Collapse of Empire: Ottoman Turks and the Arabs in the First World War

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Preface

This dissertation is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration except where specifically indicated in the text, footnotes and bibliography. This dissertation does not exceed 25.000 words in length.

I should like to thank, first of all, my supervisor Dr. Kate Fleet for her guidance and support during the preparation of this dissertation.

I am also indebted to Dr. Baskın Oran, Dr. Mustafa Aydın, Dr. İlhan Uzgel and Anıl Kayalar for their very beneficial feedback about my dissertation.

I must also thank the staff of TBMM Kütüphanesi (The Library of The Turkish Grand National Assembly) for providing me with copies of Tanin newspaper in the digital environment.

Nuri Yeşilyurt
Wolfson College
Note on Transliteration

Modern Turkish renderings are used for the names of the Turkish individuals, organizations, books, places etc.

The transliteration system that is used for Arabic words is as follows:

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## Abbreviations

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
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<tr>
<td>BCR</td>
<td>Beirut Committee of Reform</td>
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<tr>
<td>BOA</td>
<td>Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi</td>
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<tr>
<td>CUP</td>
<td>Committee of Union and Progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DH.EUM.</td>
<td>Dahiliye Nezareti Emniyet-i Umumiye Müşteri Müdürlüğü</td>
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<tr>
<td>DH.KMS.</td>
<td>Dahiliye Nezareti Kalem-i Mahsus Müşteri Müdürlüğü</td>
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<tr>
<td>DH.ŞFR.</td>
<td>Dahiliye Nezareti Şifre Kalesi</td>
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<td>FO</td>
<td>Foreign Office</td>
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<td>HC</td>
<td>High Commissioner</td>
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<tr>
<td>İMU</td>
<td>Meclis-i Umumi İrâdeleri</td>
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<td>LEP</td>
<td>Liberty and Entente Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>PRO</td>
<td>Public Record Office</td>
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Introduction

The Arabs had been an important element of the Ottoman Empire until its de facto collapse by the end of the First World War. This war, on the one hand, formed the last stage of the demise of the Ottoman Empire, and, on the other, symbolized the last years of four centuries co-habitation of the Turks and the Arabs within the same Islamic Empire. Therefore, a closer analysis of Turkish-Arab relations in this period is of great importance for an in-depth understanding of the circumstances and the dynamics that resulted in a break between the two peoples.

The Arab movements and Anglo-Arab relations in the First World War period have attracted much scholarly attention.¹ Scholarship, however, has tended to ignore Turkish-Arab relations in this period, and such research combining Turkish and western sources has yet to develop.² Therefore, this dissertation seeks to investigate the war-time relations between the Ottoman Turks and the Arabs from the viewpoint of the Ottoman government, as reflected in its policies in the Arab provinces and the reaction of the Arabs to these policies.

In order to look at Ottom an-Arab relations in the Great War from an Ottoman point of view, it is essential to consult Ottoman/Turkish primary sources besides the western ones. Accordingly, the Ottoman Ministry of the Interior documents are very useful for enabling us to see how the imperial centre (İstanbul) viewed and transformed its periphery (Arab provinces). Furthermore, the memoirs of Ottoman army and civil officers who served in the Arab provinces during the war years, such as Cemal Paşa, the Commander-in-Chief of the Fourth Army, Ali Fuat (Erden), the Chief of General Staff in the Fourth Army, Mahmud Nedim Bey, the governor of Yemen, Naci Kâşif (Kıçıman), an intelligence officer in Medina, and Feridun Kandemir, a Red Crescent officer in Medina, gives us invaluable data about Ottoman-Arab relations as viewed by Turkish officers. In addition, Tanin newspaper, the unofficial mouthpiece of the Committee of Union and Progress, is very helpful to understand the discourse of the government referring both to its policy in the Arab provinces, and the Arab movements within the Ottoman Empire.

Among the western sources, the British archives have a special importance for the investigation of the subject. Being an enemy of the Ottoman Empire in the First World War,


² One recent work which does cover this area, using both Turkish and western sources is Hasan Kayali, Arabs and Young Turks Ottomanism, Arabism, and Islamism in the Ottoman Empire, 1908-1918, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1997. Yet, being more focused on the 1908-1914 period, Kayali’s work does not provide us with a thorough understanding of Turkish-Arab relations during the war years.
and having influence and interest in its Arab provinces, Britain was very much concerned with the Ottoman policy in the Arab provinces, and thus, British sources, though not always objective, have much to say about Ottoman-Arab relations. The British Foreign Office documents, and particularly, Jidda Agency papers, the correspondence of Egypt and the Arab Bureau, where the Arab movements in Arabia were generally directed from during the war years, include valuable data referring to Ottoman-Arab relations in the First World War. British newspapers, such as The Times, are also significant to see the Ottoman policy in the Arab provinces, and the Arab movements in general from the viewpoint of the enemy press. Furthermore, memoirs of British and French officials, such as Ronald Storrs, the Oriental Secretary in the British Residency in Cairo, Édouard Brémond, the Head of French Military Mission in the Hijaz, and T. E. Lawrence, a British intelligence officer, are useful for enabling us to look at the subject from the eyes of British and French officers.

Relying on Ottoman/Turkish sources in addition to the western ones, the main aim of this dissertation is the examination of the evolution of the Ottoman policies towards the Arabs, and the ramifications and the repercussions of these policies for the course of Ottoman-Arab relations in the First World War. Contrary to the general view, which was mainly shaped by the well-advertised, and thus, well-known revolt of Sharif Husayn, the Ottomans were not necessarily in hostile relations with all Arabs within the Ottoman boundaries during the First World War. Ottoman-Arab relations in fact underwent different evolutions and thus presented different features in every region during the war. Yet, in the end, there was no reaction of the Arabs as a whole against the Ottoman Empire, and all uprisings that erupted in the Arab provinces in this period were of tribal or local nature.

The most important factors that affected the Ottoman policy, and thus, the course of Ottoman-Arab relations in almost every Arab province in the First World War were the requirements of the war for the Ottomans, and the growing British influence in the region. Since the Ottoman policy in the Arab provinces was generally formulated according to the necessities of the war, it mainly aimed at maintaining the full support of the local people and leaders against the enemy powers by various means. This policy developed differently in every region, and its consequences also differed from region to region, yet did not present a total failure that drove all the Arabs against the government. Apart from this, the war-time strategies and designs of the Entente Powers, especially Britain, in the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire, and their mounting military and economic influence in these regions made the course of relations more complex, so that under these circumstances, Ottoman-Arab relations were not only a matter of Ottoman internal politics but also a matter of struggle.
between the Ottomans and the British to win over local tribes and leaders by bribery and propaganda.

This dissertation presents the subject on a regional basis. Before analysing the regions specifically, however, the first chapter sets out the historical and ideological background describing the political atmosphere in the Ottoman Empire from the beginning of the Second Constitutional Period in 1908 up to the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, and the development of the Arab movements and the idea of Arabism within the Ottoman Empire in the same period.

The Syrian region (including Lebanon and Palestine) is examined in the second chapter. Firstly, as the most important political and military figure in the region during the war years, Cemal Paşa, and the evolution of his policy is analysed in this chapter. In this context, the effects of the Ottoman policy on the local people and their reactions to the Ottoman administration are examined. Lastly, the real causes of the famine, from which the Syrian region suffered during the war years and for which the Ottoman government has generally been considered responsible by western contemporaries, are explained in this chapter.

The third chapter comprises the Hijaz region which is of utmost importance within the context of Ottoman-Arab relations due to the outbreak of a rebellion that was successful in driving the Ottomans out the region. First of all, the evolution of the government policy in the Hijaz just before and after the outbreak of the war is examined in this chapter. Secondly, the Emir of Mecca Sharif Husayn’s contacts with both the British and the Ottomans are set out along with the political climate that led him revolt against the Ottomans. Thirdly, the structure of the revolt of Sharif Husayn and particularly, the problematic of whether it represented a total reaction or was only a local reaction is examined. Finally the Ottoman reaction to the revolt and implications of these reactions in Ottoman-Arab relations is analysed in this chapter.

Other Arab regions in the Ottoman Empire are analysed in the fourth chapter. The structure of Ottoman-Arab relations in Najd, Yemen and Iraq as reflected in the Ottomans’ relations with the local leaders during the war years, and the impact of the British influence on these relations are examined in this chapter.
Chapter I: The Ottoman Empire before the Great War

A. Political Situation

By the early twentieth century, growing opposition to Sultan Abdülhamit II had reached its zenith, especially among the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) (İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti) members, most of whom were Ottoman army officers serving in Thrace and Macedonia. Non-payment of troops and delays in their demobilization were the main factors which caused discontent in the army. Furthermore, the Reval meeting in 1908 between the monarchs of Britain and Russia was interpreted by most of the dissident Ottoman Army officers as a prelude to Great Power intervention in Macedonia to deal with what was described as anarchy in the region. Concerned over the implications of the Reval meeting and the fear of detection by Sultan Abdülhamit’s agents, the CUP immediately started an insurrection which resulted in the restoration of the 1876 Constitution (Kanun-i Esasi) on 24 July 1908. The revolution was welcomed with great enthusiasm by all Ottoman subjects, and, in November-December 1908 the first parliamentary elections were held, in which the CUP-backed candidates won a vast majority of the seats.

The optimistic atmosphere of the second constitutional regime, however, came to an end with the following years’ conflicts and confrontations inside and outside the Empire. The years of catastrophe started with the counterrevolutionary reaction on 13 April 1909 (31 Mart Vak’ası). After the Action Army (Hareket Ordusu) put down this coup attempt, Abdülhamit II was forced to abdicate in favour of Mehmet V (Reşat) on 27 April 1909, and, increasing pressure was now applied to the opponents of the regime.

The army gained considerable power in the wake of the suppression of the counterrevolutionary reaction. Constitutional changes were introduced to ensure a fully effective constitutional system, and measures were introduced to strengthen the central authority and curb individual freedoms. In November 1911, nearly all opposition groups and parties were united in the Liberty and Entente Party (LEP) (Hürriyet ve İtilâf Fırkası). Although the notorious elections in spring 1912, known as “the elections with the stick” (sopalı seçimler), resulted in the victory of the CUP-backed candidates, the new Parliament

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5 Three main actors played a significant role in the organization of the counterrevolutionary reaction. The Liberal Party (Ahrar Fırkası), the main opposition party founded by Prens Sabahattin in September 1908; ulemâ; and, non-educated army officers (alaylı), who had risen through the ranks and had been dismissed or demoted by educated army officers (mektepli) after the CUP Revolution. For more information on the counterrevolutionary reaction, see Sina Akşin, *31 Mart Olayı*, Ankara, Sevinç, 1970, pp. 223-293.
lacked any legitimacy in the eyes of the opposition. Throughout the following months, the CUP was unable to maintain political stability in the country. It began to lose its control over the Parliament, and thus, a clash developed between the government and the CUP.6

In the critical years following the CUP Revolution, the Empire suffered large territorial losses. Bulgaria declared its independence on 22 September 1908; the Austro-Hungarian Empire annexed Bosnia-Herzegovina on 5 October 1908 and Italy invaded Tripoli in 1911. Furthermore, in October 1912, Balkan states (Montenegro, Greece, Serbia and Bulgaria) declared war on the Ottomans. The war was a disaster for the Empire, so that it was defeated on all fronts, and lost almost all of her Balkan territories including the city of Edirne which had been the second capital of the Empire before the conquest of İstanbul in 1453.7

The impact of the Balkan War on the internal politics of the Ottoman Empire was considerable. With the Balkan states approaching İstanbul and the cabinet unable to function effectively, CUP leaders, who had not so far openly taken power, staged a coup d’état on 23 January 1913 (Bâb-i Áli Baskını) and took direct control of the Empire.8 The key figures in the coup, Enver Paşa, Talât Paşa and Cemal Paşa, later became the Minister of War, the Minister of the Interior and the Minister of the Navy respectively.

Although a considerable majority of the Ottoman Parliament was in favour of neutrality while the conflicts were escalating in Europe on the eve of the Great War, it was the idea of CUP headquarters that the Empire could only survive by standing on the side of a Great Power. The Great War started in Europe in July 1914. In the immediate pre-war period (mid-July 1914), the Minister of the Navy Cemal Paşa made an overture to France for a possible alliance, but was rejected due to French concerns over their agreement with Russia in 1894. Shortly after, Talât Paşa proposed an alliance to Russia, but, was rebuffed. Finally, CUP headquarters decided to approach Germany, and, the Minister of War Enver Paşa met with Hans von Wangenheim, the German ambassador in İstanbul, on 22 July 1914.9

Germany’s close relations with the Ottoman Empire had started in 1881 with Colmar von der Goltz’s military mission, and were strengthened by Kaiser Wilhelm II’s official visit to İstanbul in 1889. The enhancement of relations was favourable to both sides. Germany, as a

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7 Disputes among the Balkan states over the share of the lands seized from the Ottomans during the Balkan War caused the Second Balkan War. The Ottoman Army under the command of Enver Paşa took advantage of this conflict and captured Edirne back from Bulgaria in July 1913.
8 The coup was not due solely to defeat in the Balkan War, but had been planned as the CUP began to lose influence over the government and came under firm opposition under the Grand Vizierate of Kâmil Paşa see Zürcher, *Turkey*, p. 112; Ahmad, *Young*, p. 116.
terrestrial state with almost no colonies, was keen to ensure Ottoman “friendship” for economic penetration as well as to maintain a strategic position against the British colonies in Asia. For the Ottomans, the Germany was a “more reliable” Great Power, considering Russia’s obvious aspirations over the Bosphorus and the British occupation of Cyprus in 1878 and Egypt in 1882.

From 22 July to 2 August, secret negotiations were held between German and Ottoman officials, and, an alliance was finally signed on 2 August 1914. After the German warships Goeben and Breslau’s epic journey to Istanbul, the Ottoman Empire approached one step closer to the war. On 22 October, Enver Paşa submitted his war plan to Germany: Goeben and Breslau accompanied by Ottoman ships would initiate attacks on Russia, followed by a defensive military operation in the Caucasus while an expeditionary force would advance against the Suez Canal. On 25 October 1914, although the Sublime Porte was still not in consensus about joining the war, Enver Paşa ordered warships to commence hostilities against Russia. On 2 November Russia declared war on the Ottomans, followed by Britain and France. The war officially started for the Ottoman Empire on 11 November 1914, when Sultan Mehmet V (Reşat) declared jihad against the Entente Powers.

**B. Arabism in the Ottoman Empire before 1914**

Until 1914, Arabism in the Ottoman Empire represented a movement against a long-established corrupt system, rather than a fully-fledged nationalism. In this sense, the overwhelming majority of Arabist thinkers, and societies alike, did not explicitly express any

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11 It should also be noted that Abdülhamit II’s (Pan-) Islamism policy seemed appealing to Germany since she regarded this factor as potentially useful against the British due to the large Muslim population in British colonies. İlber Ortaylı, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu’nda Alman Nüfuzu*, Istanbul, İletişim Yayınları, 2002, p. 50.


13 For details of the alliance agreement, see Zürcher, *Turkey*, p. 117; Shaw, *History*, pp. 310-311; Trumpener, *Germany*, p. 16.


However, by 1914, there was, if not a separatist Arab nationalist movement, a strong consciousness of Arabness among the Arab intellectuals. In the post-CUP Revolution era, a number of ideological and political factors played important roles in the development of Arabism as a reaction to the corrupt Ottoman system.

The first ideological factor that contributed to the development of Arabism in this period was the growth of Turkism as an intellectual movement. After 1908, many new Turkist thinkers appeared, such as Ziya Gökalp, Halide Edip, Köprülüzade Fuat, Yahya Kemal, Hamdullah Suphi, and several Turkist societies came into existence as a new group of actors in the Ottoman cultural and political life. In 1909, Türk Derneği (Turkish Society) was formed as a cultural society. Afterwards, it was transformed into Türk Yurdu Cemiyeti (Turkish Homeland Society) in 1911 and Türk Yurdu (Turkish Homeland) was published as the periodical of the society under the editorship of Yusuf Akçura and Ahmet Ağaoğlu. Meanwhile, Genç Kalemler (Young Pens), a literary organization with Turkist trends, was established in 1911 in Salonica (Thessaloniki) with the principal aim of simplification of the Ottoman Turkish. Finally, in 1912, Türk Ocağı (Turkish Hearth) was founded and quickly opened several branches in the provinces of the Empire. By organizing several literary and cultural activities, it significantly contributed to the awareness of Turkishness among Turkish speaking Ottoman subjects. Although the CUP appeared to have remained wary of the policy of (Pan-) Turkism, at least until the end of the Balkan Wars in 1913, the more explicit expression of Turkism by Turkish intellectuals caused reaction among the Arab intellectuals, who started to feel themselves left behind in the discussions concerning the future of the Empire.

