Husain, Sharif of Mecca, on the strength of an agreement with the British, embodied in the so-called MacMahon correspondence, revolted against the Ottoman government on June 10, 1916, in the middle of the Great War. Reading the Memoirs of his son, King Abdullah, one is frequently reminded by the writer that the quarrel of the Hashimites was not with the Ottoman state but with the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP). Specifically, Abdullah's quarrel is, on the one hand, with the CUP's policies of Turkish nationalism which tried to exclude the Arabs and/or to Turkicize them, and, on the other hand, with the policy of reducing the power of feudalism from the Sultan down to the local Sheikh (in other words, democratization). (One important issue closely related to the latter was modernization: the Hashimites, for instance, were opposed to the completion of the Hijaz railway.) How far Abdullah was sincere in his protestations of loyalty to the Ottoman state, we cannot know for certain. What is clear is that the CUP was an instrument of Turkish nationalism and that, at least for some time, it did try to follow a policy of Turkification which aroused reactions not only among Arabs, but also among other Moslem peoples, most notably the Albanians.

The British had promised Husain to uphold Arab independence in the Arabic speaking lands of Asia. Mersin,
to describe some of the contacts established between Syria and Turkey during the period between the Armistice of Mudros (October 30, 1918) and the battle of Khan Maisalun. Husain, his sons and their followers had risen against the Ottoman state in order to create an independent Arab state. When it became clear that the Entente was preparing to impose its own rule in the form of the mandate system after having cut up the whole region in small pieces, many Arabs, including Faisal himself, began to think of cooperating with the Turks in a common struggle for independence and territorial integrity.

Probably the earliest contact took place on November 3, 1918. A British delegation headed by a British general was in Katma, at the headquarters of the 7. Ottoman Army to discuss matters relating to the application of the armistice. Nuri Said was a member of the British delegation, presumably representing Faisal. Nuri Said, himself a former Ottoman officer, gave to Major Ömer Halis, his classmate from the Ottoman War College and a member of the Ottoman delegation, a secret letter. This letter, purportedly written without the knowledge of the British, was to be transmitted to İzzet Paşa, the Ottoman Grand Vizier, and called for a Moslem federation embracing Arabs and Turks. Ali Fuat Cebesoy, who was at that time commander at Katma and from whose memoirs we learn of the incident, dismissed the affair as a British ploy. Cebesoy does not tell us whose signature the letter bore.²

Later contacts came in the second half of 1919. According to a British document, a report dated July 24, 1919, Faisal and the Ottoman Sultan, Vahdettin, were engaged in negotiations. The intermediary was the former Mutasarrıf of Kerek (probably Kerak in Jordan) Essad Bey, a member of the CUP, who communicated with Cemal Paşa, commander in Konya. Cemal, who came to İstanbul, was said to be bearing an autograph letter from Faisal to the Sultan, assuring him of his devotion and fidelity. Cemal

apparently personally handed the letter to the Sultan. Another agent confirmed this information. On July 21, the Sultan conferred with the cabinet about this letter and a reply was prepared. Cemal Paşa was to carry the reply and was given secret instructions.³

There is no information whatsoever in Turkish sources to confirm the contents of this report. We only know that Cemal did leave Konya on leave on the 1st of July 1919 to come to Istanbul. However, the Sultan and his government could not view him with much favour because they knew that he had joined Mustafa Kemal's resistance movement.⁴ Cemal was accordingly dismissed from his command and remained in Istanbul.

A good part of the elements in this report reappear again in a document in the French archives.⁵ William Yale, who worked with the American King-Crane Commission which made a tour of investigation in the Middle East, got hold of the text of a Turkish-Syrian agreement which he reported on September 15, 1919. The agreement itself, consisting of 9 articles, is purported to have been signed by Faisal and Mustafa Kemal, made in two copies and exchanged in Aleppo on June 16, 1919, through the good offices of Essad Bey, Mutasarrıf of Kerek (art. 9). Article 1 declared that the two contracting parties, the Turkish and the noble Arab nations, viewed with regret the division in the Moslem world and considered it their sacred duty to end this division and ensure the cooperation of the two nations in order to defend the religion and the fatherland. At that moment when the independence of the Turks was in danger because foreigners wanted to partition Iraq, Palestine, Syria and contiguous areas, they had decided to proclaim holy war following the Conference of Paris (art. 2). In order to achieve this aim, the two parties declared they would never recognize the partition of the Turkish Empire and Arabia and its occupation by foreigners (art.

