

Transformed Landscapes

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Essays on Palestine and the Middle East
in Honor of Walid Khalidi

edited by
Camille Mansour
Leila Fawaz

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Introduction

Camille Mansour and Leila Fawaz

This collection of essays is dedicated to Walid Khalidi, the teacher, the scholar, and the man. Since his mid-twenties, Professor Khalidi has taught at a number of universities, principally Oxford, the American University of Beirut, and Harvard. His scholarship extends from Islamic studies to modern European history, from Middle Eastern politics, including Palestine, to international relations and strategic and military studies. He not only has headed many teams for specific research projects but also has been the main driving force behind the creation and sustenance of Arab research institutions, at the forefront of which stands the Institute for Palestine Studies, with offices in Beirut, Washington, D.C., Paris, and Jerusalem-Ramallah, four quarterly journals, and a publication list of more than five hundred books and monographs. Finally, Professor Khalidi has been involved, very often behind the scenes, in Palestinian politics and Arab diplomacy. This involvement reflects, certainly, his deep commitment to the Palestinian and Arab causes, though it is not too much to say that it also reflects his attachment to the universal values of justice, freedom, and tolerance, as well as the lessons he has drawn as a scholar from the study of religion, history, political science, and international affairs.*

In their contributions to this volume, colleagues, friends, and former students of Walid Khalidi have written on topics that touch upon facets of his academic interests. Consequently, this volume does not pretend to constitute a tightly coherent whole but rather reflects the diversity and

* See at the end of this book Walid Khalidi's biography and list of publications.

range of Professor Khalidi's concerns. Nonetheless, a certain unity must inevitably underlie a collection of essays linked by the man in whose honor they are written. Many of them address, whether directly or indirectly, and from varying perspectives, some of the central questions that have occupied the minds of twentieth-century Arab intellectuals like Walid Khalidi, who bore witness to—and suffered the consequences of—the series of upheavals that have convulsed the Arab East since 1914. Thus, given the overwhelming intrusiveness of the imperial powers in the region for over two centuries, how is one to assess the Ottoman legacy? Is its impact quite so negative, or does the root of the problem lie more in a certain self-righteousness and insularity said to be embedded in Arab ideological thought from the early twentieth century? And, more pressing, how is one to respond to the challenges arising from imperial domination, from Arab divisions, and, more specifically, in the case of Palestine, from the asymmetry of power that haunts the region?

The contributions in this volume thus can be said to reflect the *transformed landscapes* of the twentieth-century Arab East, in terms of both its configuration and the ways it is interpreted. The essays have been assembled in four main parts. The first includes three essays that present the lives of three Arab personalities who played significant roles in their time and whose ideas, actions, or activities presaged the debates and struggles of our time. Abdul-Karim Rafeq presents 'Abd al-Ghani al-Nabulsi, a Sufi scholar who resided in Damascus during the second half of the seventeenth century and at the beginning of the eighteenth. In particular, he focuses on al-Nabulsi's writings on religious tolerance, showing, too, how practice of this tolerance with regard to Christians and Jews played out in al-Nabulsi's daily life. Also present in the Sufi scholar's treatises, according to Rafeq, are early expressions of pride in Arabness and cultural belonging, foreshadowing the Arab nationalism to come. Along with this refreshing take on Arab culture, the reader will note that in the 1950s Walid Khalidi himself wrote two biographical studies of al-Nabulsi. The second essay in this grouping, by André Raymond, describes the role played by Badr al-Din al-Maqdisi, a religious scholar from Jerusalem who resided in Cairo at the turn of the nineteenth century, during the period of the popular revolt against the French occupation of Egypt. In a footnote, Professor Raymond remarks that the study of the life of a Palestinian shaykh resisting the foreign occupation of Egypt seems an appropriate way of honoring

Walid Khalidi in his fight for Palestine. The life of Maqdisi also exemplifies the community of language, creed, aspirations, and social values that existed—and, we might argue, still exists—between Palestine and Egypt. Philip S. Khoury, who contributes the third essay of this cluster, presents the political career of an Arab nationalist and Syrian independence leader, ‘Abd al-Rahman Shahbandar (1880–1940), whose career he provocatively compares with Khalidi’s own as regards family origin, a secular education, a connection to the American University of Beirut, his professional life, and a difficult intermediate position between an emerging Arab world and the west.

The second group of essays includes contributions that challenge traditional views of the Arab East’s modern history, as well as traditional ways of writing that history. Thus, Butrus Abu-Manneh, in writing about the changes introduced into the Ottoman system by the first and second Tanzimat periods, shows how these changes forged what would become the institutions and sociopolitical elites of the successor Arab states, an Ottoman legacy that was to remain in place under the advent of the mandatory powers. For his part, ‘Adel Manna’ focuses on the historiography of the 1834 revolt against Muhammad ‘Ali’s rule in Palestine not only to show the close relationship between history writing and contemporary prejudices but also to make a strong case for a thorough reevaluation of the anti-Ottoman ideological bias that continues to this day to color common Palestinian (and Arab) perceptions. In a similar vein, Salim Tamari mines the diary of an ordinary Jerusalem soldier conscripted into the Ottoman army during the First World War to challenge the simplistic consensual assumptions of a reigning Arab nationalist anti-Ottomanism. These contributions are particularly fitting for Walid Khalidi, who despite his avowed Arab nationalist leanings has long taken issue with facile interpretations of the Ottoman past.

The last two essays of this second cluster, while challenging traditional ways of writing history, are not concerned with interpretation so much as they are with methodology. Thus, while Issam Nassar’s examination of the history of photography in Palestine also implicitly questions stereotypical assessments, his principal aim is to demonstrate the value of photography as an important source material in the study of history. Moreover, by choosing to study the work of local photographers of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Palestine, thereby showing the country through the eyes of its inhabitants as opposed to through western, or Zionist, eyes, he meets Walid Khalidi’s concerns as

manifested in the latter's masterly *Before Their Diaspora* (1982). Finally, May Seikaly reminds us of oral history as another source material for historical studies when she excavates the memories of the dispersed inhabitants of a Palestinian village destroyed during the *nakba*—another subject with particular resonance for Walid Khalidi, considered the pre-eminent Arab historian of the 1948 war.

Khalidi's preoccupation with 1948 and the Zionist project could serve as an introductory framework for the essays that appear in the third cluster of this volume, for they are all situated in the radically transformed landscape that resulted from the cataclysm of the Palestine war. Eric Rouleau draws in part on his personal experience with Gamal Abd al-Nasser and Yasser Arafat to sketch, against the background of the emergence of the Palestinian national movement in an era of Arab nationalism, the sometimes stormy personal relationship between Nasser and the Fatah leadership, especially Arafat. Of particular interest are the Egyptian leader's post-1967 mentoring role and his lessons in realpolitik, subtly pushing Arafat and his comrades in the direction of a two-state accommodation. Complementing Rouleau's contribution, Camille Mansour's overview of Palestinian strategy from the 1948 shock to the 1982 Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) withdrawal from Lebanon sees the move toward an acceptance of the statehood goal as an almost inevitable consequence of the reconstruction of the Palestinians' political personality and the ideological and military developments unfolding in the Israeli–Arab arena during that period. It is useful here to link the contributions of both Rouleau and Mansour to Khalidi's seminal article "Thinking the Unthinkable" (*Foreign Affairs*, 1978), in which he forcefully calls for the establishment of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza. In his chapter, Jamil Hilal focuses on the transformation of the Palestinian political elite from the period of the British Mandate to the present, taking into account the changes in the political-institutional context (including the absence of a Palestinian state) and the influence on the elite of factors such as wealth, social status, education, and political activism. Laurie A. Brand concludes this section by addressing the issue of citizenship and identity through analysis of two cases of state behavior toward expatriates: Jordan with its twice-exiled expatriates of Palestinian origin in the Gulf, and Lebanon with its émigrés as a factor influencing the very structure of the state system.

The fourth group features essays that link the Middle East to the international arena. Using British Foreign Office documents, Wm. Roger

Louis looks at the 'Suez decade' (1957–67) in the Middle East from Britain's perspective, emphasizing in particular the impact of the British–French–Israeli tripartite invasion of Egypt—and, more deeply, the impact of Palestine and the enduring legacy of the Balfour Declaration—on the unfolding events. In this context, it is difficult not to recall that it was in protest against Britain's participation in the 1956 aggression that Walid Khalidi abruptly resigned his position as lecturer at Oxford and joined the American University of Beirut. Looking at a longer time frame and through a broader lens, Rashid Khalidi traces the place of the 'Middle East' in what has been referred to as the 'international system' ever since the 1815 Congress of Vienna. In so doing, he demonstrates how, notwithstanding successive restructurings and the supposedly restraining effect of international law, the reigning powers have continued to dominate the 'international order' (the United States, today's dominant superpower, for example, either subordinates or bypasses the United Nations). With regard to the Middle East, the result of this situation has been that the Arab states continue to be more objects than subjects in international affairs. In the last article of this group of essays, Michael C. Hudson focuses exclusively on the United States as the superpower with a virtual monopoly on diplomacy concerning the Palestine problem. While offering a refreshingly original analysis of the structural roots of U.S. policy inadequacy over the decades, he points to certain new factors that suggest possibilities for change.

Finally, Sara Roy's essay on the meaning of Palestine to a child of Holocaust survivors fits into no category. Yet it, too, is fitting for Walid Khalidi. The link Roy makes between the compassion embedded in the Jewish values on which she was nurtured and the Palestinian experience of deprivation and injustice constitutes a vibrant call for hope. It is a call to which Walid Khalidi would surely subscribe.

