themselves with the ideology of Ottomanism.<sup>118</sup>

Nevertheless, Abdulhamid II's regime had opponents, who were stronger outside Damascus in coastal cities such as Beirut and came from two sources. The first were the Christians who viewed Abdulhamid II's pan-Islamic policy as threatening to their equality and new acquired rights from the Tanzimat period. The second were Muslims engaged in trade, who saw that Abdulhamid II's policy did not protect them from the European commercial competition.

In Damascus, the opposition was much weaker because the Christian population was smaller and the Muslim notables were much more connected with the state system than their Beirut counterparts. The opposition here had two sources as well. The first were the conservative religious circles who had support among the religious population, but were in the long term losing the fight with modernism, centralization and the rise of the secularized political elite. The second seem to come from, either the secular or religious notables, who were not in favor of the regime and lost their positions in the system.<sup>119</sup>

The secular opposition during the Hamidian period usually joined the ranks of the Turkish reformist constitutional movement of the Young Turks and their political umbrella- the *Committee of Union and Progress* (CUP).<sup>120</sup> The Young Turks represented a liberal intellectual opposition to the autocracy of Abdulhamid II, emerging in Istanbul and built on the heritage of the Young Ottomans. Its adherents came from distinct ethnic and ideological backgrounds throughout the empire united by their resistance to Abdulhamid II, demands for freedom of expression, ethnic equality and restoration of the constitution from 1876.<sup>121</sup>

Hanioğlu claims that the CUP attitude towards the Arabs can be summarized in regarding

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118 Khoury, *Urban Notables and Arab Nationalism*, 53.

119 *Ibid*, 54.

120 Haim, *Arab Nationalism: An Anthology*, 30.

121 Kayalı, *Arabs and Young Turks*, 56.

them as inferior to the Turks and that any Arab demands for cultural autonomy is paramount to separatist activities.<sup>122</sup> Despite that, the CUP did collaborate with many Arabs who they considered representing a purely Ottomanist course of opposition to Abdulhamid II. The examples of these were Emir Arslan and Khalil Ghanem, the founders of the Turkish-Syrian Committee, which merged into the CUP in 1897.<sup>123</sup>

During the years 1895-1897 the CUP was even able to establish an influential branch in Syria and gain support from some of the ulama, the Qadiriyyah sufi sect, some members of prominent families like Rafiq al-Azm and officers of the 5<sup>th</sup> Ottoman army based in Syria. The CUP was attempting a coup there, but the central government was able to uncover members of the movement, crack down and dismantle the organization. After this incident the CUP lost its hold in Syria and the Arabs did not participate in the movement in such numbers in the years to come.<sup>124</sup> Even during the years of 1895-1897, the majority the of Syrian population was loyal to the leading families, whose majority remained loyal to the Sultan.

In regards to the events of the Young Turk revolution in 1908 and the reactions which followed in the Arab provinces, the academic community remains rather fragmented. The first generation of George Antonius, as well as the scholars of the 1950s and 1960s such as Zeine, assert that the revolution was met with enthusiasm. For many Arabs, the restoration of the constitution and the reopening of the parliament meant that they could make their voice heard in the capital and improve their position in the empire.<sup>125</sup>

On the other hand, younger scholars propose a different picture of the events. They say that the majority of the Syrian population and the elite were content with the prosperity and tranquility of the Hamidian era and that they were not enthusiastic when the news of the CUP seizing power arrived. The demonstrations erupting in Damascus supporting the CUP were drummed up by CUP adherents to show their affiliation with the coup. However, the ruling class was worried about political stability and about their positions, which they could lose now in the open competition of elections.<sup>126</sup>

The one thing that all the scholars agree on regarding these events is that at this point the policy of the CUP came across as Ottomanist reformist to the vast public. While Dawn holds the opinion that its policy remained this way until 1918<sup>127</sup>, Hanioglu disagrees, saying that while the

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122 M. Şükrü Hanioglu, "The Young Turks and the Arabs Before the Revolution of 1908," in *Arab Nationalism*, ed. Rashid Khalidi et al. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 32.

123 *Ibid*, 38.

124 M. Şükrü Hanioglu, *The Young Turks in Opposition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 105-109.

125 Zeine N. Zeine, *The Emergence of Arab Nationalism, With a Background Study of Arab-Turkish Relations in the Near East* (Los Angeles: Caravan Books, 1973), 96-100; Antonius, *Arab Awakening*, 102.