³ Public Record Office (PRO), FO 371/4233, 117548.
⁵ Ministère des Affaires Etrangères (MAE), Levant, vol. 142, pp. 145-7
On condition that Arabia would remain bound to the Ottoman Empire and that she would be loyal to the Caliphate, the Ottoman government would recognize the formation of a government in the regions of Hijaz, Medina, Iraq, Palestine, Damascus, Beirut, Aleppo under the sovereignty of “Chérif Hussein Pacha”. The details of this arrangement were to be fixed later by an alliance (art. 4). In the territories under the occupation of the Sharifian army, the name of the Sultan would again be mentioned in the hutba (art. 5). In order to start the holy war and to ensure the union of Turks, the Sharif would issue a proclamation concerning the attitude taken by foreigners against Islam. To prepare the holy war, he would on the one hand call on the sheikhs and chiefs and make alliances with them, and on the other, he would form organizations like those in Anatolia. The forces thus prepared would be absolutely prepared to start the holy war when the signal was given (art. 6). The Sharif would aid the national forces of Anatolia to the greatest possible extent and both parties undertook to aid each other in offense and defence until the realization of the projected aims (art. 7). The Sharif would inform of this agreement not only the Moslems of Hijaz, but also Imam Yahya, Sayid Idris, the Moslems of Tripoli, Bingazi, Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, India and do his utmost to win them over to a general movement (art. 8).

This agreement is also mentioned in a British report. However, there is no evidence of it whatsoever in Turkish sources, thus bringing to mind the likelihood of its spuriousness. This probability can also be deduced from the fact that on the 16th of June 1919, Mustafa Kemal was as yet in no position to speak, let alone sign a document, on behalf of anybody else. Not only does this date precede the Congresses of Erzurum (July 23) and Sivas (September 4) where leagues for the defense of rights were formed, but it is also before he had formed with five other senior officers a secret military group at Amasya on June 20-22. The reaction that Kazım Karabekir, militarily the most powerful general in this military group, was to show later to much

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6 PRO, FO 371/4215, 2404 (p. 399), 6/10/1919.
more limited contacts with Syrian nationalists is also proof of the fact that such far-reaching engagements as those embodied in the agreement would not have gone unnoticed. We are thus forced to conclude that the document in question was invented, either by Turkish and/or Arab nationalists. The former case is much more likely, because the agreement refers to the independence of the Turks without mentioning the Arabs (art. 2), to the “Turkish” rather than the Ottoman Empire (art. 3), and to Sharif Husain as “Pacha” rather than King (art. 4). The aim in concocting such a document would be to try to make the Entente powers fear the consequences of driving the Turks and the Arabs to extremities.

Later, with the Anglo-French agreement of September 15, 1919, real contacts began. The replacement of British troops by French troops was one of the major blows to Arab illusions. The Syrians could view British occupation with less misgiving because, after all, the British Army could be considered an ally of the Sharifian forces. France, on the other hand, had for long entertained colonial ambitions in Syria, so that there could be no mistaking the significance of a French occupation long after the war had ended. Rising discontent in Syria was reported in a long telegram (16/17 October 1919) of Cevdet Bey, commander at Diyarbakır, to Mustafa Kemal. He reported that the Syrians were against any kind of foreign protectorate and desired the independence of all Arab lands under the Sharif. However, Cevdet thought that such a scheme was not realizable and called for a confederation under the

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7 French intelligence sources too, did not take the M. Kemal-Faisal agreement seriously. MAE, vol. 91, p. 116.
8 Various intelligence reports about a Pan-Islamic congress in Sivas also tend to give the impression of spuriousness. One instance is a report (20/11/1919) that a delegation from Hussein was about to arrive at Sivas (as well as delegations from Azerbaijan and Afghanistan). MAE, vol. 91, pp. 161-4. Another (17/9/1919) was about the participation at the same congress of six Syrians and the decision taken by that body to revolt against foreign occupation. MAE, vol. 142, p. 176. A third report was about the presence of Azemzade Hussein Pasha as representative of Syria at Sivas. PRO, FO 371/4162, 17468 (2/1/1920).
Caliph which would comprise different Arab countries. These countries would each be represented by a crescent on the flag of the confederation.9