1

‘Abd al-Ghani al-Nabulsi Religious Tolerance and ‘Arabness’ in Ottoman Damascus

Abdul-Karim Rafeq

Syria is traditionally known for its religious tolerance and as the birthplace of Arab nationalism. Both themes have deep roots and are present at least in embryonic form in the writings of Shaykh ‘Abd al-Ghani al-Nabulsi (1641–1731), the foremost Syrian Sufi scholar of the Ottoman period and for a short time, and at the request of its inhabitants, the Hanafi mufti (jurist) of Damascus. A Damascene whose family originally came from Jerusalem and Nablus, al-Nabulsi wrote over three hundred books and monographs, most of which have been found and a number of which have been published. He dealt with topics ranging from Sufism to agriculture, from the interpretation of dreams to the authorization of tobacco smoking, and from writing poetry to descriptions of cities in his travel accounts. Like other ‘*ulama*’ of his time, al-Nabulsi belonged to a number of Sufi *tariqas* (orders), the most important for him being the Naqshbandiya and the Qadiriya orders.

The themes of tolerance and ‘Arabness’ run through al-Nabulsi’s works and he drew inspiration in these areas from two antecedents. His Sufi master, the renowned Andalusian-Syrian mystic, Muhyi al-Din ibn al-‘Arabi (1165–1240), had been an eloquent advocate and preacher of tolerance toward the followers of all other religions. With regard to Arabness, al-Nabulsi built on the work of his older contemporary and fellow Damascene, the Shafi‘i jurist Najm al-Din al-Ghazzi (1570–1651), whose writings were marked by a deep concern for the backwardness of the *umma* (the community of believers). Al-Nabulsi’s preoccupation with Arabness and tolerance were later echoed in the historical works of

another Damascene, the Christian priest, Mikha'il Breik, who began writing around the time of al-Nabulsi's death.

Al-Nabulsi's Religious Tolerance

Throughout its history, Syria witnessed a great measure of tolerance among its various religious and ethnic communities. Bound together by a common culture, monotheistic religious beliefs, a shared history, and shared interests, the communities complemented one another and coexisted peacefully over the centuries. When the Arab Muslims conquered Syria in 636, local Christian Arabs welcomed them as liberators from the Byzantine empire, which despite a shared Christian faith was coercing them militarily, economically, and religiously. Similarly, the Copts in Egypt welcomed the Muslim Arab conquerors who saved them from Byzantine persecution.¹

The new Muslim rulers allowed the local Christians and Jews to retain their religious practices in exchange for the payment of a poll tax (*jizya*), which absolved non-Muslims from the duty of fighting for Islam. At the time of the Crusades, the majority of Syria's population was still Christian,² leading to suspicion among the Muslims that the local Christians were supporting their European coreligionists. A wave of persecution and Islamization targeting local Christians followed. This occurred under the rule of mostly non-Arab rulers of Turkic origin, who had originally been pagans and did not understand the tolerance of Arab Islam.³ The Mamluk Sultanate (1260–1517) is a case in point. The Mamluks, originally imported as military slaves from the Russian steppes into Egypt and Syria, were trained, converted to Islam, and freed. They became a military caste under the Ayyubids and eventually seized power. Under their rule, the Islamization of the Christians that had earlier increased under Fatimid rule, gained momentum. The process continued under the Ottomans, albeit mostly on an individual basis, until the Christians eventually became a small minority. The non-Muslim communities continued, however, to enjoy a good measure of religious tolerance under the Ottomans. This was evident in the workplace, in their living space, and in modes of social interaction. Quarters labeled Christian or Jewish were not limited to these communities; Muslims also lived there in good fellowship with their non-Muslim neighbors.⁴

Much of al-Nabulsi's thought pertaining to religious tolerance is found in several works in which he strongly attacks a contemporary

Turkish Muslim scholar—whom he never deigns to name but refers to only as the “Rumi *‘alim*”—for his criticisms of the celebrated Sufi shaykh, Ibn al-‘Arabi. Ibn al-‘Arabi, whom al-Nabulsi considered his greatest master (*al-shaykh al-akbar*), was born in al-Andalus and, after traveling through the Maghrib, Egypt, Hijaz, Syria, and Anatolia, among other regions, eventually settled in Damascus, where he spent the rest of his life.⁵ His importance is evident from the fact that the Ottoman sultan, Selim I, after conquering Syria, ordered that a mausoleum be built over his tomb and that a *takiya* (a mosque, school, and hostel complex) be constructed nearby.

Ibn al-‘Arabi’s greatest work was written in Mecca and is entitled *al-Futubat al-makkiya*. In it, he formulated his doctrine of *wahdat al-wujud* (the oneness of existence), which “interpreted all that is or might be as manifestations of the various ‘beautiful names’ of God, his attributes, as understood by way of the experience of mystical love.”⁶ Ibn al-‘Arabi considered silence (*samt*), withdrawal from society (*‘uzla*), hunger (*ju’*), and wakefulness (*sahar*) as the conditions the traveler should strive to achieve on his journey toward union with God. By observing these conditions, the traveler develops passion (*ishq*) and experiences a series of states (*ahwal*) that purify his heart, whereby God manifests Himself to the traveler.⁷ Some *‘ulama*, including the Rumi *‘alim* with whom al-Nabulsi took issue, considered Ibn al-‘Arabi’s mysticism as *kufr* (unbelief). In response, al-Nabulsi criticized the Rumi *‘alim* as an *‘ajami* (non-Arab) who does not understand the shari’a.

In her excellent study of al-Nabulsi, Elizabeth Sirriyeh explains Ibn al-‘Arabi’s importance to the Ottomans and to al-Nabulsi.⁸ Al-Nabulsi took the teachings of Ibn al-‘Arabi to heart, especially his themes about the oneness of existence and God’s infinite mercy and forgiveness to non-Muslims. Ottoman adversaries of Ibn al-‘Arabi and of Sufism in general founded what came to be known as the Kadizadeli movement, named after their leader, Kadizade Mehmed (d. 1635).⁹ The anonymous Rumi *‘alim* may have belonged to this movement.¹⁰

In a detailed work, still in manuscript form, dated 26 Dhu al-Hijja AH 1103 (8 September 1692) and with the rather telling title *Hadha kitab al-qawl al-sadid fi jarwaz khulf al-wa’id wa-l-radd ‘ala al-rumi al-jabil al-‘anid* (The Book of Sound Doctrine on the Permissibility of Opposing a Threat in Reply to an Ignorant and Obstinate Rumi),¹¹ al-Nabulsi defends Ibn al-‘Arabi against the unnamed *‘alim* who accused him of unbelief, among other things. Among the teachings of Ibn al-‘Arabi that

the Rumi *ʿalim* vehemently attacked was the possibility that non-Muslims might go to paradise rather than hell. In his defense of his master, al-Nabulsi accuses the Rumi *ʿalim* of failing to understand the shariʿa when he insists that only Muslims are promised paradise by God whereas *dhimmis* (Christians and Jews, who like Muslims are *abl al-kitab*, or ‘people of the Book’) are destined to go to hell.¹² Al-Nabulsi quotes Hanafi jurists and scholars who differentiate between the *waʿd* (promise) of paradise made by God to the Muslims and *waʿid* (threat) of hell directed against non-Muslims. Al-Nabulsi argues that by paying the *jizya*, which brings financial support to the Muslims, non-Muslims would be forgiven by God for their unbelief and, like Muslims, would then be qualified to go to paradise where all become Muslims in the hereafter (“*fa yadkbulun al-janna biha maʿa al-muslimin wabum muslimun hinaʿidhin fi abkam al-akhira*”).¹³ Al-Nabulsi goes on to say that *waʿd* has to be honored because it is good but that *waʿid* does not necessarily have to be honored because it portends evil, as well as that God can withdraw *waʿid* out of generosity. Contrary to the rigid interpretation of the Rumi *ʿalim*, al-Nabulsi not only declares that God can pardon unbelief in *dhimmis*, but also goes so far as to say that even if *abl al-kitab* did not pay the *jizya*, it is possible that God would forgive them and allow them to enter paradise.¹⁴

Al-Nabulsi wrote the above treatise at the request of friends who wanted to exonerate Ibn al-ʿArabi from the accusation of unbelief leveled against him by the Rumi *ʿalim*. Another manuscript that is part of the same treatise and that bears the same date (26 Dhu al-Hijja AH 1103/8 September 1692) is titled *al-Radd ʿala man takallam ʿan Ibn al-ʿArabi* (Reply to the One Who Spoke against Ibn al-ʿArabi).¹⁵ In fact, the controversy over Ibn al-ʿArabi between al-Nabulsi and the Rumi *ʿalim* goes back much earlier. On 25 August 1672, twenty years before the writing of *Hadha kitab al-qawl al-sadid*, al-Nabulsi wrote a detailed treatise in defense of Ibn al-ʿArabi against his Rumi defamer entitled *Hadha kitab al-radd al-matin ʿala muntaqis al-ʿarif Muhyi al-Din* (The Book of Solid Reply to the Belittler of the Learned Muhyi al-Din).

Al-Nabulsi’s tolerance toward Christians and Jews transcended his polemic against the Rumi *ʿalim* and formed an integral part of his life and beliefs. He practiced tolerance as a matter of principle. His travel writings give abundant evidence of this. In his two journeys to Palestine in 1690 and 1693–94,¹⁶ for example, he was keen to visit and describe the Christian and Jewish sites, which are also sacred to Muslims and mentioned in the Qurʾan. While visiting the Church of the Nativity in

Bethlehem in November 1963, al-Nabulsi quoted poetry about the pleasure of visiting the place and receiving its blessings.¹⁷ He also accepted the invitation of monks in Bethlehem to stay with them, and they offered him and his companions food and entertained them with religious music. Al-Nabulsi and his companions were overjoyed at the music the monks played on the organ, which al-Nabulsi likened to the singing of a blackbird or a nightingale.¹⁸ Upon their arrival at the seaport of Jaffa, al-Nabulsi and his companions were put up for the night in the Armenian monastery, which he described as a fortified citadel with defensive towers. Al-Nabulsi and his group, again, were overjoyed by their stay there, and he wrote poetry on the occasion reflecting his satisfaction.¹⁹

While in Jerusalem, al-Nabulsi paid a brief visit to Jabal al-Tur, where he visited the tombs of important Muslims, including the tomb of the famous woman mystic Rabi’a al-‘Adawiya, as well as the footprint of Jesus on a rock. There, he recited the Fatiha (the opening *sura* of the Qur’an).²⁰ During his visit to the town of ‘Azariya, al-Nabulsi visited the tomb of Eli‘azar, son of Harun, who is said to be the same ‘Azar (Lazarus) whom Jesus brought back to life.²¹ On his first journey to Palestine in 1690, al-Nabulsi went to the town of al-Khalil (Hebron), where he visited the tomb of Abraham (the companion of God; in Arabic, *khalil Allah*). He also visited the tombs of Isaac and Jacob and their wives, and he recited the Fatiha for each.²²

While Palestine, with its many holy tombs and shrines, was the major attraction to al-Nabulsi, he also visited Christian sites in Syria. On 24 August 1694, the third day of his long journey, he visited the cave of Mar (Saint) Taqla in the town of Ma’lula, where he saw water dripping from the roof. He mentioned that the people of Ma’lula spoke Syriac as well as Arabic (which is still the case today). The water from the cave, al-Nabulsi wrote, is medically used to treat body wind, especially in children.²³ Even today, Muslims, like Christians, visit the Mar Taqla monastery to acquire its blessings.

