

POLITICAL OPPOSITION AGAINST THE FRENCH RULE IN MANDATE
SYRIA: 1920-1946

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ABSTRACT

POLITICAL OPPOSITION AGAINST THE FRENCH RULE IN MANDATE IN SYRIA: 1920-1946

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In this thesis, the French mandate period in Syria and the nationalist movement against the mandate between 1920-1946 is analyzed. This thesis aims to show that the main characteristic of the Syrian political developments - political parties as representation of Arab nationalism and contribution after the development of Arab nationalism and also show that the changes and continuities in politics of notables in Syrian political development. This thesis argument that political parties as the main organization through which the resistance the French rule has been institutionalized and materialized. The thesis assumption is that political parties are the key to understand the political system in a country and then through the thesis examine political parties as the most crucial element of the political system in Syria. The thesis emphasized that the French mandate system has left legacy in Syria and underline that political parties were - while creating – not always a coherent voice but emphasize on national political and independence and issue of sovereignty and unity against the colonial power –

anti imperialism. In all, this thesis conclude that the continuities and the political transformation from the Ottoman period to the mandate in terms of urban classes, ideologies –Arabism and Arab nationalism- and political institutionalization show the revolutionary period for Syria.

Keyword: French Mandate in Syria, Political Organization-Parties, ResistanceNationalist Movement, Legacy, Institutionalization

ÖZ

SURİYE'DE FRANSIZ MANDA YÖNETİMİNE KARŞI SİYASİ MÜCADELE: 1920-1946

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Bu çalışma 1920-1946 arasında Suriye'de Fransız manda yönetimine karşı milliyetçi hareketleri analiz etmektedir. Çalışma, Arap Milliyetçiliğinin gelişiminden sonraki katkısı ve Arap Milliyetçiliğinin temsilcisi olarak siyasi partileri, Suriye siyasi gelişiminin temel karakteristiğini göstermektedir ve çalışma Suriye siyasi gelişiminde siyasi ileri gelenlerde ki değişiklikler ve süreklilikleri de göstermektedir. Bu tezin temel argümanı; Fransız manda yönetimine karşı mücadele boyunca müesseseleşme ve yapıların oluşumunda siyasi partiler temel örgütlenme aracıdır. Bu tezin varsayımı; bir ülkede ki siyasi sistemi anlamanın temel anahtarı siyasi örgütlenmelerdir ve bu nedenle çalışma boyunca Suriye'de siyasi sistemdeki en önemli etken olarak siyasi örgütlenmeler incelenmiştir. Fransız manda yönetiminin Suriye'de bıraktığı kalıtım-miras vurgulanmakta ve siyasal örgütlenmelerin oluşumlarında her zaman tutarlı bir söylem yaratmadıklarının altı çizilmekte ve fakat milli, siyasal, bağımsızlık ve

egemenlik meselesinde emperyalizm ve kolonyal güçlere karşı dayanışma gösterdiklerinin altı çizilmektedir. Kısacası, Osmanlı idaresinden Fransız yönetimine süreklilik ve siyasi dönüşümler şehirli ileri gelenler, düşünce yapısı – Arapçılık, Arap Milliyetçiliği – ve siyasi müesseseler Suriye’de devrimsel nitelikte bir süreci gösterir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Suriye’de Fransız yönetimi, Siyasi Örgütlenmeler-Partiler, Mücadele-Milli Hareketler, Kalıtım, Müesseseleşme

To My Family

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This study aims to analyze the French mandate period in Syria and studies the nationalist movement against the Mandate between 1920 - 1946. It argues that the French mandate left the deep mark on the Syrian social and political life. And by seeing political parties as the major organizations through which the resistance against the French mandate has taken. The thesis look at the background, creation, agenda after Syrian political parties during this period. These political parties can be seen as the major symbol of resistance and against the French rule, and also these nationalist organizations, developments of parties can be considered with the context of Arab nationalism. In order to understand national political parties evolution and the evolution of nationalism, social organizations and the organization of political parties were determinants and thus the social and political effect of the French mandate and the intellectual circle will also be analyzed.

In thesis main argument is that it see political parties as the main organization through which the resistance against the French rule has been institutionalize and materialize. My assumption is that political parties are key to understand the political system in a country and through this I look at political parties as the most important element of the political system in Syria. It must be stressed that the French mandate system has left legacy in Syria under that system. Additionally, it must be underlined that political parties were - while creating – not always a coherent voice but emphasize on national political independence and an issue of sovereignty and unity against the colonial power – anti-imperialism. If there was no mandate probably these parties would have different manners. At this point, it can be said that Syrian national political organizations

and parties born out of a painful process of development and institutionalization. Therefore without understanding the significant period especially between 1920 – 1946 it would be difficult to comprehend the present Syria's political structure even today condition of the Middle East countries. Thus, looking at political parties as the main vehicle through which the Syrian opposition against the French mandate is the main focus of this thesis. I will ask the following crucial questions; "What kind of an organization of these parties in Syria did have"? "What were their major motivations"? "Who were the founders and supporters"? "What characterizes Syrian political parties between 1920 and 1946"? Also this thesis pays attention to the the idea that political parties are not static organizations, after they were formed, they transformed and evolved. They include new members, new ideologies and they tried to adopt and respond to the challenges of the political sytem. In this case the French rule gave shape to the People's Party, and the National Bloc which was formed by prominent members -notables- of Syrian society. In time, these prominent members-notables- adopted more populist discourse in attracting the masses.

Additionally, in respect of the long-term, in this thesis, it will be argued that since seventeenth century decentralization process in the Ottoman Empire in conjunction with the transformation of the land owning system prepared the ground for class formation of urban Sunni elites. By focusing on the political culture of these urban elites which originated from the "politics of notables" or "patronage system" since the eighteenth century onwards, this thesis will also explore historical roots of pragmatism. In this process, what can be seen is that the Syrian elites are in a "clientelistic" collaboration with a higher authority to realize their domestic interests. This behavioral patterns of policy making is inherited by Syrian politicians coming from different classes of society in the independence period and became the significant aspect of Syrian political development.

The French rule in Syria started after the First World War however French economic presence in Syria goes back to the nineteenth century. The incorporation of the Syrian economy- what we now call as Syria today- in to the capitalist world economy has already shaped the social structure in Syria. Nineteenth century reforms of the Ottoman Empire – the Tanzimat, the Land Reform - has also radically affected Syrian society. It is significant to note that analyzing national political parties and the evolution of nationalism “politics of notables” will also be analyzed since the politics of notables continued during the mandate period played the most important role in the creation of Syrian national political parties and of Arab nationalism through the institutionalization of the political party system.

The French came to Syria after the First World War as a mandate power basically on the Sykes-Picot agreement signed with Great Britain and their basic policy motivation in Syria was its traditional “divide and rule” policy. After the mandate was approved by the League of Nations the French tried to create small states in Syria. However the mandate government faced resistance from Syrian society especially from 1925 to 1927. During the 1925-1927 revolt one of the major driving ideas was to resist against what the French wanted to do in the Syrian territories. The French policy thus prevented the unity in the Arab world and provided a special role to the minorities. As a reaction to the French mandate, during this period, the first Syrian political parties were established in 1925 by prominent Syrian notable families, and then they formed the National Bloc in 1929.

In this study, Syrian political developments will be examined in four periods. The first period between 1920 to 1927 produced the repeated acts of physical resistance culminating in the Great Rebellion of 1925-1927, which can be described as a confrontation between the French and the nationalist leadership. The second period from 1928 to 1936 marked the beginning of what may be called as collaborative politics in which the notables formed the National Bloc

and negotiated for a treaty. The third period from 1936 to 1939 saw the political dominance of the National Bloc, and in this period Syria came to realize an “honourable co-operation” with the French, which in turn ended with the second failure to secure a treaty. These years were to serve as a transitional period in which the National Bloc was permitted to govern and to share power with the French High Commission. During this period, the French ceded the district of Alexandretta to Turkey, but also because it became clear that the French Parliament would not ratify the treaty of 1936, even after the nationalist government granted additional concessions to France. This third period ended with the resignation of the National Bloc government in the early 1939 and with the placement once again of the minorities under separate administrations. The last period covers between 1939 and 1946 -the years of the Second World War, Syrian independence, the French evacuation of Syria and its political independence. However the nationalists did not advance their demands for unity and independence much beyond what they had reached in the mid-1920s. In this study, political advancement in Syria, each term examined domestically, regionally and in the international perspective.

This thesis also focused on socio-economic institutions and political transformation in Syria in general and the French expectations during the period under consideration. The early years of the French rule in Syria displayed not much political activity and until 1925, the protest of Syrian nationalist was little organized. This thesis marked that in Syria, there was continuity of socio-political life in a historical perspective. In order to govern like the Ottomans, the French had to rely on locally influential notables who were the main intermediaries between the government and society and they acted as main actors in socio- economic and political developments. The Notables’ traditional status in society, their education, their administrative status quo shaped political culture of Syria and we can name this relation as a common-profit depended collaboration between the Ottoman officials and urban provincial notables since the eighteenth century and this common-profit depended affiliation maintained

during the French mandate period. Notables' relation with the government originated a political culture which based on common-interactive relation and foreign-sponsorship. But important point is here that collaboration with notables, the French, unlike the Ottomans, were seen as illegitimate. Most crucially, unlike the Ottomans, the traditional notables in Syria considered and described the French as "others". Western colonial powers -Britain and France- created a common consciousness which had emerged mainly in the imagination of rival civilizations as the "other". Thus different from the Ottomans, in Syria, France's position was unstable. And this illegitimacy caused urban notables to try to change the balance of power away from the French. Related to this the urban notables emerged as an important political figures in Syria were identified strictly with the ascendant idea of nationalism. Nationalism changed the intellectual and political climate in Syria and especially, two types of nationalism emerged which were territorial and ethnocultural and changed state formation in the Greater Syrian territories.

In August 1914 World War I broke out in Europe and the alliance of Triple Entente-Britain, France, Russia – was against the Central Powers, Germany, and AustriaHungary. In November 1914, the Ottoman Empire joined the Central Powers against Russia, Britain and France. Thus started World War in the Middle East. The war served to accelerate the transformation of the Ottoman social order, and thus it started a new phase in the history of the Arab countries. On October 31, 1918, the government in Istanbul signed the Armistice of Mudros, a document of unconditional surrender that caused the war to end with almost total defeat of the Ottoman armies and end the war in the Middle East. The result was the dismemberment of the Empire, the occupation of its Arab provinces by Britain and France, and boundaries were delineated and thus new states came into existence, and the emergence of newly defined territories under the British or French control called mandates.

After the First World War, the framework of Ottoman social space changed and the new mandate order in the Middle East produced new forms of culture, new

identities, and new frameworks for thoughts. As mandatory powers, according to the League of Nations, both France and Britain had to try to prepare the political entities created in Syria, Mesopotamia and Palestine for eventual independence. This meant that colonial powers had to act through the pattern composed by the forms, fields and practices of the modern states. However, two important actors in this century-Britain and France- acted as colonial powers in the acquired lands around the world and benefited from their resources. The French Mandate of Syria constituted an important part in Syrian history and this was also crucial to the other Middle Eastern countries. The political and socioeconomic changes that transformed the Middle East were affected by both external and internal events in the nineteenth and twentieth century. These transformation in socio-economic and political life reshaped the political apparatus, institutionalization of the political party structure and governmental structure.

The Arabic word for political party is *hizb*. The word primarily means a group, faction, or the supporters of a man who share his ideas and ready to defend him. It is therefore that the word has, by natural extension, came to denote the “political” in the modern European sense of the word. In this sense, the French mandate affected Syrian organizational political life - political development which resulted from the consolidation of nationalism. The nationalist leaders accepted new patterns of political organization linked to new secular system of ideas, and new forms of political association, which were encouraged in the towns and the countryside and also between different ethnic and religious groups. The French mandate policy affected and transformed Syria’s political evolution. The National leaders shared the power with the French. The French mandate policy was to create a low-level of state formation in Syria, and this caused political instability, factionalism and the rise of the radical middle-class parties in Syria. The division of the urban elites into the People’s Party and the National Bloc also contributed to Syria’s weak state formation. The coalition between the French and Syrian notables weakened Syrian economy as well, due

mainly to the post-World War partitions of Syria, inadequate French financial and commercial policies, and increased sectarianism aided by French activities.

It is important to note here that there were two historical developments that shaped the Arab Middle East. The first was the political vacuum in the Arab territories after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire that ruled this area from 1518 to 1918. The second was rising Arab nationalism, or more correctly, a new and explosive awakening of Arab identity a desire to cast off the Turkish rule and form new nation states. By 1911, two political trends had also emerged in the new constitutional era of the Ottoman Empire: the first one was assimilationist and the second, decentralist. The assimilationist tendency was represented by the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) which envisaged an integrated society out of its disparate ethnic communities and marshalled to embody a single Ottoman identity. This vision went beyond the earlier programme of the Tanzimat period which aspired to reform the state without undue disturbance to the traditional communal and ethnic identities. Ottomanism was considered a nationalist creed and a policy of radical social transformation - using Turkish as an official language of government and instruction. The decentralist tendency, on the other hand, included the opposition to the Abdulhamid's policies besides the CUP after the "coup d'etat", and included the Arabs, which sought the salvation of the empire in a decentralized system of government. Most Arab reformers after 1909 began to reassess their political stance and to distance themselves from CUP policies.

It must be stressed here that before World War I, while Arab idea of nationalism was mingled with the idea of Islamic unity, Arab nationalism scarcely aimed beyond the rehabilitation of the Arab race in a multinational empire. The aim of Arab nationalism was to restore the Arabs to their lost role in Islam to which they felt entitled. Some stressed the national values, but none advocated separation from the Islamic unity. Even Christian thinkers, who advocated complete separation from the Ottoman Empire, were ready to compromise their

extreme nationalist views so as to maintain solidarity with their Muslim compatriots.

It must be emphasized that historically before 1920, Syria did not exist as an entity, under the Ottoman rule the province of Syria included a larger area than today, and was divided among a number of regions and special districts. After the First World War, the structure of the region changed by France. Consequently, the French mandate system left the deep trace on Syrian social, governmental and political life. Because of the foreign designed borders and separation of the Syrian territories like Palestinian, Jordan and Lebanon, Syria originated as a fragile and fragmentized edge-borders in the Middle East and the Greater Syrian territories influenced Syria domestically, regionally and in truth international relations. Additionally, during the mandate period, French mandate system deliberately supported disjoint state identity and in Syria, historically by carrying out divide and rule policy the tried to augment antagonism among urban and rural inhabitants. All these element promote low-lying state establishment in Syria. As a result of the French imperialist legacy in Syria the country emerged as a weak and fragmented entity owing to its externally drawn borders and partition of the Greater Syrian territories into mini-states Lebanon, Palestine and Jordan. Artificial borders of the Middle East states and Syria directly affected different allegiances of Syrian domestic factions to regional states due to ill-organized nation-states by the imperialist powers. Moreover, during the mandate period, French imperialism intentionally prevented the development of stable state apparatus which could absorb expanding political mobilization. France also encouraged sub-state identities of Syrian religious minorities and historically rooted hostility among urban and rural populations of Syria by implementing divide and rule policy. All of these factors contributed to a low level state formation of in Syria, which affected its political development.

Following the introduction part, the study concentrate on a wide historical background in the first chapter. I will look at the class formation of Syrian urban “Sunni” bourgeoisie and aristocracy. These class structure were the primary

administrative and political player in Ottoman Empire in nineteenth century, during the French mandate period and the independence period. In addition to the essence of Ottoman management system, the modification of land possession-holding system and its influence on both the emergence of Syrian provincial notables-namely we can also describe urban landowners-families and Syrian administrative and political cultivation will be debated. About this issue, Albert Hourani used the “politics of notables” investigate the way “clientalistic” relation with the power to maximize their common-profits and tried to keep and to increase their economic and social status quo. This relation between the higher authority and notables the most crucial characteristic of Syrian governmental and political advancement in Syria. This study also examine circumstances into world capitalist system in the nineteenth century. And also examine the outgrowth Arab nationalism, the Arab nationalim actually advanded as reponse the West. The Muslim and Christian Araps pioneer of Arab nationalism.

In the second chapter, the thesis will look at the French mandate period (1920-1946). In this chapter, the study will examine the determinants of France’s policy, and “divide and rule” policy. As a mandatory power, France drew artificial and arbitrary boundries and as a part of “divide and rule” policy-political partition, emergency of weak state formation, territorial divisions and its reflection of Syrian social and political development will be analyzed. During the French mandate period, the urban notables stance transformed and the second generation established the National Bloc Party during this time (1929) and this organization accepted “Syria-first” policy changed common-profit affiliation with France, they tried to maximize their relation with France and we can say that they left their fierce pan-Arab Nationalism.

In the third chapter, the study will analyze the relationship between the French Mandate and Arab nationalism by tracing political advancements in Syria during the French mandate period. The politics of notables acted the most crucial role during the mandate and as the origination of Arab nationalisn through the

institutionalization of the political party system. The history of Syrian nationalism and its response to the French are analyzed in this chapter in the domestic, regional and international environments. During this period, Syria grew as fragile, unsteady, shattered and fragmented existence. This unsteady and fragmented existence could be seen the formation of the National Bloc. At the end of the 1930s the National Bloc was separated into two branches; one of them was Damascus branches the other branches was Aleppo. Important point is that during this period, unification and winning the country's independence became the aim of leaders, groups, organizations and parties. This period, which lasted down to the mid-thirties, witnessed the appearance of a few political parties and blocs which started the campaigning for independence systematically.

In the fourth chapter, the study will examine Syrian political parties in the period covered between 1939 and 1946 by searching both the domestically and internationally. The years between 1939 and 1946 covered the Second World War and culminated in Syrian independence in 1945 and French evacuation of Syria and its political independence in 1946. I would draw attention to the importance of the international politics and strategy and the have tried to reflect its impact on the domestic and regional level. The loss of Alexandretta and the unrati ed treaty of 1936 influenced the Syrians from all walks of life. The Allied invasion in June 1941 faced direct British influence into Syria and this invasion changed balance of power between foreign rule and local leadership. Throughout the French mandate in Syria – in the age of Western imperialism – colonial dominance, relationship between the authority-government and the notables were key to comprehend Syrian political advancements. It is important point here is that Syrian notables in government – the National Bloc sought British support for its return to power. Owing to a perceptible difference in her policy toward Arab nationalism, Britain encouraged the nationalist movement.

Before ending up this introduction part, a few word should be said about the stance of the researcher in writing this thesis. First of all, through the writing in

thesis the researcher tried to refrain from a precise determinism. That is to say, in examining the nationalist movement against the Mandate between 1920 – 1946 and the emergence of the Syrian political parties and their institutionalization and materialization, and Syrian administrator-officials' practical responses and reaction to changes were taken into consideration. Also Ottoman impact on these process is one of the important factor. Though this thesis stressed the significant continuity in the character of political development in Syria under the Ottoman and French rule, it emphasized indeed that there are important changes, evolution and developments between 1850s and 1940s. The thesis also stresses pivotal developments of political party organization, their structures, representation and the contributions to unity, sovereignty and independence of Syria and the development of Arab nationalism. Since the thesis is about Syrian political development and institutionalization and this process covered long period; this was a difficult journey.

To refrain from such a discourse, a review of English, Ottoman, Turkish documents and sources was made. It must be stated that these documents and sources used for writing the thesis are secondary sources. And at the same time using only the secondary sources restricted the scope of the thesis. Despite this, to be able to evaluate a correct and balanced narration is preferred to give a more exact envision of the duration. Significantly, in the study, a macro-perspective will be used. Significantly, this macro-perspective should be examined carefully to put forward the casual relation among different occurrences, which seem to be independent of each other. Instead of relying on a limited or a sole hypothesis-theory or level of analysis, this thesis will adopt a multi-causal – chronological viewpoint to explain Syrian nationalist political parties and political developments and Syrian political actors and their policymaking through internal and external factors and interactions between them. Indeed I have tried to draw the historical picture in broad outline, while concentrating at greater length on the chronologically interpretation.

CHAPTER 2

HISTORICAL SETTING

2.1. Syria From The Ottoman Empire To The French Mandate

The Ottoman Empire conquered Syria in 1516 with Sultan Selim I (1512-1520). After the victory of Selim's, the Ottoman captured Egypt, Syria and the Holy cities Mecca and Medina were controlled by the Ottoman Empire and Sultan Selim I. The Ottoman Empire's rule lasted until the First World War. Between the year 1516-1918, Syria compensate for a small section of the Ottoman administration and the Ottoman rulers separated Syria into a variety of administrative districts during those four centuries.

The geographical Syria- today's Syria, Lebanon, Israel, Palestine, Jordan and includes parts of southern Turkey- was composed of different religious communities of Muslims, Christians and Jews. It is important to point here that the population of Syria were not deeply divided concerning to language and ethnicity however sectarian distinctios were the most crucial feature of the Syrian population.¹ The majority of the population was Muslim which were divided as Sunni and Shia Muslims, and the Sunni Muslims considered themselves as the real believers and perceived the Shias as heterodox sects. The Shiites were also divided within themselves as the Fivers, Seveners, Twelvers (also known as *Zaydis*, *Ismailis*, and *Imamis*) as well as the Druze and the Alawis (*Nusayris*).² Among those religious denomination, the most important order was Alawis. This group mainly lived lived in the Latakia and then in Jabal

¹ Daniel Pipes, *Greater Syria: The History of an Ambition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), p.14.

² C. Held Colbert, *Middle East Patterns: Places, People, and Politics*, p.101.

Nusayriyah. The Alawis's living condition was bad and also in addition to the Ottoman, both Sunni and Christian trader mistreated them.³ During the mandate period the Alawis changed and transformed their socio-economic conditions. Using and taking part in army, Alawis began to active role and figure the governmental-political dominance in Syria.

The Christian and Jews were also the significant components of Syrian society. The Christian population of Syria were divided according to different sectarian lines as well. The six important groups among them were: the Greek Orthodox, Syrian Orthodox, the Assyrians, the Roman Catholics, the Maronites, and the Protestants that emerged as a result of missionary activities during the nineteenth century.⁴ Both Christian and Jewish minority groups accepted the safeguard of European countries. Gaining the safeguarding of Europeans provided the Christians much more easily assimilate the Arab land and they pioneered the Western cultural, social and economic incurison into the Arab lands in the nineteenth century. During this incursion and relation led to the growth of hostility between the Muslim and non-Muslim communities in Syria.⁵

The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries witnessed important developments in the region. Especially, at the opening of the nineteenth century, the Ottoman Empire's central authority gradually diminished. Diminishin of the central authority led to the rise in the autonomy of local leaders and the increase in European influence in Ottoman territories. Increasing the military defeats and dominance of the Western control both the regionally and internationally caused the fragile central authority. Thus, the Ottoman statesman tried to establishment

³ Nikolaos van Dam, *The Struggle for Power in Syria, Politics and Society under Asad and the Ba'ath Party* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1996), p.7-8.

⁴ Albert Hourani, *Syria and Lebanon: A Political Essay* (London, New York, Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1954) p.123-125.

⁵ John F. Devlin, *Syria: A Modern State in an Ancient Land* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1983) p.26.

central authority and started to a series of modernization movement. As a result of modernization, strengthening and rationalization central power – existing institutions and social and economic relationship – made much more easy Western economic incursion of Ottoman territories. Indeed, Tanzimat policies,- modernization process- augmented the enlargement of capitalist assimilation within the empire.⁶ Additionally, it must be stated here that during the nineteenth century, the requirements for state expenditures had risen together with the modernisation of administrative and military structures as well as with more integral putting into the era of European powers. The inconsistency between rising expenditures and inadequate revenue was showed plainly in the central authority’s revenue crisis. It is significant to point here that dept imperialism commonly assist to constrain the Ottoman government, and they were enforced to accept limitations. In terms of Ottoman peripheralization all this point is crucial to see and explain the location of the Ottoman economy and state in the World system.⁷ Between 1875 and 1881 the Ottoman bankruptcy was negotiated among representatives of bond holders and Palace bureaucrats resulting in the institution of the *Public Dept Administration (PDA)*. *PDA* were considerably provided the control over the finance of the government. It is crucial point here that the *PDA* worked as an institution of a colonial apparatus. The formation of the *PDA* signalled for the bureaucracy a loss of fiscal sovereignty and legitimacy in the eyes of its subjects. Also, the *PDA* worked as the servent of European capitalism, symbolized the rule of the market and it hindered any radical internal change or fiscal reform.⁸ The Ottoman debt highlights many of the aspects of capitalist integration, and its shaping of class structures and class function. It was clearly a weapon of nineteenth century imperialism. Significantly, all these things accelerated the traditional social

⁶ James L. Gelvin, “The Social Origins of Popular Nationalism in Syria: Evidence for a New Framework”, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol.26, No.4 (Nov.,1994) p.646.

⁷ Çağlar Keyder, *State and Class in Turkey: A Study in Capitalist Development* (London, New York: Verso, 1987), p.39.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p.41.

order. As mentioned before, the presence of the Ottoman debt and foundation of the *PDA* played important role in the peripheralization of the Ottoman Empire. Additionally, the military and economic pressures of European forces could not be resisted by the Ottoman Empire – hence the infiltration of European powers shifted the balances within the region.⁹ The process had important repercussion for Syria.

The European influence increased over the geographical Syria. They tried to manipulate local minorities in order to infiltrate the region. The French had already established links with the Maronites and other Catholic Christians, Russians claimed to speak on behalf of Orthodox Christians, and Great Britain attempted to have relations with the Druze community.¹⁰ Diminishing and losing the central authority, Ottoman statesman initiated a reform program.

2.2. Emergence of Arab Nationalism in Syria: The Christian Arabs and Islamic Modernists

As previously told, socio-economic life changed in the Ottoman Empire during the second half of the nineteenth century, and the peripheralization of the Arab territories to the capitalist economic system brought about a new elite group comprised basically of Arab Christians. Besides Muslim Arab groups, there were large Christian minority communities in Syria, and the Arab Christians experienced a new socioeconomic environment and they prepared the ground for Arab cultural awakening or *al-Nahda*. During this time Syria the center of Arab nationalism in early twentieth century.¹¹ The Christian Arabs were the forerunners the Arab cultural awakening and Arab nationalism. These Christian

⁹ William Cleveland, *Ortadoğu Tarihi*, edited by Mehmet Harmancı. İstanbul: Agora Kitaplığı, 2008, p.67.

¹⁰ Albert Hourani, *Syria and Lebanon: A Political Essay*, p.28.

¹¹ William L. Cleveland & Martin Bunton, *A History of the Middle East* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 2009), p.121.

Arabs were mostly lived in West and graduated from the European and American missionary schools established with the European economic penetration into Syria. During the occupation of Syria and Lebanon by Muhammed Ali and his son Ibrahim (1831-1840), the first Western missionary activities began and after 1860 events these activities increased. Especially, French, American, Russians, British and other Western missionaries established their schools in urban and rural areas of Syrian dominions, and they used Arabic in schools and colleges they established. Most Syrian Christians sent their children to these missionary schools. The Maronites especially preferred to go to French Catholic schools, which taught French language and culture and created strong ties to France.¹² By 1860, in Beirut, Jerusalem and the villages of Lebanon thirty-three schools established by the Presbyterians. In 1866, the Syrian Protestant College and in 1875 University of St. Joseph were established by American missionaries in Beirut. These schools tried to serve students of every religion and contributed to the rise of Arab nationalism.¹³ The growth of nationalism was fostered by such American ideas as liberty, individualism, moral values, social and benevolent activities, having taught the students to find new institutions to fit changing conditions. The first Arab nationalist party was a secret society in Beirut, founded 1875 by five graduates of the American University. These students –all Christians- demanded for the creation an independent Lebanon united with Syria, recognition of Arabic as the official language in Syria and the removal of censorship and freedom of expression. The secret society did not last long, but the commitment of students of the American University of Beirut helped to create an Arab consciousness, and whether nineteenth or twentieth century, they nurtured the ideas of Arab nationalism and spread them among both Muslim and Christian speakers of Arabic.¹⁴

¹² Arthur Goldschmidt Jr. and Lawrence Davison, *A Concise History of the Middle East*, (Colorado: Westview Press, 2006), p.272-277.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p.272-277.