According to a secret British report by agent “H” dated October 24, 1919, Azemzade Yusuf was expected in Istanbul together with Jamal Naser, ex-governor of Hauran, to conduct negotiations with the Ottoman government. The Porte was to be represented by Cemal Paşa, Minister of War, and İzzet Paşa, former Premier.10 So far, I am not aware of any confirmation of this report.

On the 15th of December, 1919, Lieutenant Colonel Shakir Nimet, a former Ottoman staff officer who was at the head of the national resistance organization in Aleppo, telegraphed Mustafa Kemal, calling for close Turkish-Syrian military cooperation and Syrian independence (Palestine included) with some form of link with the Caliphate or with both the Caliphate and the Sultanate.11

9 Atatürk, vol. III, p. 1104 (doc. 156e). Cevdet himself was of Arab origin.


11 Sahir Üzel, Gaziantep Savaşıının İç Yüzü (Ank., 1952), pp. 103-4. On page 103 the date is given as 15 January 1919. On the next page the date of the telegram is 15 December and the date of receipt 19 December. It seems rather certain that the latter date is correct. Jaeschke’s date of 15 November appears to be a mistake (p. 75). Nimet says that thanks to his efforts two patriotic organizations have been formed in Aleppo, one being secret, the other open. Their aim was the expulsion of foreigners and cooperation with Turkish patriots. Nimet proposed that he should be given the command of the National Forces at Maraş, Ayıntap and Kilis, and maintained that if he were successful in repulsing the French invasion, the national organizations in Syria would join the national movement in Turkey. Nimet wanted to know what sort of future Turkish nationalists envisaged for Syria, and whether they had any foreign support (if so, whose support?). He proposed to come to Pazarlık (Maraş) in 15 days to await instructions. Üzel maintains that Nimet was not sincere and that despite the sending of three secret delegations inviting him (upon instructions from Mustafa Kemal), he did not come. But he also says that he did not receive an answer to his telegrams addressed to Kemal. Gökbilgin gives the text of a telegram to Kemal signed with a code name, which
Another contact of local significance was a letter by the Sheikh of the Shamar tribe, Mesh'al, written to the Ottoman authorities (dated December 21, 1919) asserting that the people of Dair al-Zor wanted Ottoman rule and not the rule of unbelievers (either British or French), that this was a sentiment shared by Aleppo and Damascus too, and that with some help from the Ottoman army, they could easily throw out the British.  

According to a British intelligence report of January 9, 1920, the Ottoman government was sending Zeki Bey, naval officer, and Colonel Mahmud Bey to Mecca for talks there. Again, I am not aware of a source that confirms the existence of this mission.

On February 4, 1920, the Ottoman cabinet discussed a letter written on behalf of a “serious body” of Moslem and
non-Moslem notables. This letter, secretly brought to the Ottoman Consulate in Zürich by two Syrians, complained of the unjust treatment of the French and the British in the areas under their occupation which threatened to destroy the national and economic life of the country. They therefore called for a return to Ottoman rule under a regime of complete internal autonomy. A General Assembly elected by the people, would elect for a period of five years an administrator bearing the title of Governor--General or any other appropriate title. His office would be confirmed by the Caliph. Local revenues, including postal and customs revenues, would be locally spent, but Syria would pay a yearly tax to the Ottoman government. Militarily and "in other respects" -presumably, in foreign relations- Syria would depend on the Ottoman government. The letter asked that the Ottoman representatives at the Peace Conference propose this settlement, and that, if there should be any hesitation as to Syrian opinion, that an international commission should organize a plebiscite in Syria. From the republican principle embodied in the proposal, one can guess, probably with a high degree of certainty, that the proposal emanated from anti-Sharifian Syrian circles. It is difficult to imagine that Faisal could have accepted the principle of election. The roundabout and very secret way of communicating the document can also be considered an indication in this direction. The Ottoman cabinet considered the proposal to be in conformity with Ottoman interests and instructed the Foreign Ministry to act accordingly.