126 Khoury, *Urban Notables and Arab Nationalism*, 56.

127 Khalidi, "The Origins of Arab Nationalism: Introduction," x.

CUP was formally Ottomanist, the inner circle of its leaders was strongly inclined towards Turkish nationalist policy already before 1908. Neither the public, nor even the Arab members of the CUP were aware of that, which is why some of them supported the movement or were even part of it.<sup>128</sup> The controversy in the opinions of Dawn and Hanioglu on the CUP's ideological character can be perhaps explained by an inner contradiction of two wings inside the party itself: one Ottomanist liberal and the other more Turkish nationalist. The latter was more dominant in the party's decision-making already from before the revolution and its hold became even stronger in the following years.<sup>129</sup>

Almost immediately after the coup in 1908, the center of Arab political activity had shifted to Istanbul. On 9.8.1908, the first Arab society was created there under the name *The Society of Arab-Ottoman Brotherhood*. Its policy was purely Ottomanist and upon its opening it was attended and celebrated by the Arab founders and the CUP leaders. Its founders consisted mainly of Arab representatives of the old Hamidian regime, who were trying to secure their status and positions of representatives of the Arab interests in the government.<sup>130</sup>

A blow to the Arab-Ottoman cause was delivered after the results of the parliamentary elections were announced. The Arabs gained only 60 seats out of the total number of 275 and the Turks obtained 142 seats. At this time, the population of the Arabs was outnumbering the Turkish population in the empire by a ratio of 10,5 million to 7,5 million.<sup>131</sup> The majority of the Syrian delegates were notables, who the CUP managed to get as their nominees in exchange for positions in the government. A minority were delegates from Damascus who were opposing the Unionists in the parliament, but could not unite in one effective bloc.<sup>132</sup>

In April 1909 the 1<sup>st</sup> army, with backing from the religious circles, tried to make a counter-coup against the CUP but were unsuccessful. After this attempt, the CUP deposed Abdulhamid II replacing him with a more submissive sultan and launched a series of governmental cleansings that were aimed at the members of the old regime, replacing them by loyal CUP members. Abdulhamid II's advisers, of whom many were Arabs, and local governors in Syria were replaced by loyal CUP members, who were almost entirely Turks.<sup>133</sup>

The scholars who claimed that the 1908 revolution was met with cheering in Syria say that after the incidents of depositions and elections to the Ottoman parliament, the Arabs realized that CUP intentions did not mean equality with the Turks and abandoned the short-lived illusions.<sup>134</sup>

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128 Hanioglu, "The Young Turks and the Arabs Before the Revolution of 1908," 31-32.

129 Lewis, *Emergence of Modern Turkey*, 203.

130 Sa'id, *Al-Thawra al-'arabiya al-kubra*, Vol. 1, 7.

131 al-Husri, *Al-Bilad al-'arabiya wa al-dawla al-'utmaniya*, 110.

132 Houry, *Urban Notables and Arab Nationalism*, 61.

133 Tibi, *Arab Nationalism*, 108.

134 Tawfiq 'Ali Birru, *Al-'Arab wa al-turk fi al-'ahd al-dusturi al-'utmani 1908-1914* [The Arabs and the Turks during

Scholars such as Khalidi and Khoury, who maintained that the majority of the Syrian notables, especially those from Damascus, were opposing the CUP, explain that these notables now became alienated even more by the new regime and started to feel that the CUP policy was disrupting their balance of power. Some of the Arab members of the CUP even left the party after its intention became more obvious.<sup>135</sup>

Despite all that, the opposition which was mounting against the CUP all took form within the boundaries of the Ottoman Empire and Ottomanist ideology. This resistance was against a ruling group (CUP) with a demand to replace it by another ruling group so that the local authorities can regain their power. This opposition did not have separatist desires. The strategy it used against the CUP did not have a nationalist undertone, rather it blamed the CUP in the traditional Islamic terms of being impious usurpers of power. The Arab opposition to the government was more an opposition to the centralization of the CUP, than the ideology of Turkish nationalism or Turkification.<sup>136</sup>

The impact of the CUP policy that was mostly felt among the population was perhaps the Turkification of schools, the court system and the local administration. Suddenly, children had to learn the new language for the first time, and merchants and traders had to communicate in court or with the administration in a foreign language or through a translator. These manners helped the liberal-secular opposition in gaining support and the political resistance started the switch towards Arabism as a defense against the CUP centralizing Turkification.<sup>137</sup>

Nevertheless, there is discrepancy on this fact as well. Dawn and Kayalı state, that the Young Turks were charged with Turkification, but were not guilty of it as it is believed. They claim, that Turkish had been the official language of the administration since 1876 and was used in courts with translators to Arabic. In the education system as well, Turkish was the language of instruction from the upper primary school level and above, with Arabic as the local language being taught as well.<sup>138</sup>

Ironically, what helped the Arab opposition the most was the press, which was for years censored under Abdulhamid II, and the CUP lifted this censorship after they came to power. The Arab newspapers of this period were the main promoter of Arabism to the general literate public. Muhammad Kurd Ali, a former CUP supporter and journalist started to publish *Al-Muqtabas*. This journal was oriented towards promoting the idea of Arabism as a key component of Ottomanism of the Hamidian era. A more radical paper was published in Istanbul by Shukri Al-Asali under the

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the Ottoman constitutional era 1908-1914] (Cairo: 1960),109.