¹⁴ Bassam Tibi, *Arab Nationalism: between Islam and the Nation State*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), p.102-103

The most important nineteenth century Arab national writers were Butrus al-Bustani, Marun al-Naqqash, Khalil al-Khuri, and Faris al-Shidyaq, Nasif al-Yaziji. In 1847, Nasif al-Yaziji (1800-1871) and Butrus al-Bustani (1819-1883) founded literary society such as *Jam'iyyat al-Adab w'al-'Ulum* (The Literary and Scientific Society), whose members were mostly Syrian Christian and European.¹⁵ In 1857, they also founded *Jam'iyya al-'Ilmiyya al-Suriyya* (The Syrian Scientific Society). This society included Western-educated Muslims and Druzes as well as Christians among its members. Butrus al-Bustani established the Arab national journalism and published *Nafir Suriyya* (Appeal to Syria). He called for national solidarity on a supra-religious basis, also published between the year 1870 and 1886 the "*Magazine al-Jinan*" (The Paradise). Its slogan was "hubb al-watan min al-iman"- "love of country" is an article of faith.¹⁶ *Al-Jinan* and *Nafir Suriyya* were important because they were the first organs of Arab cultural nationalism. In addition, al-Bustani had founded *al-Madrasa al-Wataniyya*, the National School, in 1863, the first secular school in Syria.¹⁷ Butrus and Salim al-Bustani called the Syrian population to accept the ideas of the American system in the periodical *al-Jinan*, because they thought that the American federal system was the best solution for the Ottoman Empire and for Syria. According to them, America forms "one fatherland (*watan*) composed of many fatherlands" and thus they conceived the Ottoman dominions as a big watan (or *alwatan al-'amm*) divided into small watans (*al-watan al-khass*), one of these being the Syrian watan.¹⁸ They did not see any difference between Ottomanism and Syrianism, local and cultural identity and at the same time they were dependent on Ottomanism.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.103.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.103.

¹⁷ Bassam Tibi, *Arab Nationalism: between Islam and the Nation State*, p.102, 103. Antonious, *The Arab Awakening*, p.45-55.

¹⁸ Antonious, *The Arab Awakening*, p.47.

Besides, the Christian Syrian Arab intelligentsia, the Muslim Arabs made an important contribution to the revitalization of the Arab national identity and culture. Jamal al-Din Afgani (1839-1897) was an important modernist Muslim thinker of the nineteenth century. Unity and action were so crucial for al-Afgani's conception of Islam. He asserted a worldwide Muslim unification, and activeness against Western imperialist powers and therefore he demanded going back to the true principles of Islam.¹⁹ About the Muslim unity and solidarity al-Afgani stated that the cooperation of religious and political leaders, and the solidarity of the umma had brought such greatness to Islamic civilization in the past. Solidarity (*ta'assub*) was the most important connection among people into society together, and without this connection, society was dispersed.²⁰ In his writings, al-Afgani saw Pan-Islamic sentiment to be the most powerful motivation for bringing the community together and he said that Islam becomes an anticolonialist ideology, which calls out for political action against Europe.²¹ Afgani's aim was to liberate Muslims from oppression internally and from foreign encroachment externally.²² Also, al-Afgani's disciple, Muhammed Abduh's (1849-1905) ideas and thoughts affected the early figures of Arab nationalism in Syria. Abduh argued that Western scientific and technical skills were not inherently incompatible with Islamic religious and moral values. Islam was not opposed to scientific investigation and that leading Muslim scientists were encouraged by Muslim rulers. The scientific achievements of the West could be safely adopted without violating the spirit of Islam. His purpose was to demonstrate that Islam was compatible with modernity and that an educated Muslim did not have to choose between being modern and being Muslim, the two went hand in hand. He tried to establish a common ground between Islamic and Western thought. The key progress in Abduh's eyes was the adoption of

¹⁹ William L. Cleveland, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, p.119.

²⁰ Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1789-1939*, p.117.

²¹ Tibi, *Arab Nationalism: between Islam and the Nation State*, p.90.

²² Majid Khadduri, *Political Trend in the Arab World: The Role of Ideas and Ideals in Politics* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1970), p.57.

Western science and education. Abduh's ideas and proposals for reform related to the general problem of modernization.²³ Both Al-Afgani and Abduh printed an Arabic newspaper, "*al-Urwah al-Wuthqa*" (The indissoluble bond) that stressed the significance of religiously dependent political unity.²⁴

Another writer, 'Abd al-Rahman al-Kawakabi (1854-1902) examined the reason for the decadence of Islam and proposed recommendations for its regeneration. In his books – "*Taba'i al-Istibdad*" (The nature of despotism) and "*Ummal-Qura*" (The mother of cities: Mecca) contained extensive criticism of Abdülhamid's oppressive rule. Al-Kawakabi's defense of Islamic civilization was a glorification of the Arab role in the development of that civilization. The virtues of Islam –its language, its Prophet, its early moral and political order – were Arab achievements. In his view, the decadence of Islam was caused by practices the Turks and other non-Arab peoples had introduced into the ummah. The Arabs were the true protectors of Islam, and al-Kawakabi called for the Ottomans to relinquish their unjustified claim to the caliphate and to restore the office to its rightful possessors, the Arabs.²⁵ Kawakabi, Rashid Rida and, Abduh emphasized the doctrine of primitive Islam and the requirement of Arab revival as the foundation for a general Muslim revitalization.²⁶ Abd al-Rahman al-Kawakabi and Muhammed Rashid Rida, like, Abduh, they contributed to Islamist modernist movement.

The other important writer- Muhammed Rashid Rida (1865-1935) stressed the improvement of the Islamic world was inclined to give Arabs pride of place.

²³ Khadduri, *Political Trend in the Arab World: The Role of Ideas and Ideals in Politics*, p.59, 61.

²⁴ William L. Cleveland, *A History of the Modern Middle East* p.119.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p.122. See Earnest Dawn, *From Ottomanism to Arabism: Essays on the Origins of Arab Nationalism*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1973), p.133-140., Adeed Dawisha, *Arab Nationalism in the Twentieth Century: From Triumph to Despair* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), p.21-23.

²⁶ Dawn, p.384-385.

According to Rida, the Arabic language was the unique “in which the doctrines and laws of Islam could be thought about.”²⁷ He started a periodical, “*al-Manar*”, which became the instrument of Islamic reform according to the Afghani – ‘Abduh school.²⁸ Rida addressed himself to the basic question of Islamic reform. His approach, through outwardly modernist, reflected an inner attachment to traditionalism.²⁹ According to him, the Qur’an and Traditions provided the true meaning of Islamic principles. He stated that the cause of Islamic decadence was the Muslims’ ignorance concerning the true meaning of Islam. Afghani, “Abduh and Rida” main concern was the realm of Islam.³⁰ By the end of the nineteenth century, however, many Muslim thinkers were already affected by European liberalism and nationalism, and claimed the adoption of these ideas in the hope that the Ottoman Empire might regain its strength. Muslim liberal intellectuals tried to develop the idea of nationalism and at the same time they did not want to claim that Arab lands be detached from the Ottoman Empire or indeed that religion be disunit from the state.³¹

The Christian Arab thinkers were the first to advocate the idea of Arab nationalism without reference to Islam. Recalling Christian contributions to early Arab culture, the Christian intellectuals aspired to act a crucial role in the Arab empire if it is to be reestablished. Arab nationalism, as they advocated it, was implicitly secular. It must be emphasized that before World War I, while the Arab idea of nationalism was intermixed with the idea of Islamic unity, but Arab nationalism did not go beyond the rehabilitation of the Arabs in a multinational empire. The aim of Arab nationalism was to restore the Arabs to their lost role in Islam. Some stressed on national values, but none advocated separation from the

²⁷ Adeed Dawisha, p.21, Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age*, p.240.

²⁸ Khadduri, *Political Trend in the Arab World: The Role of Ideas and Ideals in Politics*, p.66.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 67.

³⁰ Dawisha, *Arab Nationalism in the Twentieth Century: From Triumph to Despair*, p.21.

³¹ Khadduri, *Political Trend in the Arab World: The Role of Ideas and Ideals in Politics*, p.14-15.

Islamic unity. Even the Christian thinkers, -they supported complete separation from the Ottoman Empire, were ready to agreement their extreme nationalist views so as to maintain solidarity with their Muslim compatriots.³²

2.3. The Arab Provinces and The First World War: 1876-1914

Throughout the nineteenth century, the military and civil reforms in the Ottoman Empire were significant in the history of the Middle East and Islamic World. With the impact of these reforms, in the second half of the nineteenth century the transformation of the Ottoman Empire accessed a new stage.

During the thirty years from the Congress of Berlin in 1878 to the Young Turk revolution of 1908 various efforts put together to preserve the Ottoman Empire from further territorial dismemberment and to seek a means of internal consolidation and cohesion. The success of these attempts depended on military and administrative reform and on the ability multinational, multireligious, multilingual Empire to evolve a comprehensive basis of loyalty on which Balkan nationalists, Western-oriented intellectuals, and Muslim religious authorities could focus. The reign of Sultan Abdülhamid II (1876-1909) was filled with the efforts of these groups to achieve a reorganization of loyalties along the different solutions which they put forth.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, in 1876, the constitution was drawn up and elections for an Ottoman parliament, the *Meclis-i Mebusan* had been held in December 1876 and January 1877. The parliament opened officially on 19 March.³³ The Arab territories composed of an important part of the Ottoman Empire and in this transformation process, during the 1876 elections, there were 32 Arab deputies out of a total of 232 in the first parliament. Due to the

³² Ibid., p.19.

³³ Erik J. Zürcher, *Turkey A Modern History* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2003), p.76.

geographical importance of the Arab provinces of Aleppo and Damascus, these provinces were represented in Ottoman parliament. These deputies came from the modern lettered and younger members of the local notable families, and elected by the provincial administrative councils. Nafi al-Jabiri of Aleppo, Khalil Ghanem of Beirut, Ziya al-Khalidi of Jerusalem, Sa‘di and Manuk of Aleppo, Nikula Naqqash, Nawful, and „Abd alRahim Badran of Syria were some of them.³⁴ Abdülhamid II, by using the RussoOttoman war as a pretext, suspended the parliament in 1878 and reasserted the traditional authority of sultan and thus also undermined the Tanzimat reforms, and the created despotic regime and governed the Empire with an iron fist for thirty years.³⁵ Throughout his rule, Abdülhamid rejected constitutional reform and tried to preserve the traditional system of government, based on the absolute sovereignty of the sultan and the supremacy of the Muslim millet and he tried to maintain the essentially Islamic character of the empire. It must be stated that the religion on which Sultan Abdülhamid II had formulated and followed the pan-Islamic policies, designed to stimulate opposition against the advance of the Western powers, and tried to gain commitment of the Arab peoples of the Empire.³⁶

For this aim, he maintained the politics of notables and coalesced the urban landowner classes into the state structure. The members of these notable families were employed in the bureaucratic and provincial administrative positions. Their sons took into the imperial civil or military service through the professional schools in Istanbul, and these schools were familiar with the modern political ideas. After the Young Turk Revolution and the restoration of the constitution in 1908, these educated young people played an important part in Ottoman politics and in the later period, the sons of the notable families constructed the keystone

³⁴ Hasan Kayalı, *Jön Türkler ve Araplar, Osmanlılık, Erken Arap Milliyetçiliği ve İslamcılık, 1908-1918* (California: University of California Press 1997), p.28-30

³⁵ Alexander L. Macfie, *The end of the Ottoman Empire 1908-1923*, p.15.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p.16.

of nationalist bureaucratic and military cadres of the mandate and post-independence period in Syria.³⁷

In 1889, students in the Military-Medical Academy established a secret dissent society in the empire known as “*the Committee of Union and Progress*” (CUP). The CUP members were mostly graduates of European-design schools and they perceived the rule of Abdülhamid despotic and thus claimed that a constitutional regime had to be restored. Opposition to Abdülhamid was mainly awakened among officers, educated in European-design military institutions, who were dedicated to the empire and its proud military tradition and they wanted to maintain that tradition. The members of CUP were committed to the ideology of Ottomanism and they demanded that Abdülhamid restore the constitution, and on July 24 1908, the constitution was announced and after the deposition of Abdülhamid, the Young Turks captured power in 1909. After the Young Turk Revolution and accepting the ideology of Ottomanism, the relationship between the Arabs and CUP and the Syrian Arabs began to deteriorate. The CUP sought to purge the administration of officials from the old order and replace them with appointees loyal to the Young Turk regime at the end of 1909. The CUP leaders deposed important Arab notable families from the administrative positions, and prevented the accession of the ayans to the government and undermined the notables’ ability to satisfy their local clients and changed the established social and political order in the Arab provinces. The CUP thus attempted to found a more centralized state.³⁸ Because of this policy, the prominent Arab notable families of Syria such as al-Abid and al-Azm families did not participate in the provincial or central politics, the CUP dismissed al-Abids and al-Azm from their posts and administration, confiscated some of their lands and many of the

³⁷ Kemal H. Karpat, “The Transformation of the Ottoman State, 1789-1908,” *International Journal of the Middle East Studies*, No.3 (1972), p.276-277.

³⁸ Khoury, *Urban Notables and Arab Nationalism, The Politics of Damascus, 1860-1920*, p.56.

officials replaced them with loyal supporters.³⁹ The significant point here is that the CUP leaders tried to centralize the government, but they did not actually want to Turkify the whole system, their policies were perceived as Turkification and this caused dissatisfaction among the Arab population.⁴⁰

It is crucial to stress that during this period, many young Syrians did not yet want to demand an independent Arab state, they only demanded a decentralization of the Empire.⁴¹ Against the CUP's secular and pan-Turanian orientations, Arab nationalists established their own societies and parties. The first Arab society was founded under the name of *al-Ikha' al-'Uthmani*. Its main objects were to protect the Constitution, unite all races in loyalty to the Sultan, promote the welfare of the Arab provinces on footing of real equality with the other races of the empire, spread education in the Arabic tongue, and foster the observance of Arab customs.⁴² Its membership was open to Arabs of all creeds, and branches of it were to be founded throughout the Arab provinces, and a newspaper was actually started to promote the diffusion of its ideas which, as we have seen, rested on a confusion of thought.

The CUP moved the Arab leaders to underground methods, and a series of societies formed, among which were some whose existence never became known to the Turks. The propagation of Arab national ideas was henceforth conducted on two planes; that of the open platform, functioning through the agency of recognised clubs and those secret societies formed and became active between 1909 and 1914. The activities of each group were to a great extent complementary to each other.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p.56

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p.56.

⁴¹ Hourani, *A History of Arab Peoples*, p.309.

⁴² Kayalı, *Jön Türkler ve Araplar, Osmanlıcılık, Erken Arap Milliyetçiliği ve İslamcılık, 1908-1918*, p.30.

The earliest, *al-Muntada al-Adabi* (the Literary Club), was an association founded in İstanbul in the summer of 1909 by a group of officials, deputies, men of letters and students, to serve as a meeting-place for Arab visitors and residents in the capital.⁴³ Its club-house was equipped with a library and a hostel, and it did become the busy and useful centre as it was intended to be. The CUP tolerated it, and for a time gave it their patronage influence, and there came a time when its committee became an intermediary in negotiations for the settlement of difference between the Arabs and the CUP. According to Antonious, its function remained that of a clearing-house rather than a factory ideas, and its contribution to the Arab movement did more to strengthen its appeal and extend its reach than to give it a new impulse. Antonious also claims it had an enormous membership running into thousands of whom the majority were students, and it established branches in various towns of Syria and Iraq and the least its uses was that it provided centers in which Arabs from all parts of the Empire felt at home and talked freely in an atmosphere in which relaxed and the traffic of ideas could move.⁴⁴

The other important public society was founded in Cairo towards the end of 1912, with the name of *Al-Hizb al-Lamarkaziyya al-Idariyya al-'Uthmaniyya* (The Ottoman Decentralisation Party) by Syrian exiles. Its objects were twofold; to impress upon the rulers of Young Turks the need for decentralising the administration of the empire; to mobilise Arab opinion in support of decentralisation. Its founders were, mostly men of experience and good standing, who had made their mark in public life. The statutes of the society provided for an elaborate party machine. The control was vested in a powerful committee of twenty members domiciled in Egypt and a smaller executive body of six of their own number. Branches were established in every town of Syria and smaller agencies in a number of other localities; and the closest contact was maintained between its branches and other Arab political associations in Syria and Iraq, and

⁴³ Elizer, Tauber, *The Modern Formation of Syria and Iraq* (London: Frank Cass, 1995), p.11-12.

⁴⁴ Antonious, *The Arab Awakening: the Story of the Arabs National Movement*, p.108.

with *al-Muntada al-Adabi* in İstanbul. In about a year, the committee of the Decentralisation Party had become the best-organised and most authoritative spokesman of Arab aspirations. The significance of this society in the history of the Arab movement was that it provided its first essay in the science of organised effort.⁴⁵

Additionally, the two secret societies had been founded. One was *al-Qahtaniyya* which was established towards the end of 1909, not long after *al-Muntada al-Adabi*. It offered turning the Ottoman Empire into a dual monarchy, of a Turco-Arab empire, similar to the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Antonius says, according to this group, the unity could be reached through separation, and the destinies of Turks and Arabs linked together on a more lasting.⁴⁶

The other secret society was *the Jam'iyat al-Arabiyya al-Fatat* (The Young Arab Society) established in Paris 1911 by Syrian students. The society had played a determining part in the history of the national movement. Its founders were seven young Arabs, all of them Moslem, who were pursuing their higher studies in the French capital. The objects of society were to work for the independence of the Arab countries and their liberation from Turkish or any other alien domination – a significant advance on those programmes which aimed at autonomy within the empire, and unconscious return to the ideals of the Beirut secret society.⁴⁷ To gain the independence, the society declared: “The goal of the society is complete independence of the Arab countries in all its legal and political senses. Support this independence would bring the the Arab nation into the ranks of living nations.”⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Antonius, *The Arab Awakening: the Story of the Arabs National Movement*, p.109 -110

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p.110-111.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 111-112.

⁴⁸ Tauber, *The Modern Formation of Syria and Iraq*, p.12.

A new wave of the Arab movement started against the Turkish resistance in Beirut in the last days of 1912, but an Arab Congress was going to be held in Paris six months later. In Beirut, the initiative established a Committee of Reform by eighty-six members for the grant of home rule to the Arab Provinces of the Ottoman empire.

The notices prompting them were those which had led to the foundation in Cairo of the Party. The Committee of Reform became public in February 1919, and it was greeted popular favour not only in the Syrian provinces, but also in Iraq. Public meetings were held in Damascus, Aleppo, Acre, Nablus, Baghdad and Basra, and telegrams for the Arabs demands were sent to İstanbul. Significantly, the CUP in power, hostile to the thought of decentralisation, took measures to repress the agitation.

In 1913, an Arab National Congress convened in Paris and both Muslims and Christians joined this Congress.⁴⁹ The significant point here is that these peoples Muslim or Christians-, they did not see themselves as a member of religious communities, just as a Arabs and they were still loyal to the ideology of Ottomanism.

Regarding to this issue Tibi writes as follows:

“The Arab nation does not desire secession from the Ottoman Empire... but merely changes in the existing political system. It should be replaced by one in which all nationalities in the Empire have equal rights. In such a system the primary source of legislation becomes the nation, in which the nationalities are proportionally represented.”⁵⁰

In this regard, in 1913 Arab National congress declared an important resolutions:

⁴⁹ Tibi, Arab Nationalism Between Islam and the Nation-State, p.109-110.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p.111.

“the introduction of reforms, the recognition of the Arab people and the claim for its proportionate representation in the central administration of the Empire, decentralised administration for the Ottoman provinces, the recognition of Arabic as an official language of equal status with Turkish, at the very least in parliament and in the Arab provinces.”⁵¹

In Syria, the Arab notables did not established a incorporated force as a response to political action against the Young Turk regime. They were separated between the CUP and the protestor liberal politicians. Some of them desired the pro-Unionist Ottomanism, some desired for Arabism or a more decentralized form of government. In addition to this, a small minority group started to back the notion of a secular Arab nationalism stated that “Arabic speaking Muslims, Christians, and Jews were Arabs before they were members of their respective religious communities.”⁵² This ideological confrontation reflected the intra-elite and intra-family conflict in Syria and these confrontation was the most remarkable characteristic of the Syrian politics and continued throughout the First World War. But the crucial point here is that the younger generation of ayan members – such as Shafiq Mu‘ayyad al-Azm, Rushdi al-Sham‘a, Hashim al-Atasi, Shukri al-Asali, Abd al-Rahman Shahbandar, Rafiq al-Azm, Muhammed Kurd Ali, Jamil Mardam-Beg, Fakri al-Barudi, Abd al-Hamid al-Zahrawi, Nasib and Fawzi alBakri; all of these people resisted the CUP policies and they supported Arab privileges and Arab nationalism and these people played a crucial role in Syrian political life during the mandate and after independence period.⁵³

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p.112.

⁵² Khoury, *Urban Notables and Arab Nationalism, The Politics of Damascus, 1860-1920*, p.64.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p.68-75

2.4. The First World War 1914-1918

Throughout the World War I, Syria had an important position for the CUP and the CUP government mobilized all the Islamic symbols against the Triple Entente. In November 1914 the sultan-caliph announced a jihad, encouraging Muslims of the world to unite behind the Ottoman Empire in its confrontation with the Triple Entente. The CUP leaders were suspicious about the loyalties of the Arab population of Greater Syria, especially the inhabitants of the urban centers because of the prewar Arab cultural and political formation and the close ties that some members of the Arab Christian community maintained with France. To maintain the stability and loyalty of Greater Syria, the CUP adopted a special wartime regime and appointed Jamal Pasha as the governor of the provinces of Greater Syria in December 1914. His policies antagonized large segments of the Arab population from the CUP regime, and after the failure of the attack on the Suez Canal, Jamal Pasha's rule changed. During the early years of the World War I, some Arab activists of the secret societies attempted to contact with Britain for a revolt against the Ottoman authorities. In 1915 the clandestine Arab societies *al-Fatat* and *al-Ahd* determined to communicate with Sharif Husayn of Mecca to prepare for a general revolt in Syria.⁵⁴ Later period, Husayn's son Faysal went to Damascus and negotiated the members of the secret societies and then began to contact with British, and they signed Damascus Protocol and formulated a list of conditions and decided to cooperate with the British in their war against Ottoman.⁵⁵

Jamal Pasha claimed that some Christian and Arab leaders were in communicate with Britain and France confidentially, and thus he started a brutal policy towards the Christian and Muslim Arab leaders and deported them to Anatolia or some of them arrested and placed in Jerusalem and Damascus, and also some of

⁵⁴ Tauber, *The Formation of Modern Syria and Iraq*, p.5-7; Dawn, p.150.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p.5,6.

the Arab notables were imprisoned. He executed eleven Arab notables in Beirut in 1915 and in May 1916, twenty-one Muslim and Christian leaders were executed in Beirut and Damascus.⁵⁶

Jamal Pasha's policy in Syria was a turning point in the Ottoman governments and Arab relations, because all these executions and victims started to be associated with the cause of Arabism, and the rift between Turks and Arabs increased, the Arabs demands for separation appeared and these demands expressed the Arab Revolt of

1916.⁵⁷ The hangings and Jamal's ruthless policy towards to Arab leaders gathered momentum of Arabism and therefore Syria had been the source of the first expression of pre-war Arabism. When Cemal Paşa left Damascus in 1918, he was known among the local inhabitants as *al-Saffah* (the blood shedder).⁵⁸

In the War, the Arab political movement was supported by the Allied powers, especially Britain backed the Arab Revolt and finally on 16 June 1916, Sharif Husayn of Mecca accepted to lead the Arab Revolt against the Ottomans.⁵⁹ The key figure to be over was Sherif Husayn, sherif of Mecca and emir of the Hijaz. The British commissioner in Egypt, Sir Arthur McMahon, contacted Husayn, hoping to persuade him to sever his already strained relationship with the Ottoman Empire. According to the Husayn-McMahon correspondance (July 1915 - March 1916), Britain guaranteed independent Arab Kingdom in parts of Iraq, Arabia, interior Syria and also Palestine under Hashemite rule, on the condition that a revolt against the Ottoman Empire. Apart from some parts of

⁵⁶ Cleveland, A History of the Modern Middle East p.147, Kayalı, Jön Türkler ve Araplar, Osmanlıcılık, Erken Arap Milliyetçiliği ve İslamcılık, 1908-1918, p.217-218.

⁵⁷ Tibi, Arab Nationalism Between Islam and the Nation-State, p.113.

⁵⁸ Cleveland, A History of the Modern Middle East, p.143-146.

⁵⁹ Tibi, p.114, David Fromkin, A Peace to End All Peace: the fall of the Ottoman Empire and the Creation of the Modern Middle East (New York: Henry Holt), p.218-228.

Syria, Husayn's demanding a revolt against the Ottomans did not appeal to all Arab provinces. The secret Arab societies such as *al-Fatat* and *al-Ahd* participated Sharif Husayn's rebellion supporting the British-Husayn alliance.⁶⁰ In contrast, most of the Arab people did not want to separate from Istanbul.⁶¹ The Syrian-Arab motion went on the news of reaction against the Turks, but they did not provide an organizational movement against the Turks in Syria.⁶² During the Sharif's revolt, *Al-Fatat*'s upheaval in Syria did not appeal to the Syrians and many landowner bureaucratic families carried on commitment to the Ottoman Empire and they retained their administrative posts throughout the war.⁶³

In May 1916, the secret Sykes-Picot Agreement signed between Britain and France, according to the that agreement the Middle East territories shared and agreement offered the partition of the Middle East and allocation of Syria and Lebanon to France while Iraq and Palestine were given to Britain. Another important agreement was the Balfour Declaration, which promised a Jewish National homeland in Palestine, by British Foreign Minister Arthur Balfour in 1917. The proposed Jewish State in the Greater Syrian territories was another blow to nationalist aspirations of the Arabs and their dream of unified Arab Kingdom under the Hashemite rule.⁶⁴

The Sykes-Picot Agreement (1915-1916) left the French control of the Levant's coastal area and the right to oversee the interior of Syria. The British were to receive what is now most of Iraq and Jordan. Palestine was to become an internal zone. The terms of this agreement were revealed Husayn by the Russians, but the

⁶⁰ Tauber, *The Formation of Modern Syria and Iraq*, p.7.

⁶¹ Karpat, *Ortadoğu'da Osmanlı Mirası ve Ulusçuluk*, 154; Dawisha, 37-38.

⁶² Dawn, , *From Ottomanism to Arabism, essay on the origins of Arab Nationalism*, p.155.

⁶³ Khoury, *Urban Notables and Arab Nationalism, The Politics of Damascus, 1860-1920*, p.78.

⁶⁴ Fromkin; *A Peace to End all Peace: The Fall of the Ottoman Empire and the Creation of the Modern Middle East*, p.218-231.

British managed to calm his fears by minimizing the document's importance. However, this agreement formed the basis of the postwar division of British and French areas of domination. The Allies entered into other agreements that defined areas of influence or rule throughout the rest of the region. As the Sykes-Picot Agreement, the Allies were able to dictate terms that would expand their influence after the war.⁶⁵

With the end of war, France moved troops into Beirut, Great Britain consolidated her position in Iraq, and the Arabs in British-occupied Damascus grew impatient awaiting their independence. Finally, after protracted negotiations, Britain bowed to France demands for a more complete implementation of Sykes-Picot agreement and withdrew her troops from Damascus and eastern Syria. At the same time, French forces in Lebanon and western Syria were strengthened as France prepared to insure her share of the agreement. She was given international sanction to do so by San Remo Conference of April 1920 which awarded the League of Nations mandate for Palestine and Iraq to Britain, and the mandate for Greater Syria (all of Syria and Lebanon) to France.⁶⁶

2.5. The Ascending and Downfall: The Period of Faisal's Kingdom in Syria: 1918-1920

Faysa came Syria with his army in 1918 and it was the beginning of his reign that would last until June 1920. Before arriving Syria he found convenient political environment for himself since General Allenby had already assigned Ali Rida al-Rikabi who was one of the principal and powerful supporter of him as

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p.231.

⁶⁶ William L. Cleveland, *The Making of Arab Nationalist: Ottomanism and Arabism in the life and Thought of Sati Al-Husri* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1999), p.48.

the military governor of Syria. Afterwards al-Rikabi was confirmed by Faisal as head of the first Arab government in Syria.⁶⁷

In November 1918, Britain and France affirmed that:

“the definite emancipation of peoples so long oppressed by the Turks” and to the establishment and recognition of national government... deriving their authority from the initiative and free choice of the indigenous populations.”⁶⁸

However, Faysal and al-Fatat was dubious about policy of Britain and France over future of the region. At the end of the day they would never be unconditional supporter of free and full-independent Arab state in the region. For that reason they drafted a new constitution and established a new party Hizb al-Istiqlal. Faysal era witnessed a harsh struggle were nationalist young Arabs and the former establishment of pro-Ottoman bureaucratic elites. Until 1920 Faysal and young nationalist had presided over old regime representatives and obtained full power in the country.⁶⁹

Between 1918 and 1920 having become an absolute power in Damascus with al-Fatat, Faisal started to focus on international affairs in order to gain more legitimacy for the new government. For this purpose, he appeared in Paris peace conference. He was planning to create independent unified Arab state covering Syria, Iraq and Hejaz. However, it did not take so long to notice that Western Powers would not allow his plans to come true. Therefore, he rationalised his ambitions adopting lower profile target named “Syria first.”⁷⁰

In the Paris Peace Conference, Faysal as the representative of Sharif Hussein, he argued self-determination where the Arab population was in majority. Yet, his policy was not accepted by the European Powers and he compromised giving up

⁶⁷ Tauber, *The Formation of the Modern Syria and Iraq.*, p.11.