The second ideological factor that contributed to the development of Arabism was the failure of the policy of Ottomanism adopted by the CUP. Until 1908, the officially sponsored

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17 Shaw, *History*, pp. 301, 309; Sina Akşin, *Ana Çizgileryle Türkiye’ nin Yakın Tarihi 1789-1980*, Ankara, İmaj Yayıncılık, 1998, p. 77. Among these new thinkers of the period, Ziya Gökalp rapidly became the major theoretician on the making of the ideological basis of Turkism. He was also a member of the executive council of the CUP and his ideas affected the policies of CUP leaders considerably. For more information on Gökalp’s life and philosophy, see Ziya Gökalp, *Turkish Nationalism and Western Civilization*, translated by Niyazi Berkes, London, George Allen and Unwin Ltd, 1959, passim.
ideology of the Ottoman Empire was (Pan-) Islamism, which overshadowed the nationalist ideas within the Empire for a long time. After the revolution in 1908, the main concern of the CUP was the salvation of the multinational empire, and thus, CUP leaders, who were either soldiers or bureaucrat cum politicians rather than ideologues, considered the policy of Ottomanism, which embraced all subjects of the Empire regardless of their ethnicity and religion, as the best instrument in coping with the current problems of the country. Ottomanism, however, could no longer hope to be effective after the Albanian Revolt (1910-1912) and the Balkan Wars (1912-1913). While the former demonstrated the unwillingness of a Muslim community to live in the Empire, the latter resulted in the loss of the last predominantly Christian territory of the Empire, the Balkans. The Ottoman Empire thus lost most of its Christian population and became a mainly Muslim Empire composed principally of Turks, Arabs and Kurds. Although the CUP leaders, as pragmatic politicians, tried to place greater emphasis on Turkism and Islamism interchangeably as instruments with which to hold the remainder of the Empire together, in the end, they failed to use either policy effectively, and, this lack of a dominant ideology provided a suitable space for the development of Arabism.

The political factors that contributed to the development of Arabism were the policy of reform and centralization adopted by the CUP. Many reforms, though ineffective, were introduced, such as simplification of the Ottoman language and its wider use in religious affairs instead of Arabic; secularisation of the education and judicial system; amelioration of the position of women; execution of a more liberal press policy; and improvement of the economic situation of Muslims vis-à-vis non-Muslims in the Empire. Combined with a strict centralization policy, these reforms led to the intense influence of the dominant people within the Empire, the Turks, over the other peoples, a process which was also described as Turkification. This situation eventually caused discontent among the Arab subjects of the Ottoman Empire, who complained about discrimination against the Arabs in the public sphere, and thus, a reaction to the central government and awareness of Arabness began to develop more vigorously especially among the Arab intellectuals.

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20 The CUP used (Pan-) Turkism to appeal to the sentiments of Turks under the Russian Empire during the Great War. (Pan-) Islamism was also used (i.e. by declaring jihad) to gain the support of the Muslim population in British and French colonies. See Zürcher, *Turkey*, pp. 134-135.


22 The main policies about which Arab intellectuals generally complained included: misrepresentation of the Arabs in the 1908 Parliament; election of Turkish candidates from the Arab provinces; stipulation of an ability in Turkish as a requirement for deputies (Constitution, Article 68); promulgation of the official language of the state as Turkish; requirement to use Turkish in all courts of the Empire; execution of all state correspondence and official memoranda in Turkish (CUP’s political programme 1908, Article 7); teaching of Turkish as a
In this political and ideological climate, the idea of Arabism was expressed more explicitly by Arab intellectuals and became an active part of Ottoman social and political life. Related to this, the number of Arabic newspapers increased dramatically in the post-1908 period. While there were no Arabic journals published in Istanbul in 1907, 7 new journals appeared in 1909. Likewise, while there were 20 Arabic journals throughout the Empire in 1907, this number rose to 67 in 1909.23 After 1908, the number of the Arab societies soared substantially as well. Among many societies founded in the Ottoman Empire in this period, the most important ones were Al-Muntada al-Adabi (The Literary Club) and Al-Jam’iyya al-‘Ahd (Covenant Society).24

Al-Muntada al-Adabi was founded by a group of Arab students in the summer of 1909 in Istanbul. ‘Abd al-Karim al-Khalil soon became the most prominent figure as the president of the club. Its main objectives were cultural and educational rather than political or religious.25 Hence, until its self-closure in 1915, it had the confidence and support of the government as an accommodating actor in the improvement of Turkish-Arab relations. However, the fact that many of the society’s members guided or led the future Arab movement shows its importance in the development of the idea of Arabism.26

Al-Jam’iyya al-‘Ahd was formed on 28 October 1913 in Istanbul by Aziz ‘Ali al-Misri, an Ottoman Army officer. It was established as a secret society and its membership included Arab army officers exclusively. Its aims were federalist, such as converting the Ottoman Empire into a dual (Turco-Arab) monarchy, along the lines of the model of the Austro-


25 However, according to the confession of ‘Abd al-Ghani al-‘Urayisi, the owner of Al-Mufid newspaper, the secret aim of the society was “to work for independence of the Arabs with foreign support, even this might cause foreign invasion and protection.” Dördüncü Ordu-u Hümayûn (Fourth Army), Aliye Divân-ı Harb-ı ÖrFisinde Tedkik Olunan Mesele-i Siyasîye Hakkinda İzahât, İstanbul, Tanın Matbaası, 1332, p. 6.

Hungarian Empire.\textsuperscript{27} After the detention of al-Misri in February 1914 and his ensuing release and departure to Egypt in April 1914, \textit{Al-‘Ahd} was transformed into an open society, under the name, \textit{Al-Jam‘iyya al-Suriyya al-‘Arabiyya} (The Syrian Arab Society) in Cairo and then merged with the Ottoman Administrative Decentralization Party.\textsuperscript{28}

There were two other societies that were founded outside the Empire and held a significant place in the Arabist movement in this period: \textit{Al-Jam‘iyya al-‘Arabiyya al-Fatat} (The Young Arab Society) and \textit{Hizb al-Lamarkaziyya al-Idariyya al-‘Uthmani} (The Ottoman Administrative Decentralization Party).\textsuperscript{29} The former was founded in Paris on 14 November 1909 as a secret society by a group of Arab students, among whom the leading figure was Tawfiq al-Natur. Its objective, as written in its by-laws, was “to awaken the Arab nation and raise it to the level of energetic nations.”\textsuperscript{30} \textit{Al-Lamarkaziyya} was established in 1912 by Syrian, Lebanese and Palestinian émigrés in Cairo and subscribed to the idea of decentralization while supporting the unity of the Ottoman Empire. It was known to be in cooperation with the Liberty and Entente Party in order to introduce a more decentralist administration to the Ottoman Empire.\textsuperscript{31}

Perhaps the most significant activity of the Arab reformers in the pre-1914 period was the convening of the Beirut Committee of Reform (BCR) on 12 January 1913 by the Muslim and Christian notables of the city.\textsuperscript{32} Shortly after its third meeting on 31 January 1913, the committee issued its reform programme which included autonomous rights for the Syrian region.\textsuperscript{33} In March 1913, in order to satisfy these decentralist demands; the government promulgated a new provincial law, which strengthened the representative bodies in the provinces. Yet, the committee was not satisfied with the new law. Finally, on 8 April 1913, the governor of Beirut Hazım Paşa dissolved the BCR and arrested its leaders.

In July 1913, the centre of the reform movement was shifted to Paris where an Arab Congress was held between 18 and 24 July 1913, as a result of the endeavours of \textit{Al-Fatat} and

\begin{table}
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|}
\hline
\textbf{Year} & \textbf{Event} \\
\hline
1909 & \textit{Al-Jam‘iyya al-‘Arabiyya al-Fatat} founded in Paris \\
1912 & \textit{Al-Lamarkaziyya} established in Cairo \\
1913 & Beirut Committee of Reform convened \\
1913 & Arab Congress held in Paris \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{table}

\textsuperscript{28} Dördüncü, \textit{İzahât}, pp. 20-21.  
\textsuperscript{29} \textit{Al-Nahda al-Lubnaniyya} (The Lebanese Revival) a Lebanon-based society, which aimed at annexation of Beirut to Mount Lebanon, was also very active abroad with its branches in Egypt, France, the United States and Brazil. See Tauber, \textit{Emergence}, pp. 70-89; Dördüncü, \textit{İzahât}, pp. 26-28.  
\textsuperscript{30} Duri, \textit{Historical}, p. 226. While Antonius argues that \textit{Al-Fatat} worked for the independence of the Arabs, Zeine, with reference to the words of al-Natur, claims that the objective of the society was to provide the same rights and obligations for the Arabs in the Empire as Turks and to bring about an Empire composed of two great nations, the Turks and the Arabs. See Antonius, \textit{Awakening}, p. 111; Zeine, \textit{Arab-Turkish}, p. 82.  
\textsuperscript{31} Dördüncü, \textit{İzahât}, p. 44.  
\textsuperscript{32} The committee was composed of 86 delegates and the Christians were represented equally with the Muslims. Kayal, \textit{Arabs}, p. 129; Zeine, \textit{Arab-Turkish}, p. 87.  
\textsuperscript{33} Some of these demands were adoption of Arabic as an official language; the placing of the army, customs, post, telegraph, legislation under local control; all internal affairs to be under the General Council of the province, which could depose the governor by a two-thirds majority vote. See Zeine, \textit{Arab-Turkish}, p. 87.
The demands expressed in the congress did not constitute any separatist aims but rather urged the need for reform in the Empire. The CUP sent a delegation to the congress under the leadership of Mithat Şükrü, and, after a series of negotiations between the CUP leaders and the Arab reformers such as ‘Abd al-Karim al-Khalil and ‘Abd al-Hamid Zahrawi, an agreement was reached over carrying out reform in the administration of the Arab provinces and appointment of some Arab notables to high rank government jobs. Afterwards, although the government partly implemented this agreement, it was not enough to satisfy the autonomous demands of the Arab reformers fully.

C. Administrative Map of the Arab Provinces

Despite frequent changes in the administrative boundaries of the Empire before and during the Great War, there were nine Arab provinces in the Ottoman Empire by 1915: Aleppo, Hijaz, Syria, Najd, Mosul, Yemen, Basra, Baghdad and Beirut. In addition to these provinces, there were five autonomous Arab sancaks: Asir, Jerusalem (Kuds-i Şerif), Mount Lebanon (Cebel-i Lübnan), Medina and Zor.

The Ottoman Empire had never extended to the south and south east of the Arabian Peninsula where Britain had already established control and protection in Trucial Oman in 1820, in Aden in 1839, in Bahrain in 1861, and in Muscat and Oman in 1891. Subsequently, Britain extended its influence to Kuwait and Qatar in 1899 and in 1913 respectively. In the inner parts of the Arabian Peninsula, the Ottomans had never had direct control. The Najd

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34 Ibid., p. 83. The congress was not welcomed with enthusiasm by all Arab notables in the Ottoman Empire. For instance in Damascus, Medina and Aleppo the conservative notables remained suspicious about the congress. Kayal, Arabs, pp. 137-138.
36 Cemal Paşa, Haturat, pp. 63-64. This agreement granted the Arab reformers many of their demands such as the use of Arabic as an official language in the Arab provinces and as the language of instruction in primary and secondary schools, local military service, appointment of foreign experts in provincial administration, specified quotas for Arabs as local governors and senators. Ibid., p. 63; Antonius, Awakening, p. 116.
37 An imperial decree, issued on 18 August 1913, declared that the appointment of the Arabic speaking officers would be made by the provinces and Arabic would be the language of instruction in primary and secondary schools with the reservation that the secondary schools in provincial capitals would continue to teach in Turkish. Some limited concessions were also given on military issues. In addition, some Arab reformers such as Zahrawi were appointed senator. Antonius, Awakening, pp. 116-117; Sina Aşşin, Jön Türkler ve İttihat Terakki, Ankara, İmage Kitabevi, 2001, p. 387, Cemal Paşa, Haturat, p. 64. Autonomous rights granted on language issues were confirmed at the fifth congress of the CUP (20 September 1913) as well. Ahmad, Young, p. 141.
Map No. 1: Middle East on the Eve of World War One


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1830 Date of occupation or treaty arrangement
International boundaries in 1914 (alignments approximate)
Boundaries of the Ottoman Empire in 1800 (alignments approximate)
Railways
Suez Canal
Proposed railways
Major steamship lines

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region (the central and the eastern parts of the inner peninsula), had so far been the scene of a struggle between two rival tribes, the House of Rashid and the House of Sa'ud. The latter’s capture of Riyadh in 1902 and subsequent advance in the region confined the former to Hail in the Shammar region (the northern parts of the inner peninsula).\(^{41}\) Ibn Sa'ud’s invasion of Al-Hasa region (the western shores of the Persian Gulf) in May 1913 compelled the Ottoman government to sign an agreement with him in May 1914 and appoint him the hereditary governor of the new vilayet of Najd (including Al-Hasa region).\(^{42}\)


\(^{42}\) Anscombe, *Gulf*, pp. 164-165.
Chapter II: Syria

In late 1914, Cemal Paşa was appointed Commander-in-Chief of the Fourth Army in Syria.\textsuperscript{43} His appointment to this very important region of the Ottoman Empire was to have severe repercussions for the development of Ottoman-Arab relations, due largely to the harsh policies he adopted and to his notoriously difficult personality. Cemal Paşa’s departure from İstanbul on 4 December 1914 was a relief for his fellow CUP leaders, Talât Paşa and Enver Paşa, who were contented to see him leave and hoped that he would apply his “imperious and stubborn” nature against “the Syrians, Armenians and the other non-Moslem elements in the Mediterranean provinces” according to the American ambassador Henry Morgenthau.\textsuperscript{44} Cemal Paşa was not only unpopular but also feared. When Falih Rifki (Atay), who was appointed Cemal Paşa’s orderly (emir subayı) in 1915, was travelling to Jerusalem in order to take up his new post at the headquarters of the Fourth Army, the local people along his route were too frightened even to say the name “Cemal Paşa” out loud. Once in Jerusalem, Falih Rifki ordered a taxi driver to take him to Cemal Paşa’s office. “What? Cemal Bâşâ?” the taxi driver asked, his eyes wide open in alarm, before shouting “Tafaddal!” to the horses. “I felt” Falih Rifki recalled “that even the horses changed their attitude.”\textsuperscript{45}

Enver Paşa had offered the post of Commander-in-Chief to Cemal Paşa because he considered the situation of Syria crucial. The region was militarily important due to the preparation of an expeditionary force there to attack the Suez Canal in order to interrupt the transportation of Indian troops and ease the burden of Germany on the Western front.\textsuperscript{46} It was also an area of risk due to increasing activities of Arab reformers, which had resulted in government complaints over the preceding two years about the lack of security in Syria.\textsuperscript{47} The First Canal Campaign started in January 1915 and finished in February 1915 without any significant military success. However, the campaign had an important meaning in the course of Ottoman-Arab relations. Cemal Paşa’s observations about the harmony and fraternity among the Turkish and the Arab army corps during the campaign are important

\begin{itemize}
\item Here, the word “Syria” is used to express the geographical region covered by the term “Greater Syria”, which also includes Lebanon and Palestine.
\item Enver Paşa had already despatched Mümmez Bây, his assistant, Abdurrahman Bây, a senator, Shaykh As’ad al-Shuqayrí Efendi, deputy for Acre, and, other Arab notables to Syria in order to maintain the support of Arab Bedouins for the Canal Campaign. Cemal Paşa, Hattrat, pp. 146-147.
\item Idem.
\end{itemize}
Map No. 2: Syria in 1914

indicators of Turkish-Arab relations in the Ottoman Army as observed by an Ottoman commander. At this point, Cemal Paşa stressed the great self-sacrifice of the 25th Division which was entirely composed of Arabs, and, the loyalty of the army transport corps which was composed of Syrian and Palestinian soldiers none of whom had deserted during the campaign.\(^49\) In the months following the campaign, however, Cemal Paşa started to exercise harsh security measures in the region while concentrating on the preparations for a second campaign against the Suez Canal. These strict measures included executions of several Arab notables and deportation of numerous Arab notable families, and played an important role in determining the new state of Ottoman-Arab relations in Syria during the Great War.