Al-Nabulsi’s respect for Christians and Jews and their prophets is evident in another of his works, entitled *Ta’tir al-anam fi ta’bir al-manam* (Perfuming Humanity by Interpreting Dreams), which he finished writing on 22 February 1685.²⁴ Al-Nabulsi was no doubt influenced by other Muslim books about dreams, especially Ibn al-‘Arabi’s dreams of Jesus. Both authors interpreted visions of Jesus in dreams as a sign of good luck and success. In “Dreams of Jesus in the Islamic Tradition,”²⁵ an article by Annemarie Schimmel in which she translates passages from al-Nabulsi’s

Ta'tir al-anam about the benefits of seeing Jesus in dreams, al-Nabulsi is quoted as writing:

Someone who sees Jesus in his dream becomes a blessed person full of goodness and destined to travel; his journeying is undertaken to please God; he will become a pious person, prone to asceticism, satisfied with but little, and given the knowledge of medicine.

Further:

Sometimes a person dreams that he is observing people in a town or a mosque and sees Jesus among them. If the people around him are in a bad situation or undergoing trials and tribulations, the dream means that they will be saved from the situation, because Jesus is God's spirit and His mercy; if they are healthy and safe they will remain thus. Should his mother be with him, it means that a powerful sign from God will become manifest in that place.

Another interesting dream interpretation is this: "If a pregnant woman dreams of Jesus, she will give birth to a boy who will become a physician."²⁶

Al-Nabulsi's book about the interpretation of dreams, in which only goodness comes out for those who dream of Jesus, echoes Islam's respect for Jesus as a prophet. Sufis traditionally tend to be more tolerant toward *dhimmis* because all *ahl al-kitab* believe in the same God and strive to achieve what pleases Him. Al-Nabulsi's tolerance has an added significance because he was nominated as the official Hanafi mufti in Damascus in 1722–23.²⁷

Al-Nabulsi's involvement with Christians, and the esteem in which he was held by them, are exemplified in his correspondence with Athanasius Dabbas, the former Melkite Greek Catholic patriarch of Antioch who was at the center of the split of the Greek Catholics from the Greek Orthodox Church, which came out into the open in the early decades of the eighteenth century. In 1685, Dabbas was appointed Greek Orthodox patriarch of Antioch with the support of French missionaries and merchants and Catholic converts in Damascus and Aleppo, replacing Kyrillus al-Za'im. A year later, however, Dabbas embraced Rome, at which point Kyrillus, with support from Istanbul, was again named patriarch of Antioch while Dabbas was demoted to the rank of bishop in Aleppo (though Rome continued to consider him

patriarch). It was as bishop that in 1706 he had an Arabic printing press brought from Romania to Aleppo in order to print the Bible in Arabic. Dabbas again became patriarch of Antioch in 1720. With his death in 1724, the contending parties, later defined as Greek Catholics and the Greek Orthodox, each chose a rival patriarch of Antioch. Eventually, the Ottomans sided with the Greek Orthodox patriarch, and Greek Catholic converts, persecuted by the Ottomans and the Orthodox, sought refuge in Egypt.²⁸

The correspondence between al-Nabulsi and Dabbas that has come down to us dates to 1712, after Dabbas's demotion to bishop and before his reappointment as patriarch of Antioch. At the time, the ex-patriarch was apparently living in Damascus, and he sought al-Nabulsi's opinion on three questions relating to Christian theology, more particularly with regard to monotheism. Al-Nabulsi was seventy years old at the time and had already produced about two hundred works.²⁹ The questions reached al-Nabulsi in early December 1712, and al-Nabulsi formulated his answers within days in the form of a *fatwa*. In his introduction, al-Nabulsi writes that the questions came to him through Christian individuals (*ba'd al-Nasara*), though other copies of the manuscript specifically mention that the questions are from the patriarch of the Christians (*batrak al-Nasara*). The eighteenth-century Damascene mufti and biographer, Muhammad Khalil al-Muradi, mentions in his biography of al-Nabulsi that the latter's works include "an answer to a question sent to him by the patriarch of the Christians relating to monotheism."³⁰ In a detailed study of the patriarch's questions and al-Nabulsi's answer, Bakri Aladdin postulates that Dabbas must have read several writings by al-Nabulsi, including his important work, *al-Wujud al-haqq*.³¹ In the correspondence, Dabbas quotes a verse from the Qur'an to validate his ideas relating to the unity of God, and al-Nabulsi responds by quoting verses from the Qur'an and sayings (*hadith*) of the Prophet to support his belief in the unitary and indivisible nature of God.

The correspondence between the two leading clerics is significant in that it represents the peak of Muslim-Christian dialogue and underlines a high measure of reciprocal respect between clerics. In the introduction to his answer, al-Nabulsi heaps praise on the Christians, considering them brothers in a spiritual exercise whose noble souls and kind natures have become moons in the sky of monotheism.³² At the end of his *fatwa*, al-Nabulsi assures Dabbas of his readiness to provide further explanations if his answer is unclear.

The correspondence between Dabbas and al-Nabulsi was by no means an isolated instance of amicable relations between members of the Christian and Muslim clergy. The Latin clergy, attached to a number of Catholic orders in Aleppo, for example, reveal in their chronicles the good relations they had with local Muslim clerics, whether *qadis* (judges), *muftis* (jurists), or *naqibs* of the *ashraf* (heads of descendants of the Prophet Muhammad). In fact, it was not unusual for Christian clergy in conflict with rival Christian factions or harassed by the state to seek refuge with Muslim notables.³³

The 'Arabness' of al-Nabulsi

In his attack on the Rumi *'alim* who challenged the teachings of Ibn al-'Arabi, al-Nabulsi's main emphasis is on the importance of tolerance toward non-Muslims, in accordance with God's mercy, as advocated by his master. But al-Nabulsi's Arabness is also evident when he castigates the Rumi *'alim*, referring to him as an *'ajami* (non-Arab) and accuses him of being incapable of understanding religious tolerance as perceived by Ibn al-'Arabi and by Arabs generally. The implication is that only Arabs who comprehend the Arabic Qur'an are able to understand its true meaning; al-Nabulsi seems to be extolling the virtues of the Arabs over the *'ajam*, even within Islam. He was neither a defender of a race nor was he anti-Ottoman, but his primary concern was the Arab community to which he belonged and which at the time was suffering multiple injustices at the hands of Ottoman officials. The connection between tolerance and Arabness is significant in the thinking of al-Nabulsi, all the more so because he had many followers and admirers among the Arabs and because this connection is at the roots of Arab national consciousness as it developed in later years.

Al-Nabulsi's derogatory use of the term *'ajami* has precedent in the work of the Damascus Shafi'i mufti and biographer, Muhammad Najm al-Din al-Ghazzi, who is said to have awarded al-Nabulsi an *ijaza* (religious license) when he was a child for his study of the Qur'an.³⁴ In the introduction to his seven-volume work entitled *Husn al-tanabbuh li-ma warada fi-l-tashabbuh* (Better Awareness about What Had Been Said about Imitation),³⁵ al-Ghazzi laments the backwardness of "this *umma*" (*badhibi al-umma*), meaning no doubt his immediate Arab-Islamic *umma*. When al-Ghazzi was writing in the first quarter of the seventeenth century, the Ottoman state was still powerful and the Arab-Islamic *umma*

was suffering from many ills. The devaluation of the Ottoman silver currency, the *aqche*, caused inflation and affected salaried officials, especially the underpaid troops, who tried to impose extra taxes on the people to make up for the devaluation. When the government tried to stop them, they rebelled. Revolts occurred in Yemen (1560s), Egypt (1589–1609), Syria (1590s–1650s), and Baghdad (1623). The Persian Safavids took advantage of the revolt in Baghdad and occupied the city from 1623 to 1639, when they were ousted by Sultan Murad IV (1623–40). The poor in Damascus, who could not afford to buy bread, gathered at bakery doors. The peasants in the countryside suffered from heavy taxes imposed by the Ottoman feudal troops (*sipahis*), who had been given land grants (*iqta'*), causing many to desert their villages and flock to the towns. There, uprooted and destitute, they were taken advantage of by demagogues. In the Midan suburb of Damascus, for example, the uprooted peasantry supported a free thinker (*zindiq*) called Yahya al-Karaki, who challenged the teachings of the Damascene *'ulama*. Fearing al-Karaki's ability to rally the impoverished population, the governor of Damascus, urged by the *'ulama*, had al-Karaki put to death in 1610. Another major disturbance in Syria that must have worried al-Ghazzi occurred in Mount Lebanon, where the preeminent chieftain, Fakhr al-Din Ma'n II, challenged Ottoman authority and defeated the governor of Damascus in 1622 but was finally killed by the Ottoman authorities in 1635.³⁶

Al-Ghazzi emphasized the backwardness of what he called "this *umma*" in order to draw moral lessons from it. He contended that God, in His desire for the well-being of the people, intended that the condition of backwardness teach them to distinguish between right and wrong. Right, according to al-Ghazzi, is achieved by imitating the good nations of the past (which he does not identify). Through imitation of these good nations, both imitators and imitated would gain God's recompense.³⁷ He warned against imitating the unbelievers and sinners of other nations, specifically the *'ajam*.