135 Khoury, *Urban Notables and Arab Nationalism*, 59.

136 Khalidi, "The Origins of Arab Nationalism: Introduction," x-xi.

137 Khoury, *Urban Notables and Arab Nationalism*, 59.

138 Dawn, "The Origins of Arab Nationalism,"18-20; Kayalı, *Arab Intellectuals*,90-95.

name *Qabas*. This journal asked for more political autonomy for the Arab territories. Despite the fact that the press censorship was lifted, after the 1909 counter-coup the CUP was not willing to risk too much freedom of opinion and occasionally some journals were closed and suppressed.<sup>139</sup>

Another blow to the idea of Turkish-Arab unity was the ban of societies established by non-Turkish ethnic groups, which led to the abolishment of the *Society of Arab-Ottoman Brotherhood* only eight months after it was inaugurated at an impassioned meeting of Arabs and Turks.<sup>140</sup>

After this incident, the Arab opposition had to move their activities into a form of secret and semi-secret organizations. In Istanbul, the Literary Club was opened that overtook most of the Brotherhood Society's members and was unofficially a cover for various political activities and discussions. The club was tolerated by the Unionists, because its activities were not mainly political. It was not a policy-making organization, rather a platform, where many politically-active Arabists would meet, and through this platform their ideas gained new supporters. Most of its members were Arab students in Istanbul, and later the club opened branches in Syria and Iraq.<sup>141</sup>

Towards the end of 1909 a secret society, formed by some army officers who were members of the Literary Club, was established under the name *Qahtaniya*. The political aims of this organization were to establish a dual monarchy based on the model of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, with the Ottoman sultan being the person connecting the Arab and Turkish Empires. The Arabs would have their own parliament with Arabic as the official language.<sup>142</sup>

Despite the fact that the activities of most of the Arab organizations and societies were focused on obtaining some degree of autonomy and decentralization within the empire, there were some who had secession already in mind. In November 1909, a group of Muslim students and members of the Literary Club established the Young Arab Society which was the first organization to demand complete separation from the empire and played a key role in the Arab national movement.<sup>143</sup> The organization and its communications were secret and some of its members were executed during WWI. Those who survived, played an important role in Arab politics after the war.<sup>144</sup>

Since the revolution of 1908 until 1912, two trends were struggling in the CUP policy: The Ottomanist liberal and the Turkish nationalist trend. It is difficult to judge, how sincere were the promises of equality made by the CUP when they came to power. We can only ask, what could be the actions of the CUP if the conditions in which they were, were different. The Young Turks came

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139 Khoury, *Urban Notables and Arab Nationalism*, 61.

140 Antonius, *Arab Awakening*, 105.

141 Sa' id, *Al-Thawra al-'arabiya al-kubra*, 8-9.

142 Birru, *Al-'Arab wa al-turk fi al-'ahd al-dusturi al-'utmani 1908-1914*, 320.

143 Dawn, *From Ottomanism to Arabism*, 150.

144 Sa' id, *Al-Thawra al-'arabiya al-kubra*, 9.

to power in a very difficult time and were immediately exposed to serious internal and external threats, which put them in a mood of anger and frustration. It is undisputed, that the events in the Balkan, that followed the 1908 coup, were viewed by the Turks as betrayal. Austria seizing an opportunity annexed Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria declared its independence and Crete united with Greece.<sup>145</sup> The Christians rejected the idea of Ottoman liberalism and shared citizenship and indicated how the multicultural model was inapplicable in the Ottoman Empire. However, the situation in the Arab lands, as proved by many previous sources above, was very different. The Arabs, unlike the Balkan Christians, were loyal to the empire and wished its continuation. Despite that, it seems that the CUP was unable to apply a different measure on the Arabs and treated them based on the events of the Balkan.

The CUP could not reconcile between two contradicting ideologies: Turkish nationalism (and the rising Pan-Turanian ideology) and Ottomanism. It tried to merge the two together by promoting the Turks above the other races and keep the Ottoman leadership of the Muslim umma in the same time. The CUP in the Arab lands failed to recognize demands for decentralization from separatism and by doing so, they imposed centralization and tightened the autonomy, where it needed decentralization and relaxation.

In addition to that, there were the internal threats, that were demonstrated in the 1909 counter coup. The CUP had to seize power and in order to do so, they basically gave up the ideas of constitutional equality and liberty.

In 1912-1913, the CUP's grip on power was weakened, which allowed the Arabists to advance. In the end of 1911, various opposition groups to the CUP, which emerged within the party itself, merged into one political party called the Liberal Union. Because its members were already in the parliament, it could start to oppose the CUP right away and propose a plan of decentralization of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>146</sup>

The CUP's immediate response was securing the dissolution of the parliament and arranging the new elections, in which of 275 delegates only 6 opposition deputies were able to gain seats in the chamber. In this elections, all the existing Arab opposition from the 1908 parliament lost their seats except of two, who allied with the CUP in the campaign and entered the parliament on their ticket.<sup>147</sup> In 1913, when the government was busy with the Balkan War the CUP launched another attack, this time on the cabinet, shooting the minister of war Nazim Pasha dead and forcing the opposition Kamil Pasha to resign from the post of the president of the Council of State.<sup>148</sup> By these

<sup>145</sup> Lewis, *Emergence of Modern Turkey*, 214.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid*, 221-222.

<sup>147</sup> Rashid Khalidi, "Ottomanism and Arabism in Syria Before 1914: A Reassessment" 59.

<sup>148</sup> Lewis, *Emergence of Modern Turkey*, 225.

steps the CUP secured the position of sole governors that lasted until the end of WWI.