⁶⁸ Fieldhouse, *Western Imperialism in the Middle East, 1914-1956*, p.5.

⁶⁹ Tauber, *The Formation of the Modern Syria and Iraq.*, p.11.

⁷⁰ Khoury, *Urban Notables and Arab Nationalism. The Politics of Damascus, 1860-1920.*, p.85.

Iraq and Palestine in return independent Syria. Meanwhile, he tried to seek support of Jewish population as well.⁷¹ The negotiations process with the Western Powers over ruling of the region was deepening the internal political struggle among leaders of Arab nationalist. In order to settle the unrest down Faysal decided to call for an elected congress to be convened in Damascus. He aimed in the congress to make the nationalist wind as leverage for his ambition for independent Syria against European Powers. At this point particularly France rejected Faisal's demanding and "the Article 22 of the Covenant of League of Nations" was admitted. According to the Article; "the Arab provinces that had been liberated from the Ottoman Empire, would be placed under a Type A mandate under which the mandate power would advise assist them until they could handle their own affairs."⁷² And thus, the congress went to election in Damascus but the nationalist were defeated by the old regime bureaucratic powers in some provinces as Aleppo and Homs.⁷³ In spite of this defeat, the nationalist dominated the congress due to cooperation with previous pro-Ottoman landowning-bureaucratic families of Aleppo, Hama and Homs who joined to the Arab nationalists after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire.⁷⁴ The first Syrian Congress reiterated the principle of independent Syrian state and rejected any mandate and influence of foreign powers.⁷⁵

After Paris Conference, Faisal headed to London on 18 September 1919 in order to discuss over future of Arab Lands. However, what he encountered there was completely disappointing for him since France and Britain reached an agreement

⁷¹ Fromkin, *A Peace to End all Peace. The Fall of the Ottoman Empire and the Creation of the Modern Middle East*, p.395.

⁷² Tauber., p.118.

⁷³ Tauber, p.16., Fromkin, p.345.

⁷⁴ Khoury, p.86-88.

⁷⁵ Fromkin, p.436.

which a French mandate over Syria.⁷⁶ In January 1921, Faisal had to accept French mandate over Syria and signed an agreement. On the other hand, the young nationalist were completely unhappy with this agreement and they raised voices against Faysal. That made Faysal to seek for new alliances in the country against national opponents. The new partner which he seek was his previous enemies, pro-Ottoman conservative notables of Damascus, deprived of their power since 1918. These notables established a new party and they are not so eager and insistent for independent Syria. They were rather in pursuit of their old administrative privileges in the country and they believed to obtain them by reconciliation with Western Powers.

At the San Remo Conferance on 24-26 April 1920, the French mandate was imposed on Syria and Lebanon and British one for Iraq and Palestine. With the declaration of mandate over the Arab lands, the detremination of younger nationalist to fight against French reached its peak regardless of the costs of their armed resistance.⁷⁷ For This purpose tehy set up an army at the West border of Syria. However, the French army defeated this army and enetered into Damascus on 25 July 1920 and obtained full authority over Syria.⁷⁸

This was the end of Faisal era in Syria and old-regime representatives took back power with support of Britain and France. He was forced into exile in Britain to be brought back to Iraq, Transjordan and Palestine to continue their Arab cause. At the end of World War I, the Ottoman Empire was collopsed and imperialist Powers concluded establishment of mandate regimes in all Arab regions.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ Zeine Zeine, *The Struggle for Arab Independence: Western Diplomacy and the Rise and the Fall of Faisal's Kingdom in Syria*, (Beirut: Khayats, 1960), p.108-112.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p.152-156, Khoury, *Urban Notables and Arab Nationalism*, p.91.

⁷⁸ Zeine, p.185.

⁷⁹ Khairia Kamieh, "An Evolution of the Arab Government in Damascus 1918-1920," in *State and Society in Syria and Lebanon*, ed. Youssef M. Choueiri (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), p.30.

CHAPTER 3

THE FRENCH MANDATE PERIOD IN SYRIA: DIVIDE AND RULE POLICY

The First World War created different the social and political framework of Syria-changed and produced different culture, different identity, and unique frameworks for thought. The League of Nations granted the mandatory powers to France and Britain to prepare the political existence designed in Syria, Mesopotamia and Palestine for independence. In 1920, at the San Remo Conference, two “A” mandates were designed of the Ottoman provinces of Syria: in the norther part –Syria and Lebanon for France, in the southern- Palestine, and the province of Mesopotamia-Iraq- was designed for Britain. As a mandatory powers both Britain and France- were only to supply “administrative advice and assistance” to peoples in theory but in practice both of them acted self-government. Britain and France ruled mandate territories as “Article 22 of the League Covenant” and it stated that “the well-being and development of such peoples” – that is, of “peoples not yet able to stand by them-selves under the strenuous conditions of the modern World” - “form a sacred trust of civilization.”⁸⁰ It is important to note that according to “A” mandate each countries were viewed as independent however they exposed to mandatory power until they achieved govermental and administrative development. Ultimately, in spite of the local residents wishes for self-governing, the mandate administration established in the Middle East territories the mandates in the Middle East, being established in spite of the local populations’ clear preference

⁸⁰ Susan Pedersen, “The Meaning of the Mandates System: An Arguement, p.561-562.

for independence and, in the case of Syria, rooted objection to the assignment of the French mandate.⁸¹

The French and Britain mandatory administration into the Arab provinces confirmed by the League of Nations. Actually, this new mandatory administration named as a “imperialism” looked like in the nineteenth century administration. Significantly, this system granted as “self-determination.”⁸² Actually, thanks to the by President Woodrow Wilson, the mandatory powers established legitimacy in Arab provinces. Woodrow Wilson was the driving force behind both the League of Nations and the legal framework of mandate system.⁸³ The primary aim of a Mandate was to create the legitimate mandatory power in order to advanced unsophisticated nations and thus mandate discourse that thanks to the mandatory power undeveloped nations reached “higher level of civilization, whose flower was independence and democracy.”⁸⁴

In the essence of the mandate rules Neep stated that “an advanced state was going to tutor a less-advanced state in the complexities of democratic self-government until it was ready to rule itself. Imperial domination was formally qualified to provide for eventual full independence. It was perceived as a liberal concept that covered and legitimized outright imperial control. In contrast to a colony or protectorate, the mandate was officially a provisional arrangement, although its length was unspecified.” The Mandate system planned great power tutelage of those “incapable of or deficient in the power of self-government”

⁸¹ Ayşe Tekdal Fildish, “The Troubles in Syria: Spawned by French Divide and Rule”, *Journal of Emerging Economies and Policy*, Volume XVII, No:4., p.8.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p.9.

⁸³ Daniel Neep, *Occupying Syria under French mandate: Insurgency, Space and State Formation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p.22.

⁸⁴ Philip S. Khoury, *Syria and the French Mandate; the Politics of Arab Nationalism, 1920-1945* (London: I.T. Tauris, 1987), p.45.

who needed “nursing toward political and economic independence.”⁸⁵ During the drafting of the Covenant of the League of Nations, the Mandatory principle was applied on a scale which exceeded the proposals.

The League of Nations and the Mandate system were key points through which the hitherto inviolate sovereignty of the state would be constrained Article 22 of the Covenant of the League of nations.⁸⁶ According to the Article 22 of the Covenant of the League of Nations:

“To those colonies and territories which as a consequence of the late war have ceased to be under the sovereignty of the States which formerly governed them and which are inhabited by peoples not yet able to stand by themselves under the strenuous conditions of the modern World, there should be applied the principle that the well-being and development of such peoples form a sacred trust of civilization and that securities for the performance of this trust should be embodied in this Covenant.”

“The best method of giving practical effect to this principle is that the tutelage of such peoples should be entrusted to advanced nations who by reason of their resources, their experience or their geographical position can best undertake this responsibility, and who are willing to accept it, and that this tutelage should be exercised by them as Mandatories on behalf of the League...”

“The degree of authority, control or administration to be exercised by the Mandatory shall, if not previously agreed upon by the Members of the League, explicitly defined in each case by the Council.”⁸⁷

With these statements, France had commenced to exercise the Mandate in the name of the league of Nations and then council was established and responsibility of this council was to examine the political, social and economic development of the Mandated Territories submitted annually to the Council of the League of nations by the French Government new solidarity and drive.

After a short battle against a force of soldiers and irregulars led by Yusuf al-

⁸⁵ Daniel Neep, *Occupying Syria under French mandate: Insurgency, Space and State Formation*, p.22.

⁸⁶ Albert Hourani, *Syria and Lebanon: A Political Essay*, p.24.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p.163.

‘Azmah, Faysal’s Minister of War, at Khan Maysalun on 24 July 1920, French troops occupied Damascus. Faysal left for the protection of the British in Baghdad. In this place, the new Mandatory Power was created in Syria in the form of a more extensive and more invasive apparatus of a modern colonial state.

3.1. Determinants of France’s Policy in the Levant

France imposed the mandatory administration for Syria and Lebanon in 1920 and assert to Syria rested on three significant interests: “religious, economic, and strategic.” The bases of each interests were laid before the twentieth century, but after the First World War these interests were significantly reinforced. Even then, each interest contained structural flaws which were to bring instability to French rule after 1920.

First of all, historically France played a crucial role as religious protector of Catholic communities in the Middle Eastern territories and particularly of the Catholic Maronites of Mount Lebanon. Actually, this role originated in the seventeenth century. But, after 1900, France deepened her religious and cultural interests and particularly focused to Syria and Lebanon. Her activities maintained and supported by a growing network of missionaries and educationalists. France’s activities continued for a long time in that territories both culturally and religiously and used this cultural and religious activity for legitimacy or justification for imperialist administration.

The religious identity was determined as the most important of the ties that bind the French to the region. The French viewed the Levant inhabitants as a delicate structure both religiously and ethnically. According to the French perception each of these groups could easily get in harmful and open to negative effect. Each of these communities was viewed as divided and uncommunicative and having self-control and thus the Levantine communities were thought to be separated that

social life could be ensured just by an outsider defender. Divisions between Christians and Muslims, Sunnis and Shias, Druze, Alawis, Greek Orthodox and Catholics, Kurds, Turcomans and Circassians – all these communities were enacted by France so as to encourage statement for imperialistic position.⁸⁸

Under the the umbrella of religious patronage, they built a sphere of influence caused serious problems for French policy. Most important was that France's educational and other missionary activities applied merely to the Maronites who were condensed in Mount Lebanon and Beirut. French commitment to a Catholic protectorate increased cultural and political obstacles between French officials directly affected in Syrian affairs – whether missionaries, traders, or officials of the *Quai d'Orsay* – and the Muslim majority.⁸⁹

For the French, Syria comprise a diversity of religious and cultural groups and usually these communities conflicted with the Muslim majority and they were restricted by a common language, geography, and political history. Looking at the Syrian society in terms of sectarian conflict, we see that they incorporated with the French to develop and they tried to gain their protection. Significantly, Christian minority was numerically weak but their social cultural ties with Europe especially France was strong and this caused a problematic relationship between a large community of Muslims in all areas of Syrian life.⁹⁰

Secondly, French interest in the Levant originated from the broad investment in railways, seaport buildings, and trade activitiesec interchange that French initiative had began during the last Ottoman timesin.⁹¹ And also, French

⁸⁸ Neep, *Occupying Syria under French mandate: Insurgency, Space and State Formation*, p.25-26.

⁸⁹ Khoury, *Syria and French Mandate: The politics of Arab Natioanlism 1920-1945*, p.27.

⁹⁰ John Spagnolo, *France and Ottoman Lebanon: 1861-1914*, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Volume 15, Issues 3, p.61.

⁹¹ William Cleveland, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, p.203.

financier supplied more than half the profit required by the Lebanese silk manufacture and French comrades dominated the buying of Beirut silk exports: silk manufacturing in Lebanon presented to link into the Europe-led world economy in a similar way cotton manufacturing did in Egypt during the nineteenth century.⁹² Moreover, the agricultural region of the Hawran in the southwestern Syria, was increasingly linked to the world markets by the newly built roads and increasing monetisation. The Syrian interior was less extensively penetrated by international capital than the coast, although French-owned companies eventually took over the lucrative tobacco monopoly, controlled the railway network and invested in public works there.⁹³

The shift towards the Mediterranean or Franco-centric economy at the end of the twentieth century may have been indirectly encouraged by local efforts to win more autonomy from Ottoman control. Leila Hudson states that the coastal-trade of Syria provided an alternative to domination by Egypt and increasingly an alternative to Istanbul.⁹⁴ In the area of transportation, first of all, French financier established linkage between Beirut and Damascus in 1857, French companies also built the seaport of Beirut and a railway line binding Beirut with Damascus and the Hawran.⁹⁵

Syrian towns grew up through the French, Italian and other European merchants, that managed most of the trade between Europe and the Levant. These merchants were granted special status and privileges by the Ottoman Sultans. The first such

⁹² Roger Owen, *The Middle East in the World Economy, 1800-1914* (London: I.T. Tauris, 1998), p.154.

⁹³ Leila Hudson, *Transforming Damascus, Space and Modernity in a Islamic City* (London, New York: Tauris Academic Studies, 2008), p.49.

⁹⁴ Hudson, *Transforming Damascus, Space and Modernity in a Islamic City* p.102.

⁹⁵ Neep, *Occupying Syria under French mandate: Insurgency, Space and State Formation*, p.27.

grant was made to the French communities by the Franco-Ottoman concordant of 1535, which together with subsequent concordants served as the basis not only the foreign “Capitulations” in the Ottoman Empire, but also of the French claim to protect the Catholic Christians of the Levant.⁹⁶

The last crucial interests of French in the Levant was strategic. France needed to control Eastern Mediterranean for security reasons, also tried to counterweight British impact in the Middle East. In France mostly accepted concerns were that France would never be a real Mediterranean power until it gained a Levant control to go with its North African empire. Behind counterbalancing British influence, the control of North Africa was important since the new ideas about Arab nationalism managed to penetrate from East to West.

3.2. Partition of Syria: Emergence of a Weak State

France officially implemented the mandate administration both Lebanon and Syria from the League of Nations two years after the occupation of Damascus. In 1923, the French had already created “*de facto*” arrangement for the establishment of boundaries and form an management which the League of Nations was provided.⁹⁷

The partisans of the Syrian party, having already been forced to surrender part of Greater Syria to the British, imposed further divisions on Syria in the belief that only the policy of “divide and rule” could preserve France’s authority over her ungrateful Syrian subjects.⁹⁸ As mandatory power, France constructed artificial boundaries and established several indigenous governments instead of one for the

⁹⁶ Albert Hourani, Syria and Lebanon: A Political Essay, p.26.

⁹⁷ Peter A. Shambrook, French Imperialism in Syria 1927-1936 (Lebanon, Ithaca Press, 1998), p.2.

⁹⁸ Antonious, p.525.

whole territory. This was officially explained as being due to the separatist feelings of various sections of the population and their different levels of development.⁹⁹ With the partition Syria into smaller pieces, France also wanted to segregate and repress the Arab nationalist movement.

First of all, they designed the Greater Lebanon in August 1920. To the old *mutasarrifate* of Mount Lebanon, France joined the coastal cities of Tripoli, Tyre, Sidon, and Beirut. Moreover, France took away the fertile Beqaa Valley from Syrian dominion and settled it within the frontiers of the enlarged Lebanese state. Benefited from this territorial parcelling were France's patrons, who were the mainly the Maronite Christians, and these people were the single largest religious group in the new Lebanon. With this territorial redistribution policy, French wanted to increase the possibilities of sectarian conflict in order to preserve France's patronize and save their interest. Apart from Beirut, the coastal cities- Tripoli, Tyre, Sidon, the areas joined to Lebanon comprise a mainly Muslim inhabitants. The members of these Muslim residents protested to being settled within a Christian predominated polity.¹⁰⁰

After the creation of Great Lebanon in 1920, Damascus and Aleppo were separated into different states, and both of them were governed by French consultants. Both the Aleppo state and the Sanjak of Alexandretta had a large extent of Turkish inhabitants, enjoyed a mainly self-governing management. Also, the Damascus state included the districts of Hama and Homs. Additionally, French divided two compact minorities -the Alawites and the Druzes in 1922 by providing each of them with a divide state in 1922. Around the northern coastal city of Latakia, the Alawite state was settled and the Jabal Druze state was settled around south of Damascus. Both the Alawite and the Druze state were

⁹⁹ Hourani, p.172.

¹⁰⁰ Cleveland, p.203.

governmentally were divide from Syria until 1942.¹⁰¹ In addition to these separation, also, the desert tribes of Syria were placed under the military authority of the French *Controle Bedouin*.¹⁰²

A Syrian Federation comprised of the Damascus, Aleppo, Alawite and Druze states, was declared in 1922. But, at the end of 1924, France determined a new administrative framework by comprising the states of Damascus and Aleppo into individual unit named the state of Syria. Additionally, Damascus and Aleppo, the reorganized state of Syria included the cities of Homs and Hama, the other chief urban centers in the mandate. It is crucial point to here that socially and economically, Sunni muslim traders and landowners were dominated in these four states. There was a strong connection between the foundation of the French mandate in Syria and the weakening of the Arab nationalism. The strategy was to divide Syria into fragments to block nationalist sentiment first and then put an indigenous administrative facade facilitating the French rule. The remaining issue was how many states should be created and on what basis they should be divided.

3.3. Partitioning of Syria

As an important territorial division, the process was started focusing on the Great Lebanon in 1920, the state of Greater Lebanon was created by French mandatory power. The Lebanese were under the French tutelage in sectarian bargaining for political power in government institutions. The French did not want to exclude the Muslims from participating in the Lebanese political life. Because, the separate existence of Lebanon depended on Lebanese Muslim acceptance at the same time. By the mid-1930s, Lebanese Muslim leaders took part in the political bargaining. Even though attending in the political life and political bargaining,

¹⁰¹ Cleveland, p.204.

¹⁰² Khoury, p.59.

these peoples focused on a Lebanese union with Syria. Actually, these people generated the traditions of the urban notability, Khoury state that “they tried to collect mass support by advocating union with Syria, but used this support as tool to gain political leverage within the Lebanese area. Simultaneously, the growing Muslim and Christian mercantile bourgeoisie in Beirut was won over to the idea of Greater Lebanon aggravated the anti-French sentiments of the Syrian nationalist movement.”¹⁰³

It is important to note that the main heritages of this territorial separation were France’s patrons, the Maronites Christians. In the region, in the aspect of religion, there were Christian Maronites, Druzes, Shia, Sunnies, and several smaller minorities covering Greek Orthodox and other Catholic minorities. The Maronites saw the salvation in France.¹⁰⁴ Akarlı stressed that “The Greater Lebanon was brought into its existence to provide the Maronites with a distinct political entity in which they were the single largest community. However, they did not form the majority of the population. By adding several Muslim areas to the new state, the French reduced the Maronite’s percentage to about 30 percent of the population.”¹⁰⁵ This French policy increased the possibility of a sectarian clash. About the resulting of the sectarian conflict Kedourie say that “it was lead to the bloodshed in the 1970s and 1980s as various groups attacked the leading position of the Maronite minority in what had become a predominantly Muslim country. Whether this expansion of Lebanon; was the result of Maronite Christian or French political pressure cannot be determined.”¹⁰⁶

The French designation of Syria depended on Mount Lebanon, with its principal Maronite population, Catholic missions, western universities, and other

¹⁰³ Khoury, p.58.

¹⁰⁴ Engin D. Akarlı, *The Long Peace: Ottoman Lebanon, 1861-1920* (University of California Press, 1993), p.

¹⁰⁵ Cleveland, p.225.

¹⁰⁶ Kedourie, p.85.

institutions already mostly in favor of French authority. However inland Syria was wholly in a different position. Despite its importance Christian population it had few binds with France. It had no historical unity and contained large and possibly hostile minorities, such as the Alawites in the north and the Druzes in the south. The Alawite state was placed around the northern coastal city of Latakia, with their great Alawite population. They had a special governmental system under the French mandate authority. The important method of the mandatory authorities was directed to encouraging the communal consciousness of the inhabitants and to rising their material and intellectual level through the creation of educational and medieval services.¹⁰⁷ Thanks to these activities, the districts developed both economically and socially. Additionally, these development the equality between the Alawis, Sunnis and Christians was founded.¹⁰⁸

It must be stated here that there was a representative Council but the administration was wholly controlled by French. In 1930 an Organic Law was proclaimed defining the nature and activities of the political institutions of the state, whose name was changed to the Government of Latakia. Indeed, the Alawites noticed the risks in France's policy of supporting the segregation of the Alawites and training them to rely on foreign support and therefore they claimed the reunification of the region in the state of Syria, and their demand was supported by the Sunnis and Arab nationalists. For all practical purposes, France insulated the Druzes and the Alawites from national political field and made sure that the Syrian political life would be controlled by a propertied and conservative class of urban sunni Muslims.

During the mandate period, the strategy of marginalization of the Alawite and the Druzes from political life also helped the French in preventing the nationalist

¹⁰⁷ David Kenneth Fieldhouse, *Western Imperialism in the Middle East 1914-1958* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p.52.

¹⁰⁸ Fieldhouse, *Western Imperialism in the Middle East 1914-1958*, p.252.

action from affecting the minority-residents geography. Simultaneously, many of the forces in Damascus, Aleppo, Hama, and Homs that formed a nationalist front in opposition to the French rule were absent in the peripheral regions. Thereafter, “the Syrian nationalist movement faced great difficulties in expanding the base of its activities beyond the four nationalist centers.”¹⁰⁹ Furthermore, Syria’s religious and ethnic minorities such as the various Christian groups, Jews, Armenians and Kurds were scattered and did not enjoy a geographical base, while the other minority groups the Alawites and Druzes were compact minorities with substantial political importance in Syria. Under the Ottomans their religious and cultural differences, and political disinterests kept these minorities out of the mainstream of political culture. Under the mandate the French authorities restrained efforts to support and exploit this separatism.

From the early years of the mandate, professionally trained Druze contenders for power, aligned with the ascendant Syrian nationalist movement to upset French strategy. By the end of the mandate the French had to allow the incorporation of the compact minority areas into the larger Syrian state. However minority consciousness fortified by a conjunction of factors including geography, religious distinction, insulation of community and religious division. All these factors affected adversely effect on Syrian governmental structure and political life after the Mandate administration. It acutely prevented the existence and crystallization of a Syrian governmental structure and political advancement with a consolidated national and territorial identity.

¹⁰⁹ Khoury, Syria and the French Mandate: The Politics of Arab Nationalism 1920-1945, p.59.

3.4. Political Institutions Formed by the French Mandate: The Institution of the High Commission

The political organization of the Mandate Territories was designed during the first years of the Mandatory period. It may be described as a dual organization. As a part of the “divide and rule policy”, the French tried to insulate the nationalist action by settling rural areas against the much more politically aware and anti-urban nationalist centers. In this strategy, they concentrated to modify the rules of landownership because these land owners was the “basis of the urban political leadership’s wealth and power.”¹¹⁰ Using this strategy, the French mandate system tried to cut down the historic relations reliance between the urban absentee landowning class and the Syrian peasantry.

In order to carry out French policy, the political organization of the Mandate Territories founded the High Commissioner, the representative of the Mandatory Power. By means of this commissioner “holding supreme decisionmaking authority at the apex of the administrative structure was the high commissioner for Syria and Lebanon, whose headquarters were in Beirut.”¹¹¹ “To assist him he had at his headquarters in Beirut a political and a military cabinet, and a number of departments, staffed in the upper ranks by officials from France, and under the control of the Secretary-General, the High Commissioner’s principal administrative assistant, which covered departments of public security, education, public works, and the organization for Beduin affairs.”¹¹²

High Commission’s responsibility was to carried out the traditional French policy in Syria and Lebanon. And to achieve their political aims, France altered

¹¹⁰ Hourani, p.60.

¹¹¹ Cleveland, p.206.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p.206.

the agricultural relations. Because the French realized in “an independent free-holding peasantry the embodiment of the ideas of freedom and independence which were so highly prized and protected by the French nation.”¹¹³ The French “breathed more easily in a simple village society than in the more complex hostile towns of Syria”.¹¹⁴ On the other hand, the promotion of widespread peasant proprietorship in Syria and the development of capitalist relations in agriculture would weaken the system of latifundia which the upper classes of the big towns based for self-preservation. And thus French tried to change economic relationship in the rural area near to nationalist centers to present peasants huge social and economic protection.

The first step taken by the French High Commission for its “pro-peasantry strategy” was to establish a cadastral survey.¹¹⁵ A *Regie du Cadastre* was founded under the control of the High Commission whose responsibility was to regulate the land registry system. Even before the final collapse of Ottoman administration Syria, officials of the land registry had begun to predate land titles and sell them to the highest bidders. When the registers were removed, it became very difficult to check the validity of titles. Only influential families were able to safeguard their property rights. And then, the First World War caused an important turn over in land. The war created a situation of severe primary commodity shortages. The prices of foodstuffs sharply increased during and after the war, and many small proprietors and village communities had to borrow cash from big landowners. Inability to repay these loans then caused to foreclosures. Whole villages throughout Syria were added to the estates of big landowners and semi-independent village communities were transformed into dependent sharecropping communities.¹¹⁶

¹¹³ Khoury, p.60.

¹¹⁴ Denis W. Brogan, *The Development of Modern France 1870-1939*, p.60.

¹¹⁵ Khoury, p.61.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.63.

Furthermore, the *Regie du Cadastre* tried to break up the unproductive *musha'* tenure. Because *musha* tenure was the most customary characteristic of the Syrian land system. This system put acute limitations on the formation of small private holdings and agricultural development. *Musha'* lands were difficult to exploit since farmers were required to pursue a traditional rotation system. The village community administered the land system on the basis of a periodic redistribution of plots among its individual members and paid the land tithe on a corporate rather than on a particular foundation. Rotation arrangement rendered irrigation and drain difficult. As a result, *musha'* lands were often denied the capital or credits necessary for proper development. This provided an opportunity for absentee landowners with access to the judicial system to extend usury into the countryside villages into their estates. As a consequence, before the arrival of the French, traditional village society was already in the process of being gradually transformed into communities of sharecroppers.¹¹⁷

The French wanted to accelerate the disintegration of the *musha'* system however they had no intention of destroying the social landscape of the countryside, rather, they wanted to reorganize it by stressing the family instead of the communal village organization or tribe as the prime socio-economic unit. And then they enforced a new taxation system which covered so many inequalities. The new and more equitable taxation system could only be applied to lands which the cadastral survey included and where property rights were clearly founded. Thus, it was imperative that the High Commission extend land reforms as quickly as possible.

The French land surveys were first conducted in the fertile coastal plains of Lebanon and Latakia, in the Beqaa, in the Ghuta oasis around Damascus, in the plains of the Orantes River in central Syria, and in the districts around Aleppo

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.63.

and Antioch. “In 1926, a law imposing the obligatory registration of all immovable property was implemented. In 1930, a new *Code de la Propriete* was enacted which attempted to impose obligatory registration and to dissolve most of the distinctions between different forms of land ownership in Syria.”¹¹⁸

The French presence contributed a greater measure of physical security to the Syrian peasantry. The efforts of French native affairs officers in the *Services Speciaux de L’Armee du Levant* and *the Controle Bedouin* to accelerate the process of tribal sedentarization by installing tribesmen as agricultural laborers on the margins of recently cultivated zones made raiding less common during the early Mandate. In Syria’s outlying regions, such as the Alawite territory, the French improved the peasantry’s lot by legally and, physically protecting its property rights against big landowners.¹¹⁹ But French aims to impoverish and to impair the urban landowning class were chiefly not successful. Because, the transitory nature of the mandate hindered the flow of French capital necessary to keep land reforms.

In spite of the pressures of the High Commission and interest groups with investments in Syria, the French government did not undertake costly land reforms or make long-term investments in Syria. In addition, the postwar French emphasis on economic restrictionism was imposed, especially during the first decade of French rule in Syria, political instability was widespread. This political instability discouraged big landowners from investing in land development.

Also, the illiterate and conservative peasantry groups hindered French efforts to transform agrarian relations in Syria. Because these groups were dubious of

¹¹⁸ Khoury, p.63.