Al-Nabulsi picks up on this point in his polemic against the Rumi *'alim* (*Hadha kitab al-qawl al-sadid*), where he quotes al-Ghazzi's statement that the *'ajam* should not be imitated because of the superiority of the Arabs, as evidenced by Arab reasoning and tradition (*aq'l wa naql*).³⁸ Quoting at length from *Husn al-tanabbuh*, al-Nabulsi reiterates al-Ghazzi's concern for the *umma*'s well-being, leaving no doubt that the *umma* referred to was the Arab *umma*. The Rumi *'alim*, al-Nabulsi writes, appeared among the boorish people of the desert and the impure of the

countryside in *Bilad al-Rum* ('Lands of the Romans,' a derogatory reference to the Byzantines, the enemies of the Arabs) and, astonishingly, dared to accuse Ibn al-'Arabi of unbelief, while he himself was an *'ajami* and the son of an *'ajami*.³⁹ Al-Nabulsi's defense of Ibn al-'Arabi would appear to be a defense of the Arabs in general against the *'ajam*. He goes on to note that it is well established among the *'ulama* that the Arabs were the masters of the *'ajam* and the Rumis and that it was the Arabs who converted the Rumis to Islam.⁴⁰ Al-Nabulsi quotes a *hadith* attributed to the Prophet Muhammad: "You should love the Arabs for three things: because I am an Arab, because the Qur'an is in Arabic, and because the language of the people in paradise is Arabic."⁴¹ In another *hadith* quoted by al-Nabulsi, the Prophet is reported to have said: "If people are equal in piety, the Arab has precedence over the others."⁴²

Al-Nabulsi's harsh criticism of the *'ajam* and his feeling of Arabness undoubtedly reflect his unhappiness over the deplorable conditions under which his compatriots, the Arabic-speaking peoples, were suffering at the time. Elizabeth Sirriyeh quotes from one of al-Nabulsi's published works in which he explains why he shut himself inside his house in Damascus for seven years (1680–87):

I was badly affected by this horrible state of affairs which befell this city of ours, Damascus, and the terrible, catastrophic situation which afflicted this land, such that I gave up associating with people except for some who believed in what I had to say and desired the truth that I desired.⁴³

Among the conditions of the time that al-Nabulsi deplored were the injustices and excessive taxes inflicted on the peasants by the *sipabis*, the feudal lords, which resulted in the emptying of the countryside. A number of Syrian *'ulama*, including important muftis from the four schools of Sunni jurisprudence, supported the peasants by issuing fatwas deploring the sultan's orders and the feudal practices that allowed the *sipabis* to behave in such a way as to drive peasants from their villages and their *watan* (homeland), as the *'ulama* put it. They urged the peasants to stand up to their oppressors, who breached the shari'a by their actions, citing the precedent of the Prophet Muhammad, who fled Mecca to Medina to be spared injustice, and exonerated them from liability for punishment in the hereafter.⁴⁴ The fatwas issued by the *'ulama* in this respect are collected in a work entitled *Nusrat al-mutagharribin 'an al-watan 'ala-l-zalama*

wa-abl al-‘udwan (Support for Migrants from the Homeland against the Unjust and the Oppressors).⁴⁵ Al-Nabulsi, for his part, issued a *fatwa* entitled *Takhyir al-‘ibad fi sukna al-bilad* (Giving the People the Option to Live Where They Choose), condemning the *sipahis* for causing the peasantry to flee their villages and then trying to make them come back to work the land and pay taxes.⁴⁶

The Significance of al-Nabulsi’s Stand

In his defense of the people against state injustice, al-Nabulsi was not alone among Muslim *‘ulama*; rather, he was part of a long tradition. At the very outset of Ottoman rule over Arab lands, when the state was at the very peak of its power, a Sufi *‘alim* from Hama, Shaykh ‘Ali Bin ‘Alwan al-Hamawi, urged the conquering Ottoman sultan, Selim I, to observe the shari’a by word and action, to prevent atrocities and obscenities, and to stop encroachment by governors and troops on civilians.⁴⁷ Other Syrian *‘ulama* opposed the Ottoman state’s imposition of fees for drawing up marriage contracts (*rasm-i ‘arus*) on the grounds that this contradicted the Arab-Islamic practice set forth by the Prophet Muhammad, who legalized marriage contracts for a silver ring or the recital of a verse from the Qur’an. The fees also cut into the income of the local judges and witnesses. The Damascene Shafi’i mufti, ‘Ali al-Qudsi, is reported to have “vomited blood” when “this Ottoman State” (*badhibi al-dawla al-‘uthmaniya*) introduced judicial fees on women’s marriage contracts, considering this act a *fitna* (act of civil strife) to which no other *fitna* was comparable because it breached the established Arab-Islamic practice of facilitating marriage.⁴⁸ According to the contemporary Egyptian chronicler, Ibn Iyas, the Azhar *‘ulama* in Cairo refused to draw up marriage contracts or to authenticate divorce cases in protest against the fees and the commended practice of matrimony was forsaken.⁴⁹

Al-Nabulsi’s evident pride as an Arab in defending the Arab, Ibn al-‘Arabi, against accusations of unbelief by a Rumi *‘alim*, whose *‘ajami* identity is repeatedly emphasized, reflects a growing general pride among the local people in their Arabness. Indeed, from the very beginning of Ottoman rule, the Syrian chroniclers and biographers referred to the Ottomans as *rum*, a term that traditionally had been used by Arab-Muslims to denote Byzantines. Similarly, the Arabs referred to the Ottoman sultan as *sultan al-rum* and even to the Turkish pilgrims coming to Damascus to join the pilgrim caravan setting off for Mecca as *al-hajj*

al-rumi, a flagrant contradiction in terms.⁵⁰ By contrast, they referred to their country as 'Bilad al-Sham' and 'Bilad al-'Arab'.⁵¹ A feeling of identity and cultural belonging was thus evident in Ottoman Syria. For al-Nabulsi, therefore, to emphasize his Arab identity, to quote from the Prophet's *hadith* concerning the pride of being Arab, and to emphasize the good the Arabs had brought to the *'ajam* are all reflections of the Arabness with which many Syrian Arab *'ulama* identified at the time.

The feeling of Arabness among the Syrian *'ulama* grew even stronger later. In 1738, a mere seven years after al-Nabulsi's death, a group of Arab *'ulama* sent a petition to the authorities in Istanbul entitled *Matalib 'ulama al-'Arab li-l-'Uthman* (Requests by the Arab *'Ulama* to the Ottomans).⁵² The petition raises concerns similar to those voiced earlier by al-Ghazzi and al-Nabulsi. It begins by referring to the past role of the Arabs in Islam and notes that the Arabs introduced Islam to the *'ajam*, giving them preference over themselves and giving them high judicial and administrative positions, including that of sultan. The *'ulama* then make the charge that when the caliphate and the sultanate passed into the hands of the *'ajam*, the latter humiliated the Arabs and degraded them. The petition ends by asking for justice and acknowledgment and the rehabilitation of the Arabs. It also requests an answer from the Ottomans in accordance with the *shari'a*.

The Ottoman authorities did respond, according to the Moroccan traveler al-Zayyani and his sources in Istanbul, who reported the petition. Their reply acknowledged the role of the Arabs in spreading Islam among the *'ajam* and in giving them important positions. But the Arabs, the response continued, later became weak and failed to defend Islam, making it possible for the unbelievers (*kuffar*) to occupy Muslim lands—an apparent reference to the Crusades. The Ottomans added that God eventually saved Islam through non-Arab Muslim rulers, such as the Kurds, the Seljuks, the Khawarizmshah, and the Ottomans, without whom Islam would have suffered. Finally, they advised the Arab *'ulama* to be contented with their role as students and teachers, and as scribes and flatterers to every ruler. The tone of the Ottoman response is indicative of the state of relations at the time, and it is not surprising that the feeling of Arabness in Bilad al-Sham as seen in the petition continued to grow.

The other strand of al-Nabulsi's thought in his response to the Rumi *'alim* is religious tolerance, as seen in his defense of non-Muslims against the Rumi's rigidity in consigning them to hell. These two themes—the feeling of Arabness and the religious tolerance of the time—were

reflected in a history of Damascus for the period 1720 to 1783 written by the contemporary Damascene Greek Orthodox priest, Mikha’il Breik. Breik explained that he had begun his history in 1720 for three reasons: it was at this time that he had become conscious of events around him; it was then that the ‘Azms, “sons of the Arabs” (*awlad al-‘Arab*), were appointed as governors in “our country” (*biladina*); and it was during this period that Catholicism in Syria gained ground.⁵³ It is significant that Breik, an Orthodox priest, gave priority to the appointment as governors of Syria of the ‘Azms, *awlad al-‘Arab*, over the spread of Catholicism, which led to a split in his own Greek Orthodox Church. According to Breik, the fact that the ‘Azms were *awlad al-‘Arab* made them more tolerant toward the local Christians than were the Turkish governors. Thus, Breik shares with al-Nabulsi the recognition that religious tolerance goes hand in hand with Arabism. This dualism remains the cornerstone of Arab civil society.

Notes

1. André Raymond, *Le Caire* (Paris: Fayard, 1993), p. 17.
2. Kamal Salibi, *Syria under Islam: Empire on Trial, 634–1097* (Delmar, NY: Caravan Books, 1977), p. 27.
3. Louis Pouzet, *Damas au VIIe/XIIIe siècle: vie et structures religieuses dans une métropole islamique* (Beirut: Dar al-Machriq, 1988), pp. 305–29.
4. On the coexistence of religious communities in the living space, see my “The Social and Economic Structure of Bab al-Musalla (al-Midan), Damascus, 1825–1875,” in George N. Atiyeh and Ibrahim M. Oweiss, eds., *Arab Civilization: Challenges and Responses: Studies in Honor of Constantine Zurayk* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1988), pp. 272–311. For the integration of the religious communities in the work place, see my “al-Ta’ayush bayn al-tawa’if fi Bilad al-Sham ‘ibr al-Sijillat al-Shar’iya,” in *al-‘Alaqa bayna al-Muslimin wa-l-Masibiyin fi Bilad al-Sham kbilal al-marhala al-‘uthmaniya* (*Les Relations entre musulmans et chrétiens dans le Bilad al-Cham à l’époque ottomane aux XVIIe–XIXe siècles*), a collection of papers presented at a conference held at Balamand University in March 2004 (Beirut: Anis Commercial Printing Press, 2005), pp. 75–119.
5. For a short study of Muhyi al-Din ibn al-‘Arabi, see “Muhyi al-Din Ibn al-‘Arabi,” in *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2nd ed. (Leiden: Brill, 1954–).
6. Marshall G.S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization*, 3 vols. (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1974), vol. 2, pp. 238–44; Albert Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1991), pp. 176–87.