Under these circumstances and with connection to the Liberal Union, the Ottoman Party of Administrative Decentralization was formed in December 1912 in Cairo. It was founded by Syrians living in exile in Egypt and was headed by Rafiq Bey al-Azm from Damascus. After the 1912 elections, many of the defeated Arab deputies joined the party as (Shurki al-‘Asali, Shafiq Mu’ayyad al-‘Azm, Rusdi al-Sam‘a and ‘Abd al-Hamid al-Zahrawi).<sup>149</sup> The party’s demands were similar to earlier decentralization movements, particularly to recognize Arabic as the official language, to secure a greater decentralization in the provinces and grant a wider participation of Arabs in the government. This Party had close contacts with all the major societies in Syria and Iraq and the Literary Club in Istanbul. It became the first fully organized body of Arab opposition to the CUP.

The Decentralization Party enjoyed support among the Syrian elite, but some of the Damascene families started to oppose the organization. These were mainly the families, who by collaborating with the CUP managed to regain their local positions. They charged the Decentralization Party of collaborating with the European powers and therefore betraying the empire. These charges were actually not pure fabrication, as some leaders of the party were considering the idea of British protection against the French interests in the Syrian region, in case that the Ottoman Empire collapses and the British were supportive of that.<sup>150</sup> However, this split of opinions among the Arab notables of Damascus was increasingly reflecting their inner power struggle, which was manifested by holding the side of either the CUP Ottomanist or the anti-CUP Arabist stream.

Following the fall of Kamil Pasha’s government in Istanbul, the CUP in April 1913 closed the Syrian branches of the Decentralization Party. The Beirut Reform Society, an influential organization in the province, formed just three months ago with demands raging from those similar to the Decentralization party to demanding political independence for the Beirut Province under the protection of France.<sup>151</sup> After these repressive steps, *al-Fatat* (the Young Arab Society) took the role of secret operations and promotion of revolt in the Syrian provinces. The center of political activity had to switch to a neutral ground and from the initiative of the Young Arabs, the first Arab Congress was assembled in Paris.

The congress met on 18.-23. 7. 1913 and was attended by 24 delegates, of which two were from Iraq, three represented the Arab community in USA, the rest were from the Syrian provinces and all of them were almost equally represented by Muslims and Christians. The articulated

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149 Khoury, *Urban Notables and Arab Nationalism*, 63.

150 *Ibid*, 63-64.

151 Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*, 112-114.

resolutions were in favor of westernizing reforms to modernize the Arab lands and asked for decentralization within the empire.<sup>152</sup> The CUP, who tried to prevent the congress from taking place, was now willing to negotiate with its members and sent a representative to draw an argument with them. The drafted agreement, reached in Paris, granted using Arabic as an official language and in education in the primary and secondary schools, restrictions on military service and granting a stable number of Arab deputies in the parliament and as local governors. The negotiations followed for two months, when the CUP confident after a major victory in the Balkan, presented the Arab Congress with a reform program lacking most of the points agreed on. The Arab reaction to this was shock and despair.<sup>153</sup>

The last organization formed before the eruption of the war which deserves mentioning, was the secret society of military officers *al- 'Ahd* (The Promise). It was formed on the principles of Qahtaniya by the same leader 'Aziz 'Ali al-Misri after they had to dissolve the former organization, because of the suspicion that they had a spy among them. Al- 'Ahd was preparing an uprising in the Arab provinces which was however uncovered by the authorities and al-Misri was arrested in February 1914, sentenced to death, but after demonstrations in Egypt and the pressure of UK in Istanbul, was released and returned to Egypt.<sup>154</sup>

By the outbreak of WWI, the CUP had been successfully dividing the Arab opposition into the rival Ottomanist and Arabist camps. It succeeded also in gaining the support of some of the prominent Arabists by offering them positions in the local government or in the parliament, among them the influential president of the Arab Congress 'Abd al-Hamid al-Zahrawi. The Arab movement was by the beginning of war starting to get oriented on separation from the empire, but it was unsuccessful to achieve a popular upheaval among the vast population and remained an issue that affected only the upper narrow layer of society.<sup>155</sup>

According to M. Hroch's periodization, phase A of the nation building process was already identified as the period of Arab literary Nahda. The national movement in its essence begins with phase B, when some part of the ethnic group, usually the more educated, starts to promote the new national identity to the rest of the ethnic group. In the beginning of phase B, is the national movement an issue of a limited circle of nationalists, but its goal is to gain support of the wide public and the masses. The stage of mobilization is the success of phase B, and it is what it takes the national movement to phase C.<sup>156</sup> The Arab movement, as it was shown, did not succeed to become a mass movement by 1914, nor until the end of the war in 1918. Based on that, it can be summed

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152 *Ibid*, 114-116.

153 Zeine, *The Emergence of Arab Nationalism*, 106.

154 Sa'id, *Al-Thawra al- 'arabiya al-kubra*, 46-48.

155 Khoury, *Urban Notables and Arab Nationalism*, 66.

156 Hroch, *Národy nejsou dilem náhody*, 53-54.

up, that the Arab movement reached phase B only in the studied period.