¹¹⁹ Khoury, *The Tribal Shaykh, French Tribal Policy, and the Nationalist Movement in Syria between two World Wars* (Middle East Studies, Vol. 18, No.2 (Apr., 1982), p.180

French intentions, and regarded as efforts to disrupt a historical way of life. The result was that the new class of small proprietors created by the reforms was vulnerable to exploitation by a big urban and rural landowners, they were interested in keeping and expanding its privileged position and material resource base in the countryside. During the early Mandate period, French obtained an advantage agricultural credit banks, which had applied considerable pressure on the High Commission to institute widespread land reforms, and refused to lend money to small proprietors and village communities. Thus, only big landowners were able to borrow money from these banks.¹²⁰

After all these process, the breakdown of the *musha*' system did not cause a significant advancement of a small land owner class in Syria, and the failure of the High commission to transform the land system and agrarian productive forces actually stimulated land accumulation in the hands of fewer owners. In regions land was being concentrated in the hands of the middle seized and big landowners. Additionally, there was an important obstacle preventing French efforts to isolate the Syrian countryside from the cities. The Mandate system was based on indirect colonial rule. Without the resources to govern directly or to train local administrative cadres, the High Commission relied on local intermediaries with past administrative experince and with their own independent influence.

To change the landowning base of this class presented the French with a delicate problem. The web of social and financial relationship which bound this class together made it exceedingly difficult to isolate its nationalist members from those elements willing to cooperate with the High Commission. This obstacle preserved the material and political bases of the landowning class and insulated it fairly well from challenges further down the Syrian social scale during the

¹²⁰ Khoury, *The Tribal Shaykh, French Tribal Policy, and the Nationalist Movement in Syria between two World Wars*, p. 180.

Mandate era. In the end, France was left with the sole possibility of playing rural-based landowners and tribal shaykhs against the city notables.¹²¹

The Mandate rule also attempted to govern through cooperative elements within the traditional political elite. They realized that without a significant group of influential local collaborators in the nationalist centers of the interior to maintain French policy, France would face insecurity in Syria. Therefore, French found two small groups in the extremely hostile nationalist towns. These were the Uniate communities and the Muslim urban notability. The Uniate communities were mainly in Damascus and Aleppo and these communities moderately overlapped with the Christian comprador bourgeoisie who, had been tied to French commercial interests and received French political protection. The members of the Muslim urban notability, had been part of the higher Ottoman administration in the Syrian provinces before its collapse in 1918. Arab Muslim majority inhabited in the Syrian interior and it was the Muslim political elite, members of the landowning bureaucratic class. The French High Commission had to propagate in order to develop an effective native policy in Syria.

The politicians and bureaucrats who select to cooperate with the French after the occupation were often those fellows of the urban absentee land owner and bureaucratic class who had systematically enlarged their political and financial interests under the Ottoman administrative system. They hold tightly to the Ottoman state, in spite of the emergence of Arab nationalist ideology after 1908, which was connected by a advancing number of disenfranchised politicians and intellectuals from their own class even from their own families. On behalf of the Ottoman state and through the political apparatus which it supplied, senior Ottoman-Arab officials competed successfully with their new Arab nationalist rivals. However, in 1918 during the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire,

¹²¹ Khoury, p.66.

these functionaries were dismissed from public office and appointed to the margins of political life by Arab nationalists.¹²²

While the notables without trouble justified its role as a provincial aristocracy of service in the Ottoman Empire, cooperation with a European authority in Syria posed some difficulty. Since the Ottoman government was Muslim and had the prestige and legitimacy of 400 years of rule behind it. Cooperation with the French was difficult, but it was fairly suitable. The main justification was that Syria, after the great economic hardship suffered during the war and the political vacuum created by the break down of four centuries of Ottoman govern, required a strong external force to reestablish stability in the country. By working with the French, these notables felt that more could be succeed for Syria.¹²³

The French strategy of separating and utilizing the divisions and clashes within the Syrian political elite was easier since the political arena in 1920 however at the same time the French noticed that while the political elite was a properly cohesive socioeconomic class, politically it was factionalized, personal interests more than shared ideology enclosed its members' loyalties. They noticed that competitive and unstable coalitions of families mediated the upper level of politics in the towns. Though these families were interested in protecting the material bases of their power, they felt confident enough to compete with one another and the French were interested in creating and widening rivalries and then encouraging the cooperative factions.¹²⁴

Moreover, in the early Mandate years, financial problems in France and an expensive administrative installed in Syria confined the availability of French benefits which could arouse interest and maintain an effective core of local

¹²² Khoury, Syria and the French Mandate: The Politics of Arab Nationalism 1920-1945, p.68.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, p.69

¹²⁴ Khoury, Syria and the French Mandate: The Politics of Arab Nationalism 1920-1945, p.69

collaborators. Though the High Commission accepted to expand local administration to accommodate willing collaborators and to elect dissidents, but there were not enough top jobs to go around. Therefore collaborators were shuffled in and out of office with alarming frequency in order to distribute the benefits of office to as many as possible. Native government during the Mandate was characterized by a high turnover of politicians and bureaucrats at the ministerial level.¹²⁵

3.5. The Bureaucracy

French administration in Syria led to larger than normal bureaucratic expenditure. At the beginning of the mandate administration the Secretary-general was under the High Commission. It was responsible for the application of French mandate policy in Syria.

Directly under the High Commissioner's control was the Secretary-general, who in the early years of the Mandate, had broad responsibility for the development and application of French policy in Syria. *The Services Speciaux* was an information bureau with "specialized branches dealing with Intelligence, the press, propaganda, and the *Surete Generale*."¹²⁶ French native affairs officers, mainly drawn from the colonial service, belonged to the Special Services. The most important branch was the *Service des Renseignements*, or intelligence. It was the keystone of French policy in Syria, and it worked as a connection between the civilian regime and the military. There were less than one hundred officers in the *Service des Renseignements*, many of them were trained in the Arabic language and were familiar with the dominant religion, culture, and customs of the country.¹²⁷ There was also a number of governmental

¹²⁵ Ibid., p.70.

¹²⁶ Stephen H. Longrigg, *Syria and Lebanon under French Mandate*, (London, New York: Oxford University Press, 1958), p.115.

¹²⁷ Khoury, -1945, p.78.

departments located in Beirut which French officials staffed at the upper echelons. Departments that dealt with matters of interest to both Syria and Lebanon and therefore could not be wholly controlled by regional governments were under the immediate jurisdiction of the High Commission. These were called the Common Interests and included customs, the postal and telegraph services, and control of concessionary companies.

In addition to the Special Services and the Common Interests there were two main categories of French officials performing in the divergent Syrian states. The first consisted of officials directly appointed by the High Commissioner and paid from his budget. These included the Delegates (*Delegates*) to each state and the staff of advisers (*conseillers*) attached to the states" various administrative departments, such as finance, education, and public works. The Delegate had block power over the local ruler and French advisers had the same power over local directors. Furthermore, concerning the emerging a disputable question, Khoury state that "the Delegate referred it to the High Commissioner, thus giving the French the final decision on all important matters of state. In each *kaza* (district) or sanjak, an identical situation was reproduced: an Assistant Delegate, rather than the local mutasarrif (district commissioner), was the final authority."¹²⁸

The second category was comprised of French officials whom local governments hired directly under contract and who were paid out of local state budgets. These officials were also attached to local directors or ministers and hence mainly duplicated the functions of French appointed advisers. During the Mandate period, thanks to the divide and rule policy, French mandate system designed a number of government in Syria. Each government had its own governmental recreating at the regional stage the same departmental arrangements happened at

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, p.79.

the center. But this was not applicable because the High Commission dominated approximately all areas of management, suppressing local enterprise. One of the most important aspects of French governing in Syria and Lebanon was the preservation of a judicial system which allowed cases foreign nationals to be tried special courts, despite Article 5 of the mandate which stated that:

“the privileged and immunities of foreigners, including the benefits of consular jurisdiction and protection as formerly enjoyed by capitulation or usage in the Ottoman Empire, shall not be applicable.”¹²⁹

In 1923, the High commissioner reorganized the “jurisdiction of foreign cases.” According to this reorganization, “the new judicial reforms permitted any foreign national involved in a commercial or civil dispute to have his case tried in a court presided over by a French judge. French clerks were attached to the Tribunals of the First Instance and Courts of Appeal and Annulment. French judges, who were paid from state budgets, were named by the President of Syrian Federation but only with the approval of the High Commissioner.”¹³⁰

The promulgation of this new judicial regulation was criticized by Syrian and Lebanese press and by well-orchestrated strikes in 1925 and 1926, organized by the nationalist Union of lawyers in Damascus.¹³¹ There were grievances and focused on the re-foundation of the Mixed Courts, and on the general body of French legal reform which native legal experts regarded as an important step toward the rationalization and unification of the Syrian legal system and thus new regulations gave French judges huge influence over Syrian judges. Grievances also focused on the contradiction between what the French claimed to be “the establishment of a greatly improved judicial system and the stark reality of life in

¹²⁹ Hourani, *Syria and Lebanon: A Political Essay*, p.310.

¹³⁰ Khoury, *Syria and the French Mandate: The Politics of Arab Nationalism 1920-1945*, p.82.

¹³¹ S. Joarder, *Syria under French Mandate*, p.106.

a garrison state in which the French arrested and jailed or exiled scores of their political opponents, using specially constituted military tribunals headed by Frenchmen.”¹³² No judicial reform exposed more explicitly the degree of power the French authorities had over the local population.

Actually, the main features of the judicial system in Syria and Lebanon, there was a little changes during the Mandate. Hourani state that “with the exception of some French efforts to reorganize and streamline procedural matters in the *nizamiyya* (general courts for civil, commercial, and criminal cases), the only excessive French interference concerned affairs of personal status, which traditionally were reserved for the „ulema“ and the religious leaders of the minorities. French attempts to redefine these rights were specially intended to demote Syria’s Sunni Muslim majority to the status of one sect among many and were met by fierce opposition from the Muslim religious establishment.”¹³³ In practice, local Muslim judges consistently refrained from applying French revisions of personal status law. Furthermore, the French interfered in the administration of *awqaf* (charitable endowments), another important domain of the Muslim establishment. At the executive level, the Controller-General, who had been assigned by and responsible to the “Supreme Muslim Council for the inspection of *awqaf*,” was to be appointed by and directly dependable on the High Commissioner.¹³⁴

Consequently, the massive corruption of *awqaf* administration was reduced and this led to greater French control. However, the High Commission’s decision to seize ultimate control over *awqaf* caused Muslim opposition. Protests focused on the issue of non-Muslim interference in a purely Muslim institution. But actual reason lay the “ulama’s fear that forces of secularization and modernization were

¹³² Khoury, p.82.

¹³³ Albert Hourani, Syria and Lebanon: A Political Essay, p.225.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, p.225.

progressively undermining their position in Syrian society.”¹³⁵ The primary motivation behind French efforts to alter the law of personal status and to supervise the administration of charitable endowments in Syria was to weaken the country’s Muslim majority by setting the legal and religious status quo in which Sunni doctrine was clearly dominant. Thus, it was not simply a matter of the French promoting the equality of all religious communities, they feared that if religious shaykhs in alignment with urban nationalist leaders were permitted to organize the mass of Muslim outside the authority of the Mandate government, the the Muslim majority would become an extremely dangerous political weapon.¹³⁶ France’s financial policies had two longer-term targets, to maintain her political control over Syria and to boost her economic interests in Syria. Toward these targets, France “assumed control of the Syrian monetary system a decisive step in reshaping the Syrian economy into a dependency of the French economy.”¹³⁷ In 1918, Britain had introduced the Egyptian pound as the unit of exchange in the area, replacing the Turkish pound.

By creating monetary parity between the urban center and colony, the French administration objected to pay for its high-priced military of oppression in the new resident currency and to make use of the Egyptian pound to support cover external expenditure. In 1920, the French administration granted “the exclusive right to issue the Syrian currency to a private French bank, the *Banque de Syrie*.”¹³⁸ In the realm of public finance, the High Commission’s primary goal was to have Syria and Lebanon pay for themselves. Public finances during the Mandate were grouped into four separate budgets, these were the budgets of the High Commission, the state government, the Common Interests, Auxiliary budgets.

¹³⁶ Khoury, *Syria and the French Mandate: The Politics of Arab Nationalism 1920-1945*, p.83.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, p.83.

¹³⁸ Sa’id B. Himadeh, *Monetary and Banking System*, p.263

These four budgets accounted for all expenditures for public security, administration and justice, economic and developmental purposes, and social and cultural services. State budget revenues were drawn from four different sources, these were the Common Interests, direct taxes, excise duties, and non-tax revenues. In the Syrian state, the Common Interests and direct taxes contributed the biggest shares, approximately 37 percent each per annum, while excise duties and non-tax revenues each provided shares of 13 percent.¹³⁹ At the beginning of the Mandate administration, the French acted Syria “as an imperial possession to be exploited in the old colonial manner.”¹⁴⁰ Their economic policies increased French economic interests, and during the process, maintained their political domination. After the occupation, the High Commission exercised all its power to boost the enlargement of French commercial and fiscal movement in Syria at the expense of breaking the Mandate charter which stipulated an “open door” and the equal chance for all member states of the League of Nations.¹⁴¹

During all this process, Syrian manufactory was not protected by the High Commission. And although many traditional industries began to decline before World War I, under the devastating effect of European competition French customs policy in Syria helped to accelerate the decline, and finally during the World depression many important industries were destroyed. The depression also caused the curtailment of emigrants’ remittances, a severe fall in the price of agricultural outputs, the reducing in the purchasing power of the peasantry and the urban lower-middle class. All these factors also increased unemployment in towns and consequently by the mid-1930s, the High Commission confronted a growing wave of economically motivated anti-French unrest in the form of demonstrations and strikes against insufficient protection from foreign goods.

¹³⁹ R.Widmer, *Economic Organization of Syria*, p.5.

¹⁴⁰ Khoury, p.89.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p.89

During the Mandate, French built Syria's infrastructure, but in general French policies prevented economic development in Syria before the Second World War. French banking and monetary practices, the excessive share of the Syrian budget which went to unproductive defense expenditures, the High Commission's preferential treatment of its own nationals, the inadequate protection provided by the French-run customs administration which was rife with corruption, and the heavy tax burden placed on the commercial bourgeoisie by a more efficient tax system were some of the more obvious obstacles to local development. All these factors combined with widespread political instability in the early Mandate and the World depression to deny Syria the capital accumulation required to stimulate and sustained industrial growth.

3.6. Army: An Alawite Organization?

In 1920, at the beginning of the Mandate administration, a military Academy - *the Armee du Levant*- was founded in Beirut. It was the keystone of the Mandate defense and public protection structure. Respecting the size of *the Armee du Levant* Van Dam stated that “employing French instructors, the academy produced a cadre of Syrian officers who were attached to the newly formed Syrian legion. In addition to the regular troops of *the Armee du Levant*, the French also established a Syrian Legion (*Troupes Spéciales*) recruited from (the local population) the various religious and ethnic minorities, such as the Alawis, Druzes, Isma'ilis, Christians, Kurds and Circassians.”¹⁴² Later period, the *Troupes Spéciales du Levant* became the embryo of a nationalist army, and broaden into the Syrian and Lebanese military forces.

But, simultaneously, the Sunni Arab majority of the Syrian inhabitants were not supported to enrol. Concerning to the implementation of a divide-and-rule policy, Van Dam stressed that was “intended to prevent any of the communities from obtaining a position so powerful as to be able to endanger the position of the central administration.”¹⁴³ “This French recruiting policy followed a tradition established by colonial powers in their various dependencies, first to recruit enlisted personnel, and later officers too, from tribal groups remote from the central capital, from minority groups and especially from groups with limited independence aspirations. Frequently these groups came from economically less-developed areas and were therefore attracted by the opportunities in the army.”¹⁴⁴ A social and economical elements accelerated powerful representation

¹⁴² Nicholas Van Dam, *The Struggle for Power in Syria: Politics and Society Under Asad and the Ba‘th Party* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1996), p.26.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, p.26.

¹⁴⁴ Van Dam, *The Struggle for Power in Syria: Politics and Society Under Asad and the Ba‘th Party*, p.27.

of minorities in the Syrian military. These minority groups actually came from the rural areas. In socially, they regarded a military career as a chance rise.

Hurewitz stated that “the urban wealthy Sunni Arab landowning and commercial families who led the Arab nationalist movement during the French occupation in Syria had no firm military tradition. They indirectly reinforced the trend towards strong representation of minorities in the Syrian army by refusing to send their sons for military training, even as officers, in a force which they viewed as serving French imperial interests.”¹⁴⁵ At the end of the Ottoman Empire, notable families “disdained to the army as a poor career choice and used connections and money to secure military exemptions for their sons. During the Mandate era, their view of the army changed towards hatred. Their failure to position themselves in the military institution enabled other classes and communities to control the Syrian army after independence and to contribute eventually to the demise of the old ruling class.”¹⁴⁶

Moreover, notable families often despised the army as a profession, and considered the Military Academy of Homs as Patrick Seale states as “a place for the lazy, the rebellious, the academically backward, or the socially undistinguished. Few young men of good family would consider entering the (military) college unless they had failed at school or been expelled.”¹⁴⁷

French efforts to hinder “the army from having an institutionalized political role also contributed to the poor civil-military relations in mandated Syria.”¹⁴⁸ French mandate administration would prefer for officers “from the religious and ethnic minorities and from the countryside certainly helped to isolate the army from the

¹⁴⁵ J.C. Hurewitz, *The Middle East Politics: The Military Dimension* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1973), p.153.

¹⁴⁶ Khoury, *Syria and the French Mandate: The Politics of Arab Nationalism 1920-1945*, p.81.

¹⁴⁷ Seale, *The struggle for Syria*, p.37.

¹⁴⁸ Michael van Dusen, *Syrian Army*, p.166.

independence movement. Minorities and rural sunni Arabs were thought to be less susceptible to Arab nationalist influences and therefore the French encouraged them to enter the Academy and promoted them in the military hierarchy. Many of the officers who graduated from the Academy were Christian Arabs, Armenians, Alawites, Circassians, Druzes, and Sunni Arabs from rural districts.”¹⁴⁹ Similarly, the rank and file of the Syrian Legion had an important minority constituent. The Syrian Gendarmerie, which policed the countryside and competed with the Syrian Legion, had an even stronger minority constituent.¹⁵⁰

3.7. Social Institutions

The Ottoman governors in the mid-nineteenth century tried to redesign the stabilize of power between central authorities and local nobility by adapting the existing system of land possession, tax gathering and educational system. Provincial governors tried to implement local reforms to advance government administration, communications infrastructure and schooling. The most important point was that these reforms changed the social fabric of large parts of the late Ottoman Empire.

During the French mandate, France led to existence in Syria some of the necessary circumstances that would create a modern society. Some of the areas opened up to agriculture. For the first time, the religious minorities were treated on a level of full equality with the Sunni Muslims in all official, judicial and administrative matters.¹⁵¹ The most urgent social problems was that that of the archaic system of land-tenure, which was tackled with as explained above. In the

¹⁴⁹ Khoury, *Syria and the French Mandate: The Politics of Arab Nationalism 1920-1945*, p.81.

¹⁵⁰ Van Dusen, “Political Integration and Regionalism in Syria”. *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 26, No. 2 (Spring, 1972), p.44.

¹⁵¹ Khoury, *Syria and the French Mandate: The Politics of Arab Nationalism 1920-1945*, p.83.

field of education, a state system of schools was constructed for every grade from primary up to the Syrian University in Damascus.

In addition to the these advancement and –“success”-, the extensive failing of French mandate rule was to achieve the affirmation and colaboration of the Syrian people. A large part of the population was from the very initiating greatly vital of the French rule. Extensively, this attitude depended upon particular grivances. It was complained that France had failed to provide a reasonable standard of administration. The French officials were often corrupt, and arbitrary while the Syrian officials were not wisely chosen, properly trained and in consequences of this, the development of public services was unsatisfactory. In addition, the French officials, both proved to be inefficient, and adopted a harmful attitude towards those whom they ruled.¹⁵² Also, the rights of the individual were denied, there was no freedom of speech, of assembly or of publication, imprisonment without trial was frequent. A particularly widespread complaint was of the activities of the officials of the *Services Speciaux*, who far exceeded their duties and often became petty despots in their districts.¹⁵³ Furthermore, there were various economic and financial grievances. Economically, the tariff-system did not give adequate protection to local enterprise.

The insufficiency of the French administration angered most in Syria. There was a extensive segments of the population which opposed the mandatory rule on grounds of principle. The majority of the nationalists rejected to recognize the Mandate, which they regarded as contrary to the 'right' of nations to independence, to the promises made by the allies during the First World War, and to the spirit of Article 22 of the Covenant, which provides for administrative

¹⁵² Khoury, *Syria and the French Mandate: The Politics of Arab Nationalism 1920-1945*, p.85.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, p.85.

suggestion and support, but not for semicolonial rule.¹⁵⁴ During the Mandate, an independent government was not established, and there was no appreciable progress. What was most significant was, “the separation of the country into a number of states, and the encouragement given to separatism and to the intransigence of the minorities, which seriously diminished the possibility of establishing a stable and representative government.”¹⁵⁵

In brief, according to the principle of the mandate, in 1920, France established the Mandate for Syria and Lebanon on the name of the League of Nations. As Mandatory Power, thanks to the High Commissioner, French policy was implemented. Through the divide and rule policy, French atomized society along religious and ethnic lines, they stressed communal and regional differences and formed a series of separate political units.

¹⁵⁴ Hourani, Syria and Lebanon: A Political Essay, p.177.

¹⁵⁵ Hourani, Syria and Lebanon: A Political Essay, p.177.

CHAPTER 4

1920-1936: THE FRENCH MANDATE POLICY AND POLITICAL FORMATION IN SYRIA

This chapter will analyze the relationship between French Mandate and Arab nationalism by tracing political developments in Syria during the French Mandate period. The politics of notables continued during the mandatay period and played the most important role in the creation of Arab nationalism through the institutionalization of the political party system. The history of Syrian nationalism and its response to the French will be analyzed in two periods in this chapter.

In these phases certain factors remained constant, in particular the French government's determination to safeguard its own essential interests and France's friendly attitude to the minorities. Other factors, however, changed, most notably the relationship between the French and the nationalist leadership. The first phase covered from 1920 to 1927, produced repeated acts of physical resistance culminating in the Great Rebellion of 1925-1927. This first phase lasted until 1927 and was marked by a head-on confrontation between the French and the nationalist leadership. The nationalists transformed a local uprising in the Jabal Druze in 1925 into a national revolt which lasted for two years but which was ultimately crushed. The Great Revolt was itself a watershed because it created the opportunity for a more stable balance of power between the government and society, something both the nationalist leadeship and the French desired.

The second period, from 1928 to 1936, marked the start of what may be called collaborative politics in which the notables formed what became known as the National Bloc and negotiated for a treaty. That period ended in 1933 with the failure of the treaty negotiations and led to three years of increasingly radical

nationalism activity. In the second period, the French realized the necessity for some concession to the demanding for self-determination in Syria. A constitution was promulgated and a parliament elected. Meanwhile, the failing of the Great Revolt convinced that nationalist leadership to drop armed confrontation as a strategy for winning French recognition. Instead, it adopted an evolutionary approach to the nationalist targets of integrity and independency. This more delicate strategy reflected the urban leadership's preference for an ideology which aimed at restoring a balance between foreign rule and regional leadership which had performed in late Ottoman times. Armed struggle and revolutionary upheaval were never again regarded as serious alternatives during the interwar years. The National Bloc, an alliance formed of nationalists in four towns - Homs, Hama, Damascus, Aleppo - became the most important political organization of the Mandate era it would steer the course of the nationalist movement until independence was finally achieved at the end of World War II. This second phase ended in a sense in 1936 when the radical wing of the National Bloc found unacceptable with respect to the treaty which the French had negotiated with a ministry which included moderate nationalists.

4.1. I. 1920-1927: Resistance to the French Occupation

In Syria, the opposition to the French rule was fortified by the many administrative and economic grievances, and these found expression in a several of local disturbances. The most significant of them the revolt of Ibrahim Hananu in North Syria and the rising in the Hauran. The instability of French policy especially in administration contributed to create a strong opposition to French rule. It was led and organized by the 'People's Party', which grew up in the years preceding the revolt.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁶ Hourani, Syria and Lebanon: A Political Essay, p.186.

The nationalist opposition was interested in common Arab troubles that were the independency and the integrity-unity of the Arab world. In regional matters, its main aim was that it supported the union of the French Mandated Territories, and claimed that Jebel Druze and the Alawi district should be collaborated in the State of Syria, and Lebanon was to be self-directed within a Syrian or Arab State. Also, according to the nationalist, Syria should be given real self-government, and gained complete independence. These two points were so significant because Franco-Syrian relations revolved throughout the period of the Mandate.¹⁵⁷

The Syrian politics lies in its social structure. It was dominated by clans of notables, many of them had risen to wealth and influence since the mid-nineteenth century as Ottoman land regulations allowed the accumulation of large estates and growing trade generated wealth for grain producers and merchants. About Urban Notables, Khoury determined the two main categories of Syrian notables. First, there were the land-owning scholars, members of the clerical orders and their families who held both religious and secular positions and were so wealthy. The leading Damascus families included the al-Ajlanis, the al-Ghazzis, the al-Kaylanis, the al-Hasibis, the al-Jaziris, and the al-Bakris. All these played an important role in early twentiethcentury politics. Second there were non-scholarly land-owning and bureaucratic families, some of them merchants, who had acquired land, government appointments, and wealth. The most significant of these were the al-Azma, the al-Abids, the al-Yusufs, the Mardams, the al-Quwwatlis, the al-Shamas, and the al-Barudi. Khoury argues that in the early twentieth century, these families dominated Damascus politics and wealth within a larger Damascus elite.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p.186.

¹⁵⁸ Khoury, *Urban Notables and Arab Nationalism...* p.95-96., *Syria under the French Mandate*, Youssef Choueiri, State and Society in Syria and Lebanon (Exeter, United Kingdom: University of Press, 1994), p.90.

Rivalry between the Syrian urban elites was the key to the positions they accepted on the issues of Arabism and the future of Ottoman Empire before 1914. The top strata, who had been gaining official positions and patronage remained Ottomanists, while the less successful and to some extent younger notables became in some sense nationalist who wanted decentralization. The test of their attitudes and the extent of their nationalism came with the Hijaz rising and the formation of Faysal's Syria after 1916.²¹¹

The diffusion of a new national feeling in Syria before World War I was the product of several factors: the stepped-up pace of Ottoman centralization, the growing Turkish insensitivity to local Arab needs, and increased exposure to European modes of thought. Nationalism became an ideological instrument for some individuals from two urban groups, the Christian commercial bourgeoisie and the absentee landowners and bureaucrats. Although nationalism was clearly a rising star before the war, it was the French occupation of the Syrian interior in 1920 that ensured the dominance of the new ideology. Direct European control made nationalism the most relevant and topical political idea of the interwar era.²¹²

4.2. Motives and Actors of Early Resistance

The Mandatory period described by Hinnebusch and Ehteshami as a “European powers especially Britain and French, arbitrarily and artificially imposed borders of the Middle Eastern states in the form of Westphalian style nation state and separation of Greater Syrian territories into four mandates of Syria, Lebanon, Palestine and Jordan by the corepowers according to their imperialist needs and wishes at the expense of pre-existing cultural and linguistic unity created tension between identity (the nation) and sovereignty (the territorial state) of the new

Arab states.”¹⁵⁹ Thus, “supra-state identities of pan-Arabism and pan-Syrianism transcending the existing state boundaries as expressive of preexisting cultural unity and challenged state sovereignty.”¹⁶⁰

With regard to the Pan-Syrianism Pipes underlined that “it held so strong after Faysal’s failure that even the hand-picked agents of France expressed its ideals. In 1920, on the occasion of the unfurling of a French-designed flag for Syria, the Syrian prime minister gave a toast to ‘united Syria!’ Similarly, in 1926, the newly chosen head of the Syrian state called for -Syrian unity with free access to the sea.”¹⁶¹ The French rule responded to these sentiments by suppressing political expression and forcing pan-Syrian partisans into exile. Some went to Baghdad, Amman or Egypt, which became the political center of Pan-Syrianism during the 1920s. Pipes stated that “during the mandate and the post-independence periods, similar to their aforementioned pragmatic policy towards the core powers, Syrian notables pursued a pragmatic regional policy within the context of inter-Arab struggle for Syria by cultivating regional allies for their own political ascendance and their factional interests.”¹⁶²

In the 1920s, the French mandate policy caused a series of uprisings in Syria. The Great Revolt initiated in 1925 in the State of Jabal Druze and lasted to 1927. The Jabal Druze composed of different religious groups and they were an completely endogamic groups which arose in Egypt in the eleventh century. Druze’s religion was an heterogenous mixture of Islamic, Christian, Greek, and Pagan beliefs.

¹⁵⁹ Raymond Hinnebusch, Anoushiravan Ehteshami, “The Middle East Regional System,” in the Foreign Politics of Middle East Studies (Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002), p.29-33.