7. Ibn al-ʿArabi, *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2nd. ed.
8. Elizabeth Sirriyeh, *Sufi Visionary of Ottoman Damascus: ʿAbd al-Ghani al-Nabulsi, 1641–1731* (New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2005); see also the brief but scholarly and comprehensive article on ʿAbd al-Ghani al-Nabulsi by Walid A.S. Khalidi, *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2nd ed.
9. Sirriyeh, *Sufi Visionary of Ottoman Damascus*, pp. 8–9.
10. Sirriyeh, *Sufi Visionary of Ottoman Damascus*, p. 92, quotes Barbara von Schlegell in her work, “Sufism in the Ottoman Arab World: Shaykh ʿAbd al-Ghani al-Nabulsi (d. 1743/1731)” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 1997), as having identified this anonymous Turk (the Rumi *ʿalim*) as Mahmud b. Shaykh ʿAli. In another work by al-Nabulsi entitled *Hadba kitab al-radd al-matin ʿala muntaqis al-ʿarif Muhyi al-Din* (ms. Asad Library, no. 9873, f. 2a), al-Nabulsi writes that he has seen a monograph written by some Rumi scholars (no doubt the Rumi *ʿalim*) ascribed to Ibn Imam al-Kamiliya, but that he doubts that al-Kamiliya is its author.
11. A copy of this manuscript is found in the state library in Berlin (no. Mq 1581, ff. 29a–46b). I am grateful to Dr. Bakri ʿAladdin, formerly professor at Damascus University and now in the School of Oriental Languages in Paris, for allowing me to use this manuscript.
12. al-Nabulsi’s defense of non-Muslims is first taken up in detail by Michael Winter in his article, “A Polemical Treatise by ʿAbd al-Ghani al-Nabulsi against a Turkish Scholar on the Religious Status of the Dhimmis,” *Arabica* 35 (March 1988), pp. 92–103.
13. al-Nabulsi, *Hadba kitab al-qawl al-sadid*, f. 35b.
14. al-Nabulsi, *Hadba kitab al-qawl al-sadid*, f. 44a.
15. Ms. Asad Library, no. 1418, ff. 53–100. Another title given to the same manuscript is *al-Radd ʿala-l-taʿin fi-l-ʿArab wa fi fadl al-ʿArab*, see Bakri Aladdin, *ʿAbd al-Gani al-Nabulsi (m. 1143/1731): Œuvre, Vie et Doctrine* (thesis presented for Doctorat-ès-Lettres, Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, 1985).
16. al-Nabulsi undertook two journeys to Palestine and wrote about his experiences. The first trip is described in *al-Hadra al-unsuya fi-l-ribla al-qudsiya*, ed. Akram Hasan ʿUlabi (Beirut: Dar al-Masadir, 1990). The second trip was part of a journey that lasted just over one year (2 September 1693 to 25 September 1694), during which al-Nabulsi visited parts of Syria, Palestine, Egypt, and Hijaz. That journey is the subject of al-Nabulsi’s *al-Haqiqah wa-l-majaz fi-l-ribla ila Bilad al-Sham wa Misr wa-l-Hijaz*, ed. Ahmad ʿAbd al-Majid Hreidi (Cairo: al-Hayʾa al-Misriya li-l-Kitab, 1986).
17. al-Nabulsi, *al-Haqiqah wa-l-majaz*, p. 125.
18. al-Nabulsi, *al-Haqiqah wa-l-majaz*, p. 125.

19. al-Nabulsi, *al-Haqiqa wa-l-majaz*, p. 146.
20. al-Nabulsi, *al-Haqiqa wa-l-majaz*, p. 116.
21. al-Nabulsi, *al-Haqiqa wa-l-majaz*, p. 135.
22. al-Nabulsi, *al-Hadra al-unsuya fi-l-rihla al-qudsiya*, pp. 260–61.
23. al-Nabulsi, *al-Hadra al-unsuya fi-l-rihla al-qudsiya*, p. 27.
24. There are several editions of al-Nabulsi’s *Ta’ir al-anam*, some of which reproduce the text on its own, while others reproduce it together with the text of an earlier work entitled *Muntakhab al-kalam fi tafsir al-ablam*, by Muhammad Bin Sirin (d. 110/729). The two works, for example, appear in a Beirut edition published by al-Maktaba al-Thaqafiya (no date).
25. Annemarie Schimmel, “Dreams of Jesus in the Islamic Tradition,” *Bulletin of the Royal Institute for Inter-Faith Studies* 1 (Spring 1999), pp. 207–12.
26. Schimmel, “Dreams of Jesus in the Islamic Tradition,” pp. 208–209.
27. See my *The Province of Damascus, 1723–1783* (Beirut: Khayats, 1970), p. 83.
28. For the career of Athanasius Dabbas and the split within the Greek Orthodox Church, see Bernard Heyberger, *Les chrétiens du Proche-Orient au temps de la réforme catholique* (Rome: École Française de Rome, 1994), pp. 85–86; Bruce Masters, *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman-Arab World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 85–86, 89, 112; Thomas Philipp, *The Syrians in Egypt, 1775–1975* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag Wiesbaden, 1985), pp. 12–14.
29. Bakri Aladdin, “Deux fatwa-s du Šayh ‘Abd al-Ġani al-Nabulsi (1143/1731): présentation et édition critique,” *Bulletin d’Études Orientales* 39–40 (1987–1988), p. 13.
30. “*Wā labu jawab su’al warada min taraf batrak al-Nasara fi-l-tawhid*,” Muhammad Khalil al-Muradi, *Silk al-durar fi a’yan al-qarn al-thani ‘ashar*, 4 vols. (Cairo: Bulaq, AH 1301; several reprints), vol. 3, p. 34.
31. Dabbas’s questions and al-Nabulsi’s response (*fatwa*) in Arabic are reproduced with a French commentary in part 1 of Aladdin, “Deux fatwa-s,” pp. 7–37. The second part of this article deals with the second *fatwa* and al-Nabulsi’s defense of the oppressed peasantry.
32. Aladdin, “Deux fatwa-s,” part 1, p. 22.
33. Heyberger, *Les chrétiens du Proche-Orient*, p. 42.
34. Muradi, *Silk al-durar*, vol. 3, p. 31.
35. Muhammad Najm al-Din al-Ghazzi, *Husn al-tanabbuh lima warada fi-l-tashabbuh*, 7 vols., ms. Asad Library, no. 9030.
36. For more on these events, see my article, “al-Huwiya wa-l-intima’ fi bilad al-sham fi-l-‘ahd al-‘uthmani,” *Chronos* 3 (2000), pp. 7–34 (see especially pp. 21–22). This article is republished in my book, *Dirasat iqtisadiya wa ijtimaiya*

- fi tarikh Bilad al-Sham al-badith* (Damascus: Librairie Nobel, 2002), pp. 347–74. For the biography of Yahya al-Karaki, see Muhammad al-Amin al-Muhibbi, *Khulasat al-athar fi a'yan al-qarn al-hadi 'ashar*, 4 vols. (Cairo: Bulaq, 1284/1869; several reprints); see vol. 4, pp. 478–80.
37. Ghazzi, *Husn al-tanabbuh*, ff. 18b–19a.
 38. al-Nabulsi, *Hadha kitab al-qawl al-sadid*, ff. 29b–30a.
 39. al-Nabulsi, *Hadha kitab al-qawl al-sadid*, ff. 29b–39a.
 40. al-Nabulsi, *Hadha kitab al-qawl al-sadid*, ff. 29b–39a.
 41. “*Abibbu al-'Arab li-thalath: li-anni 'arabi, wa-l-Qur'an 'arabi, wa lisan ahl al-janna 'arabi*,” al-Nabulsi, *Hadha kitab al-qawl al-sadid*, ff. 31a–31b.
 42. “*Idha istawa al-nas fi-l-taqwa quddima al-'arabi 'ala ghayribi*.” Al-Nabulsi, *Hadha kitab al-qawl al-sadid*, ff. 30a–30b.
 43. Sirriyeh, *Sufi Visionary of Ottoman Damascus*, p. 55 (see also p. 53). The quote is from al-Nabulsi's work, *Ghayat al-matlub fi mahabbat al-mahbub*, edited with an introduction in Italian by S. Pagani (Rome: Bardi, 1995).
 44. For the situation of the peasants and the support they received from the Syrian 'ulama, see my “Relations between the Syrian 'Ulama and the Ottoman State in the Eighteenth Century,” *Oriente moderno* 18, no. 79 (1999), pp. 67–95; see pp. 84–86. See also my “The Syrian 'Ulama: Ottoman Law and Islamic Shari'a,” *Turcica* 26 (1994), pp. 9–32; see pp. 22–26.
 45. Yass al-Faradi, *Nusrat al-mutagharribin 'an al-watan 'ala al-zalama wa-ahl al-'udwan*, ms. Asad Library, no. 6879.
 46. al-Nabulsi's *fatwa* is published in Aladdin, “Deux fatwa-s,” pp. 28–37; see pp. 18–20.
 47. 'Ali bin 'Alwan al-Hamawi, *Nasihah al-Shaykh 'Akwan ila al-Sultan Salim bin 'Uthman*, ms. Asad Library, no. 21580/b.
 48. Muhammad Najm al-Din al-Ghazzi, *al-Kawakib al-sa'ira bi-a'yan al-mi'a al-'ashira*, ed. Jibra'il Jabbur, 3 vols. (Beirut: Dar al-Afaq al-Jadida, 1979), vol. 3, p. 222. See also my “The Syrian 'Ulama,” pp. 10–12.
 49. “*Fa-imtana'u al-zawaj wa-l-talaq fi tilka al-ayyam wa batalat sunnat al-nikah wa-l-amr li-Allah fi dbalika*.” Muhammad b. Iyas, *Bada'i' al-zubur fi waqa'i' al-dubur*, 2nd ed., ed. Muhammad Mustafa (Cairo: Dar Ihya' al-Kutub al-'Arabiya, AH 1380/1961), vol. 5, pp. 417–18, 424. See also my “The Opposition of the Azhar 'Ulama to Ottoman Laws and Its Significance in the History of Ottoman Egypt,” in *Etudes sur les villes du Proche-Orient, XVIe-XIXe siècle: Hommage à André Raymond* (Damascus: Institut Français d'Etudes Arabes de Damas, 2001), pp. 43–63.
 50. Today a side street in Suq Hamidiya in Damascus carries the name Suq al-Arwam.