Following the model periodization of Hroch, phase C should follow after phase B with the mobilization of the masses by the idea of gaining independence and self governance, Here is where the path of the Arab national movement differs from the model situation. In 1919, for a short period of time, Syria gained independence and its elected political bodies acquired the ideology of Arab nationalism from the very beginning. This political unit officially represented only Syria, but it spoke of Syrians as the members of an Arab nation.<sup>157</sup> Therefore, it can be said that, by a historical coincidence, gaining independence predated the mass mobilization for that goal, and the Arab national movement did not have a phase C. The goal of phase C, the mobilization of the crowds, was left for the nationalist government and thus it is possible to say, that after the state was created it had to create the Arabs.

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<sup>157</sup> Dawn, *From Ottomanism to Arabism*, 152.

### 3.4. The social aspects of Arabism and the Subjective Features of the Arab Nation Building Process

The primordial aspects of the Arab nation building process (ties with the past, language and ethnicity) were already been discussed. Now it is time to specify some of the features, which according to the modernist theorists of nationalism, most greatly impact it.<sup>158</sup> According to Gellner's theory, nationalism occurs as an accompaniment as well as the result of several social changes in the modern world. More specifically, these changes are particularly the extinction of the old social system (the feudal system in Europe) and the emergence of the middle class.<sup>159</sup>

These social changes were seen in the Arab World in particular, in the Middle East as a whole, starting in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century- specifically in the modernized administration, faster communications and mass education, which resulted in the formation of new professional occupations. Governmental clerks, teachers in modern state schools, journalists and army officers were all a new class, which Gellner would characterize as versed in high culture and context-free communication.<sup>160</sup> This class formed the ranks of both Ottomanists and Arabists, and their common denominator was the opposition to the ruling class, which had been unsuccessful in protecting the Islamic civilization against the European expansion.

Besides the emergence of this new class, Gellner ascribes the emergence of nationalism to the loss of the bond or glue that used to hold the social relations together in the pre-modern age. The bond of Islam, as the cornerstone of social and political life in the Islamic World, was weakened, if not socially then at least politically after the intellectual crisis of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The simple but revolutionary idea, that Islam does not contain in itself all the solutions needed nor the remedy for the deplorable stage of the Islamic World, opened the field for other rival ideologies to compete for its place, namely to nationalism in both its forms (cultural and political). This inability to solve the chief problem of the Eastern world, which was the pain of humiliation and defeat in the face of the West, was always the driving force of all the rival ideologies and their reasons in overtaking the former ideology's place. And so, since no ideology or no system has been able to resolve this problem to this day, the substitution of ideologies, where the latter is overtaking the place of the former, is a continuous and repeating process. As in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Islamic modernism of Muhammad 'Abduh and the Ottomanist conservatism of the tanzimat period did not achieve the promised results, so Ottomanist modernism claimed the field. When Ottomanist modernism failed, Arabism and Arab nationalism challenged it in the same way. Finally, when looking past the era

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<sup>158</sup> Hroch, *Národy nejsou dílem náhody*, 45.

<sup>159</sup> Gellner, *Nationalism*, 27-30.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid*, 29.

currently in discussion, Arab nationalism was eventually defeated in 1967 and was challenged by Islamic political ideologies yet again.

Returning to the period Arabist and Ottomanist conflict, both ideologies claimed that they contain the solution for restoring Islamic greatness. The aims of Arabism did not differ radically from those of Ottomanism. Most of the Arabists before 1914 did not advocate separation from the empire and their main difference from the Ottomanists was in the means of how to manage the Ottoman empire in order to regain its glory and resist the penetration of the West. The reasons why some Arabs switched to Arabism, that was a lesser bond in comparison to Ottomanism, might perhaps have had two causes.

The first might have been that for many Arabs, Ottomanism could have seemed unable in achieving its goal of closing the gap between Islam and the West.<sup>161</sup> Secondly, when the Young Turks, as representatives of Ottomanism decided to consolidate power in Istanbul, they prevented the Arabs from participating on the creation of the policy of an ideology that claimed to include them.<sup>162</sup>

Nevertheless, Arabism remained a minority movement among the Arabs even between 1908-1914, as it is believed by the latest generation of scholars, mainly Dawn, but also including Khalidi and Khoury. The problem of such a conclusion is that it seems to contradict several examples of primary evidence: 1) The quantity of Arabist material in the press from 1908-1914 significantly outnumbered the Ottomanist material, 2) Diplomatic documents of European diplomats from Syria speak of the growing importance of the national feeling among the Arabs, and 3) The experience and works of those, who participated in the movement before 1914.<sup>163</sup>

Based on these sources of evidence, until the 1950s and 1960s it was believed that the ideology of Arabism was dominant in Syria in 1908-1914. However, as revealed by Dawn, the sources that supported this theory can be misleading. Firstly, the press does not necessarily reflect the reality; rather it reflects the ideas of its writers.<sup>164</sup> Naturally, the Arabist journals outnumbered the Ottomanist ones, because they were the means by which the Arabists wanted to spread their ideology and gain support. Ottomanism as a dominant ideology did not need to justify itself and most of its adherents held governmental office, which they could use to channel their ideology instead of using the press. However, even if the press did not reflect what people were thinking, at the very least it was what the public had been reading for most of those six years. Therefore, the concept of Arabism, even if not supported by many, was very familiar among the Syrian elite.