We now come to military contacts and military cooperation between Turkey and Syria. In conformity with the Anglo-French agreement of September 15, 1919, at the beginning of November, the British started to withdraw from Cilicia and Syria. In Cilicia they were replaced by French troops. Because the French were understood to have come to stay, and also because they tolerated, when they did not actually encourage, Armenian terrorism, armed resistance soon began, especially in Maraş, Urfa,

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Adana and Ayıntap. This resistance was the work of militia groups, the so-called National Forces. The National Forces had the unofficial but direct support both of the national movement led by Mustafa Kemal and of the Ottoman governments of Ali Rıza Paşa and Salih Paşa. In this bloody struggle, the support of Syrian nationalists was of vital importance. Faisal and the Syrian nationalists, having been abandoned to the mercy of France by the Anglo-French agreement, were in favour of supporting the struggle of the Turks, and later themselves actively engaged in the same struggle which culminated in the tragic defeat at Khan Maisalun.

Yasin al-Hashimi, who was in close relations with the Turks, was arrested on November 22, 1919 and interned in Palestine. A circular by Mustafa Kemal, dated January 24, 1920, reported that there were 6670 French and Armenian troops in Cilicia. The Arab government, on the other hand, had a division centered around Aleppo and Müsilmiye. In the vilayet of Aleppo, a national organization had been created with the firm intention of not abandoning the Ottoman commonwealth, come what may. The division commander, Lieutenant-Colonel Emin Bey and the Director of Police at Aleppo, Staff Lieutenant-Colonel Shakir Nimet Bey belonged to the national organization. They had been sent a cipher to be able to correspond directly with the Turkish authorities. In the face of French occupation, a "national action" would probably be necessary. In this case, the national forces of Aleppo, after securing the directions of İskenderun, Latakiah, Dörtyol and Homs, would form three strong detachments to advance, each one, in the direction of Ceyhan, Islahiye, and Ayıntap. In this same month of January, we learn that the railway between Aleppo and İskenderun was damaged to hamper French troop movements.

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15 Kedourie, pp. 170-1. According to a report by a "Moslem agent" who visited Ankara, a deputation from Yasin Pasha had come there, calling for assistance to drive the French out of Syria. FO 371/5043, E. 1357/3/44.
16 Atatürk'ün Tamim..., p. 169-71.
17 Kedourie, p. 171.
On November 29, 1919, Maraş had revolted against French occupation. This bloody struggle ended with the evacuation and retreat of the French on February 12, 1920. Three days later, Mustafa Kemal sent a circular where he stressed the importance of Islahiye, both as a point of access to Maraş and as a point of contact with the National Forces of Aleppo and Damascus who had many times called for common action. He then repeated for Shakir Nimet Bey, the instructions he had sent already to the chiefs of the Aleppo National Organization, the General Assembly of Ottoman Forces Defending Syria and Palestine (in Damascus), the Cairo Volunteer Division, the Amman (?) Circassian Division (Shefik Bey). In these instructions, Mustafa Kemal asserts that the proposition to secure, through united action, the independence of Syria, Iraq and Turkey and form a confederation or some other form of union later to be decided upon, had been accepted and detailed instructions had been sent. However, no answer having been received, it was deemed necessary to repeat these in summary: to defend Damascus with the forces in Hauran, Damascus and Baalbek at the Zeydani (?) pass; to threaten the enemy’s action towards the interior, from Saida and Beirut, with the forces at Amman (?) Marjaioun; to foment insurrections in Beirut and Tripoli, thus preventing the advance of the enemy towards the interior; the forces at Homs to defend Homs in the direction of Tripoli while at the same time aiding Zeydani (?). These operations depended on the degree of preparation. However, the Turkish forces having started their own operation to eliminate the French and Armenian occupation forces interposed between the Turkish and Arab nations, the immediate following action by the Aleppo-Hama forces was considered necessary: these forces, after securing Hama and Aleppo in the direction of Latakiah and İskenderun, should move their major forces in the direction of Islahiye and their secondary forces in the direction of Ayıntap-Osmaniye, thus encircling the enemy.18