51. See my article, “Social Groups, Identity and Loyalty, and Historical Writing in Ottoman and Post-Ottoman Syria,” in Dominique Chevallier, ed., *Les Arabes et l’histoire créatrice* (Paris: Presses de l’Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 1994), pp. 79–93.
52. The petition is reported in full in the travel account of Abu al-Qasim al-Zayyani, *al-Tarjumana al-kubra fi akhbār al-ma’mūra barran wa babran*, 2nd ed., ed. ‘Abd al-Karim al-Filali (Rabat: Dar Nashr al-Ma’rifa, 1991), pp. 361–62.
53. Mikha’il Breik, *Tarikh al-Sham, 1720–1783*, ed. Qustantin al-Basha (Harissa, Lebanon: Matba‘at al-Qiddis Bulus, 1930), pp. 2–3, 62.

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Badr al-Din al-Maqdisi A Palestinian Shaykh Resisting French Occupation in Late Eighteenth-century Cairo

André Raymond

Shaykh Badr al-Din al-Maqdisi embodies the interesting case of an *ʿālim* (scholar) from Jerusalem who established himself in Cairo, had a distinguished career there, emerged as the leader of one of the most important neighborhoods of the city, and ended up leading the people of this popular quarter in the fight against the French occupying forces in 1798. His career sheds interesting light on the troubled period Cairo went through during the last decades of the eighteenth century, on the days of the French occupation, and on the tumultuous years that preceded the accession of Muhammad ‘Ali to power in 1805.¹

From Jerusalem to Husayniya

Most of what we know of the life and career of Badr al-Din al-Maqdisi is provided by the great Egyptian historian, ‘Abd ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Jabarti, who devotes a part of one of his necrologic notices (but not a complete biography) to Badr al-Din, and mentions some of his actions. The shaykh is also mentioned in some other sources (mainly the archives of the French expedition in Egypt) for his participation in the revolt against the occupation forces in 1798. There is very little information about his life as a whole. Much is missing in his story, and we are able to reconstruct only those parts relating to events in which he was an active participant. Badr al-Din thus appears as a second-rank shaykh and a rather modest teacher (but not, apparently, a writer). Yet, it also appears from the sources that this “*homme quelconque*” was able to raise himself to the

height of historical circumstances when history demanded it on at least two important occasions.

It was Badr al-Din's well-known brother, 'Ali al-Husayni al-Maqdisi ibn al-Naqib, who made the decision to settle in Cairo, according to al-Jabarti's relatively lengthy obituary (sixty lines) written in the year AH 1186 (1772–73) and revised a quarter-century later.² The brothers came from a noble family of Jerusalem, linked to the Imam 'Ali and to Husayn. One of their ancestors had held the important office of *naqib al-asbraf*, the representative of the *sharifs* (descendants of the Prophet) in the city—hence the “Ibn al-Naqib” appended to 'Ali's name. Born around AH 1125 (1713), 'Ali received a good education in Jerusalem, then in Damascus, Hama, and Aleppo. During these formative years, he met distinguished teachers such as Shaykh 'Abd al-Ghani al-Nabulsi and Sayyid Mustafa al-Bakri, who introduced him to Sufism (and specifically the Khalwatiya order).³ It is the latter who encouraged 'Ali to further his studies in Egypt, where he was instructed by the most eminent teachers and became a master in law and tradition. He, in turn, began to teach the *tafsir*, the *fikh*, and the *hadith* in the *Mashbad* (shrine) al-Husayni, becoming a renowned expert in these disciplines. 'Ali lived near the *mashbad*, and his house became a place to which visitors—people soliciting favors or advice—would flock. Shaykh 'Ali's house eventually proved too small to accommodate the crowds, especially since his love of thoroughbred horses led him to keep two or three at a time. Consequently, he decided to move, and rented a vast residence in the suburb of Husayniya on the outskirts of Cairo, where space was less restricted than in the center.

This choice might appear surprising. The suburb of Husayniya was a poor area of the city, periodically in turmoil, as the riots of the end of the eighteenth century show. This was the neighborhood where the city's slaughterhouses were established, which explains the role in the riots played by the butchers, whose energetic and dynamic guild was one of the mainstays of society and who often led the collective movements there.⁴ In explaining why so renowned a scholar, whose colleagues preferred to reside near al-Azhar and the main mosques and madrasas in the heart of Cairo, would have chosen to live in a remote and popular quarter, Shaykh 'Ali might have invoked the well-known saying according to which the dwellings of the nobles are located at the city's edge (*al-atraf masakin al-asbraf*), which indeed was quoted by al-Jabarti in this regard.⁵ There is another reason the historian does not mention but which may have contributed to this unusual choice: Husayniya had become the center of

activity of the Bayyumiya Sufi brotherhood, since Shaykh al-Bayyumi lived there, held sessions of *dhikr* in the suburb's al-Zahir Mosque, and died there in 1769. Al-Bayyumi's yearly *mawlid* (festival) was celebrated in Husayniya, around his sanctuary. The mosque that bears his name was built in 1766–67 by 'Uthman Agha, a follower of Bashir Agha Dar al-Sa'da, on the orders of Mustafa Pasha. The mosque, located in the northern part of the suburb, is indicated on the plan of the *Description de l'Egypte* (Bayyumi mosque, V, 343 B 5).⁶ It is not far-fetched to think that Shaykh 'Ali may have developed an interest in the preaching of al-Bayyumi at the Mashhad al-Husayni, where the two men obviously were in contact. Indeed, he may even have been encouraged to settle in Husayniya, following al-Bayyumi's example. One might also note that the residence chosen by the shaykh was a short distance from the neighborhood where Palestinians lived, concentrated near the Wakalat al-Sabun, the center of the soap trade, their major activity in Cairo.⁷

Whatever the case, Shaykh 'Ali spared no expense in refurbishing a large house. He also restored a *zawiya* nearby. In 1763–64, with his finances much depleted, he decided to embark on a long voyage to Istanbul, where he probably hoped to find a better situation. According to al-Jabarti, the restoration works of the Mashhad al-Husayni undertaken by the amir, 'Abd al-Rahman Katkhuda, which necessitated the shrine's temporary closing, provided the occasion for this journey.⁸ Shaykh 'Ali had a brilliant career in the capital. His classes were well attended and he was often solicited for advice. It seems, however, that his incisive comments on the rich and the powerful were not well received in certain quarters, and he was asked to leave the city. In 1769–70, he returned to Cairo, where he resumed his teaching at the Mashhad al-Husayni with the same success. He had the ear of the powerful. When, for example, Muhammad Bey Abu-l-Dahab, one of the leading Mamluk amirs of Egypt in the 1760s (he died in 1775), learned of the precariousness of Shaykh 'Ali's financial situation, he ordered that 100,000 paras be given to him, a generous donation that allowed the shaykh to wipe away part of his debts and give alms to the poor. Shaykh 'Ali died on 6 Sha'ban AH 1186 (1 November 1772).

This introduction helped set the stage for 'Ali's brother, Badr al-Din, who succeeded him in his house and his activities. Al-Jabarti does not write about Badr al-Din directly, but rather in the form of a long addendum (twenty-four lines) to the abovementioned obituary devoted to Badr's brother, 'Ali. It thus appears that the historian, not wanting to wait for the

eventual death of Badr al-Din, who had recently played a prominent role in momentous events, seized upon his revision of 'Ali's bibliographical note in AH 1220 (1805–1806) as an occasion to write about him. Unfortunately, al-Jabarti says nothing about Badr's former life, and does not even mention his date of birth. He merely states that Badr settled in his brother's house and took over his *hadith* class at the Mashhad al-Husayni. One can assume, however, that the shaykh was already well established in the neighborhood, an indication of his rootedness being that he demolished his brother's *zawiya* along with the surrounding buildings, and erected a "beautiful and magnificent mosque" in which he erected a tomb for his brother (event dated AH 1205/1790–91 by al-Jabarti). This edifice, located south of the neighborhood, is mentioned in the *Description de l'Egypte* (mosque of Badr al-Din, V, 375, E5). Close by the mosque, Badr built for himself a beautiful house where he settled with his family.

Following his brother's example, Badr managed to win the respect of the people and the local dignitaries. His house was always full of visitors and solicitors, and he maintained close ties with those in power. We may suppose that, like his brother, he knew personally the leading amirs of the time, Ibrahim Bey and Murad Bey. Above all, he maintained and strengthened his ties with the neighborhood where he lived, fighting for its interests and acting as its spokesman when the need arose. Al-Jabarti remarks that "he took care of people's complaints, settled their disputes, defended those who were attacked, and supported them in court, even if it were against the amirs and the rulers. In this way, he became their recourse and was viewed with much reverence." A confirmation of al-Jabarti's remarks about Badr's influence in the neighborhood can be found in a document from the archives of the *mahkama* (tribunal of Cairo) dated 29 June 1793. The document, concerning the inheritance of Hajj Husayn al-Qassab, shaykh of the butchers' guild (*gazzarin*) in Husayniya, specifies that it was drafted "in the presence of Sayyid Badr al-Din al-Hanafi, mufti and teacher at the Mashhad al-Husayni."⁹ This mention clearly shows his close relations with the leader of one of the most powerful and active groups of the neighborhood.