In terms of the diplomatic documents, instead of reflecting the reality, they might have been

161 Dawn, *From Ottomanism to Arabism*, 148.

162 Khoury, *Urban Notables and Arab Nationalism*, 67.

163 Khalidi, "Ottomanism and Arabism in Syria Before 1914," 52.

164 Dawn, "Origins of Arab Nationalism," 12.

a reflection of the European intentions, which often aimed to undermine the loyalty to the Sultan and the Caliphate. The Europeans also tended to see the events in the Middle East and the Third world from only a European perspective, where since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century nationalism was by far the leading political ideology.

The experience of the early Arab writers, who were participants in the movement as well, on the Arab Nationalism was probably affected by its spread and success after 1918, and as previously mentioned, nationalists generally tended to see the emergence of the national movement much earlier than it became a reality.<sup>165</sup>

Probably the main evidence that Arabism was a minority movement among the Arab elite until 1914, is that it did not achieve any major success neither before nor during the war. Even the Arab Revolt in 1916 was a separate movement and had only few Syrian Arabist participants. It was more of a personal revolt of the Hashimite Sharif of Mecca against the Ottoman rule, which did not adopt the ideology of Arabism from the beginning, and only finally did in order to attract the Arab opposition to the CUP in Syria. It can be also assumed, that the Arab Revolt facilitated the Arab movement more than the movement facilitated the revolt.<sup>166</sup>

However, the important question is not whether Arabism was or was not a minority movement, but rather what were the reasons that made some of the Arabs choose Arabism on the expense of Ottomanism, since it had claimed to be serving the same purpose as Arabism. Ernest Dawn has done the most extensive research so far in order to answer this question by identifying members of the Arab movement and comparing their bibliographical data with that of their Ottomanist counterparts.

In his study, Ernest Dawn dealt with Damascus and the surrounding areas, arguing that the Arab movement in Syria was representative of the Arab movement as a whole, and Damascene participants constituted a large percentage of all its participants. The movement in Syria, unlike other regions, went through all the steps leading to its fulfillment after the war in the form of a formally elected body: the government and the Syrian General Congress. Another reason Dawn chose Damascus for this study was the higher availability of bibliographical data about the inhabitants from this period.<sup>167</sup> What does not speak in favor of the choice of Damascus as Dawn's sample of the Arab movement, is Khalidi's argument that in the coastal areas of Lebanon and Palestine, a new middle class much more developed than in Damascus was on the rise due to the trade activities in the port cities. This new middle class had a greater tendency to acquire the

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<sup>165</sup> Khalidi, "Ottomanism and Arabism in Syria Before 1914," 52-53.

<sup>166</sup> Dawn, *From Ottomanism to Arabism*, 157.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid*, 152.

ideology of Arabism. This region, being open to the sea, was also open to new influences and ideas that came along with the trade, and also benefited from being more religiously mixed than the landlocked regions. As a result, the coastal cities were more likely to accept new ideologies than the conservative cities such as Damascus.<sup>168</sup>

Dawn's method of analysis was to identify the active Syrian Arabists from the period 1908-1914 and to compare their bibliographical data such as education, occupation, age, position in the social hierarchy and the relationship to local administration with the Syrian Ottomanists. He assumed, that the Arabists were either those, who publicly advocated Arabism, or were members of at least one of the known Arab societies or organizations in that period. According to these parameters, he identified 126 public advocates of Arabism as well as members of three societies, (Decentralization Party, al-Fatat, al-'Ahd) of whom 51 were Syrians.<sup>169</sup>

There are several factors to this approach that can be critiqued. Firstly, the numbers are too low if we take in account that Amin Sa'id claims, that 315 of 490 Arab officers in Istanbul before 1914 were members of al-'Ahd,<sup>170</sup> or that al-Fatat had more than 200 members, as is claimed by Antonius.<sup>171</sup> These numbers might be exaggerated and there are no specific given names, but it is known that the membership in at least Qahtaniya and al-'Ahd was secret, so it is highly possible that the real numbers of Arabists were higher than the ones identified by Dawn. The point of this argument, is not to state that there were more Arabists than Dawn is claiming, but to stress that the 51 identified members might be a small fraction of the whole movement and therefore, not a sufficient sample to rely on for analysis.

Secondly, Dawn did not include in his analysis members of the Qahtaniya, also an Arabist organization, for unspecified reasons,. He also excluded from the research 79 Syrians, who signed a telegram stating support to the Arab Congress in Paris, explaining that they were advocates of the movement and not its leaders. This assumption is wrong, as the number of the delegates at the congress was only 24, meaning many active Arabists and members of various societies did not attend, probably do to the prevention of the CUP or because the congress was organized in such a short period of time. Twelve of the signatories were also members of the societies, whose members Dawn considered to be the leaders of the movement by Dawn. Therefore, it can be argued that those signatories, as active Syrian Arabists, are usable material for the analysis as well.