¹⁶⁰ Raymond Hinnebusch, The International Politics of the Middle East (Manchester, New York: Manchester University Press, 2003), p.54-56.

¹⁶¹ Pipes, Greater Syria: A History of an Ambition, p.53.

¹⁶² Ibid., p.53.

They were essentially a tough mountain communities, resembling the Maronites of the Lebanon.¹⁶³ The French governor undertook to performing a restructuring of Druze political relationships and landowners structures, and Sultan Atrash, who was the Druze chieftain, started an armed uprising to the France forces from Jabal Druze. By autumn 1925, Homs and Damascus were in complete opposition as the political leaders of the cities combined with the Druze chieftains of the rural south to emerge a nationwide opposition movement. This resistance movement Khoury stressed that generally, “there was strong opposition to those French policies which encouraged traditional conflicts in the country, supported the religious minorities, advocated a series of administratively isolated minority enclaves, changed and destroyed the internal affairs of Syria’s various communities, and humiliated the Muslim majority by seizing control of their institutions.”¹⁶⁴

With regarding to this opposition movement Fieldhouse stated an crucial point: “beginning as a localized rebellion, but later the revolt spread, engulfing the Hawran, the region between Damascus and Aleppo, and southern Lebanon, and became a symbol of common Syrian objection to the mandate and all that it represented. And thus we can say that the Great Revolt was a popular and widespread anti-imperialist uprising with a pronounced nationalist orientation.”¹⁶⁵ It was popular and its active participants were drawn from nearly all walks of life in Syria from the urban absentee landowning class, the commercial bourgeoisie and traditional artisanal classes in the towns, in the middle class intelligentsia including Western-educated professionals, and members of the Muslim religious establishment the peasantry, and Bedouin tribes.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶³ Fieldhouse, *Western Imperialism in the Middle East*, p.287.

¹⁶⁴ Khoury, *Syria and the French Mandate: The Politics of Arab Nationalism 1920-1945*, p.151-154.

¹⁶⁵ Fieldhouse, *Western Imperialism in the Middle East*, p.287-288.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p.287-288.

The Great Revolt was a real nationalist rebellion. But its leaders had limited aims. According to Khoury:

They did not seek to overturn the French-controlled system of rule; rather they sought sometimes less, the modification of the existing system and the relaxation of French control. Their real objective was to shift the balance of power between themselves and the French back in their own direction so as to restore their traditional influence over local politics- an influence which the French had undercut both in the nationalist towns and in the Jabal Druze.¹⁶⁷

The Jabal Druze leaders had traditional purposes, but at the same time they adopted new tactics and alliances with towns that divided the normal lines of class, religion, and district. Concerning the revolt's anti-imperialist character, from its beginning it focused on the French presence in Syria, diverted the class, religious, and urban-rural clashes at the heart of Syrian society. Three classes played an important role maintaining the revolt alive. These were the Muslim commercial bourgeoisie, the absentee landowning class, and the peasantry.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p.288.

¹⁶⁸ Khoury, Syria and the French Mandate: The Politics of Arab Nationalism 1920-1945, p. 207.

4.3. Keeping the Revolt Alive: The Role of Merchants

In towns, the commercial bourgeoisie formed two branches. The one was the comprador bourgeoisie, the second one was the absentee landowning class. The comprador bourgeoisie were those merchant-moneylenders who in the path of the nineteenth century emerged as local agents of European trading houses. The European economic impact on Syria contributed to the arise of a new class which presented as an intermediary for European manufactured goods into the country and as a major channel in the absorption of the Syrian economy into European's.¹⁶⁹

The religious minorities, mainly Christians were dominant in the comprador bourgeoisie. Most Christians supported the French, and they received the religious protection from the European powers. By the mid-nineteenth century, Muslim merchants, artisans, and peasants increasingly identified local Christians with hostile and damaging European interests. But during this time Christian merchants were more easily able to purchase Syrian raw materials with cash advances from European traders, they facilitated the flow of European manufactures into the Syrian market which caused the destruction of many local handcrafts.¹⁷⁰

At that point especially, the 1860 execution of Christians in Damascus was a result of deep Muslim resentment toward the growth in power and economic influence of this class, with its strong European connection. The incidents of 1860 was important because of introducing in a new era of security for Syria's religious minorities, owing largely to increased European pressures on the Ottoman state to guarantee their protection. Local Christian merchants in Damascus and Aleppo, many with European consular protection, built

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 207.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 207-208.

themselves as the local bankers for Muslim merchants and a rapidly emerging group of absentee landowners. However, the political and administrative chaos Syria faced during and after World War I created grave economic difficulties to all. A significant proportion of the comprador bourgeoisie suffered heavy losses as trade with Europe dried up during the war. For the compradors, the French occupation provided greater hope of political stability and economic and physical security and also enabled the comprador class to renew and refortify its mediating role between French commercial interests and the Syrian economy.¹⁷¹

The second major components of the Syrian commercial merchants with strong ties to absentee landowning class and who had little access to foreign capital. During the second half of the nineteenth century, the Muslim commercial bourgeoisie and the absentee landowning class grew more financially interdependent, especially after the establishment of private landownership rights and the formation of large estates. Social differentiation was less a matter of material wealth than it was of profession and social prestige, of education, culture, and politics. While absentee landowners sent their sons to Istanbul for an Ottoman professional education in preparation for high administrative posts in the Empire, rich Muslim merchants continued to give their sons a basic Islamic education and the practical training in their business houses. Whereas the sons of landowners filled bureaucratic positions and dominated local and regional political life, the sons of commercial bourgeoisie had neither the proper education and skills nor the time to combine business and upper level politics beyond seats on local Municipal Councils.¹⁷² Despite the social and political gap between Muslim landowners and merchants, economic links advanced a growing political interdependence in the early twentieth century. The nationalist wing of the landowning-bureaucratic class took shape on the eve of the First World War, in response to the intensification of Young Turk centralization and Turkification

¹⁷¹ Khoury, *Syria and the French Mandate: The Politics of Arab Nationalism 1920-1945*, p. 208.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, p.208

policies, and because qualified elements from this class were increasingly unable to compete for places in the Ottoman administrative structure.¹⁷³

It must be stressed that in the meanwhile, European interests continued to expand in Syria, strengthening the grip of the minority-dominated comprador class at the expense of the Muslim mercantile groups. It was at this time that noticeable Muslim merchants began to identify their political interests with those of the emerging Arab nationalist movement. The events which followed the allied victory gave this identification added strength. The dividing of the Ottoman Empire's eastern provinces along artificial and often arbitrary lines severely eroded the position of the Muslim commercial bourgeoisie as distributors of goods to neighboring regions. The opposition of Muslim merchants to the new geopolitical formations grew, as traditional trade patterns and markets disappeared and local industries collapsed. For many merchants, and artisans, the standard of living declined. Then the French introduced a new paper currency tied to the unstable French franc and new banking regulations which placed tight restrictions on credits for the development of new enterprises. Merchants and landowners were forced into a greater dependence on native banks which charged much higher interest rates and did not possess the capital resources to extend credit on an extensive enough range to finance.¹⁷⁴

Mandate customs policy clearly favored French and other European imports at the expense of local manufacturing. This increased European economic control in Syria and also reinforced the comprador class, with its strong links to European trading houses. The Muslim segment of the commercial bourgeoisie had few reservations about adopting an anti-imperialist stance, and with the idea of Arab nationalism in the ascendance, merchants found a ready-made ideological weapon at their disposal.

¹⁷³ Khoury, *Syria and the French Mandate: The Politics of Arab Nationalism 1920-1945*, p. 208-209.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p.209.

Although the commercial bourgeoisie had yet to encounter threatening class pressures from below in the form of independent workers' or peasant organizations, the ideology of nationalism created a relief and provided Muslim bourgeoisie with a vehicle to regain its influence. Thus the Muslim segment of the commercial bourgeoisie, as it grew more intertwined with the landowning class, saw a good opportunity to contribute its support to the nationalist movement.¹⁷⁵

4.4. The role of Landowners

During the nineteenth century much of the Syrian countryside entered the transitional stage of capitalism as a result of agrarian commercialization. The influence of European economic penetration, which had increasingly tied Syria to the world market since the Egyptian occupation of the 1830s, encouraged the Ottoman State to expand its presence in the countryside. Towns and a network of regional market centers which grew up as a result of this commercial development gradually came to dominate the countryside. Economic structures in rural areas were transformed as private landownership supplanted traditional agrarian relations and as the world market introduced new patterns of trade and exchange. This fostered the emergence of a class of landowners, a class of small peasant proprietors, and class of landless peasants. These developments had advanced farthest in the irrigated gardens and fields around Damascus, though they had also taken hold in the grain-producing regions of the Hawran and Homs and Hama. It was in these areas that capitalist relations had penetrated and in 1925, Syrian rebel bands were most active.¹⁷⁶

It must be stressed that members of this class had been involved in the advancement of the nationalist motion from the beginning, serving in a

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p.210.

¹⁷⁶ Khoury, Syria and the French Mandate: The Politics of arab Nationalism 1920-1945, p.218-219.

leadership capacity. The ideological gap that flourished within the landowning-bureaucratic class in the Syrian provinces before and during World War I was originally expressed by Arabism versus Ottomanism. This class was both the most socially prestigious and politically influential in Syria, its members were and also among the most highly educated, politically conscious, and active.¹⁷⁷ Land merely provided a steady source of income with which to further political ambitions. Landowners were rarely involved in the direct supervision of agricultural production, preferring to reside in the city, where they formed a provincial aristocracy of service to the Ottoman state or the political opposition.

At the end of the World War I, with the foundation of an Arab government, the Arab nationalist movement enlarged to incorporate elements from other classes, notably the professional middle classes and the commercial bourgeoisie. Although the professional middle classes helped to refine nationalist ideology by secularizing it and the commercial bourgeoisie served as an important link with the popular classes in the towns, members of prominent absentee landowning families steered the movement. The leadership role of the landowning class continued after the French occupation and throughout the Mandate.¹⁷⁸

4.5. The Role of Peasants

In Syria, the peasants feared the effects of land reform on their way of life, and were affected by the growing capitalization of agriculture, and hated the richer village heads, *the mukhtars*, who could exploit them and had often collaborated with the French. Therefore, many landless peasants welcomed the chance to join one of the rebel bands. Rebel bands were led by city-based nationalist and quarter chiefs and included in their rank and file members of the educated elites, merchants, artisans, and laborers. The peasantry provided the environment,

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p.213.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p.213.

material support, for rebel bands carry on outside their original city base. For peasants, the revolt provided an opportunity to express their anger and frustration at various socio-economic, political, and cultural changes threatening their traditional way of life. Moreover, peasants feared and were hostile to French agrarian policies.¹⁷⁹

Also the relationship of big landlord to peasant was not only simply one of patron to client, where the landlord provided social services and physical protection to the peasants who, in turn, produced for the landlord and gave him/his allegiance. Additionally, the increasing differentiation of village society led to break down of traditional village loyalties. The growth of a class of small peasant proprietors was most disruptive to rural society. At the head of this class of wealthier peasants generally stood the mukhtar.¹⁸⁰ His middling socio-economic status differentiated him. Unlike the landlord, who rarely lived in the village, the power and wealth of the mukhtar was a constant aggravation to his less fortunate neighbors. In many instances, the mukhtar and other rich peasants began to identify their interests more closely with those of the big landlord class and the state, often at the encouragement of the latter and often cutting their support system in the village community from below. Increased polarization within village society meant the appearance of direct economic conflict between rich peasants and poor and landless peasants.¹⁸¹

Khoury stated that “Nationalism provided a handy mechanism by which to express grievances... It was presented as a cure-all for sorts of economic and social ills across a broad spectrum of society.’ Nationalist leaders backed a brand of nationalism that had a distinctly secular flavor. They conceived of a secular,

¹⁷⁹ Khoury, *Syria and the French Mandate: The Politics of arab Nationalism 1920-1945*, p.218.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p.218.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p.218-219.

independent Arab state built on Western institutions and of an Arab nation cemented together by common history, language, culture and territory.”¹⁸²

At the same time, they emphasized the importance and contribution of Islam to the formation ideal. Significantly, although nationalist leaders always presented the idea of a unified and independent Syrian-Arab nation to the French and the League of Nations with a proviso for safeguarding the rights of religious and ethnic minorities, this did not mean that they presented the nationalist idea to the Syrian masses in purely secular terms. In truth, “the People's Party leadership relied on Islamic invocation and symbolism as instruments of political mobilization. They called upon the popular classes to revolt in the name of the nation, but also in the name of Allah, the Prophet, and religious solidarity. Mosques and masjids were the most important rallying points in towns and villages, and among the most valuable intermediaries between the nationalist movement and the masses were Muslim preachers and scholars. French imperialism, after all, directed a powerful assault on the values, customs, and way of life of the overwhelming majority in Syria, and this elicited an Islamic response. After the Great Revolt, the beginning of a new era of Syrian politics started.”¹⁸³

4.6. II. Determinants of the Syrian Political Developments: the People's Party, the Syrian Union Party and the National Bloc

4.6.1. The People's Party and Its Impact

In Syria, the early years of the French rule displayed little party political activity. Until 1925, the protest of Syrian nationalist was little organized. In 1925, the

¹⁸² Khoury, *Syria and the French Mandate: The Politics of Arab Nationalism 1920-1945*, p.217.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, p.218.

Syrian leader 'Abd al-Rahman al-Shahbandar established *the People's Party* (*Hizb ashSja'b*) together with other Syrian nationalists, including Hasan al-Hakim, Lutfi alHaffar and Faris al-Khuri. Most members came from the educated elite of the town, absentee landowners, lawyers, engineers, doctors, teachers, and journalists. *The People's Party* was as a the first legal nationalist political party. The People's Party was not living long since the French hegemony prohibited it. In the anti-French troubles, Shahbandar took a prominent part, and when “the French were successful in pacifying the country, he went into exile and remained absent from Syria until 1937.”¹⁸⁴

The first major activity of the People's Party was that it created the new, unified Representative Assembly of the Syrian state and also stressed unification of Aleppo and Damascus. The second activity of it came on April 8 during a short visit by Lord Balfour, whose signature the 1917 British Declaration supporting a national home for Jews in Palestine. Many critical articles had published in the Damascus press during Balfour's visit to Palestine. Huge demonstrations in the town were organized against him.¹⁸⁵

The official opening of the People's Party took place at the Damascus Opera House. The people crowded into the auditorium said that for the first time since the Syrian Congress of 1920, "the will of the Syrian People." The Party's Vice-President, Faris al-Khuri, started the ceremony by calling for a constitutional government supporting national sovereignty. Regarded as the major link between the nationalist and the Christian minority in Damascus, Khuri stressed that in an independent Syria there would be religious or class distinctions and the economy would no longer be controlled by foreigners. Also, 'Abd al-Shahbandar stated that Party was not just interested in the unity of natural Syria, it also aimed to

¹⁸⁴ Elie Kedourie, *Arab Political Memoirs and Other Studies* (London: Franj Cass & Company Limited, 1974), p.49.

¹⁸⁵ Khoury, *Syria and the French Mandate: The Politics of Arab Nationalism 1920-1945*, p.142.

keep the whole arab nation united and independent. For Shahbandar, the Party had progressive role to act in the development of the Arab nation.¹⁸⁶

It must be point out that the party had no organized cadres, just personal followings loyal to individual leaders. In the party's program, Article I called for the realization of Syrian national sovereignty and unity within Syria's natural boundries, personal freedom in all its forms, the education of the people toward a social, democratic, and civil polity, the protection of Syria's national industries, the fuller development and exploitation of her natural resources, and the unification of the educational system, including compulsory and universaly elementary education.¹⁸⁷

The significant point was that the People's Party leadership had its strong secular orientation, emphasized that it was Syrian, not islamic nationalism. It avoided reference to religion in its program and public pronouncements, except to emphasize that all religious communities supported the unity and independence of Syria and that individual liberties would be affirmed in an independent Syria.¹⁸⁸

4.6.2. Pro-French Party: The Syrian Union Party and Its Impact

Against the People's Party, the Syrian Union Party (*Hizb al-Wahda as-Suriya*) was founded by Subhi Barakat to counter Shahbandar, and it consisted mainly of people collaborating with the French. Indeed, the Syrian Union party was sponsored by the High Commission to balance the growing influence of Dr. Shahbandar's organization. But in fact the contrast between these parties was not

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p.144.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p.144-145.

¹⁸⁸ Fieldhouse, *Western Imperialism in the Middle East*, p.286.

fundamental. Both parties were led by Syrian notables and supported by local elites.

Like the People's Party, the Syrian Union party called for the unity of Syria, national sovereignty, economic revival, reduction of taxes, improvement of the conditions of the working class, and harmony and freedom of all religious communities in the country. But unlike the People's Party, the Union Party's leadership and other members included prominent bureaucrats and journalist in collaboration with the French. The Union Party's official newspaper, *al-Zaman*, accused the leaders of the People's Party of political opportunism, in actuality they favored the supremacy of Islam at the expense of other religions. It criticized them for their conception of a large Arab State without questioning how Syrians, Lebanese, and Palestinians, with their developed intellects and sophisticated urbane backgrounds, could be expected to live under one roof with primitive tribes of Iraqi desert and the Hijaz. Instead, the Union party suggested that until the people were properly educated to feel that they belonged to a nation rather different religious communities, the best solution was to cooperate with their foreign tutors.¹⁸⁹

4.6.3. The National Bloc (The *Kutlah*) and Its Impact

After the People's Party, the next Syrian political grouping was the National Bloc (*Al-Kutlah*) formed in 1929. It was structured officially at a meeting in Homs in November 1932. Kedourie underlined that “the National Bloc was dedicated to the attainment of Syrian independence and Arab integrity-unity.”¹⁹⁰ It was led by Ibrahim Hananu and Hashim al-Atasi, and among its prominent members were Sa'dullah al-Jabiri, Jamil Mardam, Shukri al-Quwwatli, 'Abd al-Rahman al-Kayyali, Lutfi al-Haffar, Edmond Rabbath, Fakhri al-Barudi and Mikha'il Ilyan.

¹⁸⁹ Khoury, *Syria and the French Mandate: The Politics of Arab Nationalism 1920-1945*, p.147.

¹⁹⁰ Kedourie, *Arap Political Memoirs and Other Studies*, p.28.

The Bloc was the principal political organization in Syria in the 1930s. “Its leaders were influential in the country and frequently enjoyed a considerable following in their localities, and the Bloc was essentially a coalition of notables united by struggle against the French, and they succeeded in mobilizing the mass and organizing it in towns like Damascus, Hama and Aleppo.”¹⁹¹

The National Bloc founded after the suppression of the Great Revolt by the distinguishable Syrian leaders became the focal point of Syrian political life for the remainder of the mandate. Analysis of this group throws much light on the character of Syrian nationalism and on the social structure of politics. Many members of the Bloc, approximately 90 per cent were Sunni Muslims. All came from the main cities and most were well-educated in Istanbul, Beirut, or Europe. Nearly two-thirds came from the land-owning/bureaucratic or land-owning/scholarly classes, another quarter from more or less wealthy merchant families.¹⁹²

Concerning to the the National Bloc ideology Cleveland emphasized that “the National Bloc leaders were nationalist in that they called for the independence and territorial integrity of greater Syria. However, their nationalism was of a socially and politically conservative variety. They sought to preserve the existing patterns of social, economic, and political relationships from which their wealth and power derived.”¹⁹³ Thus, “although they demanded French withdrawal, they also wished to retain their dominant local positions so that they could step in and replace the French when the time came. This required them to balance their anti-French proclamations with sufficient cooperation to avoid being exiled or thrown in jail.”¹⁹⁴

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p.28.

¹⁹² Fieldhouse, *Western Imperialism in the Middle East*, p.29.

¹⁹³ Cleveland, *A History of the Middle East*, p.208.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.208.

According to Cleveland “the National Bloc leaders acquired very little experience in governing during the mandate. France's refusal to negotiate a treaty, its future intentions in Syria and its reluctance to allow the development of institutions of local self-government created frustration and uncertainty within Syrian political circles. An elected Syrian constituent assembly drew up a constitution in 1929, but France rejected the document. In 1930, France imposed its own constitution on Syria, it upheld France's role as the mandate authority and thus prevented Syria from adopting any measures that might impinge on French mandatory privileges.”¹⁹⁵

4.6.3.1. Structure

The seeds of the National Bloc were planted at Beirut Conference of 1927. The Nationalist Bloc emerged as the broadest political grouping in the pre-independence Syria in terms of its geographical range, numerical size, and diverse class support, at the leadership level the Bloc, like the People's Party, it was highly homogeneous. The core of the Bloc composed of Ihsan al-Sharif from Damascus, Najib al-Barazi and Abd al-Qadir al-Kaylani from Hama, Ibrahim Hananu and Abd al-Rahman alKayyali from Aleppo, and Mazhar Raslan and Hashim al-Atasi from Homs. In 1928, when the French issued a partial amnesty, others joined the group, including Fawzi alGhazzi, Lutfi al-Haffa, and Faris Khuri from Damascus, Husni al-Barazi from Hama, and Sadallah al-Jabiri of Aleppo.¹⁹⁶

The leadership of the nationalist movement in Syria, from its inception in late Ottoman times, was drawn primarily from the Sunni Arab landowning and bureaucratic class of the interior towns. Land provided a source of income to

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 208.

¹⁹⁶ Fieldhouse, *Western Imperialism in the Middle East*, p.290.

further political ambitious exclusively within an urban environment.¹⁹⁷ At the second conference in 1928 in Damascus it was announced that the coalition would complete in the elections to the Assembly. By this time, Fakhri al-Barudi, Zaki al-Khatib, Ahmad al-Lahham, Afif Sulh, Faiz al-Khuri, Muhammad al-Nahhas, and Jamil Mardam from Damascus; Twafiq al-Shishakli from Hama; and Ahmad al-Rifai, abd al-Qadir al-Sarmini, hasan Fuad Ibrahim Pasha, and Jamil Ibrahim Pasha from Aleppo joined the Bloc.¹⁹⁸

The Bloc leadership was usually well educated. They had received a secular education rather than traditional religious instruction, and more than half had acquired advanced professional training in Istanbul in preparation for administrative or military service in the Ottoman Empire, and also they had attended universities in Europe or the Syrian Protestant College in Beirut where they had studied law, public administration, and medicine. The leadership's occupational background indicates that 40 percent were "professional politicians." Another third were either lawyer or instructors of law at the Syrian University in Damascus who were actively involved in local politics, while the remaining third included three physicians, two merchants, a religious dignitary, a bureaucrat, and a retired Sharifian officer. Many members had a generous annual income from land rents, which freed them from regular employment to practice politics. These men grew up in a similar social and cultural milieu, attended the same schools, and were often related. Many had studied at Maktab 'Anbar in Damascus and then in Istanbul at the Mülkiye, returning to the Syrian provinces after the Young Turk Revolt of 1908 to join the provincial bureaucracy. However, Turkish insensitivity to Arab feelings and desires strained their commitment to the Ottoman state. Before World War I, some future Bloc leaders had already participated in secret nationalist activities. The National Bloc was a

¹⁹⁷ Khoury, *Syria and French Mandate in Syria: The Politics of Arab Nationalism 1920-1945*, p.248249.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.249.

direct descendant of the early nationalist societies of the late Ottoman and Arab independence eras in Syria, especially of al-Fatat and the al-Istiqlal Party.¹⁹⁹

4.6.3.2. Aims of the National Bloc

One of the significant features of the nationalism subscribed to by the National Bloc was its secular content. Since the end of the nineteenth century nationalism had grown at the expense of other loyalties, particularly of religion. The religious expression in its appeal was less pronounced than the territorial and etho-cultural calls for unity and resistance. The secularization of the Syrian nationalist movement was very much a product of the general secularization of the class interest of its leadership, a process which began in the latter half of the nineteenth century. The growth of the state in the nineteenth century, the spread of modern learning, the widening of Syria's links with the outside world, and her ongoing integration into a world economy created new forces, new opinions, and new psychological climate. Religious solidarity existed as did other loyalties to the family, clan, ethnic group, town quarter, and village, but all of these had been corroded somewhat by the ascendance of nationalism. The 1932 Congress of the Bloc in Homs, which first declared the Bloc a political organization, defined its primary aim. Nationalist declared that the Bloc as a political organization standing for the complete unity, territorial integrity and independence of Syria.²⁰⁰

The 1928 draft constitution stated that 'the Syrian territory separated from the Ottoman state constitutes a single indivisible unit and any arbitrary division that has occurred from the end of World War I is meaningless'. Instead the 1932 Congress stated that the Bloc stood for the complete unity, territorial unity, and self-determination of Syria, with the proviso that Lebanon could 'decide her own political fate within her pre-1920 borders'- that is shorn of Beirut and the other

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.250.

²⁰⁰ Khoury, Syria and French Mandate in Syria: The Politics of Arab Nationalism 1920-1945, p.250.

maritime provinces attached to the Mountain by the French. Along with other French reservations, the territorial imperative was to plague all negotiations for a treaty until 1939 and had not been realized by the time of full independence.²⁰¹ 1932 statement was clearly a compromise, framed to conform more closely to existing political realities. The Bloc could not hide the changing territorial frame of reference which the European partition had enforced to Syrian nationalism at the end of the war. Also nationalist made only brief reference to the question of the religious minorities "whose freedom and equality of rights and obligations were to be honored," and to the various classes in society "whose standard of living was to be raised and in whom culture and nationalism were to be instilled."²⁰²

The Bloc perceived itself as a purely political organization dedicated to opposing all foreign hegemony. The aims of the National Bloc in the thirties revealed bourgeoisie democratic tendencies. The Bloc's fundamental demands were expressed in Western political concepts and focused on democratic institutions which were more or less compatible with traditional ways of exercising political power and preserving vested interests. These demand were pragmatic and concerned specific concessions, most notably a liberal constitution, representative government, a treaty normalizing relations between Syria and France, positions in the administration and judiciary, and certain economic measures which would benefit the class interests of Bloc leadership.²⁰³

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p.263-265.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, p.265.

²⁰³ Van Dusen, Syria: Downfall of a Traditional Elite, p.130.

4.6.3.3. Division within the National Bloc: Damascus and Aleppo Branches

Nationalist leaders did not to foster mature public opinion or to politicize systematically the various geographic regions and communities in Syria in order to bring them into the mainstream of Syrian-Arab political thought and culture. Rather than developing a program of mass political education and action which could lead to the formation of a mass-based party with a unified ideology. Also, Bloc leaders almost neglected the rural areas around the four towns-Homs, Hama, Damascus, Aleppo- of concentrated nationalist activity.

Khoury stated that “the Bloc failed to make deep political inroads in the regions containing compact minorities, especially true of the Territory of the Alawites, and also of the Jabal Druze. Meanwhile, French efforts to foster communal isolation and regional separatism and the comparatively slow integration of these outlying areas into the Syrian market economy hindered the emergence and crystallization of a Syrian political community with a unified national and territorial identity.”²⁰⁴

Damascus, the capital of the Syrian state, was Bloc's central headquarters. Most of the Bloc's prominent political organs were situated in Damascus including two newspapers- al-Qabas and al-Ayyam. The Bloc's Damascus branch was the largest and most active branch. In the late 1920, Fawzi al-Ghazzi, Jamil Mardam, Ihsan alSharif, Fakri al-Barudi, Ahmad al-Lahham, Lutfi al-Haffar, 'Atif Sulh, Zaki al Khatib, Faris al-Khuri and Fa'iz al-Khuri joined the branch and in 1932, Nasib alBakri and Shukri al-Quwwatli joined. With the exception of the Khuri brothers, all members were Sunni Muslims. Mardam, Barudi, Ghazzi, Quwwatli and Bakri came from the absentee landowning class and happened to be the most

²⁰⁴ Moshe Ma'oz, “Society and Political Structure in the Arab World”, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 24, No. 1, Feb., 1992, p.29-45.

influential Bloc chiefs. Their families, which had risen to social and political prominence in the second part of the nineteenth century.²⁰⁵

The Aleppo branch of the National Bloc was generally thought to be more radical, uncompromising, and unified than its Damascus counterpart. The reason was that the more disruptive impact of French occupation and partition on Aleppo's economy, and Aleppo's lower stature in spite of its larger population, in the overall Syrian political equation during the Mandate. Aleppo's effective leadership had established themselves in relatively secure positions both in the state bureaucracy and in one of the liberal professions before the Young Turk revolt of 1908 and the subsequent Turkification policies. Important point was that these family networks help to broaden the political bases of individual Bloc members. The Aleppine nationalists were both jealous of their Damascus colleagues, who had greater access to the French owing to their favorable location in the capital, and also they sensed that the Damascus-framed policy of "honorable cooperation" aimed to get the Damascus leadership into government alongside the French, at the expense of Aleppo's specific interests.²⁰⁶

4.7. III. 1928-1936: Harmonization of Political Culture in Syria and Releasing Tensions with the Colonial Administration

The most important development of the early 1930's was the growth of a number of political parties with a special appeal to the educated youth of the towns, and therefore of great significance in a country whose political circumstances gave peculiar weight to the actions of the young. During this period, unification, and winning the country's independence, became the aim of leaders, groups, parties and organisations. This period, which lasted down to the middle thirties,

²⁰⁵ Khoury, Syria and French Mandate in Syria: The Politics of Arab Nationalism 1920-1945, p.268.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p.273.

witnessed the appearance of a few political parties and blocs which started the campaign for independence systematically.²⁰⁷

Parties established in this period were very different from one another in their doctrines and their aims, they were alike in that they endeavoured to establish a degree of organization and cohesion which older parties had not for the most part possessed, alike, too, in that they tried to base their activities not upon „gusts of feeling or some immediate objective“, but upon systematic and reasoned doctrines.²⁰⁸ They expressed and attempted to direct the spirit of the youth of Beirut, Damascus, Aleppo, and the other towns: a restless youth, dissatisfaction both with its foreign controller and with its own older generation, conscious of talents and ideas and cramped by lack of opportunity, drawn simultaneously towards and away from the West.²⁰⁹

The People's (Sh'ab) Party, though short-lived, was certainly important – it helped the spread of nationalism into Central Syria.²¹⁰ *Al-Kutlah al-Wataniyyah (the National Bloc)* gained eighteen deputies in the 1932 elections despite all the obstacles put by the French to prevent the party's victory. More remarkable than its losses in the election is the change in attitude of the *Kutlah*. Hitherto a negativist group, composed of those who were opposed to any kind of co-operation with the French, about this time it decided to meet the French half-way in order to win something for Syria. A neutral person, Muhammad al-'Abid, was chosen as President of the Republic, and two *Kutlah* members joined a five-man Cabinet in 1932, which was to negotiate a treaty with France. The terms of the proposed treaty, as offered by France, did not satisfy the *Kutlah*. This led to the

²⁰⁷ Nicola Ziadeh, *Syria and Lebanon*, (London: Ernest Benn, 1957) p.191.