The shaykh thus wielded great influence over the popular forces centered in the suburb. He had ties with the butchers' guild, as noted above, and probably with the Bayyumiya brotherhood, as well. He was in a position to take charge of the *'asabiya* (solidarity) of the neighborhood through its local networks, the 'bands' of young people mentioned dismissively in pejorative terms such as *zu'ar* (good for nothings), *awbash al-amma* (thugs),

hashara (gangs) by chroniclers who, like al-Jabarti, as scholars could not but be alarmed when the “populace” took to the streets.¹⁰ Given Badr’s position in the neighborhood, then, it is rather surprising that he did not figure in any of the popular movements that emerged in Husayniya in the last decades of the eighteenth century. Rather, the leading role in these events was played by Ahmad Salim al-Gazzar, simultaneously shaykh of the butchers’ guild and of the *khalifa* of the Bayyumiya, who in that dual capacity oversaw the entire collective life of the suburb.¹¹ Badr’s absence may be due to the dearth of our sources, but possibly also to the reluctance of al-Jabarti to dwell on those events—as a well-off bourgeois of Cairo he had little sympathy for such movements. Be that as it may, we do not encounter Badr again until 1798, at the time of the occupation of Egypt by the French, when he was swept to the surface of history by the momentous events that shook the country.

The Day of Glory

There is no need to dwell on the causes and the unfolding of the Cairo rebellion in October 1798.¹² The immediate trigger seems to have been the imposition by the French occupiers of a real-estate tax involving actual house inspections to allow the classification of the dwellings subject to the tax. Without doubt, the intrusive procedure was viewed as offensive by the population. But the true cause, certainly, was the humiliation and resentment provoked by the foreign occupation and the feeling that the Muslim religion was being insulted by Christian foreigners ruling the country. With regard to the events themselves, we will limit ourselves to those directly involving inhabitants of the Husayniya, under the leadership of Shaykh Badr al-Din.

On 19 October 1798, some three months after the occupation had begun, the preachers in the mosques of Cairo seized the occasion of the Friday prayers to call for an uprising against the French: “O Muslims, the jihad is a duty for you. How can you, free men, agree to pay the head tax (*jizya*) to nonbelievers (*kuffar*)? Have you no pride? Has not the call (*da’wa*) reached you?” This was how the rebellion (*fitna*) began, without a leader to take it in hand, in the opinion of al-Jabarti. In reality, however, the movement, rising from the very depths of the population, had a number of leaders, including Badr al-Din—lower-ranking *‘ulama* and members of the common people, several of whom were condemned to death and executed when the rebellion was suppressed.

According to al-Jabarti's description of the events, as written in his *Tarikh muddat al-Faransis bi-Misr* just after they occurred and in his *'Aja'ib al-atbar fi-l-tarajim wa-l-akbbar* some years later, the rebellion broke out in the suburb of Husayniya on the morning of Sunday, 21 October.¹³ Sayyid Badr al-Din al-Maqdisi, al-Jabarti tells us, arrived at 6 o'clock in the morning flanked by a crowd made up of the *hasharat* of Husayniya, the *zu'ar* of the peripheral neighborhoods, and people from the nearby al-'Utuf quarter, a poor area northeast of the city. The shaykh led the way, riding a nicely harnessed horse, surrounded by numerous groups shouting over and over again, "May God make Islam triumph!" (*nasara li-Allah din al-Islam*). This crowd was on its way to the court of the *qadi*, one of the traditional gathering places for demonstrators in such circumstances. The *qadi*, deeply embarrassed to find himself called upon to mediate with the occupying forces, tried to stall, which caused the crowd to throw stones and the level of violence to increase. Then, calling for the intervention of the *'ulama*, the tumultuous flow moved toward al-Azhar and to the Mashhad al-Husayni, symbolic places where Badr's influence was very strong. Solemn oaths were taken, along with the recitation of the *Fatiha* and calls to jihad. Alerted to the turbulence, General Dupuy, governor of Cairo, hastened to the site and was stabbed to death at the Bab al-Zuhuma, near Khan al-Khalili. The demonstration then swelled into an open revolt and spread to the rest of the city.

The movement of Husayniya soon melted into the general revolt that followed. But the skirmish of 22 October, during which General Sulkowsky was attacked and killed by the "populace [mob] of Bab al-Nasr," naturally carries the stamp of the neighborhood's activism.¹⁴ The French memoirs of the time also credit the people of Husayniya for the attack that destroyed a convoy of French wounded soldiers coming from Bilbays.¹⁵ It was thus that the neighborhood shared the fate of the people of Cairo, who after two days of urban fighting were crushed by artillery shelling ordered by Napoleon Bonaparte. However, even after the city reluctantly surrendered and despite the ongoing shelling, the inhabitants of Husayniya and al-'Utuf distinguished themselves by refusing to lay down arms and continuing to fight until, running out of ammunition, they were forced to withdraw. The fierceness of their resistance cost the suburb additional destruction.

Shaykh Badr al-Din is not mentioned again in the accounts of al-Jabarti and the French memorialists relating these events, but he was obviously one of the leading figures of the movement. The Arab

'lamentation' published by Georges Colin, which gives a popular perspective on the rebellion, mentions him alongside the leaders who were later executed for their roles in the uprising.¹⁶ Bonaparte's *ordre du jour* of 3 November 1798, proclaiming the death sentence for the individuals "recognized as responsible for the rebellion in Cairo," lists the names of six leaders who were to be executed the next morning, followed by the names of eight other persons condemned to death in absentia. "Cheikh el Bedr el Coudssi" is at the top of that second list, thus confirming the leading role he played in the movement.¹⁷

Meanwhile, however, the shaykh had managed to escape and elude the generalized repression that followed. French efforts to track him down, including the dispatch of spies to find him, were in vain. In fact, Badr al-Din had found refuge in his province of origin, Palestine, where he was able to remain until the end of the French occupation. Having failed to find him, the French pillaged and partially destroyed his house. As for his mosque, it was razed in the demolition works later undertaken by the French authorities to expose the outer wall of the city. This vindictive attitude of the occupiers is of course a further proof of the prominent part Badr played in the events.

Exile and Return to Cairo

In Palestine, Shaykh Badr al-Din did not remain idle. A document in the French archives of the Egypt Expedition, a letter dated 6 December 1798 sent by the Ottoman grand vizier, Yusuf Pasha, mentions an account of the Cairo rebellion by Sayyid Badr, "one of the shaykhs of Cairo," who had managed to escape after the uprising. The shaykh had apparently established contact with Egyptian expatriates in Palestine and had managed to pass along to Ibrahim Bey, the main amir of Egypt who had taken refuge in Syria during the French occupation and whom Badr probably knew personally, firsthand information about the events in Cairo in which he had taken an active part.¹⁸ Thus, even in Palestine, Badr remained active as one of the leaders of the "resistance" to the French occupation.

A bit later, recalling the most notable events of the year AH 1215 (25 May 1800–13 May 1801) and citing the blockade imposed on Egypt by the British in the Mediterranean Sea and the Red Sea, al-Jabarti mentions the interruption of the pilgrimage for the Egyptians that year: the *mahmal* (a palanquin that was traditionally sent from Cairo to the holy cities) did not return to Egypt and was held in Jerusalem. He writes,

"When the Moslem troops came [to liberate Egypt] they brought it with them to Bilbays. It is said that Sayyid Badr brought it back to Jabal al-Khalil [Hebron]."¹⁹ One can conclude from al-Jabarti's rather vague formulation that the shaykh had accompanied the Ottoman army when it attempted to reclaim Egypt from the French, and that, following the Ottoman defeat at Heliopolis (20 March 1800), he had been charged with taking the precious *mahmal* to a safe place. The next year, immediately after the capitulation of the French forces under Belliard in Cairo (14 July 1801), the shaykh returned to Egypt. Al-Jabarti mentions Badr's arrival in Cairo with a caravan bringing soap and coffee from Syria to the liberated city on 18 August 1801, accompanied by Hajj Su'udi al-Hinnawi and others.²⁰

Badr's homecoming, naturally, had a mournful side, as the shaykh was able to see for himself the destruction wrought upon his house and his mosque. Al-Jabarti, in his biographical notice on Shaykh 'Ali completed in 1805–1806, describes Badr trying to rebuild the places "better than they were" (*hatta 'adabuma absan mimma kana 'alaybi qabla dhalika*). The rather modest mosque that stands to this day in Husayniya is the one rebuilt at that time. Badr al-Din settled in his house and resumed the life that had been his before 1798. "At the time of my writing," states al-Jabarti, "he resides there, and it is a meeting place for friends and a place visited by travelers. May God bless him."²¹ Despite this concluding sentence, which seems to herald the beginning of a peaceful retirement, the public life of Badr al-Din was not yet over.