18 Atatürk’ün Tamim..., pp. 201-3. General Kâzım Karabekir, who commanded the strongest Army Corps at the time, objected strongly to this circular in a telegram dated February 22, 1920. He thought that
In March, Maulud Mukhlis, Commander in Dair al-Zor, sent an emissary to the Turkish commander in Mardin, who sent him 100 cases of light arms and 500 artillery shells. A plan was made to help the Turks by resisting French troops and destroying bridges and communications between Syria and Turkey. In June 1920, the local authorities in Homs and Baalbek stopped the dispatch of arms to the French troops in the north. The government of Damascus approved these measures, but under pressure from General Gouraud, was forced to countermand them. At this time, Yusuf el-Azma, Faisal's defence minister, went to the Turkish border and proposed military cooperation with Turkey. It is probable that this visit is related to the

it was improper for their organization, the Association for the Defence of Rights of Anatolia and Rumeli, to make commitments that only a government was entitled to make, and especially at a time when a democratic parliament was functioning. Secondly, he thought that this action was outside the "national decision", and that all action should be confined to the purpose of the Arabs securing their own independence. Thirdly, the sending of written instructions, and the circulation of this telegram down to the divisional level, was imprudent and increased the risk of its falling in French hands, which, would be an unfortunate and compromising eventuality. Mustafa Kemal's answer was sent the next day. He thought that the policy of cooperating with the Arabs was likely to force the French to compromise. Certain French overtures, like those of Picot and Admiral Le Bon were indications in this sense. As to contacts with the Arabs, the government itself had started them and had charged İsmet Bey with this duty. The instructions sent to Syria had been prepared by İsmet himself. The possibility of their falling in French hands had been considered a useful eventuality. Lastly, the "National Pact" (Misak-ı Milli) of the Assembly had not excluded territories outside the armistice line, nor had the government declared Arab territories to be outside the national boundaries. K. Karabekir, İstiklal Harbimiz (İst., Türkiye Y., 1960), pp. 478-81.

10 Kedourie, p. 171. This same source quotes Sati' al-Husri who explains that Syrian action provided Turks with valuable help (pp. 171-2). According to Ph. David (Un Gouvernement Arabe à Damas, Paris, 1923), Faisal, finding himself squeezed between the French and his turbulent officers", proposed in May to Gouraud to extend military aid against the Turks if certain territories under French occupation were added to the Sharifian zone. But apparently this was "a vain and useless activity" because the French were losing patience, and anyway, Faisal was not in the position to be able to persuade his
Turkish-Arab agreement for cooperation which was signed in Kilis on July 3, 1920 (described below).20

The French invasion of Syria in July and the ensuing flight of Faisal terminated the period under discussion. It also put an end to Syrian-Turkish cooperation. This cooperation might have continued with a Syrian underground resistance movement. However, France had for some time already started moving in the direction of a major change of policy which consisted of the renunciation of its claims in territory that was being claimed by the Turkish national movement. This renunciation was to be consecrated by the Franco-Turkish agreement of October 20, 1921. The change of French policy made Turkish-Syrian cooperation very difficult and was inaugurated, at least partly, to secure followers in this sense. In Kedourie, p. 172. I don't know if this information is confirmed by other sources.