The last point of critique to be mentioned, is Dawn's identification of the Ottomanists prior to 1914. After the end of the war in 1918 and during the brief rule of King Faysal in Syria, Arabism became the national ideology and all the Ottomanists adapted it, because there was no other

168 Khalidi, "Ottomanism and Arabism in Syria Before 1914," 56.

169 Dawn, *From Ottomanism to Arabism*, 151-153.

170 Sa'id, *Al-Thawra al-'arabiya al-kubra*, 47.

171 Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*, 112.

alternative left. In the two main governmental bodies, the Syrian General Congress and the Syrian Cabinet, the pre-1914 Arabists constituted only 15 percent. The rest were, as Dawn describes them, the newcomers to Arab Nationalism, or post-1918 nationalists, and he identified them as being Ottomanists before 1914. Though it is highly probable, that most of them were Ottomanists and CUP supporters before 1914, this has not been proven and it would not be totally correct to make that conclusion. Especially considering that there is such a lack of the data on pre-1914 Arabists, it is hypothetically quite possible that some of those post-1918 nationalists might have been unknown or secret members of the Arab societies before 1914.

Nevertheless, and despite this criticism, Dawn's research from the available data is useful in drawing a picture of the social backgrounds of the pre-1914 Arabists. In regards to their educational backgrounds, the often traditionally assumed notion, that the Arabists were a product of Western education and values, has been proven incorrect. The Arabists, alike the Ottomanists, were formed mainly by graduates of Ottoman state schools. However, the graduates of Western and traditional schools constituted a somewhat bigger portion in the ranks of the Arabists.<sup>172</sup> The Western and traditionally educated groups within the Arabists reflected two intellectual trends of the movement: one religious and one secular. The traditionalists, fearing the Western threat and the CUP secularization, stressed the contribution of Arabs to Islam and the negative impact of the Turkish rule, and advocated strengthening the Islamic institutions and traditions. The secularists, on the other hand, advocated the need for a resurgence of the empire by applying Western technology and political principles.

Concerning age differences, the Arabists did not vary in any marked way from the Ottomanists, aside from the members of al-Fatat, who were mostly students in their twenties. Perhaps the demands for a complete separation from the Ottoman Empire, which before 1914 were rare, even among the Arabists, reflect both the vitality and political inexperience of its members.<sup>173</sup>

The Arabists did not differ from the Ottomanists even in the positions they occupied in the social hierarchy. Most of Arabists and Ottomanists came from the high class families of landowners and urban notables, and at times, one family had members among both the Arabists and Ottomanists as well. There were slightly more Arabists among the middle class or lower upper class, which contained new and less powerful landowners.<sup>174</sup>

The main difference between Arabists and Ottomanists was their relation to the local government and holding office. Many of the Syrian Arabists did hold governmental office before 1908, but were unable to retain their positions after the CUP cleansings and replacements by Turks.

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<sup>172</sup> Dawn, *From Ottomanism to Arabism*, 161.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid*, 162.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid*, 163-164.

Others, mainly the younger generation that had the qualification and training to hold governmental posts and were expecting to succeed their parents and family members in the bureaucracy, were unable to do so. The Ottomanists were more successful in holding governmental office, in comparison to their Arabists counterparts (35% compared to 16% respectively). The distinction is even clearer in regards to their fathers (73% in comparison to 13% respectively).<sup>175</sup>

This distinction in holding office, is reflected in the occupations of the members of the two ideologies as well. The Ottomanists mostly occupied government positions, while the Arabists were mostly journalists, doctors, lawyers, engineers and were often engaged in intellectual pursuits. The main reason for this is that the Arabists had to secure a livelihood, which they could not find in the government.

Thus the main and most important difference between Arabists and Ottomanists among the Damascene elite was holding governmental office. This distinction was sometimes present among members of the same family, where one branch enjoyed the favor of the government and benefited economically, while the other did not. Such a phenomenon can be demonstrated by the al-'Azm family, where Shafiq Mu'ayyad al-'Azm, Rafiq al-'Azm and Haqqi al-'Azm were leading Arabists, while their cousins Muhammad Fawzi al-'Azm and Badi' Beg Mu'ayyad al-'Azm were Ottomanists and CUP sympathizers.<sup>176</sup> The Arabists opposed not only the outer enemy, which for them was the CUP, but also an inner enemy or rival which were the Syrian Ottomanists.

In all the theories concerning the nation building process, especially by those scholars that analyze the formation of nations sociologically, great attention point towards the feature of a conflicts of interests. The process can be manifested by the struggle of power, economical positions, prestige, by the struggle between the center and the periphery and between different social groups or classes.

Based on these findings, it can be concluded that the global rivalry and conflict between Ottomanism and Arabism was basically a reflection of an inner conflict in the Syrian society. However, it was not a conflict between various classes as previously portrayed by earlier generations of writers, (though the middle class challenge for power was on the rise and might have been more important in the coastal regions), but was rather an inner elite conflict between members of the Syrian high class competing for power.

This struggle between the Arab Ottomanists and Arabists accompanied the course of the Arab political history during the second Ottoman constitutional era from 1908 to 1918, with Arabism being the minority movement challenging the dominant ideology of Ottomanism. All this changed, when a "coincidence of history" brought the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire and left

<sup>175</sup> *Dawn*, "The Origins of Arab Nationalism," 16.