²⁰⁸ Hourani, *Syria and Lebanon: A Political Essay*, p.196.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p.196.

²¹⁰ Khoury, *Syria and French Mandate in Syria: The Politics of Arab Nationalism 1920-1945*, p.193.

resignation of its members from the Government and the withdrawal of *Kutlah* deputies from the Chamber. “The High Commissioner suspended parliament *sine die*”.²¹¹

For two years *the Kutlah* carried the Syrian people with it. Its leadership was accepted unquestionably; its prestige was high; it went unchallenged. Its attitude was again negative, but time was spent in organising political life in the country, on account of which its leaders suffered a great deal. They were arrested and imprisoned. When in 1935 elections were held, *Kutlah* members were returned by a large majority. The presidency of the Republic and the Premiership went to *Kutlah* members, while the Presidency of the Chamber went to one of its ardent supporters. The *Kutlah* then led the negotiations with France for the treaty, which, however, was not ratified by the French Parliament. During this period the *Kutlah* became cooperative, and this co-operation continued till early 1939, when the French authorities resorted to suppression and controlled legislation. The High Commissioner suspended Parliament, and the second Syrian republic came to an end. As a group, the *Kutlah* now proclaimed a political struggle, which was a more objectionable situation to France, with a World War on hand. But it must be noted and remembered that during this period the *Kutlah* worked almost individually.²¹²

However, during the three years when the *Kutlah* was in power (1935-38) it came to be considered by a number of political directors as too “co-operative”, and rivalry to it grew within Syrian political life. Two organisations appeared during this period – *aljabhah al-wataniyah al-muttahidah* (*United National Front*) and *‘usbat al-amal alqawmi* (*League of National Action*).²¹³ Both parties were for the re-establishment of patriotism. It was not so much an opposition as

²¹¹ Ziadeh, Syria and Lebanon, p.192.

²¹² Khoury, Syria and French Mandate in Syria: The Politics of Arab Nationalism 1920-1945, p.193.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, p.193.

attempt on behalf of sincere people to push the national cause farther a field. It must be remarked that the three political groupings which dominated the political situation in Syria down to about 1938 – *the Sha'b, the Kutlah and the United Front* – existed by power of inertia inherited from the pre-First World War aspirations and hopes of national leaders and movements. They were forced occasionally into introducing better organisation into their groups, such as *the Youth Organisation of the Kutlah* – a section of the people which had been neglected earlier.

4.8. IV. Radical Parties and Organization in Syria: The Syrian Social Nationalist Party and The League of National Action

It was during the thirties that the Syrian Social Nationalist Party, the League of National Action were founded. The most important development of the early 1930's was the growth of a number of political parties with a special appeal to the educated youth of the towns, and therefore of great significance in a country whose political circumstances gave peculiar weight to the actions of the young.

During this period, unification, and winning the country's independence, became the aim of leaders, groups, parties and organisations. This period, which lasted down to the middle thirties, witnessed the appearance of a few political parties and blocs which started the campaign for independence systematically.²¹⁴ Parties were very different from one another in their doctrines and their aims, they were alike in that they endeavoured to establish a degree of organization and cohesion which older parties had not for the most part possessed, alike, too, in that they tried to base their activities not upon gusts of feeling or some immediate objective, but upon systematic and reasoned doctrines. They expressed and attempted to direct the spirit of the youth of Beirut, Damascus, Aleppo, and the other towns: a restless youth, discontented both with its foreign masters and with

²¹⁴ Ziadeh, Syria and Lebanon, p.191.

its own older generation, conscious of talents and ideas and cramped by lack of opportunity, drawn simultaneously towards and away from the West.²¹⁵

4.8.1. The Syrian National Party

The '*Syrian National Party*' established by Antun Saadeh in Beirut in 1932. The Syrian National Party's ideology depended on three principles: "radical and secular reform of society, a fascist-style ideology and Greater Syria."²¹⁶ The reform program basically based on five principles: One of the strong principles to which the party has stuck strongly is its secular character; separation of church and state. It is non-religious, non-sectarian, non-confessional and refuses to entertain any such ideas. It believed and stressed the complete separation of state and church or religion. The other significant principles were that "prohibition of the clergy from interfering in politics, removal of barriers between sects, abolition of feudalism, and the formation of a strong army."²¹⁷

The most important features of the party was "its dedication to attain the goal of creating Syria including Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, Sinai Peninsula, Jordan, Palestine and Cyprus."²¹⁸ Roberts underlined that "Antun Saadeh' pan-Syrian nationalism did not depend on race, religion, and language but on territorial nationhood of Syrian people going back to the ancient times."²¹⁹ In this regard, Antun Saadeh did not accept any form of pan-Islamism or pan-Arabism, and "his party's secular outlook became attractive to ethnic and sectarian minorities of Syria."²²⁰

²¹⁵ Hourani Syria and Lebanon: A Political Essay, p.196.

²¹⁶ Pipes, Greater Syria: The History of an Ambition, p.101.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.101.

²¹⁸ Malik Mufti, Sovereign Creations: Pan-Arabism and Political Order in Syria and Iraq, (New York: Cornell University Press: 1996), p.48.

²¹⁹ David Roberts, The Ba'ath and the Creation of Modern Syria, p.11-12.

²²⁰ Mufti, Sovereign Creations: Pan-Arabism and Political Order in Syria and Iraq, p.48.

In concern with the SNP Pipes emphasized that “it was the first party that penetrated the army by recruiting military officers from the Homs Military Academy.”²²¹ The important point was that the SNP had not a broad base of support but actually many of its members had intellectual, cultural, political, and military prominence.²²² Before the SNP came into existence, political parties in Syria represented personal interests. “The SNP was the first true indigenous party of an ideological nature. A historian of political parties in Syria was, therefore, correct to conclude that the SNP was founded on a completely different basis from the parties that preceded it or followed it.”²²³

According to the SNP, to develop a state that represented the Syrian identity meant eliminating the polities created by the British and French in the years after World War I the Syrian republic, Lebanon, Israel, and Jordan. the SSNP viewed these existing states as artificial and meaningless and paid them no loyalty. With regard to Lebanon, Sa'ada declared, “Above all, we are Pan-syrian nationalist; our cause is the cause of Syria, not that of Lebanese separatism.” He stressed that “Lebanon should be reunited with natural Syria.”²²⁴ The Syrian Nationalist Party can conceive only of a “Syrian Nation” which has its own distinguishing characteristic.

4.8.2. The League of National Action

During the 1930s, there aroused-developed a number of Arab nationalist youth organizations. The League of National Action was the most influential of them. It was established in 1933 and symbolized a modern generation of Syrian

²²¹ Pipes, *Greater Syria: The History of an Ambition*, p.102.

²²² *Ibid.*, p.102.

²²³ *Ibid.*, p.103.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, p.104.

nationalists, consisted of mainly students from the university and secondary schools and – a group that refused the bloc’s authority over Syrian politics and was hard for the old elite to direct. Also, it showed as a response to acute economic problems and unemployment.²²⁵ Additionally, tried to weld into a unity the youth of all the Arab countries. Its stood for the independence and union of the Arab world, and was not prepared to accept any agreement with the Western Powers unless they should completely renounce their imperialist design. Its programme was formulated at a conference held in Lebanon in 1933, and for some years after that it flourished in the Syrian towns.²²⁶ In Syria its first leader was Abd al-Dandashi. His followers were mainly urban professionals, many from the merchants class, but lacked the power-base of the Bloc and other notable politicians. The League built up a following in all the main cities, except for Aleppo.²²⁷

The League believed in sovereignty and independence of the Arabs and in complete Arab unity. The basis of this is that the Arabs are one nation, with one historical experience and one language. Arabism was a movement of renaissance and liberation, which aims at the creation of one Arab national unified society. The League began work in Syria almost immediately, and Damascus remained the center of the party, but it was not till 1936 that it organised itself in Lebanon. By 1939 the Lebanese section of the League had undergone a little change. It came to accept something short of complete unity of the Arabs when it recognised Lebanon’ as an Arab country with its own political existence, and not a part of another country”. It was hope that this might help create a Lebanese loyalty which was not tinted by confessionalism. In the statement announcing this the League said, “the League considers the Lebanese as brethren and citizens . . . based on religion or confession.

²²⁵ Fieldhouse, *Western Imperialism in the Middle East*. p.295.

²²⁶ Hourani, p.196.

²²⁷ Fieldhouse, *Western Imperialism in the Middle East*, p.295.

It views the Lebanese as one people . . . be they Muslims or Christians.”²²⁸

One of the principles of the League was to hold itself above from established Governments and leaders. In this it differed from the Nationalist Youth. A branch of the National Bloc, with a paramilitary organization, the Nationalist Youth rose to prominence in 1935 and 1936. Its doctrines were not greatly different from those of the League, but the two groups wasted much of their strenght in conflict with one other. The League of National Action is a patron of the „Arab nation“. With the outbreak of the Second World War the League, like other political parties, ceased to function, and remained dormant till 1944, when it resumed its activities.²²⁹

²²⁸ Ziadeh, Syria and Lebanon, p.199.

²²⁹ *Ibid.* p.199.

CHAPTER 5

I. 1936-1946: CONSOLIDATION OF POLITICAL PARTY STRUCTURE - TOWARDS THE WORLD WAR II AND INDEPENDENCE

In this chapter, the period between 1936-1946 will be analyzed in terms of Syrian nationalism and its reactions to and relations with the French in Syria. The period from 1936 to 1939, saw the political dominance of the National Bloc and Syria came to realize an “*honourable co-operation*” with the French, which in turn was ended by the second failure to secure a treaty. In 1936, the revival of confrontational tactics in the form of a general strike together with events in Egypt and Ethiopia, caused the French government to recognize the necessity of inviting National Bloc leaders to Paris to negotiate another treaty. At first the negotiations did not go smoothly, but when the left-wing Popular Front came to power in June of that year, negotiations changed relatively and came to a satisfactory conclusion for nationalist leaders. The terms of the treaty were hammered out and it was agreed that it would not come into force the three years. These years were to serve as a transitional period in which the National Bloc was permitted to govern and to share power with the French High Commissioner. In France, the quick decline of the Popular Front brought into power those who had never believed in the policy of 1936. And, those who had believed in it at the time changed their opinion, either because the international situation necessitated that France should not be undermined in Syria and Lebanon, or because events in Syria persuaded them of the country’s unpreparedness for self-government. Similarly, the nationalists in Syria came to doubt the sincerity of French intentions, above all because the French transferred the district of Alexandretta to Turkey, but also because it became clear that the French Parliament would not ratify the treaty of 1936, even after the nationalist

government granted additional concessions to France. Meanwhile, the government's strength declined as suspicious minority communities, quietly encouraged by French agents, caused frequent disturbances, and radical nationalists attacked it on the bases that it had compromised Syria's integrity and future as a politically independent state. This phase from 1936 to 1939 ended with the resignation of the National Bloc government in early 1939 and the placement once again of the compact minorities under separate administrations. The nationalists had not advanced their demands for unity and independence much beyond the stage they had reached in the mid-1920s.

The final phase namely analyzed in this chapter between 1939-1946 covered the years of the Second World War and culminated in Syrian independence in 1945 and French evacuation of Syria and its political independence in 1946. Although in Syria there was a certain sympathy with the Allied cause there was clearly no great enthusiasm. Memories of the starvation experienced during the World War I, the broken promises of the last war, the Alexandretta debacle, and the unratified treaty of 1936 made Syrians from all walks of life wary of French intentions. However, the Allied invasion in June 1941 introduced direct British influence into Syria and the possibility of re-establishing a more equitable balance of power between foreign rule and local leadership. Denied access to the French who still preferred a higher position discredited Syrian notables in government, the National Bloc sought British support for its return to power. Owing to a perceptible difference in its policy towards Arab nationalism, Britain encouraged the nationalist movement while she applied subtle pressure on the more rigid but weakened French High Commission. As a consequence, a nationalist government supported by a newly elected nationalist Parliament returned to office in 1943, and remained there after France withdrew from the Levant at the end of the war. The nationalist leadership had secured Syria's independence in the manner which it preferred, by patient negotiation and measured pressure, not by revolutionary means which might upset the local status quo.

5.1. 1936-1939: Road to the Independence: National Bloc and the Call for General Strike

Towards the end of 1935, France was unprepared to resume treaty negotiations, the Syrian Parliament remained shut, and the Syrian economy had yet to revive from the long years of debilitating depression. Meanwhile, the Bloc's internal wounds- created by the internecine warfare between Aleppo and Damascus – had not yet healed, and the League of National Action's assaults upon the Bloc's strategy of "*honorable cooperation*" had risen above the mark of irritation. Under such conditions, the Bloc's survival seemed to hinge on taking some dramatic political action that could reunify nationalist ranks. The question was what sort of action. Bloc leaders found the option of an armed insurrection.²³⁰

On January 20, disturbances erupted in Damascus in reaction to "the closing down of the National Bloc Office in al-Qanawat and the arrest of Fakhri al-Barudi and the Nationalist Youth leader, Sayf al-Din al-Ma'mun."²³¹ Bazaars shut down and a crowd of students and quarter youth gathered in front of Nasib al-Bakri's home to prepare for a march to the Serail. Led by Bakri, Jamil Mardam, and Shukri al-Quwwatli, the demonstrators never got past the end of Bakri's Street where a "cordon of police" was posted. The police fired into the air to disperse the crowd and arrested several students. In Aleppo, Hama, and Homs demonstrations were reported on the same day.²³²

Students, Bloc leaders, and '*ulama*' met in the Great Mosque to formulate their demands, which could be summarized as a general amnesty for the hundreds who had been recently arrested, the revocation of the all expelled students from school who demonstrated and the re-opening of the National Bloc Office. When

²³⁰ Khoury, Syria and the French Mandate: The Politics of Arab Nationalism 1920-1945, p.457.

²³¹ *Ibid.*, p.457.

²³² Khoury, Syria and the French Mandate: The Politics of Arab Nationalism 1920-1945, p.457.

the French rejected an amnesty, demonstrations broke out again. At their head were town merchants who formed a committee to organize the distribution of goods (flour) and funds to the poor and striking workers. In the meantime, demonstrations had spread to other towns. On February 28, Hashim al-Atasi, in his potential as President of the National Bloc, issued a strongly-worded declaration claiming that the nationalist program was the only acceptable solution to the Syrian Question. This led to a massive demonstration in the Syrian capital. Protestors conflict with police who opened fire, killing four and wounding many. But these disturbances proved to be the last serious ones of the General Strike.

The General Strike of 1936 was clearly the National Bloc's biggest triumph to date. Taking the Egyptian Wafd's lesson to heart the Bloc adopted a course of action which revitalized its image and enabled its leaders to re-establish a monopoly over the Syrian independence movement. Ironically, the strike enabled the Bloc leadership to salvage, in less than two months, its strategy of "honorable cooperation." Furthermore, the Bloc was able to place this strategy on much sounder footing.

"Honorable cooperation" meant a treaty "not inferior to the Anglo-Iraqi" treaty and ultimately the right of the Bloc to share power with the French. Bloc leaders had never really bargained for anything more. Diplomacy supported by intermittent displays of its independent influence in the towns were the Bloc's preferred tools. At best these could gradually relax French control in Syria. Armed struggle as a vehicle to power had been ruled out with the failure of the Great Revolt of 1925-1927.²³³ But, while the General Strike helped to restore the reputation of the National Bloc, it also severely taxed the Syrian economy and the livelihood of the masses. The sixweek strike had a devastating impact on life in Syrian towns of the interior as well as in Beirut and Palestine. It is important

²³³ Khoury, *Syria and the French Mandate: The Politics of Arab Nationalism 1920-1945*, p.462.

point out is that just as the Egyptian Wafd had provided a valuable example for the National Bloc, and the Syrian General Strike provided a paradigm for action to the Palestinians.²³⁴

5.2. Establishing a Framework for Franco-Syrian Relations: Paris Negotiations

After the revolt negotiations opened on April 2 with a French team headed by Foreign Minister Pierre-Etienne Flandin. The road to a treaty was not to be as smooth as the Syrian delegation had anticipated. From the outset, the Syrians faced an unflexible and unacceptable French bargaining position which insisted *inter alia* on retaining the semi-autonomous regimes and French governors in the Alawite territory and Jabal Druze. Fortunately, for the Syrian team, it was just able to avert a complete breakdown after Fladin presented an unacceptable draft proposal toward the end of April. Then, general elections in France on April 26 sealed the Sarraut government's fate. It was replaced by a left-wing coalition leaded by the Socialist Party Leader, Léon Blum. But because this progressive coalition –known as *the Popular Front* –could not constitutionally assume Office until the beginning of June, treaty negotiations were suspended for the month of May, allowing the Syrian delegates to enjoy some of the pleasures of springtime in Paris, and on the expense account of the Iraqi government.²³⁵

As negotiations proceeded through the summer months of 1936, news filtered back to France of demonstrations in Latakia, the Jabal Druze, and elsewhere for and against union with Syria. In the Jabal Druze, opposition to unity with Syria was less pronounced than it was in the Alawite territory where Alawites expressed their grave doubts about unity, principally in sectarian terms. By contrast, the Jabal Druze was not divided along sectarian lines because the

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, p.462.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, p.491.

landowning class and the peasantry were both Druze. Demonstrations on July 12 in Sidon in favor of union with Syria turned into a riot in which four protestors were killed. In the Sanjak of Alexandretta, the Turkish minority had begun to agitate more openly for secession and unity with Ankara.²³⁶

Despite the clash of interests over the Paris negotiations, it became evident that the new treaty would have to include the Alawite and Druze districts in the Syrian state. By the second week of September, an agreement was reached, enabling the Syrian delegation to return home triumphant. The draft of the new treaty, while following the general lines of the 1933 treaty which the Syrian Parliament had “ unceremoniously rejected,” indicated a far greater acceptance by the French government of the Syrian point of view. The Syrian Treaty was loosely modelled on the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty. The Syrian Treaty supplied for “peace”, “friendship”, and “alliance” between France and Syria. It was to commence as soon as Syria was accepted into the League of Nations and was to last for 25 years. Apart from the treaty’s main articles, which merely formalized the general guidelines of FrancoSyrian relations and were never really in dispute, there were a number of attached documents defining France’s military position in Syria, her rights and obligations, and the Syrian state’s relations with the Druzes, Alawites, and other minorities, and with Lebanon.²³⁷

The French did not ratify the treaty of 1936. Its supporters and opponents were in fundamental agreement over the reasons. First of all, regional developments posed new problems. In Iraq, there were minority revolts, a “coup d’état”, and a brief military absolutism. In Egypt, authoritarianism had grown and potentially menaced Syria. There was the rebellion in Palestine and Turkey –in the Sanjak of Alexandretta - threatened Syria. And with World War II approaching, the

²³⁶ Stephen Hemsley Longrigg, *Syria and Lebanon under French Mandate*, London, Toronto, New York: Oxford University Press, 1958), p.220

²³⁷ Khoury, *Syria and the French Mandate: The Politics of Arab Nationalism 1920-1945*,

possibility of foreign intervention by France's enemies increased. The French found it increasingly difficult to give Syria full independence out of fear that she was still unprepared to cope with the various pressures around her. Secondly, the minorities question had not eased after the National Bloc took over government. The French accused Damascus of using the superior demographic position of the Sunni community to dominate the compact minorities, which destabilized the country. As we see in such circumstances, a treaty jeopardized French interests in Syria, the welfare of Syria's minorities, and the special position of Lebanon. Moreover, a treaty would be viewed in North Africa as a French retreat and would certainly give the Arab population there ideas about demanding independence as the Syrians.²³⁸

5.3. Rise of Separatist Movements: The Druzes and Alawites

In the late 1930s other developments on the Syrian periphery destroyed to undermine the credibility of the nationalist government in Damascus. Among the most grave was the challenge position to its authority by separatist movements in the Jabal Druze, the Alawite territory, and the Jazira, where a coalition of factors hindered the political unification and the crystallization of a Syrian national identity. These covered sectarianism and tribalism, geography, competitive political and socioeconomic underdevelopment, continued domination of urban groups over rural groups, and intra-elite and class conflict. In addition, France supported autonomous movements among the compact minorities. "Given the ideology of Arab nationalism, which in the hands of the Sunni-absentee landowning class demonstrated a particular insensitivity to the needs of Syria's minorities, the seeds of separatism planted by the High Commission fell on fertile ground."²³⁹

²³⁸ Khoury, *Syria and the French Mandate: The Politics of Arab Nationalism 1920-1945*, p.491.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, p.515.

The augmented manifestation of separatist sentiment and activity in the Jabal Druze and Latakia provinces correlated with the administrative unification of these two regions under the National Bloc government in Damascus. The Druzes and Alawites had much in common: both were from the countryside, and enjoyed relative isolation from central government authority, both had small, rather mysterious sects that were offshoots of Shi'ite Islam, both were Arabic-speaking, and both were engaged in agriculture and were comparatively impoverished. At the same time, both communities were internally divided along tribal or clan lines and had different characteristics and faced different conditions, which gave political life in each a specific coloring.²⁴⁰ The dividing and creation of an autonomous – independent territory in Syria served French strategies however it emerged resistance and opposition on the part of the Syrian national campaign.

5.4. The Palestinian Revolt and Syrian Reactions

Palestine was created by the post-First World War settlement. During the Ottoman Empire, Palestine did not come into existence and the region had been separated among three provinces, and each of this province included with its Ottoman officials and a representative council of local notables.²⁴¹ These provinces; the Sanjak of Jerusalem- including southern Palestine- had a special status and was precisely responsible to Istanbul. The other provinces were parts of *vilayets* which covered areas of Syria and Lebanon. After the First World War settlement, the Balfour Declaration of 2 November 1917, Palestine was designed by the British mandate in 1920 San Remo Agreement.

Muhareb stressed that Britain's most important alliance in the creation of Palestine was the Zionist leaders and the Jewish agency. At this point –Yapp

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p.515.

²⁴¹ Malcolm E. Yapp, *The Near East since the First World War: A History to 1995*, (London: Longman, 1991), p.116.

stated that the meaning of Palestine to the Muslims was actually a geographical expression, to the Christians was mostly caring religious importance and lastly to the Jews it was political.

Many factors affected Syrian politics and society in the 1930s. Changing political circumstances, the maturation of opposition movements, economically the Great Depression and the French and British infrastructural developments affected Syria in various ways. Another significant development around 1930s was the ZionistPalestian conflict. Increasing numbers of Jewish immigrants came and settled in Palestine, especially during the 1930s, as many of them escaped tfrom the Nazi régime in Germany.²⁴²

At this point, it must be noted that the event was the *Wailing Wall* (al-Buraq) uprising of August 1929 which broke out in Jerusalem. Arabs responded violently to the Zionist demonstrations at the Wailing Wall. According to Schayegh, in one week, 133 Jews and 116 Arabs were executed and 570 were injured. For the conflict, the Wall had a symbolic importance.²⁴³

According to Khoury, “the rebellion in Palestine had several causes. Two related factors were certainly the growing Arab fear of increasing Zionist power, which could eventually lead to an independent state in Palestine, and the Arab’s own growing desire for national independence.”²⁴⁴ By 1936, “Palestine found itself in the throes of a popular uprising, the intensity of which had not previously been experienced in the Arab world. This growing restiveness clearly alarmed the traditional Arab leadership, faced with new class forces threatening to break out

²⁴² Moshe Ma’oz, “The Jewish-Zionist and Arab-Palestinian National Communities: The Transferring Effect of a Century of Confrontation”, p.152.

²⁴³ Cyrus Schayegh, *The Middle East and the Making of the Modern World: Toward a Religion of Nation States 1929-1939*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts, London; England: Harvard Univesity Press, 2017), p.200.

²⁴⁴ Khoury, *Syria and the French Mandate: The Politics of Arab Nationalism 1920-1945*, p.540.

of the established political framework of factionalism.”²⁴⁵ As Swedenburg argues,

The ascendance of young militants... combined with the unrest of the peasantry in turn forced the notable leadership to react more vigorously to the deepening crisis caused by massive Zionist immigration, a peasantry threatened with bankruptcy and dispossession in the lowland plains, and the unwillingness of the British government to grant Palestinian Arabs even a modicum of self-rule.²⁴⁶

It is significant to emphasize that despite the initial reluctance of nationalists to fully support the Arab Revolt, it was met with a large scale of enthusiasm in Syria and contributed to drive the nationalist movement along the path of extremism and violence.²⁴⁷ Britain sent the Peel Commission to Palestine in November 1936 to sought the reasons of the rebellion. The Peel Commission issued its report, the White Paper, in July 1937 recommending the separation of Palestine into Arab and Jewish states. And thus, in September, the Palestine Defense Committee organized a pan-Arab Congress at Bludan in 1937 in order to support the Palestinians. Significantly, the congress accepted and announced that Palestine was an inseparable part of the Arab nation, and rejected the partition of Palestine and the foundation of a Jewish state. It also called an end to the Jewish immigration to Palestine and land transfer to Zionists, while invoking an independent Arap Palestine.²⁴⁸ Syrian understood the Palestian revolt as a part of the wider Arab movement towards independence. Both the population and leadership in Syria expressed these ideas via the press and through popular strikes and demonstrations.

²⁴⁵ Ibid., p.541.

²⁴⁶ Ted Swedenburg, *Memories of Revolt: “The 1936-1939 Rebellion and the Palestinian Natioanl Past”*, p.28.

²⁴⁷ Hourani, *Syria and Lebanon: A Political Essay*, p.222.

²⁴⁸ Mahmoud Muhareb, “The Zionist Disinformation Campaigngn in Syria and Lebanon during the Palestine Revolt 1936-1939”, p.6.

5.5. Loss of the Sanjak of Alexandretta

The Sanjak of Alexandretta, consisted of a narrow coastal plain backed by a chain of mountains and the lower valley of the Orontes River to the southeast. Along the coast was Alexandretta with natural harbour and in valley rested Antioch, the Sanjak's largest town. Throughout the Mandate period, the ethno-religious and social composition of the Sanjak looked like any of the peripheral regions of Syria. The main social and political divisions were between Turkish speakers and between Christians and Muslim, though divisions also fell in the direction of a rich-poor axis.²⁴⁹

As mentioned in the previous chapter, during the Mandate period, Syria underwent dismemberment and partitioning at the hands of the French beyond the divisions designed by the European mandate system. In March 1921, Cilicia was submitted to Turkey and the Turkish minority in Alexandretta were given special administrative status. By the October of that same year, the Turkish-French agreement was signed giving the population of Alexandretta and Antioch the right to raise the Turkish colors.²⁵⁰ The Sanjak of Alexandretta was kept under the control of a self-government regime within the French-Mandated State of Syria and assured by both France and Turkey through the "Franklin-Boullion Agreement" signed at Ankara on October 1921- according to the Article 7 of which stated:

A special administrative régime shall be established for the district of Alexandretta. The Turkish inhabitants of this district shall enjoy every facility for their cultural development. The Turkish language shall have official recognition.²⁵¹

²⁴⁹ Philip S. Khoury, *Syria and the French Mandate: The Politics of Arab Nationalism 1920-1945*, p.494.