The justification for the executions that Cemal Paşa carried out in 1915 and 1916 rested, at least for the Ottoman government, on documents which had been seized from the French consulates in Beirut and Damascus. After the Ottoman Empire’s entry into the Great War, the French consulates in Beirut and Damascus were raided and highly confidential political documents were captured by the Ottoman forces.\(^50\) It is not clear why the French consular officials did not dispose of all the political documents before leaving the country.\(^51\) Interestingly an American woman, who had lived in Beirut for two years during the war, reported to The Times that the British Consul-General in Beirut Mr. Cumberbatch had also left some of the confidential documents -perhaps those of only minimal significance- at the consulate, under the protection of United States’ Consul-General. Despite this protection, the Ottoman officials were able to raid the building and seize the documents. She further reported that those people named in these documents as being associated with Britain were not prosecuted.\(^52\) The documents seized from the French consulates in Damascus and Beirut included correspondence between France and some various Syrian and Lebanese notables about the independence of Syria and Lebanon.\(^53\) Most of these notables had participated in the

\(^{49}\) Cemal Paşa, Hatrat, pp. 162, 171. In June 1915, however, the 25th Division was sent to Gallipoli Front with the request of Enver Paşa. According to Antonius, the despatch of this division, which had been considered by Al-‘Ahd society as the backbone of a contemplated rebellion in Syria, was one of the main reasons that hindered a possible revolt in the region. Antonius, Awakening, pp. 185-186. This argument, however, does not seem realistic considering the fact that the remaining army corps in Syria was still mainly composed of Syrian and Palestinian Arabs. See Cemal Paşa, Hatrat, pp. 174, 237.

\(^{50}\) Antonius, Awakening, p. 151.

\(^{51}\) Koloğlu argues that Monsieur Picot, the French Consul-General in Beirut, deliberately left the secret documents in the building. He reportedly believed that there would be an uprising in Syria and that then he would be able to return to the region in fifteen days. Orhan Koloğlu, Bedevi, Lavrens, Arap, Türk, İstanbul, Arba Yayınları, 1993, p. 81.

\(^{52}\) The Times, 15.09.1916, p. 5.

Arab reform movement which reached a peak at the Paris Arab Congress in 1913, and who had then accepted governmental posts after the reconciliation with the CUP in August 1913.\footnote{See Cemal Paşa, *Hatrat*, pp. 63-64.}

Although the documents seized from the French consulates were handed to Cemal Paşa on his arrival in Damascus in late 1914, no action was taken until June 1915, because, according to Cemal Paşa, prosecuting these “betrayers” would trigger the enemy propaganda in the Muslim world and endanger the support of the Arabs, and the Muslims in general, to the Ottoman Empire before the Canal Campaign which was planned to start shortly.\footnote{Ibid., p. 210.} Instead, Cemal Paşa ostensibly tried to maintain support of some men of influence among these Arab notables, such as ‘Abd al-Karim al-Khalil, the president of *Al-Muntada al-Adabi*, Muhammad Kurd ‘Ali, the owner of *Al-Muqtabas* newspaper, ‘Abd al-Ghani al-‘Uraysi, the owner of *Al-Mufid* newspaper and one of the organizers of Paris Arab Congress, and, Dr. ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Shahbandar, “one of the fieriest of the Arab reformers.”\footnote{Ibid., pp. 211-212.} Cemal Paşa gathered these men of influence round him and explained to them the government policy concerning the Great War. In reply, according to Cemal Paşa, all of them approved the government policy and pledged that Syrians and Palestinians would remain loyal to the government during the war.\footnote{Ibid., p. 212.}

Afterwards, Cemal Paşa, tried to use them for the sake of the government in Syria by generously providing them with subsidies in order to ease their financial difficulties and taking them with him on important visits. Even after the First Canal Campaign, tells Cemal Paşa, nothing had occurred to change his policy towards these men of influence and that he encouraged ‘Abd al-Karim al-Khalil and Dr. ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Shahbandar to visit the soldiers who were coming back from the First Canal Campaign in order to strengthen their motivation.\footnote{Ibid., p. 212-213; Mahmud Nedim Bey, Arabistan’da Bir Ömür, Son Yemen Valisinin Hattraları veya Osmanlı İmparatorluğu Arabistan’da Nasıl Yikıldı?, İsis, İstanbul, 2001, pp. 184-185.}

Until June 1915, the Arab notables who had connections with France according to seized confidential documents were not prosecuted with the exception of the court martial of Yusuf Hayek, a Maronite priest, who was sentenced to death in March 1915 because of his treasonable correspondence with M. Deschanel, then president of French Chamber.\footnote{Antonius, *Awakening*, pp. 185-186} Cemal Paşa’s attitude, however, shifted by mid-1915. He himself reported in his memoirs that two important events caused him to prosecute these Arab notables. Firstly, when he read in several Egyptian newspapers violent attacks of *Al-Lamarkaziyya* members against the Ottoman
government in May 1915, he “could not understand how the ones who believe in this level of viciousness could think” and asked Al-Khalil the meaning of these treacherous activities of Al-Lamarkaziyya members. According to Cemal Paşa, it was clear that al-Khalil was frightened by this question. His subsequent proposal to go to Cairo in order to explain Cemal Paşa’s policy in Syria to the high-up figures in Al-Lamarkaziyya also increased Cemal Paşa’s suspicions because this was a period in which the transportation line between Syria and Egypt was totally cut due to the sea blockade of the Entente fleets and he was almost sure that al-Khalil could do anything for money. Secondly, in June 1915, deputy for Beirut Kamil al-As‘ad reportedly warned Cemal Paşa about his over-trust in these Arab notables who had been abusing it. Furthermore, he informed Cemal about preparations for a rebellion by al-Khalil and the former deputy for Beirut, Rida al-Sulh in the towns of Saida and Sur, between Beirut and Acre. An investigation carried out by the Ottoman officials reportedly proved this information to be accurate and Cemal Paşa, losing his trust in these notables, immediately ordered their arrest since the situation was dangerous.

The most important reason for Cemal Paşa’s decision to react harshly to these Arab notables was Syria’s vulnerable situation to fifth column activities aiming at stimulating an enemy intervention. At a time when the Entente forces were landing at Gallipoli and the Ottoman military forces in Syria were relatively powerless and mainly composed of Arabs, this situation posed a greater danger for the Ottomans. Given the fact that the Lebanese Maronites were suspected of being Francophile and arming to prepare for a revolt, the apprehension of an enemy landing in Syria became more acute. A British document suggesting that by the beginning of 1915, the Syrians in France expected to levy 70,000 “warriors” from the local non-Muslims in case of a French intervention, supports the accuracy of these suspicions. Therefore, in this critical situation, Cemal Paşa decided to act “violently and without mercy against these traitors.”

Despite Cemal Paşa’s apprehension, an Entente landing on Syria did not happen during the war. Although Cemal Paşa owes this situation much to the loyalty of the local population

60 Cemal Paşa, Hatrat, p. 236.
61 Ibid., pp. 236-237.
62 Ibid., p. 238.
63 For more information about al-Khalil’s revolt plan and its discovery, see Tauber, World, pp. 21-25.
64 Cemal Paşa, Hatrat, p. 238.
65 Ibid., pp. 236-237; Zeine, Arab-Turkish, p. 103
66 Cemal Paşa, Hatrat, pp. 223-224.
67 PRO, FO 141/654-1, from Philip P. Graves to Cairo, (16.02.1915).
68 Cemal Paşa, Hatrat, p. 239.
to the Empire and the Entente forces’ awareness of this situation,\(^69\) the main reason that prevented a possible landing was the absence of a common understanding and agreement between France and Great Britain on the issue of influence and intervention in Syria.\(^70\) At this point, the arrival in Egypt of a French Military Mission in early 1915 and the general supposition that it had been sent to further French interests in Syria caused the growth of controversy between Britain and France.\(^71\) Apart from this, the rumours of an American invasion of Syria complicated the issue further.\(^72\) There was also a controversy about the inclination of the local population. Contrary to the general supposition that all Lebanese were pro-French, the British claimed that only the Maronites were known to be pro-French whereas the Muslims, the Druzes and the non-Maronite Christians were all thought to be anti-French and pro-British.\(^73\) Thus, until the Sykes-Picot Agreement was concluded on 16 May 1916 between Britain, France and Russia, and clarified the interests and areas of influence of each party in the Ottoman Middle East, the idea of an Entente landing in Syria (Lebanon) had been a quite disputed question. However, after that time, the state of affairs in Syria changed in a way that rendered an Entente landing impractical mainly due to the strict security measures applied by Cemal Paşa.

The arrested Arab notables were tried in a court martial in ‘Aleyh (Âliye Divân-ı Harb-i Örfisi) in two groups, and thirty-three of the forty-three accused were sentenced to death.\(^74\) After the executions on 21 August 1915 and 6 May 1916 in Beirut and Damascus, Cemal Paşa published a book in Turkish, Arabic and French called Âliye Divân-ı Harb-i Örfisinde Tedkik Olunan Mesele-i Siyâsîye Hakkinda İzahât (Explanation about the Political Question Investigated in ‘Aleyh Court Martial) in November 1916, in order to reply the critics who argued that the documents that had been seized from the French consulates were all dated before the amnesty general in 1913 and thus could not be used for the conviction of these notables who should have benefited from the amnesty.\(^75\) In this book, in addition to the documents that had been seized from the French consulates, confessions and correspondence

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\(^{69}\) Ibid., p. 237.


\(^{71}\) PRO, FO 141/654-1, from Henry McMahon in Cairo to Sir Edward Grey (No. 23), (15.02.1915).

\(^{72}\) Àl-Muqattam, 27.05.1915 cited in PRO, FO 141/654-1.

\(^{73}\) PRO, FO 141/654-1, from Consul-General in Cairo to Foreign Office (No. 251), (09.10.1914); Ibid., from Philip P. Graves to Cairo, (16.02.1915); Ibid., from the Residency in Cairo to Sir Edward Grey, (05.04.1916).

\(^{74}\) For the complete list of the Arab notables who were sentenced either to death or exile, see Dördüncü, *İzahât*, pp. 117-127. The names of some well known Arab notables who were executed include: ‘Abd al-Hamid al-Zahrawi, a senator; Shafiq Bey el-Mu’ayyad and Rushdi el-Sham, deputies for Damascus; Salim Bey Jaza’iri, an Ottoman Army officer; Shukri Bey al-‘Asali, a civil inspector in Syria; ‘Abd al-Ghani al-‘Uraysi, a famous journalist and deputy, Rafiq Rizq Sallum, a poet; ‘Abd al-Karim al-Khalil, the president of *Al-Muntada al-Adabi*; ‘Abd al-Wahab al-Inkilizi, Vice-President of the Council of Inspectors.

of the Arab notables were also made public, in order to prove that the Arab societies, most of which were founded after the CUP Revolution, were all working for secret separatist aims, and, their secret aims and activities continued after the general amnesty in 1913. Accordingly, the executed Arab notables, who had been high-up figures in these societies, were all accused of acting under these secret separatist aims and thus betraying to the Ottoman Empire.

The shift in the policy of Cemal Paşa towards the Arab movements can be clearly seen in the Chief of Staff of the Fourth Army Ali Fuat (Erden)’s remarks at the stage of decision of the second court martial in ‘Aleyh. In his memoirs, Ali Fuat tells that when the court martial reached a provisional decision, which included maximum four death penalties, the commission of the court martial hesitated to approve the decision by itself, and therefore, the chair of the court martial Şükru Bey visited Ali Fuat in order to ask for Cemal Paşa’s permission to approve the provisional decision. However, when Cemal Paşa saw the provisional decision, he altered almost all of the punishments to death penalty, without even reading the legal explanations of the commission about each of the accused. Şükru Bey, being instructed by Ali Fuat, endeavoured to change Cemal Paşa’s mind about this harsh decision, yet he could not. Finally, after the last form of the decision of the court martial was sent to the Fourth Army for approval, Ali Fuat and the judicial advisor in the Fourth Army Vassaf Bey showed their opposition to it by not signing the file of the trial. Cemal Paşa, however, showed his determination about the punishments by approving the decision without needing the signatures of Vassaf Bey and Ali Fuat.

The second measure undertaken by Cemal Paşa as a part of his new policy in Syria was the deportation to Anatolia of hundreds of Arab notables who were suspected of being involved in treasonable activities. The names of the suspected people were reported to the Fourth Army by the officials of the vilayets and sancaks, and, these people were then deported with their families, on the order of the Commander-in-Chief. However, the practice of the deportation was criticized by both the Ottomans and the British. Falih Rifki, for instance,
points out the difficulties encountered by those who were sent to the Eastern Anatolian provinces. Moreover, he tells that, many of these deportees did no more than signing pro-French petitions before the war. Ali Fuat was very much concerned with the arbitrary use of this measure by the officials of sancaks and vilayets. In March 1916, when he proposed to answer negatively to Syria’s newly appointed governor’s request to deport a family, he confronted Cemal Paşa who interpreted Ali Fuat’s proposal as an intervention into his business. Apart from these, a report from a correspondent in The Times stressed the confiscation of the properties of those who were deported. Cemal Paşa tried to justify the practice of deportations in İzahât. In this book, it is claimed that this measure was called deportation rather than exile and was undertaken as a caution rather than as a punishment. It is also claimed that the families of the suspected were also deported in order not to disperse families, transportation of the deportees were all made by trains at no charge, the real properties of the deportees were not confiscated but were transferred to their representatives and in the destination area all of them were provided with real properties more or less equivalent to their former properties, the families in need were all salaried until they found a satisfactory livelihood in the destination cities, and, the deportees did not lose any of their citizenship rights in the places where they were deported to. This measure was frequently practiced by the Fourth Army and thus constituted an important part of Cemal Paşa’s new policy towards the Arab movements in Syria.

In addition to the executions and deportations, Cemal Paşa also tried to control press and propaganda in Syria. In order to promote the idea of Islamic unity against the Entente Powers, he published two Arabic newspapers in Damascus, Al-Sharq and Al-Islam as mouthpieces of the Fourth Army. Additionally, pro-governmental papers like Al-Ray al-‘Am, Al-Ittihad al-Islam, Al-Lazqiya, Al-Balagh al-Iqbal, Al-Safa, Bayla were financially supported. With these pro-governmental propaganda activities, the public opinion in Syria was sought to be manipulated against separatist ideas and the enemy.

During the war years, Syria not only suffered from the difficult conditions of war, but also from a disaster that gravely affected the lives of local people and hindered their strength.

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82 Ibid., pp. 78-79.
83 Ibid., pp. 47-48; See also Kayal, Arabs, p. 194.
84 Erden, Suriye, pp. 265.
85 The Times, 12.08.1916, p. 5. For the American views on the organization of the deportations see Kayal, Arabs, p. 258.
to oppose the government: famine. This disaster lasted during the last three years of the war mainly in the sancak of Mount Lebanon and the vilayet of Beirut. Figures vary for the total numbers of those who starved during the years 1915-1918. A Times correspondent in Syria at the time reported that from 60,000 to 80,000 had died by August 1916.\textsuperscript{89} Former Russian ambassador to the Ottoman Empire Mandelstam estimated it at the beginning of 1917 as 100,000.\textsuperscript{90} The estimate of Congregation Propaganda Fide at the Vatican in the middle of 1917 put the figure at 110,000.\textsuperscript{91} The scale of the disaster is made graphically clear by Falih Rifki’s description of the situation in Beirut: “Street was moaning. We were listening to the last groans of human skeletons whose stomachs were combined with their intestines, and who were crawling on the pavement in great hunger and even unable to find orange peels: - Juw’ani… Juw’ani…”\textsuperscript{92}

There are different views on the causes of the famine. Some consider the Ottoman government, and in particular the Fourth Army, as solely responsible,\textsuperscript{93} whereas others cite other reasons rather than blaming the Ottomans entirely.\textsuperscript{94} Mandelstam claims that after Enver Paşa’s visit to Syria in summer 1916, “the annihilation of Syrians by starvation” was adopted as a plan by the government.\textsuperscript{95} An article in The Times claims that the Ottoman Army followed a deliberate policy of destruction of the Arabs in Lebanon by surrounding the region and preventing foodstuffs from getting through.\textsuperscript{96} In fact, the real causes of the starvation were not due to a deliberate Ottoman policy, and the Ottoman officials even worked to cope with the disaster. It was rather a combination of multiple factors in which the role of the Ottomans was minimal. First of all, after the Ottoman Empire’s entry into the war, the Entente navy exerted a strict sea blockade on the Syrian coasts.\textsuperscript{97} This blockade halted the region’s sea trade and thus stopped the import of grain crops into Syria by sea. Normally, Lebanon and Palestine’s grain cultivation was not enough to feed the population and thus these regions were dependant on inner Syria’s grain production.\textsuperscript{98} During the peacetime, however, it had been more feasible to import crops by sea in order to meet the grain demand of Lebanon and

\textsuperscript{89} The Times, 12.08.1916, p. 5.  
\textsuperscript{90} André Mandelstam, Le Sort de L’Empire Ottoman, Libraire Payot, Lausanne, 1917, p. 342.  
\textsuperscript{91} The Times, 20.06.1917, p. 5.  
\textsuperscript{92} Atay, Zeytindağı, p. 73.  
\textsuperscript{95} Mandelstam, Sort, pp. 337.  
\textsuperscript{96} The Times, 01.02.1917, p. 5.  
\textsuperscript{98} Aleppo, Hawran, Homs and Hama were the most productive regions in Syria in terms of grain cultivation.
Palestine rather than transferring crops from inner Syria. Thus, when the Entente sea blockade was in force, Lebanon and Palestine were both thrown on inner Syria’s and their own grain resources and disaster struck. As a result of increasing demand on inner Syrian crops, the grain prices rose dramatically in the vilayet of Syria, and accordingly, in January 1915, the provincial authorities in Syria were compelled to ban the export of crops to Palestine and Lebanon in order to stop the increase in the prices. Although Cemal Paşa, after he had been informed about this ban with the complaints of the people and the mutasarrıfs of Jerusalem and Mount-Lebanon, recommended the provincial authorities in Syria to combine together with other valis and mutasarrıfs in order to find a solution to this confusing situation, no concrete actions were taken until the spring of 1915.