20 Cebesoy mentions a Yusuf Pasha, originally a staff major in the Ottoman Army, as head of the national organization of Damascus. Various forms of cooperation were effected through him. He died, fighting against the French. Cebesoy, pp. 255-6. This Yusuf Pasha may be Yusuf al-Azma. Üzel gives the text of the secret agreement which was signed at the conclusion of a conference held at the village of Kefergani in Kilis, between Polat Bey, commander of the Kilis National Forces and the Inspector of Gendarmerie Jamil Lutfi Bey, representing Yasin Pasha, his brother the Syrian General Director of Police, Staff Lieut. Col. Taha Bey, and Iraq and its Congress (?). Jamil Bey called for an alliance in every domain and for the creation of an extraordinary war council composed of 9 representatives representing Syria, Iraq and Turkey, with full powers for the conduct of war against the common enemy, to be waged until their expulsion. He also called for military and financial aid from Turkey to its two Arab neighbours. In the agreement it was decided that the necessity for the creation of such a body would be referred to the Grand National Assembly (art. 1). The Syrian government would be urged to provide the Kilis National Forces with 2 mountain cannons and 4 machine guns (art. 2). Military information, bandits and traitors would be exchanged (art. 3, 4, 6). French and Armenian military transportation was to be disrupted (art. 5). The National Forces were to be allowed to buy munitions in Syria (art. 7). The rest of the agreement was about the coordination of Syrian and Turkish activity. Üzel tells us that after this agreement, mobile groups commanded by persons such as Ibrahim Henana, Nejib Uveyt, Asim were formed in Syria. He also mentions as prominent fighters, Özdemir, Bedri (bearded), Bedri (of Damascus), Major Mahmut Bey. Üzel, pp. 99-102.
this aim. This is not the place to describe and analyze at length France's change of policy. However, it might be useful to consider three documents to show how the French were thinking.

The first document is a telegram (dated February 10, 1920) by Premier Millerand to Gouraud, High Commissioner in Beirut, where he outlined French policy vis-à-vis Syria and Turkey. In Syria, an "entente loyale" with Faisal was called for, on condition that he cooperate fully and that he exercise complete authority over the Arabs. If these conditions were not fulfilled, France would be authorized to take the "indispensable" measures for the maintenance of order. The question was more delicate and risky as regards Turkish nationalism. However, Mustafa Kemal did not have many troops at his disposal and would not take a directly hostile attitude because of the war-weariness of the population and the risk of facing more severe peace terms. His game seemed to be to pose a threat without actually taking a position of enmity. However, he tolerated or could not prevent the activity of bands which complicated Gouraud's task. The means for sending reinforcements were being examined, but demobilisation made it necessary to seek political measures to diminish the risks in the region. These would be to make it known to Kemal and Ottoman nationalism that France was prepared to defend the maintenance of the Turks in İstanbul and the integrity of the Ottoman Empire (except for Arab lands which had already been renounced by the Turks, and an independent Armenia comprising of Russian Armenia and the shores of Lake Van). As to Cilicia and the towns along the Arab zone until Diyarbakır, according to Millerand, France would seek a formula of nominal Turkish suzerainty under French control, reinforced by most precise guarantees for minorities.21

The second document is a telegram dated February 18, 1920, from Gouraud to the French Foreign Ministry. He reports a conversation he had with Nuri Said, after his last conversation with Faisal. He writes that according

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to the Sharifian view, French difficulties in the region were the result of deliberate British preparation. Gouraud is inclined to believe this and he cites a British order given at the time when the French were replacing British troops which forbade their rear-guards from intervening in case fighting broke out immediately after evacuation. He also mentions instructions signed by Yasin Pasha dated October 3, where, more than two months before the departure of British troops, he gave orders to form bands under the direction of Sharifian officers. According to Gouraud, if troubles occurred in Syria right at the moment when Faisal wanted to influence French policy, this was due to preparation beforehand and because of the British. The British had not renounced this policy and their insistence, in spite of his very firm answer, on returning Yasin Pasha to Damascus was an indication of this. Faisal and his supporters had been long aware of the British interest in extending an Arab curtain between the coast and the road to India. Nuri Said insisted that Faisal was now ready to change his policy in favour of France. France should support the creation of an undivided Sharifin state, including Hijaz, Mesopotamia and Syria.22

The third document is also a telegram by Gouraud, dated March 15, 1920. Here he voices a certain anxiety as to developments once the peace terms were made known. His opinion was that the “settlement” of the Arab question, which would require important forces, could only be achieved when the difficulties in the north were solved, thus permitting the massing of 15 battalions in Syria. The situation would be “very different” if both problems had to be faced simultaneously. He announced that he had already telegraphed the Ministry of War for an extra division in order to tide over the difficult period between the disclosure of the peace treaty and its acceptance by the country.23

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22 MAE, vol. 92, pp. 79-81.
These documents indicate the two problems which the French faced. Trying to dominate both Cilicia and Syria meant taking on two enemies at a time, with all the extra effort and bloodshed that this involved. For France, which was worn out by the Great War, this would have been a very difficult and unpopular decision to take. On the other hand, France was engaged in a keen but underhand rivalry with England. England, using Greece as its satellite, was decided to weaken Turkey as much as possible. France, to frustrate these British plans and because it had major economic and financial interests in Turkey, in the long run decided to side with nationalist Turkey. Also, and not mentioned by Gouraud, antagonizing Turkey would mean driving Turkey into closer relations with the Soviet Union, which France at that time abhorred. These can be considered the major motives of the French change of policy.