²⁵⁰ Ghada Hashem Talhami, *Syria and the Palestinians: The Clash of Nationalism*, (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2001), p.11.

²⁵¹ Talhami, *Syria and the Palestinians: The Clash of Nationalism*, p.11.

During the mandate era, the Turkish government claimed about the Sanjak that “the Turks” there composed a majority of the population. The new founding treaty of the Turkish Republic, Lausanne in 1923, formed the district of Alexandretta as a “special administrative regime” province from the rest of Syria.²⁵² During the negotiations, Turkey stressed that its assertion to the Sanjak on the grounds of the district’s large Turkish inhabitant. There are different views and figures about the population. Watenpauh stated that according to French numarates from the mid-1930s, there were nearly 220,000 inhabitants of the province. Those, who were identified as ethnic “Turks” constituted 39 percent of the inhabitant and therefore were not the majority of inhabitant. Moreover, Arabic speakers described as an ethnic group, formed 46 percent of the population, with Armenians composing the resting 15 percent.²⁵³ Also - about the population figures - Yapp noted that in 1936 the population of Alexandretta was about 200,000 – Turks constituting the 40 percent of inhabitant, Alawites consituting the 30 percent, Christians (half of whom are Armenians) are 20 percent while the Sunni Arab Muslims are 10 percent.²⁵⁴ In Yapp’s figures as well, Turks do not consitute a majority. Between 1921 and 1936 - under the provisions of the 1921 Franco-Turkish agreement - Alexandretta did not have an autonomy. During this period, Ankara started an intensive propaganda drive through various cultural programs underlining the distinct cultural features of the Turkish population in an attempt to increase their difference from the others in the province while the Syrian nationalist stressed of integration.

In September 1936 Syria and France signed an agreement to end the mandate. Turkey demanded that the Sanjak should not come under the rule of an

²⁵² Keith D. Watenpauh, “Creation Phantoms: Zaki Al-Arsuzi, the Alexandretta Crisis, and the Formation of Modern Arab Nationalism in Syria”, p.366.

²⁵³ *Ibid.*, p.366.

²⁵⁴ Yapp, *The Near East since the First World War: A History to 1995*, p.96.

independent Syrian state. In May 1938 the Sanjak became an independent region according to League of Nations decision. Later through a plebisit, the Sanjak joined Turkey and became a part of the Turkish Republic in 1939 and was renamed as Hatay.²⁵⁵

The loss of Alexandretta from Syria and its transfer to Turkey was a serious blow to the National Bloc.²⁵⁶ In addition, the developments in the other three autonomous sanjaks – the Jabal Druze, the Latakia province, and the Jazira – also damaged the reputation of the National Bloc, which at the end contributed to the fall of the Bloc as the dominant Syrian party. Al-Quwwatli quit his position in February 1938. By the end of the 1938, the National Bloc was separated into four groups; those still promoting the Mardam, the Al-Quwwatli faction, the Faris al-Khuri, the Bakriand Faiz al-Khuri.²⁵⁷

After 1936, besides the process leading to the loss of the Sanjak, instead of gaining sovereignty and independence, Syria continued to be controlled by a firm French rule. After the long administration of the mandate, Syria stayed without establishments of autonomous and territorial integrity. Additionally, the heads of its chief political organization – the National Bloc - found themselves disgraced and further lost their reputation with the loss of the Sanjak. Actually, the developments during this period will be followed by decades of political instability, as a legacy of the mandate for Syria.

²⁵⁵ Cleveland, A History of the Middle East, p.218.

²⁵⁶ Fieldhouse, Western Imperialism in the Middle East 1914-1958, p.297.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p.297.

5.6. Factionalism during the later Mandate Period: Its Effect on Syrian Nationalist Government

During its two years in office, the Mardam government met with serious problems which finally forced it to resign in February 1939. As mentioned perivious chapter, the French failure to ratify the treaty of 1936, segregational movements in the Jabal Druze, the Latakia governorate, and the Jazira, the separation of the Sanjak of Alexandretta from Syria and its annexation by Turkey, and the complications caused by the rebellion in Palestine. In addition to these problems, the gradual socioeconomic and and cultural changes occuring beneath political factionalism. The local political factionalism did not emerged intensely since the collopse of the Great Arab Revolt.²⁵⁸

With the rise of new political forces adamant on breaking out of the traditional framework of political factionalism in the 1930s, because of the acceleration of social and economic change in this period, the National Bloc faced an acute challenge to its leadership from this direction. Both the extreme secular Left-represented principally by the Syrian Communist Party- and an emerging group of radically conservative *Jam'iyyat (Muslim Association)* cannot be trusted with bringing down the National Bloc government. In fact, the Communist Party, at the direction of the French Communist Party, supported the treaty of 1936 and, while critical of certain Syrian government policies, it backed the Mardam government. In the late 1930s, collaboration destroyed the Communist Party's reputation with more than a few sympathetic, up-and-coming radical intellectuals. Regarding the Islamic *jam'iyyat*, they were too loosely organized and at odds with one another to cause any serious damage. They and the Communist Party would not take their place on the stage of modern Syrian politics until the end of World War II, that is long after the Communists came to

²⁵⁸ Khoury, Syria and the French Mandate: The Politics of Arab Nationalism 1920-1945, p.564.

an end to cooperate with the National Bloc and the *jam'iyyat* was transformed into the Muslim Brethren.²⁵⁹

Even the better founded pan-Arab League of National Action, through a more effective critic than either the Communists or the *jam'iyyat*, was unusually subdued. It focused on the Mardam government's ineffective handling of the Alexandretta debacle and its indifferent commitment to the rebels in Palestine, but its assault on the Mardam government and on the National Bloc was ineffective in contrast to the movement associated with Dr. 'Abd al-Rahman Shahbandar.²⁶⁰

The League's inadequateness can be blamed on the *Istiqlal Party's* (the Independence Party) effective silence of its opposition to the Bloc by containing the League within the traditional framework of political factionalism. Increasing the Istiqlali strength led to decline the League's influence. Radicalization clearly had built-in Syria before World War II. As the League's political fortunes declined owing to its internal divisions, smaller pan-Arab organizations emerged.²⁶¹ The most active of these was the *Arab Club* (al-Nadi al-Arabi) and it was initially established in Damascus as a descendant of al-Fatat. The Arab Club reopened in Damascus in 1937. As its forerunner, whose activities had accelerated nationalist opposition against the French during the 1920s, the club tried to promote pan-Arab nationalist ideas and to initiate planned nationalist action.²⁶² The club major principle was

...to revive the history of the Arabs and to establish strong ties between all Arab countries, to spread and unify education, to establish good morals, to work for

²⁵⁹ Khoury, *Syria and the French Mandate: The Politics of Arab Nationalism 1920-1945*, p.563.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p.564.

²⁶¹ Götz Nordbruch, *Nazism in Syria and Lebanon, The Ambivalence of the German Option, 1933-1945*, p.56.

²⁶² Nordbruch, *Nazism in Syria and Lebanon, The Ambivalence of the German Option, 1933-1945*, p.56.

the individual and the family, to encourage national industries, to emphasize sporting activities, and to work for everything which is in the Arab interest and which helps (the Arabs) socially and economically.²⁶³

The club was mostly engaged in political activities. It opposed Zionism and demanded the unity of Palestine with Syria. The club's main devices of mobilization were mosques, the press, and political activists in Palestinian towns and villages.²⁶⁴ About the club Khoury stated that the Arab Club composed of a secularist, pan-Arab organization which covered 108 regular members including 26 educated women, in the late 1930s. It had an elitist orientation and tried to collect the best-educated elements in Damascus together in pursuit of its aims. Additionally, its members looked for distance themselves from the more immediate past associated with the National Bloc. The Arab Club's chief differentiating characteristic was its pro-German orientation. In truth, this related with the growth of German interest and activity in Syria in the late 1930s. French and British Intelligence asserted that the Arab Club was the major vehicle for Nazi penetration of Syria and the Arab Club received considerable financial assistance from Berlin.²⁶⁵

German connection in Syria, while not as pronounced as elsewhere in the Middle East owing in part to Italy's longer and more developed interests there, nevertheless reflected complete German strategy in the region. The Germans wanted to court the Arabs, to expand German trade and Nazi propaganda, and "even to undermine French and British prestige in the Middle East however at the same time to avoid the danger of too flagrant a provocation, certainly any incitement to violence." The Germans tried to obtain a benefit from a growing feeling among Arab nationalists in Syria and elsewhere that, while their own

²⁶³ Khoury, *Syria and the French Mandate: The Politics of Arab Nationalism 1920-1945*, p.564.

²⁶⁴ Yehoshua Porath, *The Emergence of the Palestinian-Arab National Movement 1918-1929*, p.56.

²⁶⁵ Khoury, *Syria and the French Mandate: The Politics of Arab Nationalism 1920-1945*, p.564-565.

activities were progressively loosening the French and British imperial grip on the region, to complete the break they French and British imperial grip on the region, to complete the break they required a stronger concentration of international pressure and assistance. No foreign power was in a better position to provide this than Germany.²⁶⁶

Under the watchful eye of Dr. Imam, the Arab Club operated two levels: it tried delicately to spread anti-French propaganda and German influence in Syria while it actively supported the anti-British and anti-Zionist revolt in Palestine.²⁶⁷ The Arab Club's fate was similar to that of other radical organizations in Syria. Although it outlived the League of National Action, which the French shut down in March 1939. Many of its members fled abroad, mainly to Iraq, where they sat out the early years of the war in anticipation of their return to Damascus.²⁶⁸

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p.565.

²⁶⁷ Khoury, *Syria and the French Mandate: The Politics of Arab Nationalism 1920-1945* p.565.

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p.566.

CHAPTER 6

II. 1939-1946: SYRIAN POLITICAL PARTIES AND THE BEGINNING OF WORLD WAR II AND UNDER VICHY ADMINISTRATION

6.1. Syrian Political Parties: The National Youth Party

The National Youth Party was established Akram al-Hawrani in 1939. Hawrani was a political activist and “fierce opponent of the traditional land-owning families of Hama.”²⁶⁹ He resented the large landlords’ exploitation of the Syrian peasantry and strove to rouse the latter to a militant defense of their interest. According to Pipes “imbued with socialist ideas, he gained a strong support base among youth and peasantry against landed feudalism in Hama. Hawrani transformed the National Youth Party into Arab Socialist Party in 1950 and extended his influence over the young cadets of the Homs Military Academy, who mostly came from lower middle class families.”²⁷⁰ The Arab Socialist Party rested independent only three years, and finally merging with the Ba’th Part in February 1953.

6.2. The Ba’th Party

The Ba’th Party (*Renaissance*) was established in Damascus in 1943 by Greek Orthodox Michel Aflaq-a former school teacher in Damascus- and Sunni Muslim Salah al-Din Bitar, a Sunni Muslim, both of them were the Damascene middle

²⁶⁹ Pipes, *Greater Syria: A History of a Ambition*, p.102.

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p.102.

class and they were teachers at the *al-tajhiz* secondary school.²⁷¹ The formal founding congress of the party was convened in April 1947 in Damascus, attracting about 250 attendees from various Arab countries and regions,²⁷² most of whom were Sunnis and Orthodox Christians who belonged to the urban middle class or were members of the country gentry.²⁷³ It must be noted that in spite of a French-educated, Michael Aflaq promoted a vision of an ideal Arab movement that was essentially based on Islam and opposed dangerous European influence.²⁷⁴ “Aflaq and Bitar had deep effects on Syrian politics. Inspired by Marxism during their university years in Paris, Aflaq and Bitar formulated the trinitarian slogan of the Arab revolution and the Ba’th ideology basically was designed as the trinity of ‘*wahda, hurriyah, ishtirahkiyah*’ (unity, freedom and socialism).”²⁷⁵ This Ba’th slogan symbolized “the trinity of Arab nationalist politics throughout the Arab world.”²⁷⁶ Aflaq stressed that “Arab nationalism, represented by the youth of the nation, cannot be but a revolutionary force. The greatness of the Arab nation in the past is matched by its weakness in the present. Furthermore, compared with other advanced nations in the contemporary World, its miserable underdevelopment is immediately apparent. To remedy such a state of affairs, revolution is the only available option.”²⁷⁷

²⁷¹ Nicholas Van Dam, *The Struggle for Power in Syria: Politics and Society Under Asad and the Ba’th Party*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 1996), p.15.

²⁷² John F. Devlin, *The Ba’th Party: A History from its Origins to 1966*, (Review of Middle East Studies, Volume 11, Issues 3), p.15.

²⁷³ Robert W. Olson, *The Ba’th and Syria, 1947-1982: The Evolution of Ideology, Party and State*, Review of Middle East Studies, Volume 18, Issue 1, July 1984, p.21.

²⁷⁴ Fieldhouse, *French Imperialism in the Middle East 1914-1958*, p.300.

²⁷⁵ Youssef M. Choueiri, *Arab Nationalism: A History: Nation and State in the Arab World*, p.159.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p.159.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p.161.

6.3. The Beginning of World War II and under Vichy Administration and towards the Independence

Syria escaped the serious military engagement and damage of World War II. In reality, Syria was entirely impacted by the political advancements of the Second World War. The war changed the country in two important respects. It prepared the way for independence from France and it aroused both economic and societal alteration which speed up the recoalition of political powers in the country. The war also accentuated a number of important trends which would define Syria's course in the postwar period. The accelerator for independence was the foundation of an extent British existence in the heart of Syria. Britain's direct wartime involvement in Syrian political and economic life aggravated Anglo-French rivalry and created new opportunities for the Syrian nationalist leadership. In the end, Britain's weight in the overall balance of power enabled veteran nationalist to realize their main objective: national independence with the National Bloc at the helm of government.²⁷⁸

Anglo-French relations in the Levant had been civil for long stretches between the wars. Owing to Britain's comparative strength in the region, the French continued to feel the weaker of the two. In particular, they had always feared that Britain's toleration and even mild encouragement of Arab nationalism might undermine France's position in Syria and Lebanon.

Olmert stated that "before the military intervention, France had promised unconditional independence of Syria and Lebanon. Although France issued independence of Syria and Lebanon in 1941, De Gaulle was so proud of colonialist past of France that he had no intention to give up the control of Syria

²⁷⁸ Khoury, *Syria and the French Mandate: The Politics of Arab Nationalism 1920-1945*, p.583.

and Lebanon. Under British pressure, De Gaulle reluctantly restored the constitution of 1936 and allowed the holding of free elections.”²⁷⁹

Allies in fact, the British did not at first recognize the Free French as the sole representative of the French nation, which contributed to their difficult relationship in Syria and Lebanon. The principal source of Anglo-French friction in the Levant was Britain’s insistence that France grant Syria her independence. De Gaulle, intent on resurrecting France as a first-class world power in the postwar era, supported the renewal and strengthening of France’s ties to her colonies. He viewed British policy as designed to support British hegemony in the Middle East after the war, at the expense of France’s interests. In this atmosphere of mutual suspicion and rivalry, Syrian nationalist leaders discovered new levers to work toward their eventual independence.²⁸⁰

Significant point was that the eruption of World War II found the nationalist leadership exhausted and politically bankrupted. Out of government and out of power, the nationalists welcomed the breather offered by the war. They hoped in particular that the exciting events in Europe might allow the Syrian public to forget the Bloc’s mistakes of the past two years. Syrian towns were usually tranquil after the High Commissioner’s decision in early July 1939 to suspend the Syrian constitution, dissolve Parliament, give greater autonomy to the minority regions, and to place the government in the hands of a Directorate composed of non-nationalist permanent secretaries of ministries. There were no protests or strikes. There were no signs of the National Bloc or opposition parties attempting to resist a policy which “but a short time ago would have been regarded as reactionary and totally unacceptable to all patriotic Syrians.”²⁸¹

²⁷⁹ Yossi Olmert, “A False Dilemma? Syria and Lebanon’s Independence during the mandatory period”, *Middle East Studies*, Volume 32, Issue 3, 1996, p.47.

²⁸⁰ Khoury, *Syria and the French Mandate: The Politics of Arab Nationalism 1920-1945*, p.584.

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p.584.

The Allied Declaration of War against Germany reinforced French control in Syria and Lebanon. Martial law was proclaimed. The French military got authority to requisition whatever they needed. Most taxis were commandeered. Strict censorship of the press and other communications was imposed. "All radios in cafés and other public places were confiscated to prevent crowds from gathering to listen to the German-Arabic broadcasts, a social event which had become so much a feature of daily life in... neighbouring Arabic-speaking countries."²⁸² Meanwhile, the French cut down on their list of political "subversives." They cocluded the Syrian Communist Party, the Syrian Social Nationalist Party, the Arab Club, and Fakhri alBarudi's Bureau for National Propaganda, as well as imprisoning Axis sympathizers and the leadership of the National Action.²⁸³

During the first year of the war, a number of nationalists, including Mardam, proclaimed their absolute loyalty to France (and Britain) and quietly tried to persuade the High Commission to relinquish the reins of government to the Bloc. Whenever a political impasse was reached between the nationalists and the French, nationalists looked outside Syria to her Arab neighbors for leverage to break it. Several Arab unity plans were already afloat, associated with the Hashemite houses in Transjordan and Iraq, and with Ibn Sa'ud.²⁸⁴

By the time France capitulated to the Axis Powers in June 1940, Shahbandar was leading political figure in Syria. Shahbandar's assassination helped to put the National Bloc back into the limelight, but under a new leader. Therefore, Shukri alQuwwatli was able to make his bid for the leadership of the national independence movement. The Allied invasion of the Levant in early June of 1941 changed the balance of power in Syria. Britain was already in control of Iraq,

²⁸² *Ibid.*, p.584.

²⁸³ *Ibid.*, p.584.

²⁸⁴ Khoury, *Syria and the French Mandate: The Politics of Arab Nationalism 1920-1945*, p.585.

Palestine, Transjordan, and Egypt. The massive British military existence in Syria and Lebanon, introduced through the invasion, clinched Britain's predominance. Just as at the end of World War I, Britain's physical presence in the Arab East dwarfed France's, reawakening the fear that Britain intended to ease France out of the region altogether. The Allied invasion had been accompanied by a Free French proclamation, issued in the name of General de Gaulle by General Georges Catroux, promising independence to Syria and Lebanon.²⁸⁵

Inhabitants of Syria and Lebanon! At the moment when the forces of Free France, united to the forces of the British Empire, her ally, are entering your territory, I declare that I assume the powers, responsibilities and duties of the representative of France in the Levant. I do this in the name of France, which is the traditional and real France, and in the name of her Chief, General de Gaulle. In this capacity I come to put an end to the mandatory régime and to proclaim you free and independent.²⁸⁶

In spite of the June 1941 proclamation promising independence, Britain had agreed that the Free French should continue to control all the administrative levers in the Levant states, including the the *Troupes Spéciales*, for the tie being, while Britain insured the region's overall military security.²⁸⁷ The Free French, nevertheless, were pathologically afraid of British designs. One issue that particularly irritated the French was the British-funded wheat scheme designed "to maket he Levant selfsufficient in cereal production" which they "denounced... as a British bid to control the Levant by economic means."²⁸⁸ In order to assert French control, General Catroux established an administrative regime in Syria that was no more advanced than those of the early 1930s.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p.587-590.

²⁸⁶ Hourani, *Syria and Lebanon: A Political Essay*, p.241.

²⁸⁷ Khoury, *Syria and the French Mandate: The Politics of Arab Nationalism 1920-1945*, p.594.

²⁸⁸ François Kersaudy, *Churchill and De Gaulle*, (Fontana Press, 1990), p.196.

To Syrian nationalists it gradually became crystallize that the Free French did not purpose to suspend the Mandate before reaching treaties with Syria (and Lebanon) which satisfied French interests. A second French proclamation of independence, by General Catroux, on September 27 was not taken seriously in nationalist circles.

How could it have been when it “excluded all Syrian control of the army or police forces, or the public services, or economic affairs, or communications.”²⁸⁹

Under British pressure, De Gaulle reluctantly restored the constitution of 1936 and allowed the holding of free elections. The National Bloc won the elections of June 1943, Sadallah al-Jabiri became the prime minister and Shukri al-Quwatli was elected as president of Syria. In July 1944, both the Soviet Union and the United States established diplomatic ties and recognized independence of Syria and Lebanon.²⁹⁰ Especially, the recognition of the Soviet Union, newly emerging antiimperialist super power, gave Syria a chance to balance French hegemony and imperialist territorial desings in the Levant.²⁹¹ From 1944 to 1946, Syrian politicians targeted one goal: political independence. Against British and French imperialism, Syrian politicians skillfully cultivated post-war superpowers, the USA and the USSR, neither of them had imperialist record in the Middle East, to gain its independence. Therefore the early Syrian policy towards the superpowers may be described as “ practical nationalist nonalignment.”²⁹² Independence gained because of the nationalist leaders were able to use sovereign rivalries between powers. Eventually, in April 1946, British and

²⁸⁹ Khoury, Syria and the French Mandate: The Politics of Arab Nationalism 1920-1945, p.595.

²⁹⁰ Cleveland and Martin Bunton, A History of the Modern Middle East, p.229-230; Derek Hopwood, p.29.

²⁹¹ Rami Ginat, Syria and the Doctrine of Arab Neutralism: From Independence to Dependence, (Brighton, Portland: Sussex Academic Press), p.29-32.

²⁹² *Ibid.*, p.36-40.

French powers evacuated Syria and also Lebanon in December 1946, and both Syria and Lebanon belong to independent.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

This thesis tried to analyze the French mandate period in Syria and national movement against the Mandate between 1920-1946. This period was significant in order to understand basic continuities and transformations of Syrian political developments. This study focus on to carry out to two main targets. The first target was to clarify the main characteristic of the Syrian political developments – political parties as representation of Arab nationalism and also contribution after the development of Arab nationalism. The second target was to analyze the changes and continuities in politics of notables in Syrian political development. Notables' role was explained as a leadership, how the political organizations - the nationalist movement – was managed and how they created and institutionalized political parties was analyzed.

This study stressed that national political developments- and Arab nationalism- is a continuation as a process from the late Ottoman times through the period of French rule. This process is shaped by important interconnected and interacting elements: the bureaucrats, the landowning and merchant families. These elements had a monopoly over the state and politics during the interwar period. During the Tanzimat period and the French rule, political and governmental changes continued: the foundation of modern institutions, schools, the spread of modern education, ideas and new ideologies, the loosening and shifting of family structure, and the changing and redirection of the Syrian both economic and political structure.

This thesis showed that there was a strong political and social interaction between the state and society. During the Tanzimat period, the state tried to

implement a set of reforms called *Tanzimat*, basically to hinder the dispersion. Relatively, we can say that during the Tanzimat period, the Ottoman Empire was still powerful and had the capability to manage its territories, and thanks to the Tanzimat reforms government affected and reoriented on the society. This thesis marked that in Syria, there was the continuity of socio-political life in a historical perspective. So as to govern like the Ottomans, French had to rely on locally influential notables, who were the main intermediaries between the government and the society and they acted as the main actors in the socio-political and economic life. During both the Ottoman times and the French rule, notables' traditional status in society, their education, their administrative status quo shaped the political culture of Syria. This relationship can be identified as a common-profit based collaboration between the Ottoman and urban provincial notables since the eighteenth century, and has continued during the French rule. The collaboration of the notables with the state created a political culture which depended on changing coalition and foreign patronage. However, the important point to note here is that the collaboration of the notables with the French, unlike the collaboration with the Ottomans, were seen as illegitimate. Therefore, unlike the Ottomans, in Syria, France's position was unstable. And this illegitimacy caused urban notables to try to change the balance of power away from the French. Within this process, the urban notables emerged as important political figures in Syria and became the pioneers of the rising idea of nationalism. It was this nationalism promoted by the urban notables, which shaped and changed the intellectual and political climate in Syria. Especially, two types of nationalism which is territorial and ethno-cultural developed and changed political developments and state formation in Syria. Throughout the thesis, it has been indicated that modernization process during the late Ottoman period and the French mandate caused as a weak state formation, political instability and factionalism in the country.

This thesis displayed that the birth of Arab nationalism under the Ottoman Empire in the second half of the nineteenth century was intimately connected to

the international advancements. Earlier the mandate period, the European powers were already intensely interested in the Arab territories. The age of *nahda* marked cultural activities which resulted in an Arab cultural nationalism pronounced by the Christian Arabs. Paralleling Christian Arabs, Muslim Arab officers of the Ottoman army with Western training, had also established secret societies and organisations, building the politicisation of at the beginning of Arab cultural nationalism.

Throughout the thesis, it has been revealed that urban class transformed the idea of nationalism into a political movement in the early twentieth century. These nationalist leaders were educated in modern professional schools and they had experience in the new branches of the Ottoman administration. This experience played a significant role in the formation of political parties and secret societies of Damascus, Beirut, Cairo, and Paris before the First World War. This was also the case under Faysal's short lived Arab Kingdom. Through the urban political leadership, nationalism was shaped, but the crucial point to note here is that this nationalism was not revolutionary in terms of aiming to change the existing social hierarchies. Indeed, they tried to constitute a balance of power between Syrian society and France, and helped to establish the French control over the society. However, the French rule in Syria was not without opposition. The popular uprising which was the Great Syrian Revolt had revolutionary effects as this revolt formed the path to independence of Syria. The resistance against the mandate and the weak state formation became the most significant determinant of the French mandate policy during this period, which continued into the post-independence period. Nationalism became the backbone of the resistance against the French mandate. Nationalist leaders adopted new patterns of political organization based on secularism and new forms of political association were reinforced between towns and the countryside as well as between different ethnic and religious groups. Significantly, the French Mandate policy affected Syria's political transformation and evolution. Economically as well, the French mandate negatively affected the Syrian economy as there was an inadequate

French financial and commercial commitment and also increased sectarianism aided by French activities.

The French Mandate policy came out low-level of state formation in Syria, caused political instability, factionalism and the rise of the radical middle-class parties in Syria. The separation of the urban upper class into the National Party and the People's Party further promoted to Syria's weak state formation. The conflict between the radical parties and factionalism aggravated in the late 1930s, and also during this time political unrest increased between the religious minorities. The French mandatory administration neglected the Syrian administrative elite and intensified the difference between Syria's Sunni Arab majority and the various minority communities. Additionally, French refused to give the recognized nationalist leadership adequate consideration, denied them the opportunity to obtain experience in ruling and thus the administrative incompetence of the nationalist leaders continued into the independence era. These led to Syria's future state structure and political development and culture. Indeed, the French mandatory administration established higher forms of political organization but most nationalist leaders had failed to transcend their narrow city bases. They could not become national politicians or leaders and their effect remained limited. Moreover the conflict between Aleppo and Damascus during the Mandate period damaged the Syrian politics.

During the 1930s, new political movements appeared in Syria in response to the gradual socio-economic and cultural changes. These movements attempted to bridge the widening gap between the nationalism of the upper classes and the nationalism of popular sentiment. More radical than the National Bloc, they expressed that popular sentiment in a bid to enlarge the base of political activity in Syria. While the war years forced them to disband temporarily and sent their leaders underground and into exile, the war accelerated the forces which they carried. These radicalized movements left their track on the political parties - the politics of nationalism. They abandoned a strong middle-class component. They

were composed of members of the liberal professions and of a nascent industrial bourgeoisie, and were armed with European education and new, sophisticated methods of political organization acquired abroad. They demanded the right to take a more active part in the political process. The most significant and representative of the radicalized organizations to emerge in Syria in the 1930s was the League of National Action and in the 1940s, the Ba'th Party.

And even though the League did not survive the war, it proved to be the ideological parent of the Ba'th Party for the later period and the political organization with the most long-lasting influence on Syrian political developments in the postwar era. The League helped to lay the intellectual and organizational foundations of radical pan-Arabism which the Ba'th Party was to build upon after independence. The League and early Ba'th leadership belonged to the same generation of young Syrian men born between 1900 and 1914 – the beginning of World War I. There was little opportunity for this generation to participate in politics during the Mandate. After World War I, the influential group of disaffected urban notables and middle-class intellectuals, armed with the new idea of Arabism, had emerged on the political stage. After World War II, it was a second generation of Arab nationalists, those left out of politics under the mandate, who were now prepared to come to power.