Secondly, the state of mobilization and the war-time situation in general contributed greatly to the starvation. The existence of the Fourth Army, which was not composed of purely local people, was a great burden on Syria’s agriculture. The tithe (aşar) was levied by the army to feed the troops. Furthermore, part of the local population was either conscripted or hired to work in military constructions which inevitably caused a decrease in the number of cultivators. It is also claimed that a large amount of fruit trees in the region were cut down and used as fuel for trains, and, wagons and beasts were confiscated in order to tow artillery. The situation was even more desperate when Sharif Husayn declared revolt in June 1916, resulting in the transfer of more crops to the region in order to feed the soldiers and win over the Hijazi Bedouins.

The third reason behind the famine was a more natural one. When the time of cultivation was about to begin in the spring of 1915, a mass amount of locusts visited Lebanon and

99 Cemal Paşa, Haturat, p. 311; Erden, Suriye, p. 306. Accordingly, the excessive production of the inner Syria was generally exported. The dependency of the Beirut’s economy on trade ships is also mentioned in The Times, 15.09.1916, p. 5.
100 It is interesting that just before leaving the country in autumn 1914, the British Consul-General in Beirut warned British subjects to leave the region at the first opportunity, because of the expected “dearth of food.” This can be explained as being due to the Consul-General’s awareness of the region’s dependence on sea trade in terms of grain crops. The Times, 15.09.1916, p. 5.
101 Cemal Paşa, Haturat, p. 311.
102 Ibid., pp. 311-312.
103 Ibid., p. 312. By 1917, an additional 10% was levied by the army from small producers and 25% more from larger producers in order to be used for the needs of the civilians. Schilcher, “Famine,” p. 242.
104 Tibawi, Syria, p. 210. Conscription, however, was the case only for Muslims: “Man power of [Jewish] colonies have not suffered from requisition for military service to same extend as Arab population but in autumn of 1917 a good many young men were arrested on suspicion and sent to Damascus.” PRO, FO 141/654-1, from Clayton to the High Commissioner (HC) in Cairo (No. c.92), (21.01.1918).
105 “Outbreak of war brought trade to a standstill and consequent accumulation of stores led to requisitions on large scale especially of agricultural implements, machinery, iron piping, grain, animals, transport etc.” PRO, FO 141/654-1, from Clayton to HC in Cairo (No. c.92), (21.01.1918); Tauber, World, p. 37.
devastated the region’s crops. An American woman who was in Beirut at that time describes the toll of this calamity as “(...) the whole olive and grape crop of Lebanon and South Syria had gone. The wheat crop in the northern Syria was damaged in places but not ruined. The fruit trees had suffered but still might yield some harvest.” The locusts stayed until autumn, destroyed almost all the harvest and extinguished the last hopes to tackle the scarcity of grain in the region. After this disaster, the ban of crop imports from inner Syria to Lebanon was abolished, and in July 1916, the army took over the management of the crisis on the order of Cemal Paşa. The army used middlemen to buy crops from the cultivators and collected all the crops in the army stores for their later distribution to the local people.

Fourthly, financial factors such as the case of profiteering and the speculations about the value of the paper money were the last and the biggest stroke for the disaster. As early as January 1915, when the import of grain from Syria to Lebanon was restricted, some tradesmen were smuggling crops into Lebanon and selling them at extremely high prices. After the army started to supervise the management of the crisis in July 1916 the smuggling halted to a large extent; yet, this time the cultivators in Hawran revolted and refused to sell their harvest to the army in paper money of which value had reduced dramatically (at least 25%) due to the anti-government propaganda activity of some Syrians. This propaganda activity, which had begun in the headquarters of the Fourth Army when some Arab telegram officers received a telegram from Istanbul ordering collection of all coins and gold monies, was a clear expression of the local people’s reaction to the policies of Cemal Paşa. Afterwards, although Cemal Paşa issued a circular to stabilize the value of paper money, the situation did not get better, and in the end, the depreciation of paper money made the starvation problem even more severe. Shortly after the Hawran uprising, the new vali of Syria Tahsin Bey considered the oppressive practices of the army as the reason of the uprising and requested from Cemal Paşa the exemption of Hawran district from the army’s area of jurisdiction in terms of the purchase of the crops. Although Cemal Paşa did not agree with the governor on this issue, he complied with his demands in order not to cause collusion and then

107 Cemal Paşa, Hātrakat, p. 312.
108 The Times, 15.09.1916, p. 5. Although Zeine and Tibawi consider the raid of locusts as an accompanying factor of the starvation, the American woman regards it as, if not the sole, at least the main cause of the disaster. See, Zeine Arab-Turkish, p. 102-103; Tibawi, Syria, p. 210.
110 Ibid., p. 312.
111 Ibid., p. 315-316; Schilcher, “Famine,” pp. 239-240; Atay, Zeytindağı, p. 70.
112 See Atay, Zeytindağı, pp. 69-71.
ordered the army to quit the overall management of the crisis in order to prevent an unequal situation for other regions.\textsuperscript{114} With the relief of getting out of army’s control, however, the cultivators started to sell their products with high prices in gold and the tradesmen, who could purchase them, sold them in the unproductive regions with even more astronomic prices.\textsuperscript{115} Thus, under these circumstances, it was almost impossible for the poor people in the unproductive regions to buy the crops with these astronomic prices.

The Ottomans were also blamed by the British for not accepting foreign assistance to tackle the starvation. A Syrian refugee reported in \textit{The Times} that the Ottoman officials stopped the Monasteries’ and the Americans’ assistance and “stated openly that they preferred that the Syrians should die off.”\textsuperscript{116} This, however, does not in fact seem to have been the case when another contemporary account in \textit{The Times}, suggesting that the American Red Cross was functioning in Beirut without any obstruction from the Ottoman officials, is considered.\textsuperscript{117} The Pope also successfully sent a large sum of money to the Apostolic Delegate at Istanbul for distribution in Syria.\textsuperscript{118} Moreover, a ship, anchored at Alexandria, carrying the grain donation of the King of Spain and the President of the United States never reached Syria because of the British objection which was based on the danger of the Ottoman Army’s seizure of the grains. Although the \textit{Reuters} news agency reported that the Ottoman Empire had “refused to grant the request of the United States to permit a neutral committee to distribute relief in Syria,”\textsuperscript{119} Cemal Paşa states that the British were not satisfied even though he had accepted all the terms that had been stipulated by the Americans about the distribution of the grain in order to avoid any possible abuse.\textsuperscript{120} According to him, the Entente Powers deliberately barred the foreign aid in order to incite the local population to rise against Ottoman rule.\textsuperscript{121} The fact that the assistance of the United States, Spain and Vatican were all sent in reply to Cemal Paşa’s numerous requests, which were made via the Maronite Patriarch and the Director of the American University in Beirut, shows that the Ottomans in fact did not pursue a policy of refusing foreign aids that were sent to tackle the famine.\textsuperscript{122}

\textsuperscript{114} Cemal Paşa, \textit{Hatrat}, p. 316. The provincial authorities, who subsequently managed the crises, tried to allocate certain productive regions to feed the unproductive ones. For more information about the measures adopted after 1917 to overcome the famine and their failure, see Schilcher, “Famine,” pp. 241-248.
\textsuperscript{116} \textit{The Times}, 05.04.1916, p. 7.
\textsuperscript{117} \textit{Ibid.}, 15.09.1916, p. 5.
\textsuperscript{118} \textit{Ibid.}, 20.01.1917, p. 5.
\textsuperscript{119} \textit{Ibid.}, 12.08.1916, p. 5.
\textsuperscript{121} Cemal Paşa, \textit{Hatrat}, p. 321.
\textsuperscript{122} \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 318, 322.
There are different contemporary Ottoman views on the Ottoman policy and administration in Syria during the Great War. On the one hand, the unofficial mouthpiece of the CUP Tanin, by the end of 1916, described the war years in Syria as a period of development, tranquillity, self-sacrifice, and ambition to defeat the enemy.\(^{123}\) In another article in September 1916, it is claimed that the two years of war had contributed to the industrial development of the region more than fifty years of peace had done, with giving the examples of ice factories, new roads and railways that were built during the war period.\(^{124}\) On the other hand, Hüseyin Kâzım Bey, who was in Syria during the war period, criticized in his book 10 Temmuz İnkılabı ve Netayici (The Revolution of July 10 and Its Consequences), the corruption of “ignorant and careless” Ottoman officials who sought to exalt their own financial situation by building companies and factories with the support of pro-governmental notables in order to construct a monopoly on main goods, rather than taking care of the impoverished people. According to Kâzım Bey, these corrupt policies eventually fostered the hatred against the government among the Syrians who were once pro-Ottomans.\(^{125}\)

In conclusion, Cemal Paşa and the strict security measures executed by him had been a determining factor in the course of Ottoman-Arab relations in Syria during the Great War. However, while analysing Cemal Paşa’s policy, the general state of war in the Ottoman Empire should always be considered. The main aim of Cemal Paşa, as the Commander-in-Chief of the Fourth Army in Syria, was to maintain security in the region while fighting the British. Yet, the fact that he also had to take care of the Hijaz and Yemen, which were dependent on Syria in terms of food and arms supplies, shows the heavy conditions he had to work in. The situation was even worse when starvation struck Syria and occupied the Ottoman officials for a long time. Under these circumstances, Cemal Paşa was successful in tranquillizing rebellious activities in Syria that until the British advance in late 1918, there has been no separatist uprising in the region.\(^{126}\) Furthermore, the state of high security established by Cemal Paşa, was the most important factor in rendering the Entente power’s landing plans

on Syria impractical.\textsuperscript{127} These were sound achievements for any Commander-in-Chief in his area of jurisdiction during the First World War. Finally, an Arab army officer, the Commander of Intelligence Services in the Fourth Army ‘Aziz Bey’s views on this point are worth mentioning: “he [Cemal Paşa] did not hang a single innocent people nor did he harm any but evil. Jamal came to Syria as a Turk who was assigned to perform a mission, and he carried it out faithfully.”\textsuperscript{128}

\textsuperscript{128} ‘Aziz Bey, \textit{Al-Istikhbarat wal-Jasusiyya fi Labnan wa-Suriyya wa-Filastin Khilala al-Harb al-‘Alamiyya}, Beirut, 1937, p. 11, cited by Tauber, \textit{World}, p. 38. The views of the Hijazi notables, including the Sharifian family, on the executions of the Arab notables by Cemal Paşa are also worth mentioning: “the published papers had disclosed that these men were in touch with foreign Governments, and ready to accept French or British suzerainty as the price of help. This was crime against Arab nationalism and Jemal had only executed the implied sentence.” T. E. Lawrence, \textit{Seven Pillars of Wisdom: A Triumph}, London, Jonathan Cape, 1990, p. 68
Chapter III: Hijaz

The Hijaz revolt, which broke out in the summer of 1916 and spread northwards, reaching Damascus by the end of 1918, is commonly considered the most successful Arab reaction to Ottoman rule in the Arab provinces of the Empire. Its significance for Ottoman-Arab relations, however, has tended to be ignored, research being focused on its role in the development of the Arab nationalism, and its importance for British war-time strategies in the Middle East. It was however of equal importance to Ottoman central government and an understanding the dynamics of it in this context is important in furthering a more in-depth understanding of Ottoman-Arab relations in this period.

Before the outbreak of the Great War, Ottoman policy in the region was very much in tune with the desire of the CUP to establish and maintain a firm central control over the provinces of the Empire. The appointment at the end of 1913 of Vehip Paşa the governor and commander of the forces in the Hijaz was a clear indication of the government’s unwillingness to accept any form of autonomy in the region. Doubtful of the loyalty of the Emir of Mecca Sharif Husayn and suspicious of his activities, Vehip Paşa set out energetically to enforce the CUP’s centralization policy and, in consequence, the traditional rivalry between the Emir of Mecca and the governor of the Hijaz came to a head. ¹²⁹

The governor and the Emir clashed over various issues, the most important of which was the extension of the Hijaz Railroad from Medina to Mecca. Hijazi people were not in favour of the extension of the railroad. The Bedouins opposed it because it threatened their main livelihood, the camel rental, since pilgrims would prefer to travel by more convenient trains. ¹³⁰ In addition, the deployment of Ottoman troops would be made easier, thus

¹²⁹ Administrative authority in the Hijaz province was shared between Ottoman governors and Emirs of Mecca. Emirs were appointed by Ottoman Sultans among the prominent members of the House of Hashem, who were believed to be descendants of the Prophet Muhammad. Traditionally, Emirs of Mecca had three main functions in Hijaz: firstly, they were responsible for the supervision and safety of the Muslim pilgrimage (hajj); secondly, they acted with the government to extend its political and military authority in the Hijaz and its environs; and thirdly, they accepted the overlordship of the Ottoman Sultans and accordingly legitimised the religious claims of the Caliph-Sultan as “the servant of the sacred places”. William Ochsenwald, “Ironic Origins: Arab Nationalism in the Hijaz, 1882-1914,” Khalidi, Origins, pp. 190-191; Saleh Muhammad Al-Amr, The Hijaz Under Ottoman Rule 1869-1914: Ottoman Vâli, the Sharif of Mecca, and the Growth of British Influence, Riyadh, Riyadh University Publications, 1978, p. 113; Selim Deringil, “Legitimacy Structures in the Ottoman State: The Reign of Abdulhamid II (1876-1909),” IJMES, Vol. 23/3 (1991), p. 351.

¹³⁰ PRO, FO 141/460-8, from Abdul Kadir Mackawee in Aden to Wingate in Sudan, (25.02.1914); Ibid., from Kitchner in Cairo to Edward Grey (No. 58), (04.04.1914); Ibid., Secret note from British Agency in Cairo to FO, (19.04.1914). Since the agricultural activities and natural resources were very limited in the Hijaz, the region’s economy was extremely dependent on the annual Muslim pilgrimage. The townspeople’s main business was the accommodation and the maintenance of the pilgrims; whereas the tribesmen provided the transportation of the pilgrims by camel rental. Additionally, raiding the pilgrim caravans was another source of income for the tribesmen. A certain amount of money (urban sürresi) had been paid annually by the Ottoman government to the Hijazi tribesmen in order to make them stop these raids and maintain the security of both the pilgrims and the

threatening the freedom of movement of the Bedouins in the Hijaz. The Emir opposed it for two main reasons. Firstly, he would come under direct control of the government as a result of the facilitation of transport between Syria and Mecca. The detachment of the sancak of Medina from the province of the Hijaz in 1910 and its new status as an autonomous sancak under the direct control of the imperial centre was viewed by the Emir as an outcome of the railroad, which had reached the town in 1908. He feared that the same would happen to the province if the railroad was extended to Mecca. Secondly, the impact of the railroad on the pilgrimage threatened the power that the Emir obtained through his control of the security of the pilgrimage route and also the income he derived from the camel rentals in which he had at least a 25% share. Hijazi townsmen, too, opposed the extension of the railroad because of their fear of direct government control which might lead to local conscription and an increase in taxes. In addition, a state of chaos caused by the Bedouins protesting against the railroad would affect the townsmen’s pilgrim business badly.