In conclusion, one can say that despite many attempts, Turkish-Syrian cooperation in the period under discussion did not reach significant proportions. The reasons for this can be summarized as follows. First of all, the French change of attitude vis-à-vis Turkey can be mentioned. Secondly, the Syrians had not yet had enough time to properly evaluate Western imperialism. Perhaps a significant proportion were inclined to believe that, in the last analysis, the West would act in favour of Arab aspirations. The hesitations shown by Syrian nationalists in the face of the impending French invasion in July 1920, might be considered an indication in this respect.24 A third factor

24 According to the account in Kedourie, Faisal accepted Gouraud's first ultimatum on July the 18th. He then revoked the Syrian Congress, which was inclined to resist, and began to disband the army. When Gouraud sought a more complete acceptance of his ultimatum, Faisal accepted this too (20th). But when he saw that this was not stopping the French invasion, he proclaimed his decision to fight (21st). Then he hesitated and asked for further negotiations, but this "proved fruitless". Under such circumstances, defeat (24th) was inescapable. Kedourie, p. 173. According to Üzel, Syrian nationalists assembled a militia force of about 65000 men in the Aleppo area. Pretending an agreement had been reached with the French, this force was disbanded on the 22nd. The next day the French occupied Aleppo without encountering any resistance. Üzel, p. 102.
which comes to mind, is a reluctance on the Turkish side, after having faced for two years Husain’s revolt, to believe that Syrian cooperation could be very serious. The behaviour of Ali Fuat Cebesoy, described above, is a case in point. The most important of the three factors seems to be the first, taken in conjunction with Turkish weakness and exhaustion. There were those who believed, both in Turkey and Syria, in a return of Arab lands to Ottoman rule, with provisions for a confederative or federal administration. However, in view of French and British imperial ambitions, this was a mere illusion. Sooner or later, Turkish nationalists realized this. They also realized that substantial Turkish independence, that is to say an independence including the economic domain, could only be attained at the price of completely renouncing all ties with Arab countries. The price, at that time, of renewing ties with Arab countries would be to accept some form of Western tutelage, which was a solution they abhorred.

25 It is interesting to note that though there seemed to be a certain sentiment to restore political union between Turkey and Syria on both sides, this did not generally aim at a return of the status quo ante. Rather, a confederative or federative type of union was envisaged. In this context, one can mention three further instances of this attitude. On October 21, 1918 (10 days before the armistice of Mudros), Mustafa Kemal sent a telegram which contained a proposition by Faisal made to the Governor of Syria, Tahsin Bey. According to this proposition, an armistice was to be concluded between Turkey and Syria. Turkey was to recognize Syrian independence and the Sultan was to appoint a viceroy (naibüssultan) there. Kemal, being of the opinion that Syrian independence was a foregone conclusion, had authorized Merşinli Cemal Paşa to conduct negotiations on this basis. The government, however, thus made aware of this initiative, put an end to it. H. Bayur, Atatürk (Ank., Güven B., 1970), pp. 189-90. A second instance is Sultan Vahdettin’s secret peace plan which he presented to the British on March 30, 1919, according to which a large degree of autonomy was to be granted to Arab lands. S. Akşin, İstanbul Hükümetleri ve Milli Mücadele (İst., Cem Y., 1976), pp. 233-4. A third example is Kemal’s insistence on the acceptance of the principle of Arab independence at a meeting of the Representative Committee of the Association for the Defence of Rights on November 22, 1919. U. İlgemir, Heyet-i Temsiliye Tutanakları (Ank., TTK Y., 1975), p. 88.