<sup>176</sup> Khoury, *Urban Notables and Arab Nationalism*, 67.

the Ottomanists with no other political alternative than to adopt the ideology of Arab nationalism. Based on that, it can be summarized that Arabism, demanding political autonomy, never fully developed into a separatist nationalist movement seeking independence from the Ottoman Empire like the nationalist movements in the Balkan. Arab nationalism suddenly became a national ideology of Syria in 1919 and only since then started to gain the support of the wide public and promote its main goal, the Arab unity.

## Conclusion

Nationalist ideas among the Arabs were not a pure imitation of the West and did not develop from the secular nationalism of the Lebanese Christian Arabs. The ideas of this movement, after all, echoed no interest among the Muslim majority of Arabs.

To sum up, the roots of Arab nationalism can be found in Islamic modernism and the increasing gap between Western and Eastern civilizations. Since the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the ruling minority of Ottoman society was aware of the need to adopt some Western-style reforms to keep up with the military advancement of Europe. This obvious need to imitate the West caused an injury to the Ottoman and Eastern self-view. Thinkers such as al-Afghani and Muhammad 'Abduh departed from justifying the need for reforms, which was typical among their predecessors, and immersed themselves instead in an emotional defense and self-justification of Islamic civilization. In order to ease the pain of the present humiliation and inferiority, they recalled the glory of the Eastern past. The period that they considered to be the peak of Eastern civilization was the period of early Islam. They believed that the return to this period would close the gap between the two civilizations and bring a sense of superiority back to the East. And so, because Islam of the early followers was the Islam of Arabs, reviving Islam basically meant reviving the Arabs to their position of preeminence in the Islamic world.

Arabism as an ideology developed from Islamic modernism and the difference between these two can be pictured as follows: For an Islamic modernist, Arabs and the Arabic language play a significant role, because it was via the Arabic language that Islam was revealed to them and spread by them to the world. For an Arabist, Islam has a significant position, because it was in the name of Islam that the Arabs conquered and ruled the world. However, for the Arabist, Islam is only one of the components of his Arab identity.

Before the eruption of WWI, Arabism, demanding autonomy and decentralization within the Ottoman Empire, was a minority movement among the Arab high class of landowners and urban notables, that challenged the dominant Ottomanist ideology. Arab nationalism can be specified as a form of Arabism that included political demands for separation from the empire, as well as the creation of an Arab state, where cultural borders corresponded with the cultural ones. Arab nationalism was a minority movement among the Arabists and hence a movement that had very little traction.

The repressive Turkish governmental policy of the CUP in the years 1908-1914 influenced the increase of Arabism. However, to what extent it was the CUP's Turkification that caused the Arabist reaction is unclear, as most scholars do not agree, even on the fact of whether there was any significant Turkification in this period in comparison to the era of Abdulhamid II. It is more likely that Arabism was a reaction to the centralization of the CUP, which stripped many Arabs, who were used to hold government posts under Abdulhamid II, from power.

Based on the theories of nationalism, the nation building process in general, is defined by its objective and subjective features. The objective components, which were used to define the modern Arab nation can be seen in the following features: Firstly, in the Arabic language and the Arab history in the sense of the past glory that was recalled in the period of the Arab literary renaissance. Secondly, in Islam that was revived by Islamic modernism. According to the modernist theories of nationalism, the creation of modern nations is a result of certain subjective features such as social, economical and cultural changes in the society. Among these characteristics, it was possible to identify Gellner's social aspects of modernity, which according to him are a precondition to the emergence of nationalism. The loss of the social bond of pre-modern society is evident in the weakening of Islam's position as the political and social bond. The emergence of the educated middle class, versed with the needs of the modern world, codified language and context-free communication, is found in the generation of governmental clerks, journalists, teachers and military officers produced by the Ottoman reformation. Based on this, Gellner's theory proved applicable to the Arab world. Another subjective feature of the Arab nation building process is a conflict of interests. This was identified in the intra-elite power struggle of Damascene notables, where the families that held governmental posts were Ottomanist and the families that did not switched to the ideology of Arabism. It was only after the end of WWI, when the Ottoman Empire collapsed, that the Ottomanists were left with no other alternative than to adopt the ideology of Arab nationalism.

In accordance with Miroslav Hroch's periodization, the Arab nation building process went through its phase A during the period of Arab literary renaissance. Phase B of the movement, which is the period of agitation, manifested itself during the years 1908-1914 by the opposition to the CUP. In this period, the Arab national movement did not succeed in mobilizing the population and becoming a mass movement. The theoretical phase C of a national movement is characterized by a mobilization of the crowds and the struggle for independence. Because the end of the war caused the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire and brought Arab independence, the Arab national movement basically jumped from phase B to an independence, and ultimately skipped phase C.

According to Gellner's definition of nationalism, it can be concluded that the Arab nation

building process did not materialize into a nationalist movement until 1914. However, in this period the necessary predispositions have crystallized in the Arab society, which allowed the movement to become a mass ideology in the years to come. This ideology established a strong bond between the people and a desire to form a unified nation.

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