Other major areas of conflict between the governor and the Emir included: proposals to implement the 1913 provincial law which meant the abolition of the special status of the province of the Hijaz, proposals to abolish the supremacy of Islamic law in the local courts, and attempts of drafting the black slaves to the Ottoman Army.

Although the British Consul-General in Egypt reported to the Foreign Office in February 1914 that the “difficulties between Turks and Sharif of Mecca have been amicably settled,” the tensions had not in fact cooled. Hijazis showed their opposition to the policies of the government in various ways. Emir Husayn wired several times to Istanbul and urged the deposition of Vehip Paşa. The governor, in turn, corresponded with Istanbul complaining about Sharir Husayn. Consequently, unrest broke out in the region and the Bedouins,

133 Al-Amr, Hijaz, p. 79; PRO, FO 141/460-8, from Abdul Kadir Mackawe in Aden to Wingate in Sudan, (25.02.1914). The Emirs of Mecca also levied 3 liras from every pilgrim who landed at Jidda. Özyüksel, Hicaz, p. 197.
134 The Hijaz had a special status within the Ottoman Empire so that the local population was exempt from military conscription, the tax rates were very low comparing with other regions of the Empire, only the Islamic law (shari'a) was applied in the courts, the slavery was permitted, and apart from the Ottoman Army, Emirs had their own guardians which was composed of voluntary Bedouins and freed slaves. Édouard Brémond, Le Hedjaz dans la Guerre Mondiale, Paris, Payot, 1931 p. 22; Özyüksel, Hicaz, p. 185; Ochsenwald, “Subsidies,” p. 301; Ochsenwald, “Ironic,” pp. 194-195; Mahmud Nedim, Arabistan’da, p. 48.
137 PRO, FO 141/460-8, from Consul-General in Cairo to FO, (14.02.1914).
138 For details of the correspondence between Sharir Husayn, Vehip Paşa and İstanbul, see Kandemir, Peygamberimizin, pp. 352-356.
instructed by Sharif Husayn, closed the road from Jidda to Mecca, attacked Ottoman officers and brought the region’s economy to a standstill. As a result of this agitation, the CUP was compelled to abandon its firm centralization measures and a decree issued in March 1914 stated that no changes would be made to the status quo in the Hijaz. However, the state of affairs in the region remained strained until late 1914. Although Vehip Paşa continued to write reports to İstanbul until August 1914 in which he reiterated his accusations against Sharif Husayn on various matters, urged his deposition and called for the reinforcement of the military force in the province, the government always replied urging rapprochement with the Emir and maintenance of the status quo in the region.

After the Ottomans’ entry into the Great War, the government policy in the Hijaz aimed at maintaining active support of the Emir of Mecca. This support consisted of despatching a voluntary Bedouin force for the Canal Campaign and the Emir’s endorsement of the Ottoman Sultan’s call for jihad. Hijazi Bedouins’ participation in the Canal Campaign was deemed very important by Cemal Paşa since it would improve the motivation of the Ottoman troops and mean the Emir’s de facto approval of the jihad. When Cemal Paşa requested from Sharif Husayn a voluntary force for the First Canal Campaign by late 1914, the latter “politely” accepted this request and despatched a Bedouin force under the command of his eldest son, Sharif ‘Ali, along with the governor Vehip Paşa, who also proceeded to the north in order to join the campaign. Sharif ‘Ali, however, got no further than Medina where he stopped on the pretext that one of his men had seized the suitcase of a well-known CUP member which contained secret correspondence between Vehip Paşa and İstanbul regarding plans to depose Sharif Husayn and abolish the special status of the Hijaz. After this revelation, Faysal made contacts with CUP leaders in İstanbul in the spring of 1915 and insisted on the recall of Vehip Paşa.

Cemal Paşa’s insistence on the support of the Hijazi volunteers continued during the preparations for the Second Canal Campaign as well. In response to this insistence, Sharif Husayn cabled Enver on 10 July 1915 reassuring him of his loyalty to the cause of jihad.

139 PRO, FO 141/460-8, from Consul-General in Cairo to FO (No.20), (21.03.1914); Kandemir, Peygamberimizin, p. 352.
140 Dawn, “Amir,” p. 17. A member of the Sharifian family told the British that the governor “had to kiss [the] hand of Huseyin publicly” after the CUP’s compromise. PRO, FO 141/460-8, from G. H. Symes to HC in Cairo (No. 70/84-1198), (05.08.1915).
141 Kayalı, Arabs, pp. 182-183.
142 Cemal Paşa, Hatrat, pp. 161-162.
144 Tauber, World, p. 63. Subsequently, Galip Paşa was appointed the new governor of the Hijaz. He arrived in Mecca on 6 June 1915.
reiterating the fragility of the Hijaz’s war-time situation which required careful handling, and requesting arms and money for the mobilization of the Hijazi volunteers for the Second Canal Campaign. The government, keen on maintaining the support of Sharif Husayn, accepted the request and gave money and arms to Husayn for the mobilization of volunteers. Moreover, in March 1916, Cemal Paşa encouraged Enver Paşa, who was in Syria at that time for inspection, to visit Medina in order to put more pressure upon Husayn to support the campaign. During this visit, Sharif Faysal had been in touch with Enver Paşa who offered “handsome money to Faysal to fight on his part” in the campaign. Finally, as a response to the increasing Ottoman insistence, Husayn sent Sharif ‘Ali to Medina with 1,500 Bedouin forces in order to proceed to Syria and join the campaign. However, these forces too remained in Medina for an extended period and a conflict started to develop between the muhafız of Medina Basri Paşa and Sharif ‘Ali.

Despite Ottoman desires, the population of the Hijaz had no interest in supporting any action hostile to the British since any such action would threaten their economic position and their security. The dramatic decrease due to the war in the number of the pilgrims coming from the Entente colonies such as India and North Africa had already brought the main economic activity in the Hijaz to a halt and caused the Hijazis to “curse the war and those who caused it”. Additionally, the supremacy of the British navy in the Red Sea constituted a great threat for the Hijazis in the event of their support of hostile actions against the British, so that a trade blockade that could be exerted by Britain on the Hijaz coasts would have had disastrous consequences for the region. The graveness of this threat was also perceived by Cemal Paşa that when six German naval officers were killed by Hijazi Bedouins in April 1916, he condoned the killings since he thought they were ordered by Sharif Husayn in order not to anger the British who so far allowed the export of foodstuffs from Egypt to Hijaz by sea. Consequently, this fragile situation in the Hijaz gave Sharif Husayn a useful reason for

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145 Kayalı, *Arabs*, p. 192. Three months later, Sharif Faysal stated to the British that “they have no intention to fight for Turks” and if they were sent to the Canal Campaign, their actions would only be pretence. PRO, *FO 141/461-1*, from HC in Cairo to FO (No. 626), (20.10.1915).
146 PRO, *FO 141/461-2*, from Clayton to Governor-General in Erkowit (No. 299), (22.04.1916).
149 Britain did not exert a trade blockade on the Hijaz coasts until 15 May 1916 and this policy created sympathy towards the British among the Hijazis. See PRO, *FO 141/460-8*, Letter from Sharif Husayn to Ronald Storrs via messenger Mohammed Ibn Arif Ibn Oreifán in Alexandria, (18.08.1915); PRO, *FO 141/461-2*, from McMahon in Cairo to Edward Grey, (10.05.1916).
not participating in any hostile actions against the British as well as for not approving or promoting the Ottoman Sultan’s call for jihad.

In this political climate, Sharif Husayn calculated his advantages well and decided to find a solution for the Hijaz outside the Ottoman framework. His contacts with the British and with some Syrian notables were of great importance in the formulation of his new policy towards the Ottomans. On the basis of the available evidence, it can be argued that he had decided to break with the Ottomans before the outbreak of the Great War, as early as February 1914, while the centralization measures of the CUP were mounting in the Hijaz. However, after the suspension of the centralization measures in March 1914 and the subsequent recall of Vehip Paşa, the tide of events, particularly the outbreak of the war, gave Sharif Husayn the finest opportunity to strengthen his ties with Britain in order to gain his independence from the crumbling Ottoman Empire. Accordingly, Sharif Husayn’s decision to break with the Ottomans should not be considered as being directly related to the CUP’s centralization policy, which had been suspended in the Hijaz in March 1914, but to the current political climate in which Husayn calculated his best interests as being with the British.

Anglo-Sharifian contacts started in February 1914 in Cairo between Sharif ‘Abdallah, son of Sharif Husayn, and Lord Kitchener, the British High-Commissioner in Egypt. In this meeting, ‘Abdallah complained about the new governor of the Hijaz Vehip Paşa, “who is not in sympathy with the people and who does not act harmoniously with his father in the conduct of internal affairs of the holy places as well as comfort and security of Moslem pilgrims coming from all over the world.” He asked “whether in case this friction become acute and an attempt made by the Turkish government to dismiss his father from his hereditary office of Sharif of the holy places, you [the British] would use your good offices with the Sublime Porte to prevent any such attempt?” This is the first documented overture of the family of Sharif Husayn to the British for direct assistance against the Ottomans.

Up to December 1914, the correspondence between the Sharifs and the British developed in a positive and encouraging manner for both sides. In September 1914, Kitchener wanted Storrs to ascertain from Sharif ‘Abdallah whether “should present armed German influence at Constantinople coerce Khalif against his will and Sublime Porte to acts of aggression and war against Great Britain he and his father and Arabs of Hejaz would be with

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151 PRO, FO 141/460-8, from Kitchener in Cairo to Edward Grey (No. 22), (06.02.1914). ‘Abdallah further hoped that the British Government would not allow reinforcements of the Ottoman forces to be sent by sea in the event of a quarrel and asked if Edward Grey could send a supportive message to Sharif Husayn, but Kitchener answered that “it would be improbable.” Idem.
us [Britain] or against us.”\textsuperscript{152} ‘Abdallah, in his reply to the British, stated that he desired closer union with Britain but expected written promises that Britain would abstain from internal intervention in Arabia and guarantee the Emir against foreign and Ottoman aggression.\textsuperscript{153} Kitchener’s response was that “if the Amir and Arabs in general assist Great Britain in this conflict that has been forced upon us (by) Turkey, Great Britain will promise not to intervene in any manner whatsoever whether in things religious or otherwise. Moreover recognising and respecting the sacred and unique office of the Amir Hosayn Great Britain will guarantee the independence, rights and privileges of the Sharifate against all external foreign aggression, in particular that of the Ottomans.”\textsuperscript{154} Sharif ‘Abdallah replied to these pledges that his father had no intention of adopting a policy hostile to British interests, while Sharif Husayn himself, in a verbal message, stated that his position in the world of Islam and the present political situation in the Hijaz made it impossible for him to break with the Ottomans immediately, though he was waiting for a suitable pretext.\textsuperscript{155} At the same time, Emir Husayn reported to the British that through his political influence, “rebellion and disobedience had well nigh broken out among the Syrian corps.”\textsuperscript{156}

In 1915, Sharif Husayn established contact with some Syrian notables.\textsuperscript{157} As early as January 1915, one month after Husayn’s statement to the British about his influence on the Syrian corps, Fawzi al-Bakri brought him a message from the members of Al-Fatat society in Damascus that the Syrian and Iraqi leaders, including senior Arab officers in the Ottoman Army, favoured a revolt for the attainment of Arab independence and proposed him the leadership of the movement.\textsuperscript{158} Then, Sharif sent his son Faysal to İstanbul in the spring of 1915, with the declared purpose of making representations to the central government, but with the actual aim of contacting notables in Syria and informing them about the proposed alliance with the British.\textsuperscript{159}

In Syria, Sharif Faysal held secret meetings with the Syrian notables, who presented him with the Damascus Protocol in which the boundaries of the independent Arab country, to be demanded from the British, were laid out, and a petition to Husayn approving his cooperation

\textsuperscript{152} Ibid., from FO to Consul-General in Cairo (No.219), (24.09.1914).
\textsuperscript{153} Ibid., from Consul-General in Cairo to FO (No.233), (31.10.1914).
\textsuperscript{154} Ibid., from FO to Consul-General in Cairo (No. 303), (31.10.1914), (Attached letter to ‘Abdallah).
\textsuperscript{155} Ibid., from Consul-General in Cairo to FO (No.303), (10.12.1914).
\textsuperscript{156} Ibid., a note taken by messenger X on a discourse by Sharif of Mecca, (09.12.1914).
\textsuperscript{158} Antonius, \textit{Awakening}, p. 149.
\textsuperscript{159} Ibid., p. 150; Dawn, “Amir,” p. 28; Kayali, \textit{Arabs}, p. 191.
with the British. Faysal, highly satisfied with the readiness of Syria for cooperation in the planned revolt, returned to Mecca on 20 June 1915 and handed the Syrians’ proposal to his father. The overture of the Syrian notables to Husayn had two meanings for the latter. Firstly, their support would increase the possibility of success of the revolt which could not be carried out solely with the man-power of the Hijaz and would accordingly increase his credibility in the eyes of the British. Secondly, the boundaries of the independent Arab country in the Damascus Protocol had great appeal for the Sharifian family and exceeded their territorial expectations which had until now been limited to a kingdom in the Hijaz and its environs. Thus close contact with the Syrians was very much in the interests of Sharif Husayn.

Having gained the support of the Syrians, Husayn was now ready to resume negotiations with Britain in order to reach a final agreement and secure their support against the Ottomans. On 14 July 1915, Husayn started negotiations with Henry McMahon, the British High-Commissioner in Egypt. Negotiations lasted until 30 January 1916, and in the end, Britain complied with the territorial demands of Sharif Husayn with some exceptions.

In early January 1916, just before the conclusion of an agreement with the British, Husayn sent his son Faysal to Syria in order to make the last arrangements for the rebellion. Faysal, however, found the situation in Syria desperate as a result of firm security measures applied by Cemal Paşa in the region. Under these circumstances, Faysal viewed an action of rebellion unfeasible, and therefore, urged his father to postpone it. Subsequently, Husayn reported to McMahon that “Syria can neither engineer revolution nor seize Hijaz Railway owing to dispersal of Chiefs.” The British, being suspicious of Faysal’s sincerity to the cause of revolt, and, anxious about his action plans in Syria that would endanger the

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160 Tauber, World, pp. 62-65; Antonius, Awakening, pp. 152-158; Lawrence, Seven, pp. 26-29. The boundaries were laid out as: “North: The line Mersin-Adana to parallel 37 N. and thence along the line Birejik-Urfa-Mardin-Midiat-Jazirat(Ibn ‘Umar)-Amadia to the Persian frontier; East: The Persian frontier down to the Persian Gulf; South: The Indian Ocean (with exclusion of Aden, whose status was to be maintained); West: The Red Sea and the Mediterranean Sea back to Mersin.” Antonius, Awakening, p. 157.
161 The original documents of the correspondence can be found in PRO, FO 141/461-1; FO 141/461-2.
162 The exceptions were: Mersin and İskenderun; the portions lying west to the districts of Damascus, Homs, Hama and Aleppo, and, the provinces of Basra and Baghdad. PRO, FO 141/461-1, from HC in Cairo to FO, (26.10.1915); PRO, FO 141/461-2, from HC in Cairo to FO, (30.11.1915).
163 Tauber, World, p. 78; Antonius, Awakening, p. 188.
164 PRO, FO 141/461-2, from HC in Cairo to FO (No. 272), (18.04.1916).
165 “Faisal has been and is in great touch with Enver who is a strong character and offered a handsome money to Faisal to fight on his part. We are also asked to provide money for the same force which is pledged to subsequently be used against the Turks. How can we be sure that this force is not going to be used against us? We can trust Sheriff but not Faisal because of the possibility that he is playing for his own hand.” Ibid., from Clayton to Governor-General in Erkowit (No. 299), (22.04.1916).
interests of the French, suggested that Husayn “confine himself to securing the railway and clearing the Turks out of Hijaz.”