It must be stated here that army played also a crucial role in Syrian political life. Lowest visible during the Mandate but eventually most disruptive to Syrian politics afterwards was the increasingly politicization of the military. The most significant factor influencing the army's decision to become directly involved in political life was the attitude of urban Sunni leaders towards the military. Since the early nineteenth century, notable families in the towns had a hostile attitude to the military which they regarded as a socially inferior institution. They actively did not encourage their sons to pursue military careers and used their wealth and government connections to secure exemptions. This attitude continued throughout the Mandate and also after the independence period. In

fact, it was only after the mid-1930s, when the possibility of Syrian independence grew, that nationalist leaders started to think more seriously about Syria's institutional future, including the army. And nationalists began to support the sons of the urban elites to pursue military careers by attending the military academy in Homs. But although there was an increase in the percentage of urban Sunni Arabs who became commissioned officers between 1936 and 1945, relations between the officers and the nationalist leadership remained weak and did not improve. These officers came from rather humble backgrounds or from the newly rising middle classes and they mostly resented their civilian leaders.

Nationalist leaders also distrusted the officer corps as, they accused them of serving the French outright, or at least of serving French interests by remaining aloof from the nationalist struggle. Moreover, the French Mandate policy caused the radicalization of the military, and changed its features. By French design, the army developed a strong rural and minority appearance, in which the Alawite community featured mostly. By the end of the Mandate, several infantry battalions in the *Troupes Spéciales* were composed almost completely of Alawites. The French preferred minority and rural recruits for the obvious reason that they were remote from Syria's dominant political ideology, Arab nationalism. Most importantly, the destroyed economic situation of Syria's rural and minority communities made the army a vehicle for their social mobility. In this way, the lower ranks of the army became the preserve of the Alawites, the Druzes, and Sunnis from rural districts. Because Alawites were the largest and the poorest minority community in the country, they were most overrepresented in the army. The Alawite impact, however, was not felt for a full generation after independence. Sunni commissioned officers held the levers of power in the army in the years after independence.

As it was discussed in this thesis, to express their aims, ascendant junior officers from the Alawite and Druze communities and from rural Sunni districts

needed an ideology. Ba'thist ideology provided a framework of ideas which was sufficiently flexible for their purposes. Its program emphasized land reform and more equitable economic measures and it condemned religious sectarianism. After the independence period, these officers began to penetrate the Ba'ath Party through its base in the Syrian Army.

To conclude, continuities from the Ottoman period into the French mandate are important to study in order to understand the evolution of national political parties, nationalism and social organizations in Syria. Especially the the French mandate period between the 1920 – 1946 has played the most crucial role in shaping Syrian political life, its institutionalization as political parties. Throughout history, some periods could be labelled as 'revolutionary', in terms of leaving their mark and shaping a period. In this sense, the period between 1850s – 1940s is significant with the continuities it carries and the changes and transformations that it brings. This period is a 'revolutionary' one for Syrian territories. This thesis by focusing on the continuities and the political transformation from the Ottoman period to the mandate in terms of urban classes, ideologies – Arabism and Arab nationalism – and political institutionalization tried to demonstrate this revolutionary period for Syria.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: TURKISH SUMMARY / TÜRKÇE ÖZET

Bu çalışma 1920-1946 arasında Suriye’de Fransız manda yönetimine karşı milliyetçi hareketleri analiz etmektedir. Çalışma Fransız manda yönetiminin Suriye sosyal ve siyasi yaşamında derin izler bıraktığını belirtmekte, Fransız manda yönetimine karşı oluşmuş muhalefetin siyasi örgütlenmeler aracılığıyla şekillendiği üzerinde durmaktadır. Bu siyasi örgütlenmeleri Osmanlı İmparatorluğu-özellikle Tanzimat sürecinden alarak geçmişlerini irdelemekte, oluşumların siyasi ajandalarını analiz etmektedir. Çalışma siyasi örgütlenmeleri Fransız yönetimine karşı oluşturulmuş temel mücadele-direç sembolü ve aynı zamanda Arap Milliyetçiliğinin gelişim süreci içinde en önemli kanallar olarak bakılması gerektiğini savunmaktadır. Milliyetçi siyasi örgütlenmelerin ve milliyetçiliğin gelişiminde siyasi örgütlenmelerin belirleyiciliğinin yanı sıra bu siyasi örgütlenmelere temel oluşturmuş entelektüel fikir ve yapılarda analiz edilmiştir. Suriye siyasi gelişimi ve milliyetçiliğin oluşumu sürecinde Osmanlı İmparatorluğu döneminden Fransız mandasına siyasi ileri gelenlerde süreklilikler ve değişiklikler göstermektedir. Siyasi seçkinler yapısında ki bu süreklilikler bağımsızlık sonrası Suriye sosyal-siyasi yapısını şekillendirmesi bakımından incelenmiştir.

Bu çalışmanın temel argümanı; Fransız manda yönetimine karşı mücadele boyunca müesseseleşme ve yapıların oluşumunda siyasi partiler temel örgütlenme aracı olarak analiz edilmesidir. Bu tezin varsayımı; bir ülkede ki siyasi sistemi anlamının temel anahtarı siyasi örgütlenmelerdir ve bu nedenle çalışma boyunca Suriye’de siyasi sistemdeki en önemli etken olarak siyasi örgütlenmeler incelenmiştir. Fransız manda yönetiminin Suriye’de bıraktığı kalıtım-miras vurgulanmakta ve siyasal örgütlenmelerin oluşumlarında her

zaman tutarlı bir söylem yaratmadıklarının altı çizilmekte ve fakat milli, sosyal-siyasi, bağımsızlık ve egemenlik meselesinde emperyalizm ve kolonyal güçlere karşı dayanışma gösterdiklerinin üzerinde durulmaktadır. Osmanlı idaresinden Fransız yönetimine süreklilik ve siyasi dönüşümler şehirli ileri gelenler, düşünce yapısı – Arapçılık, Arap Milliyetçiliği – ve siyasi müesseseler Suriye’de devrimsel nitelikte bir süreci gösterir. Suriye’deki bu dönüşüm ve gelişimi anlamak açısından siyasi örgütlenmelerin ne tür yapılar oluşturduklarına, motivasyonlarının, destekleyicilerinin ve kurularının kimler olduğunu ve kişilerin nasıl bir tarihsel bağlam içerinden geldiklerine bakılmıştır.

Bu tez çalışması giriş bölümü ile birlikte yedi bölümden oluşmaktadır. Çalışmanın giriş bölümünde tezin amacı, argümanı, varsayımı ve bu varsayımla ortaya koymak istedikleri, cevap aradığı soruları ihtiva ettiği giriş bölümüdür. Giriş bölümünde çalışmanın metodolojik niteliği de açıklanmaktadır. Bu çalışmada tarihsel analiz ve kronolojik bakış açısı temel alınmıştır. Bağımsızlık ve bağımsızlık sonrası da etki eden süreci analiz edebilme açısından tarihsel süreklilik ve değişim-gelişimleri ortaya koyabilmek geçmişten günümüze süreci doğru okuyup analiz edebilmek için bu yöntem tercih edilmiştir. Çalışmanın birinci bölümünde Osmanlı imparatorluğundan Fransız manda idaresine kadar milliyetçi siyasi örgütlenmeleri doğru okuyup analiz edebilme adına süreklilik ve değişimler konu edilmiştir. 1920-1946 arası Fransız manda idaresi özellikle Suriye’nin siyasi yaşamının şekillenmesi, siyasi yapıların oluşumu ve bu yapıların kurumsallaşması açısından devrimsel bir nitelik taşımaktadır. Fakat bu tarihsel süreci doğru analiz edebilmek amacıyla da bu bölümde Osmanlıdan Fransız mandasına kadar geçen dönemdeki önemli tarihsel noktalara değinilmiştir. Bu bölümde Osmanlı devlet ve toplumunu dönüştüren modernleşme dönemi olarak da tanımlanan Tanzimat sürecine değinilmiştir. Tanzimat süreci olarak adlandırılan 1839-1876 döneminde yönetimin merkezileşmesi ve bu merkezileşmeyle birlikte Osmanlı toplum ve yönetiminde meydana gelen değişim üzerinde durulmuştur. Arap Milliyetçiliğinin nüvelerinin oluştuğu, Arap kültürel uyanışı-“Nahda”nın öncüleri sayılan Hristiyan Araplar

entelektüel ve Müslüman Arap entelektüellerinin fikriyatları analiz edilmiştir. Yine bu bölümde 1876-1914 arası dönemde birinci ve ikinci Meşrutiyet, Sultan Abdülhamid dönemi (1876-1909), Genç Türkler, Türkçülük, pan-İslamizm gibi fikri akımların Osmanlı toprakları, Suriye eyaletinde oluşturduğu yankılara, Genç Türk Devrimi ve İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti'nin eylemlerinin henüz fikri yapılarından Osmanlı merkezi yapısından ayrılmak istemeyen fakat sonradan 'Arap Milliyetçiliği' diye adlandırılacak olan fikriyat ve Arap toplumu üzerindeki etkileri üzerinde durulmuştur. Bu dönemde Arapların kurmuş olduğu 'al-Fatat' ve 'al-Ahd' gibi Birinci Dünya Savaşı ve sonrasında da Arap toplumu üzerinde değişim ve dönüşümler yaratan siyasi örgütlenmeler analiz edilmiştir. Yine birinci bölümde 1. Dünya savaşı (1914-1918) arası dönemde Osmanlı İmparatorluğu, müttefik devletler özellikle İngiltere ve Fransa arasında yapılan anlaşmalara, Şerif Hüseyin ve oğlu Faysal'ın savaş esnasındaki tutumları analiz edilmiştir. 1. Dünya savaşının sona ermesi ve Fransa ve İngiltere arasında yapılan bölüşümlerle Ortadoğu topraklarının şekillenmesi, 1918-1920 yılları arasında kapsayan Amir Faysal'ın kısa süreli Suriye Krallığı, ve al-Fatat ve yine bu dönemde kurulan İstiklal ve Bağımsızlık partileri incelenmiş ve Fransa'nın tam bağımsızlıklarını tanımaması üzerine bu siyasi örgütlenmelerin aldıkları tavırlar analiz edilmiştir.

Çalışmanın ikinci bölümü 1920-1946 Suriye'de Fransız manda döneminde Fransa'nın Suriye'de uyguladığı 'böl ve yönet' politikasını analiz etmektedir. Mandater güç olarak Fransa Suriye'de böl ve yönet politikasının uzantısı olarak yapay-suni bölümlenmeler yapmıştır. Suriye'nin kendi içinde çeşitli küçük devletlere bölünmesi bu devletlerin bazılarının tekrar birleşmesi gibi yerel ve siyasi parçalanmışlıklarla kendi yönetimini kolaylaştırmış olmakla birlikte bölgedeki etnik ve dini bölünmüşlükleri daha da belirginleştirmiş, güçlü bir siyasi bilinç oluşmasını engellemek ve zayıf bir devlet sistemi oluşturmaya yönelik çalışmalara girişmiş olduğu üzerinde durulmaktadır. Cleveland ve Fieldhouse'da belirtildiği gibi Fransa'nın Suriye üzerindeki çıkarları 3 gruba ayrılarak; ekonomik, dini ve stratejik çıkarlar olmak üzere üç grup olarak analiz

edilmiştir. Fransa'nın bölgedeki çıkarlarını koruyabilmek amacıyla bölgedeki Osmanlı İmparatorluğu döneminden itibaren dini ve eğitim faaliyetleri aracılığıyla özellikle bölgedeki Maruniler'in koruyuculuğu rolü ve ticari faaliyetler aracılığıyla bölgede etkili olduğu gösterilmektedir. Ayrıca bu dönemde siyasi seçkinlerin Fransız manda yönetimiyle ilişkilerinde ve Fransızlara karşı duruşlarında ki değişiklik vurgulanmıştır.

Çalışmanın üçüncü bölümü Fransız manda yönetimi ve Arap Milliyetçiliği arasındaki ilişkiyi siyasi gelişmelerin üzerinden analiz eden bir çerçeve sunmaya çalışmıştır. Manda yönetimi döneminde bölgenin ileri gelen ailelerinin özellikle etkili olduğu siyasi seçkinler eliyle siyasi örgütlerin-partilerin oluştuğu ve kurumsallaştığı ve bu siyasi seçkinlerin Arap Milliyetçiliğinin yaratılması sürecindeki rollerinin altı çizilmiştir. Fransız manda yönetimini karşı mücadele ve Arap Milliyetçiliği yerel, bölgesel ve uluslararası konjonktür göz önünde tutularak bir değerlendirme yapılmaya çalışılmıştır. Fransız manda rejimini karşı mücadele – direniş, siyasi örgütlenme ve bağımsızlığa giden süreçte önemli köşe taşlarından biri olarak 1925-1927 isyanları bu isyandaki aktörler, aktörlerin temel motivasyonları, isyandaki çeşitli grupların rolleri yarattıkları etkiler açısından analiz edilmiştir. 1925-1927 isyanı sonrasında kurulan siyasi partilerden “Halk Partisi” ve “Milli Blok” üzerinde özellikle durulmuştur. Bu partilerden; Milli Bloğun kendi içinde çeşitli gruplara ayrışması Fransız manda yönetimiyle kurdukları ilişkiler çerçevesinde de farklılık arz eden tutumları analiz edilmiştir. Suriye siyasi yaşamının belirleyicileri ve yön vericileri olarak özellikle Halk Partisi ve Halk Partisinin Fransız manda rejimiyle ilişkisi, Fransız manda rejiminin halk Partisine tepki olarak desteklediği siyasi oluşum ve çalışmalar incelenmiştir.

Bu bölümde özellikle Milli Blok üzerinde detaylı bir analiz yapılmaya çalışılmış, Milli Blok ve Milli Bloğun yapısı, amaçları, politikaları, sonrasında Milli Blok içerisinde yaşanan ayrılık hareketleri; Halep ve Şam bölünmeleri-, Suriye'nin siyasi yaşamını şekillendirmesi ve bağımsızlığa giden süreçte ve hatta

bağımsızlık sonrası Suriye siyasi yaşamına yön veren öneminden dolayı detaylı bir şekilde analiz edilmeye çalışılmıştır. 1925-1927 olayları gibi, 1928-1936 yılları da Fransız manda yönetimi ve siyasi seçkinler arasında ilişkilerin boyut değiştirmesi, siyasi kültürde meydana gelen değişim-dönüşümler, kolonyal idarenin Suriye'ye karşı tutumu açısından değerlendirilmiş. Anayasa, seçimler ve sonuçları yarattıkları etkileşimler açısından incelenmiştir. Bu bölümde ayrıca bu dönemde kurulan radikal partiler bu siyasi partileri oluşturan kesim özellikle ikinci jenerasyon diye adlandırabileceğimiz eğitimli-kentli kesim ve bu kesimin siyasi örgütlenmesi analiz edilmiştir. 1930lu yıllar boyunca bu yılların temel özelliği milli bütünlük, Suriye'nin bağımsızlığını kazanması siyasi lider, örgütler ve partilerin ana hedefi olmuştur. 1930lu yılların sonuna doğru Fransız manda yönetiminden tam bağımsızlığı kazanmak amacıyla çeşitli çalışmalar yürütülmüş amaç aynı olsa da bağımsızlığı kazanma yollarında örgütler siyasi partiler kullandıkları kanallar ve duruşlarıyla farklılık arz etmişlerdir. 1932 yılında Antun Saadeh tarafından, 1933 yılında genç Arap milliyetçi gençler tarafından kurulan radikal siyasi örgütlenmeler dayandıkları ideolojik temeller bakımından analiz edilmiştir.

Tezin dördüncü bölümünde 1939-1946 arası Suriye siyasi partileri yerel, bölgesel ve uluslararası etkileri ve etkileşimleri ele alınarak analiz edilmiştir. 1939-1946 yılları 2. Dünya Savaşı yılları aralığını da kapsayan dönemler olması sebebiyle bu dönemde uluslararası gelişmelerin Suriye siyasi gelişimine ve dönüşümüne etkileri incelenmiştir. Bağımsızlık sürecine giden etkinliklerin arttığı ve sonunda Fransa manda yönetimin Suriye'yi boşaltması ve Suriye'nin bağımsızlığını elde ettiği 1946 yılına giden süreç analiz edilmiştir. Uluslararası siyaset, özellikle batılı devletlerin -Almanya, Fransa, İngiltere, İtalya-benimsedikleri stratejiler Suriye'nin bağımsızlığına giden yolda önemli roller üstlenmiştir. 1939-1946 yıllarındaki önemli olaylardan; 1936 yılında Fransa ve Suriye arasında anlaşmazlıklar, İskenderun Sancağının Suriye'nin sınırlarından çıkması ve Türkiye sınırlarına dahil olması Suriye'de yaşamın her alanını etkilemiş Fransa-Suriye, Suriye-Türkiye ilişkileri açısından ileri ki dönemlere

kalıcı izler bırakmıştır. Müttefik güçlerin 1941’de işgali Suriye’yi doğrudan İngilizlerle karşı karşıya getirmiş bu karşı karşıya gelme Fransa-Suriye ve İngiltere açısından önemli sonuçlara neden olmuştur. Suriye’de Fransız manda yönetimi boyunca – İngiltere’nin Irak gibi bölgenin çeşitli yerlerinde kurduğu kolonyal hakimiyet ve bu kolonyal hakimiyet boyunca yerel seçkinler- ve çoğunlukla varlıklı ailelerin başını çektiği ilişkiler de kurulan karşılıklı çıkar ilişkileri Suriye’deki siyasi gelişim ve değişimleri anlamak açısından büyük önem taşımaktadır. Bu dönemde Milli Blok İngiltere’nin desteğini almaya çalışmış, İngiltere’nin desteğini almak suretiyle Fransa ile mücadele ve bağımsızlığı elde etme yolunda yeni kanallar geliştirmeye çalışmıştır. İngiltere çeşitli nedenlerle Arap Milliyetçiliğine destek olmuştur.

Sonuç olarak bu çalışma 1920-1946 yılları arasında Suriye’de Fransız manda yönetimi ve bu yönetime karşı oluşan mücadeleyi analiz etmektedir. Bu dönem Suriye siyasi gelişmelerini anlamak açısından temel süreklilik ve elbette değişimleri içermektedir. Çalışmanın iki temel amacı vardır. Bunlardan birincisi Arap Milliyetçiliğine katkısı, Arap Milliyetçiliğinin temsilcisi ve Suriye siyasi yaşamında katalizör görevi gören siyasi örgütlenmeler ve partileri analiz etmektir. Çalışmanın diğer bir amacı ise Suriye siyasi yaşamında başat aktör olan siyasi yerel seçkinleri ve seçkinlerin yönetimle kurdukları ilişkilerdeki değişim ve süreklilikleri analiz etmektir. Çalışmada yerel seçkinler siyasi örgütlenmeler-partilerdeki liderlik rolleriyle ele alınmış aynı zamanda siyasi örgütlenmeleri nasıl oluşturdukları, nasıl yönettikleri, yönetimle kurdukları ilişkiler-çıkart ilişkileri- siyasi partilerin kurumsallaşması sürecindeki rolleri yönüyle analiz edilmiştir. Çalışmada Osmanlı imparatorluğundan manda rejimine siyasi gelişmelerde bir süreklilik olduğunun altı çizilmiştir. Bu süreklilik ve gelişmelerde yön verici rolleriyle Suriye’deki belli başlı aileler ve bu ailelerin Suriye ekonomisi, sosyal yapısı ve de en önemlisi Suriye siyasi hayatına yön verici ilişkileri incelenmiştir.

Bu çalışmada devlet-yönetim ve toplum arasında siyasi ve sosyal olarak güçlü etkileşimler olduğu gösterilmiştir. Osmanlı imparatorluğunda *Tanzimat* dönemi olarak adlandırılan reform-modernleşme süreci merkezde olduğu gibi Mısır ve Suriye gibi Osmanlı devletinin çeşitli eyaletlerinde farklı sonuçlara neden olmuştur. Önemli bir nokta olarak belirtilmiştir ki; Tanzimat sürecinde Osmanlı idaresi güçlü bir yönetimle hala uzak eyaletleri üzerinde etkili olabiliyordu. Bu uzaktan-etkin yönetimde Tanzimat reformlarıyla gelen idari anlayış, farklı etnik ve dini gruplara verilen haklar aracılığıyla toplumda meydana gelen değişikliklerde rol oynamaktaydı. Burada önemli bir husus olarak belirtilen Osmanlı yönetiminde olduğu gibi Fransız manda idaresi de sosyal, ekonomik ve siyasi yaşamda yönetim ve toplum arasında ki ilişkilerin yönetilmesinde –aracı sıfatıyla-yerel seçkinlerden yararlanmaktaydı. Osmanlı ve Fransız idaresinde ortak olan bu ‘aracılık’ her iki tarafında kendi çıkarları doğrultusunda devam ettirilmiştir. Yerel seçkinlerin-aracı rolüyle toplumun değişimi ve gelişimindeki rolü özellikle birinci bölümde ele alınmıştır. Yerel seçkinlerin hem Osmanlı hem de Fransız manda döneminde toplumdaki rolleri, eğitim durumları, yönetimdeki konumları Suriye siyasi yaşamını şekillendirmiştir. Burada önemli bir nokta olarak vurgulanan; yönetim ve toplum arasındaki aracı rolleri hem Osmanlı hem de Fransız manda yönetimi döneminde devamlılık gösterse de Fransız manda yönetimiyle kurulan bu ilişki ve iş birliği –Osmanlılardan farklı olarak meşru olarak kabul edilmemiştir. Arap Milliyetçiliğinin öncülleri olarak kabul edilen bu yerel seçkinler Osmanlı yönetimine karşı kendilerini “diğer”-“diğeri” olarak tanımlamazken Fransızlara karşı kendilerini “diğer” olarak tanımlamış ve ilişkilerini bu “diğeri” tanımı üzerinden sürdürmüştür. Osmanlı idaresiyle kıyaslandığında meşru görülmeyen ve diğeri olarak tanımlanan Fransa manda yönetimi karşısında şehirli seçkinler diye tanımladığımız kesim Suriye siyasi gelişiminde aktör olarak daha fazla önem kazanmıştır. Milliyetçilik fikrinin gelişiminde ve yükselişinde şehirli seçkinler dediğimiz bu kesim öncü rolü oynamıştır. Milliyetçilik fikri de gelişirken özellikle iki tip milliyetçilik; toprak parçasına dayalı ve etnik-kültürel milliyetçilik olarak gelişim göstermiş, Suriye’nin devlet yapısı-idari yapısını şekillendirmiştir. Çalışma boyunca

Osmanlı İmparatorluğunun son yıllarında yoğunlaşmış ve Fransız manda yönetimi boyunca devam eden moderleşme sürecinin Suriye’de zayıf bir devlet yapısına neden olduđu, siyasi istikrarsızlık ve gruplaşma-hizipleşmelere neden olduđu ve bu durumun manda yönetimi boyunca devam etmekle birlikte bağımsızlık sonrası dönemde aktarıldığı - bağımsızlık sonrası Suriye’nin siyasi yaşamı üzerine etkilerinin devam ettiđi vurgusu yapılmıştır.

Çalışmada aynı zamanda Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda özellikle 19.yüzyılın ikinci yarısında doğduđu-tohumlarının bu dönemde atıldığı ortaya konan Arap Milliyetçiliğinin uluslararası gelişmelerle yakından ilişkili olduđu gösterilmektedir. Manda yönetimlerinden öncede Avrupalı güçlerin özellikle Fransa ve İngiltere’nin yoğun bir şekilde Arap topraklarıyla ilgileri-iletişimleri olduđu görülmekte ve ortaya konmaktadır. “*Nahda*” olarak işaret edilen kültürel faaliyetlerin Arap kültürel Milliyetçiliğinin filizlenmesinde ve gelişim göstermesinde başat rol üstlendiđi bu noktada da Hristiyan Arapların rolünün daha fazla olduđu görülmektedir. Hristiyan Araplar çalışmada belirtildiđi gibi özellikle Fransa, İngiltere gibi güçlerin koruyuculuđu altında Avrupa devletleriyle daha fazla ilişki içerisinde olmuş, eğitim, misyonerlik faaliyetleri, üniversiteler ve ticaret gibi kanallar aracılığı ile dışarı ile daha fazla etkileşim halinde olmuştur. Hristiyan Arapların yanı sıra Tanzimat diye adlandırdığımız özellikle belli alanlarda yoğunlaşan modernleşme faaliyetleri sonucu Müslüman Arap memurlarda Osmanlı ordusunda yer almış-batılı eğitim süreçlerinden geçmiştir. Özellikle 1909 sonrasında Araplar gizli örgütlenmeler ve organizasyonlar aracılığıyla Arap kültürel milliyetçiliğinin siyasallaşmasında rol oynamışlardır. Arap Milliyetçiliğinin erken dönemleri diyebileceğimiz bu dönemde- 1913 de Paris’de toplanan Arap Kongresinde Arap Milliyetçiliđi süregelen Osmanlı politikalarından özellikle İttihat ve Terakki Partisinin çalışmalarından, ideolojik akımlardan –Osmanlıcılık, İslamcılık, Türkçülük gibi – özellikle Türkçülük akımdan ve izlenen politikaya dair hoşnutsuzluklarını dile getirmişlerdir. Fakat bu noktada önem arz eden husus Osmanlı devletinin yürüttüđu politikalarından her ne kadar hoşnut olmasalarda bu dönemde Arap

Milliyetçileri kendilerini hala Osmanlı çatısı altında tanımlamakta Osmanlı yönetiminden ayrılmak – bağımsızlık gibi fikirler geliştirmemekte daha fazla yönetimde yer almak adem-i merkezîyet taleplerini dile getirmektedir. Bu dönemde Arap milliyetçiliği siyasi olarak yeterince güçlü değildir. Arap Milliyetçiliği ve Genç Türkler arasında fikir ayrılıkları zamanla artmış ve bu ayrılıklar 1. Dünya Savaşında- 1916 yılında Arap İsyanı olarak adlandırılan İngilterenin desteği ve vaatleriyle Osmanlı devletine karşı cephe alışı iyiden iyiye belirginleşmiştir.

1918-1920 yıllarında Suriye’de Arap İsyanı önderi Şerif Hüseyin’in oğlu Faysal’ın kısa süreli krallığı döneminde de Şam, Beyrut, Kahire ve Paris’de kurulmuş olan gizli örgütlenmeler ve organizasyonlar önemli rol oynamışlardır. Faysal’ın yönetimini tanımayan ve Suriye’nin bağımsızlığına karşı Fransız mandasına gösterilen tepkiler içerisinde 1925-1927 Arap isyanı sonrasındaki etkileri açısından bir dönüm noktasını oluşturmaktadır. Arap isyanından sonra Halk Partisi kurulmuş ve bu partinin çalışmalarına karşı Fransa’nın desteklediği karşıt siyasi örgütleneler oluşmuştur. 1929 yılında kurulan bağımsızlığa giden yolda etkin rol oynayan Milli Blok Fransa manda yönetimi ile yakından ilişkilerini sürdürmüş, yönetim ve toplum arasında aracı rolü oynamıştır. 1930lu yıllarda uluslararası ve yerelde gerçekleşen büyük ekonomik ve kültürel değişimler sonucu toplumdaki katmanlar arası farklar daha da belirginleşmiştir. Ekonomik krizler ve kültürel değişimler Milli Blok içerisinde bölünmelere yol açmış, yeni siyasi hareketler için zemin hazırlanmıştır. 1932, 1933 ve 1939 yıllarında kurulan radikal partiler geliştirdikleri söylemlerle 1940’lı yıllarda Mişel Eflak ve Selahaddin Bitar tarafından kurulan, yeniden doğuş anlamına gelen Baas Partisi bağımsızlık sonrası Suriye siyasi gelişimine yön vermiştir.

2. Dünya Savaşının başlaması Suriye siyasi gelişimini doğrudan etkilemiştir. Savaş Suriye’nin bağımsızlığa giden sürecini hızlandırmış, ekonomik ve sosyal olarak da ülke içinde ki siyasi güçlerin bir araya gelmesini, bağımsızlığı kazanma, Fransız manda yönetimine karşı birlikte hareket etmelerini sağlamıştır.

Uluslararası ve yereldeki gelişmeler ve de İngiltere'nin desteğiyle 1946 yılında Suriye bağımsızlığını elde etmiştir. 1920-1946 arası Suriye siyasi gelişimi ve değişimi, yapıların oluşum ve kurumsallaşması süreci açısından devrimsel bir nitelik taşımaktadır. Bu anlamda çalışma boyunca 1850'li yıllardan 1940'lı yılların ortasına kadar devam eden süreçteki süreklilik ve değişimleri görebilmek, Osmanlı imparatorluğundan manda yönetimine kadar geçen süreçteki şehirli seçkinler ve üstlendikleri roller, Arapçılık, Arap Milliyetçiliği ve Suriye'deki kurumsallaşma sürecini analiz edebilmek amacıyla tarihsel bir bakış açısı ve kronolojik bir yol haritası izlenmiştir.

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FRENCH RULE IN MANDATE SYRIA: 1920-1946

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