Moving from activities of Husayn and his contacts with the British to the Ottoman policy towards the Hijaz, by June 1915, with the arrival of the new governor Galip Paşa in Mecca, the Ottomans appeared to have taken a somewhat more conciliatory approach than previously, no doubt very much influenced by the necessities of the war. When the Bedouins blocked the road and attacked Galip Paşa’s forces on their way from Medina to Mecca, he bribed the Bedouins and did not even undertake any investigation of the issue after he had arrived in Mecca. Moreover, in most cases, he sought to be on good terms with the Emir, complied with his demands and ignored numerous intelligence reports revealing the Emir’s plans for revolt. This negligent attitude of Galip Paşa towards the activities of Husayn reflected the central government’s policy of appeasement in Hijaz.

In April 1916, Sharif Husayn cabled to Enver Paşa and demanded the recognition of his hereditary rule in an autonomous Hijaz, from Tebbuk to Mecca, declaration of an amnesty in Syria and Iraq, particularly those sentenced to death in the court martial in ‘Aleyh, and suggested that once these demands were met he would then despatch the Bedouin forces under Sharif ‘Ali from Medina to Syria in order to join the Second Canal Campaign. Considering the crucial state of the war for the Ottomans, Husayn’s telegram can only be described as an attempt to find a pretext for his planned rebellion. Nevertheless, the Ottoman authorities do not seem to have been interested in taking any preventive actions over the suspicious activities of Sharif Husayn. Instead, İstanbul was content with merely urging him to recall Sharif ‘Ali to Mecca and threatening that he would not see his other son Sharif Faysal, who was in Syria at that time, until the despatch of the Bedouin forces to Syria. Likewise, Cemal Paşa cabled to Husayn and warned him about his “meaningless” and “ill-timed” demands. During the subsequent correspondence between Husayn and İstanbul, the conciliatory policy of the Ottomans towards Husayn continued, so that in the end, instead of taking preventive actions, they came into an understanding with Husayn that Sharif Faysal would go back to Medina to fetch the Bedouin volunteers; as soon as he arrived in Medina,

166 Ibid., from Governor-General in Khartoum to Clayton in Cairo (No. 448), (23.04.1916); Ibid., from HC in Cairo to FO (No. 387), (24.05.1916).
168 Kandemir, Peygamberimizin, pp. 361-370.
171 Cemal Paşa, Haträt, pp. 263-264.
Sharif ‘Ali would return to Mecca, and, after the arrival of the Bedouin forces in Syria, the issue of amnesty would be considered by Cemal Paşa.\footnote{Dawn, “Amir,” pp. 36-38; Tauber, \textit{World}, p. 80. Cemal Paşa describes Faysal’s feelings that his “eyes started to scatter sparks of joy” when he heard from Cemal that he was allowed to go back to Medina in May 1916. Cemal Paşa, \textit{Hatırat}, p. 270.}

Immediately after Faysal’s departure from Syria, Cemal sent Deputy Commander of the Fourth Army Fahreddin Paşa to Medina in order to secretly investigate the state of affairs in the Hijaz. Cemal Paşa, however, seems to have remained negligent about what was a critical situation in the Hijaz so that when Fahreddin Paşa cabled him from Medina that the rumours about the suspicious activities of Husayn are all true, Cemal Paşa, rather than taking necessary measures, accused Fahreddin of being deceived by provocateurs.\footnote{Kandemir, \textit{Peygamberimizin}, pp. 378-379.} Shortly after Faysal’s arrival in Medina, Sharif Husayn cabled to Cemal Paşa and Grand Vizier Sa‘id Halim Paşa that since he did not know on whom he should rely among two Ottoman officials, one very courteous (Enver) other very rude (Cemal), he had to cease his relations with the government and pull his sons back to Mecca until he received a satisfactory answer to his telegram which was sent to Enver Paşa in April 1916.\footnote{Cemal Paşa, \textit{Hatırat}, p. 274.} Finally, the Sharifs, taking advantage of the pacifying policy of the Ottomans, were able to start their revolt on 6 June 1916 in Medina. Then, Sharif Husayn officially proclaimed his revolt on 10 June 1916 in Mecca.\footnote{Sharifian forces captured Mecca on 9 July 1916, Jidda on 16 July 1916, Taif on 22 September 1916, Yanbo on 31 December 1916, Al-Wajh on 26 January 1917 and Aqaba on 6 July 1917. Izzettin Çopur, “Hicaz Filistin ve Suriye Cephesindeki Arap Ayaklanması, Bu Ayaklanmada İngiliz Lawrence’ın Rolü,” \textit{Stratejik Araştırma ve Etüt Bilteni}, Vol. 1/1 (2001), pp. 205-211; \textit{PRO FO 141/461-3}, from HC in Cairo to FO, (31.07.1916). The city of Medina, despite numerous hindrances, strongly held out under Fahreddin Paşa until 7 January 1919, two months after the Mondros Armistice. A circular of Fahreddin Paşa, instructing the soldiers the methods of eating locusts, demonstrates the hard conditions that Medina suffered during the revolt. Kandemir, \textit{Peygamberimizin}, p. 123-125, 181.}

Although Sharif Husayn’s revolt led to the events that resulted in a total break between the Turks and the Arabs, it cannot be considered as a reaction of the Arabs as a whole against the Ottoman Empire. It was rather a local reaction with the support of an external power. The extent to which the revolt was a local affair, driven largely by one man’s ambitions rather than by any wide-appeal ideology can been seen in the limited extent of Sharif Husayn’s influence which stretched only to the Hijaz and, to a smaller extent, its environs, and, was extremely dependent on British support. According to a British intelligence officer, Sir Wyndham Deedes, Sharif Husayn was not recognised as a very powerful figure in the other Arab lands and it is impossible for Syrians, Yemenis and Iraqis to be under the rule of one chief even if they may acknowledge one spiritual chief.\footnote{Zeine, \textit{Arab-Turkish}, pp. 105-106.} Moreover, a contemporary British report
suggests that the people of Mecca were almost pro-Ottomans and those on the side of Sharif Husayn were about 5,000 people among whom the men of influence were about 500.\footnote{PRO, FO 141/817-9, from McMahon in Cairo to Viscount Grey (No. 297), (03.10.1916).}

The lack of enthusiasm among the Arab elements of the Ottoman Army about the revolt was also a sign of the local character of Sharif Husayn’s movement. The Arab prisoners of war who were sent to camps in India and Egypt were viewed by the British and the Sharifs as potential conscripts to the revolting army. This method, however, had little success because the overwhelming majority of the prisoners refused to take any action against the caliphate and feared being shot immediately if caught by the Ottomans.\footnote{Tauber, \textit{World}, pp. 102-110; Koloğlu, \textit{Bedevi}, p. 114; Brémond, \textit{Hedjaz}, pp. 87-88.}

Arab deserters from the Ottoman Army were also viewed as a valuable source of soldiers and officers by Sharif Husayn. According to Tauber, “from about a million soldiers in 1915, half had deserted by the end of the war.”\footnote{Tauber, \textit{World}, p. 111.} The number of Arab deserters was very high in Medina as well, so that Fahreddin Paşa ordered on 7 April 1918 that captured deserters be shot and those who caught them be granted fifteen gold liras.\footnote{Kıçım, \textit{Medine}, p. 193. For more information on the Arab deserters in Medina, see \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 180, 200, 401, 513-514.} The high number of Arab deserters, however, did not necessarily mean that all of those deserters fought on Sharif Husayn’s side. In contrast, most of them preferred to return to their homes or hide from their Ottoman pursuers until the end of the war.\footnote{Tauber, \textit{World}, p. 111.} Furthermore, some Baghdadi officers, who had deserted to the Sharifian forces, posed great problems for both the Sharifs and the British. In some British reports, they were accused of being pro-Turkish and working only for their own economic interests by stealing the money and the stores sent by the British to the revolting army. It was claimed that they were doing tremendous harm “in the Hedjaz by starting all that was bad in the former Turkish rule,” and also in the prestige of Husayn among the Bedouins.\footnote{Ibid., from Davenport to Garland, (30.05.1918); \textit{Ibid.}, from Hussein Nuri al-Kueri to Colonel Bassett, (28.05.1918).} Moreover, they were accused of hindering any sort of action against the Ottomans by breaking the guns.\footnote{Ibid., from Davenport at sea to Wilson in Jidda, (16.06.1918).} In this sense, they were also suspected of being Ottoman agents.\footnote{Ibid., from Davenport at sea to Wilson in Jidda, (16.06.1918). Apart from these, a conflict developed between the Iraqi and the Syrian officers in the revolting army because the latter felt themselves discriminated in favour of the Iraqis who took over all the senior positions. \textit{Idem.}; Tauber, \textit{World}, p. 48.}
Notwithstanding the high number of deserters, there were many Arab officers serving in the Ottoman Army until the end of the war. Yasin Hilmi (al-Hashimi), a member of Al-‘Ahd, commanded the 24th Division in Palestine front near Tul Karm in 1918 and was then appointed the commander of the 8th Army-corps stationed in Salt in Transjordan. He refused numerous offers from Sharif Faysal to join the rebellion. His brother Major Taha was the Chief of General Staff in the 7th Ottoman Army-corps in Yemen and served for the Ottomans until the end of the war. Likewise, Captain Mehmed Bey commanded the Ottoman forces in Ma’an and served during the Hijaz revolt. “To most of them” says Lawrence referring to the Al-‘Ahd members, “the word was never given; for those societies pro-Arab only, willing to fight for nothing but Arab independence; and they could see no advantage in supporting the Allies rather than the Turks, since they did not believe our assurances that we would leave them free.”

Another feature of the Hijaz revolt that proves its local character was its absolute reliance on the Bedouins, the nomadic people living autonomously in deserts. They formed 75% of the Hijaz population and had always been out of the direct control of the government. Since the main motivation in their actions was economic rather than religious, the support of the Bedouins during the revolt rested on two major factors: money and military power. Both Sharif Husayn and the Ottomans fought to win over them, but in the end it was the party which paid more money, contributed more grain and demonstrated greater power which secured Bedouin support. When the Bedouins saw that they were not being paid any more or realised that the side they were supporting becomes powerless, they ceased to remain on their side. It is therefore inappropriate to consider the Bedouin contingent of the revolting army as an expression of nationalist or religious sentiments among the Hijazi Arabs against the Ottomans.

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185 On this issue, Dawn suggests: “Many Arab officers, served at the Straights or in the Caucasus. Others, however, served in Palestine; even here, recruits for the Arab army appeared to have been prisoners of war more often than deserters.” Dawn, “Rise,” p. 157.
186 Tauber, World, pp. 115-116; Erden, Suriye, pp. 89-90.
187 Lawrence, Seven, p. 23.
189 “They are by no means fanatically religious contrary to the received idea; they neither fast nor pray, and in reality are only nominal Mohammedans” A. J. B. Wavell, A Modern Pilgrim in Mecca and a Siege in Sanaa, London, Constable & Company, 1912, p. 59. See also Kiciman, Medine, p. 118; Koloğlu, Bedevi, pp. 96, 109.
190 Kiciman, Medine, pp. 80, 128-129, Koloğlu, Bedevi, pp.132-133; Atay, Zeytindağı, p. 81.
Sharif Husayn’s forces, with the exception of ex-Ottoman officers who joined the rebels after the outbreak of the rebellion, were almost entirely made up of Bedouins. The financial contribution of Britain was essential for Husayn to win over the Bedouins, so that in August 1915, a famous member of the Sharifian family expressed to the British that Sharif Husayn’s good relations with the Arabs of desert was dependent on his money and grain contribution to them, and thus, British contribution to Husayn in terms of money, grain and arms was essential for Husayn’s consolidation of power in Arabia. Britain provided gold and foodstuffs to the Bedouins mainly via Sharif Husayn. In September 1916, McMahon urged Sharif Husayn that “he should endeavour to counteract the influence of Turkish gold among the Arab tribes by more generous payments on his own part.” The source of these “generous payments” was of course the British.

The Ottomans started the propaganda activities to win over the Hijazi Bedouins and townsmen long before the outbreak of the revolt, so that in late 1914, Sharif Husayn reported to the British that “they (Turks) have informed the people and the Bedouins that it was Britain which intercepted the alms and aid and thus reduced them to their pitiable state” and thus created an anti-British atmosphere in Arabia. In addition, the grain contributions were also made to the region that by October 1915, when the Syrian region was suffering from starvation, the Fourth Army and the province of Syria sent grain to Mecca worth 35,000 liras to be distributed to the local people as a loan in order to meet the grain need of the Hijaz.

Once the revolt had broken out, in the summer of 1916, the Ottomans followed a policy, on the one hand, of bribery among the Bedouins and of countering the religious propaganda used by Sharif Husayn, and, on the other, of denial of any “Arab” nature of the revolt. Throughout the revolt, the Ottomans provided grain and gold to ensure the loyalty of the Bedouins. In a letter to the Commandant of Yanbo, intercepted and forwarded by the Sharifian forces to the British, the muhafız of Medina Basri Paşa stated that “large amount of gold and decorations have been given Arabs round Medina to bribe them and telling commandant to do likewise” in Yanbo. However, according to the intelligence officer in Medina, Naci Kâşif (Kuçman), the policy of bribery practiced perfectly by Basri Paşa was

191 Mousa, Lawrence, p. 16; Lawrence, Seven, p. 42; “The Hejas revolt is essentially a tribal movement and the Sherif a tribal chief who has thrown in his lot quite definitively with the tribesmen.” PRO, FO 686/6, Report on the Hejas, (22.12.1916).
192 Ibid., from Symes to HC in Cairo (No. 70/84-118), (05.08.1915).
193 PRO, FO 141/462-1, from McMahon in Cairo to Edward Grey, (11.09.1916). Those who joined the rebel forces were paid between four and ten English pounds per month. Brémond, Hedjaz, p. 87.
194 PRO, FO 141/460-8, a hand note taken by X of a discourse by Sherif of Mecca, (09.12.1914).
196 PRO, FO 141/461-3, from Wilson in Jidda to Arab Bureau in Cairo, (04.08.1916).
interrupted by the new Emir of Mecca Sharif ‘Ali Haydar, who was somewhat mean on this issue. Apart from this, the Ottomans continued to contribute grain to the Bedouins, so that by September 1916, the government decided to sell wheat, that was brought to Hijaz by trains, for half of its real cost to the Hijazi Bedouins who were loyal to the Ottomans. Naci Kâşif relates that the loyalty of the tribesmen along the Hijaz Railway up to Medina was to a great extent maintained thanks to the utilization of train wagons in distribution of the grains to the Bedouins. The situation, however, was not the same between Mecca and Medina due to absence of a railway on this line.

The Ottoman government also awarded medals to the Bedouin shaykhs, again in an attempt to ensure their allegiance. In August 1916, Cemal Paşa proposed the Ministry of the Interior to award Ottoman medals to Hamid Abu Shamar from the Beli tribes, Nuri al-Shalan from the Ruwala tribes, and some of their relatives because of their loyalties to the government after the outbreak of the Hijaz revolt.

The Ottoman policy to win over the Bedouins had at least some success as is shown by the continuing loyalty of various tribes. Husayn al-Mabayrik from the Rabigh tribes supported Fahreddin Paşa actively against Sharif Husayn throughout the revolt. Beli tribes between al-Wajh and al-‘Ala also remained loyal to the government that during the war that they sold the foodstuffs, given to them by the British and Sharif Husayn, to the Ottoman Army. Moreover, in September 1916, Al-Sharq newspaper reported that lots of tribes among them Al-Huwazim, Al-Ahmada and Mesiye stated their loyalties to the government.

Apart from the use of money, foodstuffs and medals to ensure the loyalty of the Bedouins, the Ottoman government also attempted to counter the religious propaganda used by Sharif Husayn at the beginning of the revolt. Shortly after the outbreak of the revolt, the Ottomans, on 1 July 1916, appointed Sharif Husayn’s rival, Sharif ‘Ali Haydar, as the new Emir of Mecca.

\[197\] Sharif ‘Ali Haydar was appointed Emir of Mecca on 1 July 1916 in place of Sharif Husayn.
\[198\] Kiciman, Medine, p. 80.
\[200\] Kiciman, Peygamberimizin, p. 80.
\[201\] BOA, DH.KMS., 41/43, (19.08.1916).
\[203\] Ibid., p. 397.
\[204\] Tanin, 21.09.1916, p. 1. In August 1916, it was reported in Tanin that some of the prominent Arab tribesmen had published a proclamation in which they stated that the Arabs who take actions against the Turks and the Islamic Caliphate will be considered infidels. Ibid., 17.08.1916, p. 1.
\[205\] Ibid., 02.07.1916, p. 1. Since 1840, there was a rivalry between two clans of the House of Hashem: Dhawu-Zayd and Dhawu-‘Awn. Sharif Husayn was a member of ‘Awn sect, while his rival, Sharif ‘Ali Haydar was a member of Zayd sect.
Husayn had started his propaganda on 26 June 1916, issuing a proclamation to the Islamic world.206 In this proclamation, after complimenting the House of Osman and stating that the Emirs of Mecca were the first Muslim princes to acknowledge the Ottoman government, Husayn mentioned his service for the government over the past years while fighting with the Ottomans against rebellions in the region. Afterwards, he described how the Empire had become corrupt and decayed in the hands of the CUP and accused it of dragging the Empire into the war which brought pain and poverty to the last Islamic Empire of the world and particularly to the holy lands of Islam. He further accused the government of issuing a paper called *Al-Ijtihad* in which the biography of the Prophet was written in a very disrespectful manner; rejecting God’s word: “the male must obtain the double of the female” and making them equal in inheritance; allowing the troops in the Mecca, Medina and Damascus garrisons to break their fasts during Ramadan; diminishing the power of the Ottoman Sultan by forbidding him even to choose for himself the chief of his personal cabinet; instructing the judge of the “Mohammaden Court of Mecca” to reject the evidence of believers outside the courts; hanging “at one time of 21 men among the learned Muslims and the Chiefs of Arabs” and deporting their innocent families to remote regions while confiscating their properties; digging up the tomb of “the Grand Emir and ascetic person” Al Sayyed al-Sharif ‘Abd al-Kader al-Jazairi al-Hassani and scattering his bones; and finally firing at the K’abe and damaging its holy cotton (*qiswa*).

It is known that the proclamation, before it was published in Cairo, had been amended slightly by the British, after the French had expressed their anxieties about the passages which condemned the Ottoman government for allowing troops to break their fasts and over the passage on evidence in the religious courts since France was also exercising the same measures in her Muslim colonies.207 Rashid Rida, the editor of *Al-Manar* in Cairo also intended to make some amendments to give a more nationalistic colour to the proclamation before its publication, however, Sharif has reportedly rejected and the original proclamation was published.208 Obviously, the main aim of Sharif Husayn’s proclamation was to justify the rebellion in the eyes of Muslims, most of whom were living under British rule and most of whom had already condemned the Sharif for jeopardizing the holy lands of Islam. In this

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206 An English translation of this proclamation can be found in PRO, *FO 141/461*-3, from HC in Cairo to Edward Grey, (15.07.1916), (Attached report of Captain Cornwallis, Appendix-IV). For a French translation, see Mandelstam, *Sort*, pp. 360-362. The information and quotes given in this paragraph referring the proclamation are all taken from PRO, *FO 141/461*-3, from HC in Cairo to Edward Grey, (15.07.1916), (Attached report of Captain Cornwallis, Appendix-IV).


sense, the only passage that touched on the cause of Arabs was the execution of twenty one Arab notables, without even emphasizing their ideology of Arabism.

Sharif ‘Ali Haydar issued his counter-proclamation on 9 August 1916, fourteen days after his arrival in Medina.\textsuperscript{209} In the counter-proclamation, Sharif Haydar denounced the actions of Sharif Husayn and justified the policies of the Ottoman government from a religious as well as a political perspective. He firstly emphasised that no non-Muslim conquerors had occupied the Hijaz, the holy lands of Islam, for thirteen centuries in spite of all the misfortunes and catastrophes that its Islamic possessors have undergone. At this point he proceeded to accuse Sharif Husayn of making an agreement with a Christian power to push the Ottomans out of the Hijaz, an action that would eventually cause Christian protection of the holy lands of Islam. He considered Sharif Husayn to have been deceived by the British as were the Emirs of other Muslim British possessions such as the Khedive of Egypt, the Sultan of Zanzibar and the Emirs of India. For the colonial Muslim troops fighting on the British side, Haydar claimed that “as long as they are in the service of a Christian power, fighting in its lines, girding on its swords, fighting according to its order whatever they may be, they will be considered Christians as there will be no difference then between the Muslem or the Christian and the result for the Islam is one, because the origin is the head and the limbs are the subjects.” Afterwards, Haydar tried to justify the Ottoman alliance with another Christian power, Germany, stating that the alliance was made in order to use the Germans “in smashing other Christian powers and to help in taking revenge for Islam from its enemy.” Furthermore, he mentioned that unlike Britain, Germany did not possess any Muslim territories hence there was no problem in being allies with them. Finally, Sharif Haydar called all inhabitants of the Hijaz, to unite and fight against the troops sent by the Christians and their native aides, and, to assist the Ottoman troops in their actions to extinguish the revolt.

On 9 September 1916, Sharif issued his second proclamation in \textit{Al-Qibla} newspaper, the official mouthpiece of Sharif Husayn.\textsuperscript{210} This time, Husayn produced a more political argument against the policies of the CUP, though some religious points remained. Afterwards, the Sharif issued two more proclamations in November 1916 and March 1917 in \textit{Al-Qibla}.\textsuperscript{211}

\textsuperscript{209} The full text of the original proclamation can be found in \textit{Tanin}, 05.09.1916, pp. 1-2. For an English translation, see PRO, \textit{FO 686/11}, Sherif Haydar’s Proclamation, (09.08.1916). The information and quotes given in this paragraph referring the proclamation are all taken from PRO, \textit{FO 686/11}, Sherif Haydar’s Proclamation, (09.08.1916).

\textsuperscript{210} An English translation of this proclamation can be found in PRO, \textit{FO 141/462-1}, from McMahon in Cairo to Edward Grey, (06.10.1916). See Mandelstam, \textit{Sort}, pp. 363-364 for a French translation.

In these proclamations, Sharif went on condemning the “wicked” actions of the CUP such as “plundering” the tomb of the Prophet in Medina, while making many references to his first two proclamations.\textsuperscript{212} It is also interesting that the word “Turanist” was employed by the Sharif in the last two proclamations while referring to the CUP. Considering the contexts of these proclamations, it can be said that this word was used by Husayn to emphasise the “infidelity” of the CUP rather than expressing a nationalist reaction to its “Turanist” policies.

The Ottoman government did not make the news of revolt public for more than a month after it had broken out. Then, on 26 July 1916 an article called “Intrigue in Mecca” (\textit{Mekke’deki Fesat}) appeared in \textit{Tanin}. This article reflects the main argument of the CUP against the rebellion of Sharif Husayn that this revolt was not representative of the Arab population as a whole and that, contrary to any such idea, there was no Turkish-Arab division, the Turks and Arabs being united as members of the Ottoman Empire. Accordingly, it is also claimed that neither Arabism nor Islamism was concerned in the revolt, and that the sources of the intrigue in the Hijaz were personal aspirations of Husayn and “the joining to Husayn of some vagabond tribesmen of whom the main livelihood had always been pillage.”\textsuperscript{213} Moreover, according to the article, Britain was “deceived by the spurious influence of Sharif Husayn” and plotted this revolt with gold.\textsuperscript{214} Finally, it is claimed that although the government was aware of the real intentions of Sharif Husayn for a long time, it did not take any actions mainly because there were more important issues to be dealt with and also because the government thought that Husayn’s ambitions for kingship, that had been “burning his heart” for quite a long time, could be extinguished by good management.\textsuperscript{215}

Towards the end of the war, the Ottoman government, deeply concerned about the struggle against the rebels, attempted to arrange a peace with Sharif Husayn. After the Soviet government published Sykes-Picot Agreement in November 1917 and the real intentions of the British and the French governments over the Middle East were revealed, Cemal Paşa decided to use this revelation to propose a peace to the Sharifs. On 13 November 1917, he wrote letters to Sharif Faysal and to Ja‘far al-‘Askari, the Chief of General Staff of the revolting army. In his letter to Faysal, Cemal stated that Sykes-Picot Agreement was in contradiction with the independence aims of the Arabs and proposed re-opening negotiations.

\textsuperscript{212} Mandelstam, \textit{Sort}, pp. 392.
\textsuperscript{214} \textit{Idem.}
\textsuperscript{215} \textit{Idem.}
“with a view to solve the problem in favour of Islam.”216 In the other letter, Cemal reminded to Ja’far that “General Allenby is to-day conquering Palestine which Salabidden Eyoubi [Salah al-Din Ayyubi] defended” and proposed to see him in person in Damascus assuring that he would be allowed to return in safety.217 Faysal, instructed by his father and the British, did not give an official reply to Cemal, though unofficially send him the message that sword was the intermediary between them. Although the new commander of the Fourth Army, Muhammed Cemal Paşa made three more peace proposals to Faysal in February, June and August 1918, he too did not get any positive replies.218

In conclusion, Husayn’s independence ambitions combined with British designs in the Middle East and produced this revolt during the very crucial years of the Great War. Therefore, the reasons behind the revolt were in fact economic and political rather than religious or ideological. However, Husayn’s religious constraints in the holy lands of Islam compelled him and his sons to employ a more religious language to carry out and justify their actions.219 While Ottoman government policy shifted from firm centralization to attempted conciliation, failure to respond to the growing threat of revolt effectively, and finally to unsuccessful bids for peace, Sharif Husayn’s policy moved from somewhat unconvincing accommodation to outright rebellion. In the end, although it succeed in driving off the Ottomans from the Arab lands and thus opening a new phase in the course of Turkish-Arab relations in general, within the context of Ottoman-Arab relations, the revolt of Sharif Husayn does not represent an overwhelming expression of Arab sentiment against the Ottomans. It was rather a local reaction which took advantage of the general state of war and the conciliatory policies of the centre, and which exceeded its natural limits of success thanks to the generous support of a Great Power.

216 PRO, FO 141/431-3, from HC in Cairo to James Balfour (No. 316), (25.12.1917), (Attached letter from Cemal to Faysal).
217 Ibid., (Attached letter from Cemal to Ja‘far).
218 Ibid., from the Residency in Cairo to James Balfour (No. 70), (08.04.1918); Ibid., from Wilson in Jidda to Arab Bureau in Cairo (No. W 158/164), (07.06.1918); Tauber, World, pp. 154-156.
219 Before starting his actions, the Sharif’s main concern was religious. He was afraid of being condemned by the Islamic world because he rose against the caliphate. He several times expressed these concerns to the British. PRO, FO 141/461-1, from Governor General in Khartoum to Clayton in Cairo (No. 721), (05.10.1915); Ibid., précis of the account of his visit and mission to Sharif Husayn ibn ‘Ali of Mecca by the messenger “A”, (05.10.1915). ‘Abdallah states the importance of the religion in their actions as: “(...) religion which justifies it [the revolt] and which is the sole foundation of action prevents us from working at once.” PRO, FO 141/460-8, from Consul-General in Cairo to FO (No.303), (10.12.1914), (Attached letter from ‘Abdallah).
Chapter IV: Other Arab Regions

Najd, and Iraq were the other regions where Ottoman-Arab relations were shaped during the Great War. The war-time evolution of the relations in these three regions, however, was not as energetic as that in Syria and the Hijaz. While Britain sought to increase its influence in Najd, Yemen and Iraq, the Ottoman policy generally concentrated on maintaining the full support of the local Arab leaders by various means against the enemies of the Empire. In the Najd and the Yemen regions, the pre-war patterns of the relations between the Ottomans and local leaders did not undergo a significant transformation during the war and even after the revolt of Sharif Husayn, whereas in Iraq, the relations were generally overshadowed by the British invasion.

In the Najd region, Ibn Rashid (in Hail) and Ibn Sa‘ud (in Riyadh) were the most influential tribal leaders with whom the Ottomans were in relation. Until the outbreak of the Great War, Ottoman-Ibn Rashid relations had been very positive. Yet, Ottoman-Sa‘udi relations had not been that favourable, mainly due to the latter’s relations with the British. During the war, this pattern of the relations did not undergo any major change, although the government sought to maintain full support of both Ibn Rashid and Ibn Sa‘ud against the British and Sharif Husayn.

In Hail, being close to Ottoman power centres and far away from British area of influence, Ibn Rashid had been a leader loyal to the Ottomans for quite a long time. The Ottoman government continuously subsidized him, especially in his struggle against his rival, Ibn Sa‘ud. During the war, the amount of Ottoman subsidies increased in order to ensure his allegiance to the government. Hence, in December 1915, the Ottoman Senate decided to pay an extra 288,000 piasters salary to Ibn Rashid and his family, because of their loyalty and service to the government. Furthermore, at the beginning of 1916, an Ottoman mission under Mehmet Âkif (Ersoy) was sent to Hail to present gifts and to guarantee his support in case of trouble in the Arabian Peninsula. Ibn Rashid, in reply, mentioned his readiness to serve for the Ottomans in Arabia, and pointed out his need for more arms and money in order to compete with his rival Ibn Sa‘ud, who had been receiving money and arms support from

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220 Here, the word “Najd” is used to express the inner parts of the Arabian Peninsula which also includes the Shammar region.
221 Here, the word “Yemen” is used to express the geographic region to the south of the Hijaz, which also includes the autonomous sancaq of Asir.
222 BOA, İMÜ, 1334/10, (08.12.1915).
the British. Afterwards, by actively supporting the Second Canal Campaign, Ibn Rashid demonstrated his loyalty to the government one more time.

Ottoman-Ibn Sa’ud relations, however, were never as good as those between the Ottomans and Ibn Rashid. In Riyadh, being close to the British area of influence, Ibn Sa’ud had been in close contact with the British, though, he has never broken his relations with the Ottomans completely. After his invasion of Al-Hasa region he was appointed the hereditary governor of the new Ottoman vilayet of Najd in May 1914. After the outbreak of the Great War, the Ottomans sought to maintain his active support against the British, so that the

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223 Taken from Baker, *Husain*.
government called for his help in Iraq where the British invaded Basra in November 1914. Ibn Sa’ud took advantage of the Ottoman calls for help and exerted a duplicitous policy by continuing to be in touch with both the Ottomans and the British. He continued to strengthen his ties with the British, especially after his defeat against Ibn Rashid in the battle of Jarrab on 24 January 1915. Finally a protectorate agreement was signed between Ibn Sa’ud and the British on 26 December 1915. Yet, even after this agreement, Ibn Sa’ud did not turn his back on the Ottomans that he continued to sell camels and British cloth to the Ottoman Army during the Second Canal Campaign.

After the outbreak of the Hijaz revolt, the Ottomans sought to drive both Ibn Sa’ud and Ibn Rashid against Sharif Husayn. During this revolt, Ibn Rashid assisted the Ottoman forces by allowing the transfer of foodstuffs from Hail to the besieged city of Medina. Yet, he did not take any direct actions against Sharif Husayn. By August 1917, he came to Madain Salah (to the north of Medina) with his forces, but did not attack Mecca although he was paid to do so. Apart from this, the Ottomans tried to take advantage of the traditional rivalry and hatred between Sharif Husayn and Ibn Sa’ud, and demanded several times the latter take action against Sharif Husayn. Fahreddin Paşa, in October 1918, offered Ibn Sa’ud arms and ammunition assistance if the latter attacked Mecca, yet did not get a positive reply. Subsequently, when Medina was still holding out after the armistice, he proposed Ibn Sa’ud a joint attack against Mecca. Ibn Sa’ud, however, required Germany’s and the Austro-Hungarian Empire’s recognition of the boundaries of his Emirate at first.

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230 According to this agreement, Ibn Sa’ud was formally recognized as the independent ruler of Najd under the British protection, and, in return, he undertook to refrain from any interference in the affairs of neighbouring shaykhs who were also in treaty relations with Great Britain. David Holden and Richard Johns, The House of Saud, London, Sidgwick & Jackson, 1981, pp. 50-51; Yapp, Making, p. 264.
231 Cemal Paşa, Hatrat, p. 172.
232 PRO, FO 141/757-8, from King Husayn in Mecca to HC in Cairo, (05.07.1918).
234 Sharif Husayn had a great apprehension of Ibn Sa’ud’s activities and intentions during the war. PRO, FO 141/757-8, (08.07.1917); PRO, FO 686/25, Note by Cromwell in Jidda, (28.11.1917). He generally accused Ibn Sa’ud of condoning the transfer of foodstuffs to Medina and Hail, and thus badly affecting the military operations of the revolting army. Ibid., from King Husayn in Mecca to HC in Cairo, (05.07.1918).
235 PRO, FO 141/430-3, from Baghdad to HC in Cairo (No. 9111), (26.10.1918). See also Ibid., from Yenbo to Arab Bureau in Cairo (No. 5172/250), (18.11.1918).
deemed this demand inappropriate and did not reply, and thus, no active help was received from Ibn Sa‘ud against Sharif Husayn.\footnote{Kandemir, Peygamberimizin, pp. 306-307; Kecman, Medine, p. 394.}

In the Yemen region, the most powerful local Emirs were Zaydi Imam Yahya of Yemen and Sayyid Idrisi of Asir. Although Ottoman-Yahya relations were favourable until 1911, the government was at odds with Idrisi for quite a long time. This picture did not change after the outbreak of the Great War, so that the government continued to support Imam Yahya against Sayyid Idrisi who was in cooperation with the British, and who then joined the revolt of Sharif Husayn.

The most important factor that sustained the good relations between Imam Yahya and the Ottomans was the Da’an Agreement which was signed between Imam Yahya and Ahmet İzzet Paşa\footnote{The Command of the Ottoman forces in Yemen and a senator.} after the latter had put down Yahya’s rebellion in 1911, and according to which Yahya was granted an autonomous administration in Yemen.\footnote{For details of the agreement, see Mahmud Nedim, Arabistan’da, pp. 136-139.} Thanks to this agreement, Ottoman-Yahya relations developed in a peaceful and stable manner after 1911, so that by the beginning of 1914, the Ottomans assisted Imam Yahya when he was fighting against Idrisi to drive him back to Sabia.\footnote{PRO, FO 141/460-8, from Mackawee in Aden to Wingate in Khartoum, (25.02.1914).} During the Great War, Imam Yahya remained loyal to the Ottomans, despite numerous overtures and offers from the British and Sharif Husayn.\footnote{PRO, FO 141/461-2, from the Sherif of Mecca to HE Minister, (01.06.1916); PRO, FO 686/25, Note by Cromwell in Jidda, (28.11.1917); Metin Ayşığı, Osmanlının Son Vilayeti Yemen, Ankara, Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 2002, pp. 2006, 2017.} His words “Even if I had only one slice of bread, I would give it to the [Ottoman] government” clearly shows his loyalty.\footnote{Tanin, 19.02.1917, p. 1.} Furthermore, when the Ottoman forces under Said Paşa attacked British Aden and captured Lahij in July 1915, Imam Yahya did not hesitate to assist the Ottoman forces although he was not in favour of this campaign.\footnote{He thought that it was impossible to challenge the British support to the Lahij tribes and thus this campaign would have no success but would only cause a new conflict among the Muslims. Mahmud Nedim, Arabistan’da, pp. 217-218. The phrase “Long live the Turks and the Arabs” in a march tune written for this campaign shows the solidarity that was sought to be established between the Turks and the Arabs against the British in Yemen. Asaf Tanrıktut, Yemen Notları, Ankara, Güzel Sanatlar Matbaası, 1965, p. 82.}

Ottoman-Idrisi relations, however, were hostile both before and during the Great War. He was known to be supported by Italians against the Ottomans during his rebellion in Asir in 1911.\footnote{Mahmud Nedim, Arabistan’da, pp. 123-124. A British report stating the difficulties to present British guns to the soldiers of Idrisi, who got used to Italian and Turkish guns, proves Idrisi’s close relation with the Italians. PRO, FO 141/462-1, from the Resident in Aden to HC in Cairo, (15.09.1916).} After this rebellion had been put down, a very weak agreement could hardly be reached between Idrisi and the Ottomans, without satisfying either party. Hence, the relations
continued to deteriorate, and Idrisi sought to build up his power by strengthening his ties with the British and by attacking Imam Yahya in Yemen. During the war, Idrisi-British relations continued to develop that an agreement was finally concluded between the Government of India and Idrisi in April 1916.

After the outbreak of the Hijaz revolt, the hostile relations continued with Idrisi, just as did the friendly relations with Imam Yahya. Idrisi joined the revolt and captured Kunfuda in July 1916. Imam Yahya, however, remained loyal to the government and actively supported the Ottoman forces in Yemen against Idrisi. The Ottoman army units in the Yemen region lost their entire transportation and communication links with the Ottoman mainland due to the Hijaz revolt. This situation, however, did not turn into a disaster for the Ottoman forces, mainly thanks to the friendly relations with Imam Yahya.

In Iraq, Ottoman-Arab relations developed in a different manner due to the British invasion which started in November 1914 in Basra and brought a series of battles throughout the war years. While fighting against the British, the Ottoman policy in the region chiefly concentrated at ensuring the allegiance of the local tribes against the British by propaganda. The propaganda activities generally aimed at promoting the idea of jihad among the Iraqi tribes. Sada-yı İslâm (Voice of Islam) newspaper started to be published in July 1915 in Baghdad fostering the idea of Islamic unity against the British colonialism, and urging loyalty to the caliphate. Offering government posts to the tribal chiefs was another method adopted by the Ottomans to win over the tribes. In October 1917, Enver Paşa suggested to the Ministry of the Interior that the tribes along the Euphrates River should be combined under one administration and their chiefs should be offered government posts that would “please their

244 Mahmud Nedim, Arabistan’da, pp. 140-145. On the eve of the Great War, Sharif Husayn and the British approached Idrisi to make him join the planned revolt. In fact, Sharif Husayn did not trust Idrisi very much, yet his cooperation was vital in order to guarantee the safety of the southern borders of the Hijaz which were vulnerable to a possible attack of the Ottoman forces in Asir. PRO, FO 141/461-1, from Hakimam in Erkowit to Clayton in Cairo (No. 725), (05.10.1915); Ibid., the account of his mission to Sheriff Hussein of Mecca by the messenger “A”, (05.10.1915); PRO, FO 141/461-2, “The Politics of Mecca” by T.E. Lawrence, (01.02.1916).

245 Antonius, Awakening, pp. 161-162. From that time on, Idrisi’s military activities were controlled from India. PRO, FO 141/461-3, from Chief Egypforce in Cairo to Chief London, (15.06.1916).

246 Bayur, Türk, Vol. III/3, p. 205. The city was subsequently recaptured by the Ottomans in October 1916 with the help of the Arabs of Hali district. PRO, FO 141/462-1, from the Residency in Aden to HC in Cairo, (06.10.1916).


sentiments and interests."\(^{250}\) However, these activities were not very successful in challenging the British propaganda and bribery in Iraq, so that a number of tribal uprisings occurred against the Ottomans in Najaf, Karbala, Kufa, Semawe and Hilla.\(^{251}\) In the end, as the British more successfully influenced over the Iraqi tribes and expanded its invasion,\(^{252}\) Ottoman relations with the local tribes were correspondingly obstructed.

Apart from the tribal politics, the Arab movement in Iraq was generally not encouraged by Britain who was cautious to any kind of actions that might stimulate nationalist sentiments in the territories that were or would be under direct British occupation. In this sense, the news of the Hijaz revolt was generally not circulated in Iraq.\(^{253}\) Furthermore, the revolt plans of some Iraqi notables and army officers were generally not supported by the British and were even interrupted due to the British invasion. A deputy acting as the head of the Liberty and Entente Party in Basra, Sayyid Talib, just before the outbreak of the war, made several overtures to the British, and proposed to form a British protectorate in Basra under his rule. The British, however, did not give him any concrete assistance or encouragement, and after the capture of Basra in November 1914 he was totally ignored by the British officials.\(^{254}\) Apart from this, in March 1915, some Iraqi army officers, particularly members of Al-'Ahd society, decided to start a revolt and ask the British support, yet the British victory in Shʻayba in April 1915 disrupted the plan. Subsequently, in July 1915, some other Iraqi army officers, stationed in Nasiriyaa, brought about another revolt plan, according to which they would maintain the support of tribal chiefs, separate themselves from the Ottoman forces and contact the British on the basis of granting independence to Iraq. This plan, however, failed too because the officers could not maintain British help and because the British forces captured Nassiriyaa in late July 1915.\(^{255}\)

In conclusion, the British influence was the key factor in determining the course of Ottoman-Arab relations in Najd, Yemen and Iraq during the Great War. This influence revealed itself in Najd and Yemen by subsidizing Ibn Saʻud and cooperating with Idrisi against the Ottomans, and in Iraq by directly invading the region. Mainly due to this factor, the pre-war power relations remained chiefly the same in Najd and Yemen during the war, so

\(^{250}\) Askeri Tarih Belgeleri, pp. 243-245.

\(^{251}\) Most of these uprisings failed because the rebels did not act in an organized manner and could not establish contact with the British. Tauber, World, p. 30


\(^{253}\) Tauber, World, p. 31; Atiyyah, Iraq, p. 101.

\(^{254}\) Mahmud Nedim, Arabistan’da, pp. 95-96; Atiyyah, Iraq, pp. 87-91; Kayah, Arabs, pp. 179-180, 187.

\(^{255}\) Atiyyah, Iraq, p. 102.
that Idrisi’s hostile actions against the Ottomans continued, just as Ibn Sa‘ud’s duplicitous policy did. Hence, the outbreak of the war did not constitute a turning point in the relations between the Ottomans and the local Arab leaders in these regions. Furthermore, Sharif Husayn’s revolt did not alter the local leaders’ inclinations towards the government as is shown by the continuing loyalty of Imam Yahya and Ibn Rashid. In Iraq, however, Ottoman-Arab relations were generally eclipsed by the British invasion due to which the Ottoman policy towards the Iraqi tribes was obstructed, and under which the Arab movement could not find a strong encouragement.
Conclusion

Despite the fact that the First World War period represented the beginning of one of alienation between the Turks and the Arabs in terms of social and political relations, the wartime relations between the two peoples did not necessarily develop in a completely hostile manner, but underwent different evolutions in different regions. The effectiveness of the Ottoman policy that was formulated according to the necessities of the war and the influence of the Entente Powers, especially Britain, in the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire were the most important factors in determining the colour of the relations.

Throughout the war years, the Ottoman government generally sought to maintain the full support of the local people and leaders in the Arab provinces against the enemy powers. However, the state of war also encouraged the Arab movements aiming at separation or foreign protection in some regions. Under these circumstances, development and effectiveness of the Ottoman policy differed from region to region.

In Syria, the government was successful in tranquillising the separatist activities and maintaining the support of the local people against the enemy powers mainly due to the firm policies adopted by Cemal Paşa who was the most important figure in the formation of government policy in the region. He, at first, tried to gather some influential Syrian notables round him and maintain their full support in the course of the war by adopting a mild policy. Then, however, the increasing apprehension of an enemy landing in Syria combined with the revelation of the preparations of some Syrian notables for a revolt in Lebanon, compelled Cemal Paşa to adopt a very firm policy to deter both the Syrians and the enemy powers. Meanwhile, starvation struck the region and gravely affected the local people during the war years. Although this disaster was considered by some western contemporaries as an outcome of a deliberate Ottoman policy, it was in fact due to a number of natural and financial factors which combined with the difficult conditions of war, and in which the role of the Ottomans was minimal. In the end, the firm policy of Cemal Paşa, which included executions and deportations, combined with the disaster of starvation and rendered the local people too weak to oppose the government in Syria, and under these circumstances, no separatist uprisings happened in the region until the invasion of the British in 1918.

In the Hijaz, which was close to the British areas of influence around the Red Sea and had a special place in the British war-time strategy because of its religious importance as the holy lands of Islam, the government policy developed in a more peaceful manner but could not succeed in controlling the most influential local leaders effectively. After the Ottomans’
entry into the Great War, the government zealously sought to maintain active support from the
Emir of Mecca Sharif Husayn, while ignoring the suspicious activities of the Sharif and his
sons on various occasions. In this political climate, Sharif Husayn, taking advantage of the
government’s conciliatory policy, strengthened his ties with the British, instead of rendering
help to the Ottomans. When Husayn declared his revolt on 10 June 1916, it was too late for
the Ottomans to avert the negative consequences of their conciliatory policy. The revolt was
successful in pushing the Ottomans out of the Hijaz and facilitated the separation of the Arab
provinces, and thus the Arabs, as a whole from the Ottoman Empire. The Ottomans reacted to
the revolt by increasing expenditure to win over the Hijazi Bedouins, trying to counter Sharif
Husayn’s religious propaganda with the appointment of Sharif ‘Ali Haydar the new Emir of
Mecca, and denying any Arab nature of the rebellion. These policies, however, were not very
effective in countering the revolt, so that from 1917 on, the Ottoman commanders made a
series of peace proposals to Husayn, which were all rebuffed by the latter.

In other Arab regions, the Ottoman policy had partial success under the growing British
influence in these regions. In the Najd region, the government tried to maintain the support of
both Ibn Rashid and Ibn Sa’ud against the British and Sharif Husayn. In the end, although Ibn
Rashid, who had been traditionally loyal to the Ottomans, actively supported the government
on various occasions, Ibn Sa’ud, being in close relation with the British, applied a more
duplicitious policy and did not render any direct help to the government. In Yemen, Imam
Yahya, who was on good terms with the Ottomans since 1911, was continuously subsidized
against Sayyid Idrisi of Asir, and thus remained loyal to the Ottomans throughout the war,
while Idrisi, who was supported by the British, joined the revolt of Sharif Husayn and
attacked the Ottoman forces in Asir. In Iraq, although bribery and propaganda activities were
made in order to win over the local tribes, the expansion of British invasion obstructed the
Ottoman policy and also interrupted the revolt plans of some Iraqi army officers, and thus
overshadowed the course of Ottoman-Arab relations in the region.

In the end, a reaction of the Arabs as a whole against Ottoman rule did not take place
during the First World War period. This situation can be explained by the lack of a supra-
regional national consciousness among the Arab subjects of the Ottoman Empire. During the
war years, the idea of Arabism, which represented an intellectual reaction against the long-
established corrupt Ottoman system rather than a fully-fledged nationalism in this period and
chiefly concentrated in the Syrian region in terms of reform activities, was unable to attract
the Arab masses in the Ottoman Empire, whose loyalties were mainly of local or tribal nature
rather than “national”, in order to trigger a total reaction against the Ottomans. In this context,
Syria had the greatest potential to produce a rebellion engineered by Arabist intellectuals. Yet, even this revolt plan, which was prevented by Cemal Paşa, did not intend to exceed the boundaries of the Syrian region. Accordingly, the common characteristic of the Arab movements within the Ottoman Empire during the war years was their local or tribal nature, rather than being a reaction of the Arabs as a whole. These movements could not establish inter-regional links with each other, so that a local movement in an Arab region generally did not produce an echo in other regions. This was true even for the revolt of Sharif Husayn, which can be considered as the most successful Arab reaction ever against Ottoman rule in the Arab provinces. The local nature of this revolt can be easily seen in its failure to attract all Arab elements in the Ottoman Army and in its absolute reliance on the Hijazi Bedouins, whose support was mainly sustained by British gold and grain. The approval of Sharif Husayn’s revolt by some Syrian notables was also not enough to change its local character, because this approval solely expanded the territorial expectations of Sharif Husayn and increased his credibility in the eyes of the British, rather than stimulating a total reaction in all Arab provinces.

Finally, the British influence in the Arab provinces was certainly an important factor that affected the course of Ottoman-Arab relations during the war years. As Britain sought to win over the local tribes and leaders by propaganda and bribery and tried to drive them against the Ottomans in almost every Arab province, the Ottoman government was always compelled to increase its expenditure in order to counter these British activities. In a region where the major sentiments of the people were local or tribal rather than “national”, and thus loyalties could easily be changed with money and power, bribery was certainly a very effective method to ensure the support of the local leaders and tribes. Under these conditions, with the exception of Syria, Ottoman-Arab relations did not develop within their own internal dynamics, but rather developed as a matter of struggle between two hostile powers, who were Britain and the Ottoman Empire, to win over local tribes and leaders. Those tribes and leaders influenced by the British generally acted against the Ottomans, whereas those who were influenced by the Ottomans remained loyal to the government. In the end, in some regions such as the Hijaz and Iraq, the number of the Arab tribes and leaders acting against the Ottomans during the war certainly increased, while in some regions such as Najd and Yemen, the traditional patterns of the relations with the local leaders did not undergo any major change and thus the situation did not deteriorate for the Ottomans. In Syria, however, until 1918, the influence of the Entente Powers remained limited and thus the local movements could generally be controlled mainly due to the strict policies adopted by Cemal Paşa.
**Glossary**

*kaza* : District. Third level subdivision in the Ottoman administrative system.

*muhafız* : Commander who administrates an autonomous *sancak*.

*mutasarrıf* : Administrator of a *sancak*.

*sancak* : Sub-province. Second level subdivision in the Ottoman administrative system.

*ulema* : Doctors of Muslim theology.

*vali* : Governor. Administrator of a *vilayet*.

*vilayet* : Province. First level subdivision in the Ottoman administrative system.
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