In July 1804, in the course of the conflict between the Egyptian amirs (headed by Ibrahim Bey, 'Uthman Bardisi Bey, and Muhammad al-Alfi) on the one hand and Khurshid Pasha, the recently appointed Ottoman viceroy of Egypt, on the other, the insurgent amirs went on the offensive. Approaching Cairo, they sent a request to the shaykhs of the city, asking them to intervene with the pasha to put an end to the civil war between the Egyptian Mamluks and the Turks. The pasha refused to listen. A few days later, the vanguard of the amirs' forces reached Cairo. Muhammad Bey al-Manfukh entered the Husayniya neighborhood and took up position in the al-Bayyumi Mosque. On 16 July, a group of Mamluks sent for Badr al-Din, who was taken to Bardisi and Ibrahim Bey. The latter pressed him to negotiate a truce with the pasha, suggesting that Badr convey the message that the pasha would never be safe with the soldiers (*al-'askar*). "As for ourselves," the amirs added, "we shall support him by offering our obedience and our service, as is fitting." Badr returned to his

house late that night and went to see the pasha the next morning, on 17 July. After he conveyed the message of the amirs, the pasha said, "What you are saying is true, but who will give them my response?" The shaykh boldly replied that he would. The pasha, angered by the shaykh's answer, had him followed and arrested. Badr was placed in the custody of the watch of the *kbaznadar* (the amir in charge of the treasury). The next morning, the two foremost 'ulama of Cairo, Shaykh al-Sadat and Sayyid 'Umar, the *naqib al-asbraf*, came to request his release. The pasha refused: "I worry that the soldiers may kill him. No harm will be done to him. This is not the time to free him. It will be better in five days. The *kbaznadar* is taking good care of him in a place more comfortable than his own home." He ended with the words, "How could a man of his stature behave in this manner? Going to the rebels under a disguise, bringing back their offers and then asking to go back to them."²² It was not until 31 July that a new initiative on the part of the shaykhs ended successfully, securing Badr's freedom and enabling him to go home.²³

This event is highly telling of the important position acquired by Shaykh Badr al-Din. His prestige was sufficiently high with the amirs, and especially Ibrahim Bey, for them to entrust him with such a delicate mission, knowing as well that the pasha would listen to him. The initiative of Cairo's influential shaykhs likewise demonstrates the esteem in which he was held by his peers. At the same time, one cannot but admire the shaykh's determination and his willingness to undertake a mission that was not without risks, as the events made clear.

The last time Shaykh Badr al-Din appears in al-Jabarti's chronicle attests to his prestige in the eyes of Muhammad 'Ali, who assumed full power in 1805. On 11 August 1810, while Muhammad 'Ali Pasha was preparing the expedition against the Wahhabis in Hijaz, an emissary from Istanbul arrived carrying orders from the Sublime Porte with an honorary gown. He was welcomed with full honors. On 18 August, a divan was held at the Cairo Citadel: Isma'il, the pasha's son, received the gown of *mirmiran* (provincial governor) amid salvos of honor. On 20 August, the shaykhs were invited to present themselves the following day at the Husayni Mosque. Only the most important among them could enter the sanctuary, forbidden to the public, where the emissary of the Sublime Porte presented the document sent by Sultan Mahmud that bore his *tughra* (seal). The imam of the mosque, Sayyid Muhammad al-Manzalawi, led the prayer in the name of the sultan, but afterward additional prayers were said by Badr al-Din. The Sublime Porte envoy

then gave official gowns and money to the shaykhs. Al-Jabarti's concludes his account with the sour comment, "Then they left and went home: this meeting had no importance whatsoever." It hardly bears mentioning that the historian's conclusion does not reflect the reality of the situation but rather his own tepid feelings toward Muhammad 'Ali.²⁴ Indeed, the pasha had quite naturally wanted to emphasize this clear manifestation of the sultanate's regard for him, and in so doing strengthen his own personal prestige in Egypt. The details of the ceremony at the Husayni Mosque, and the role that Badr was assigned to play, make clear the importance of the position he had acquired with Egypt's new ruler.

After this prestigious appearance in 1810, al-Jabarti does not mention Badr again in his chronicle. This silence is significant. Given the shaykh's high position, his role in the momentous events that Egypt witnessed before and after 1800, and the obvious consideration the historian had for him, it may be inferred from the absence of any biographical note about him in the *'Aja'ib* that the shaykh died after the completion of the chronicle in 1821.

Conclusion

The life of Shaykh Badr al-Din is illustrative of a number of phenomena. First of all, it reveals the tight connection that existed between Egypt and Palestine, so close geographically and culturally. Shaykhs from Jerusalem could settle easily in Cairo and not merely have a career in the great institutions of learning in the heart of an intellectual milieu representing all the rich variety of the Arab Islamic world, but could even gain sufficient influence in a popular quarter to become that quarter's spokesmen and leaders in times of crisis. At the level of local history, the career of Badr al-Din confirms the importance of the role played by the lesser shaykhs in organizing and leading the people of Cairo. The tumultuous times of the end of the eighteenth century, the expedition of Bonaparte, and the troubles that preceded the rise to power of Muhammad 'Ali provided many occasions for them to play this role. The "great *'ulama*" of al-Azhar—the likes of Sadat, Sharqawi, Mahdi, and Sawi—were inevitably in the glare of events solely by virtue of their institutional positions, but the "lower *'ulama*," because of their closeness to the people, had a social and political effectiveness that gave them a decisive role in the history of Cairo at the turn of the nineteenth century.

Notes

1. I have addressed the career of Badr al-Din in *Artisans et commerçants au Caire* (Damascus: Institut Français de Damas, 1974), pp. 445–46, and in *Egyptiens et Français au Caire* (Cairo: Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, 1998), pp. 45–46, 131–32, and 139. It seemed to me that recalling the life of a Palestinian shaykh resisting foreign occupation of Egypt would be appropriate to honor Walid Khalidi and his fight for Palestine.
2. 'Abd al-Rahman al-Jabarti, *'Aja'ib al-athar fi-l-tarajim wa-l-akbbar*, 4 vols. (Cairo: Bulaq, 1879), vol. 1, pp. 371–74; translated into English by Thomas Philip and Moshe Perlmann as *'Abd al-Rahman al-Jabarti's History of Egypt*, 4 parts in 2 vols. (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1994), vol. 1, pp. 624–27. In referring to this work, I will give page numbers for both the Arabic and English editions.
3. On Shaykh al-Nabulsi (1641–1731), refer to *Encyclopedie de l'Islam*, 2nd ed., vol. 1, p. 62, W.A.S. Khalidi. On Shaykh al-Bakri (1688–1749), see *Encyclopedie de l'Islam*, 2nd ed., vol. 1, p. 995, C. Brockelmann.
4. On the neighborhood of Husayniya and its religious and professional affiliations, see *Artisans et commerçants*, particularly pp. 436, 444–45.
5. al-Jabarti, *'Aja'ib*, vol. 1, p. 372 (Arabic) and p. 625 (English).
6. On 'Ali al-Bayyumi, see al-Jabarti, *'Aja'ib*, vol. 1, pp. 337–38 (Arabic) and vol. 1, pp. 564–67 (English); *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., vol. 1, p. 1186, W.A.S. Khalidi. On the mosque, see 'Ali Pasha Mubarak, *Khitat*, 20 vols. (Cairo: Bulaq, 1888), vol. 2, p. 6; vol. 4, p. 69.
7. See my article, “Les Palestiniens au Caire au XVIIIe siècle,” *Revue d'études palestiniennes*, no. 36 (Summer 1990), pp. 57–66.
8. According to 'Ali Pasha Mubarak, the construction work done by the amir 'Abd al-Rahman Katkhuda happened in AH 1175 (AD 1761–62), which puts the date given by al-Jabarti for 'Ali's trip to Istanbul in question. Mubarak, *Khitat*, vol. 4, p. 88.
9. National Egyptian Archives, *Mabkama, qisma 'askariya*, vol. 223, no. 465, 29 June 1793.
10. See my articles, “Quartiers et mouvements populaires au Caire au XVIIIe siècle,” in P.M. Holt, *Political and Social Change in Modern Egypt* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), pp. 104–16; and “Deux leaders populaires au Caire à la fin du XVIIIe et au début du XIXe siècle,” *Nouvelle revue du Caire* 1 (1975), pp. 281–98.
11. For more on the movements of 1786 and 1790, see *Artisans et commerçants*, pp. 794–95, 805.
12. On this rebellion, see especially al-Jabarti's *Tarikh muddat al-Faransis bi-Misr* (Leiden: Brill, 1975), translated into English as *Napoleon in Egypt: al-Jabarti's*

- Chronicle of the French Occupation, 1798*, trans. Shmuel Moreh (Princeton and New York: Markus Wiener, 1993), pp. 84–96; al-Jabarti, *‘Aja’ib*, vol. 3, pp. 25–28 (Arabic) and pp. 40–45 (English); Nicolas Turc, *Chronique d’Egypte*, ed. and trans. Gaston Wiet (Cairo: Institut Français d’Archéologie Orientale, 1950), pp. 41–43. Among the studies devoted to the expedition are Henry Laurens, *L’Expédition d’Egypte, 1798–1801* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1989), pp. 148–52, and Raymond, *Egyptiens et Français au Caire*, pp. 124–38.
13. al-Jabarti, *Tarikh Muddat*, p. 84; al-Jabarti, *‘Aja’ib*, vol. 3, p. 25 (Arabic) and p. 40 (English).
 14. A fort that was built on the location of al-Zahir Mosque was named after Sulkowsky. Adam Skalkowski, *Les Polonais en Egypte, 1798–1801* (Krakow: Gebethner and Wolff, 1910), p. 43.
 15. Colonel Chalbrand, *Les Français en Egypte, ou souvenirs des campagnes d’Egypte et de Syrie* (Tours: J.-J.-E. Roy, 1875).
 16. Georges Colin, “Une complainte arabe sur l’expédition française en Egypte,” *Bulletin de l’Institut Français d’Archéologie Orientale* 18 (1921), p. 211.
 17. Archives of Vincennes, Armée d’Orient, M. et R. 532, Ordre du 13 Brumaire an VII.
 18. Archives of Vincennes, Armée d’Orient, B6 13, Yusuf Pasha to Ibrahim Bey, 6 December 1798.
 19. al-Jabarti, *‘Aja’ib*, vol. 3, p. 111 (Arabic) and p. 172 (English).
 20. al-Jabarti, *‘Aja’ib*, vol. 3, p. 194 (Arabic) and p. 298 (English).
 21. al-Jabarti, *‘Aja’ib*, vol. 1, p. 374 (Arabic) and p. 627 (English).
 22. al-Jabarti, *‘Aja’ib*, vol. 3, p. 304 (Arabic) and pp. 446–47 (English).
 23. al-Jabarti, *‘Aja’ib*, vol. 3, p. 308 (Arabic) and p. 473 (English).
 24. al-Jabarti, *‘Aja’ib*, vol. 4, p. 120 (Arabic) and p. 169 (English).

3

‘Abd al-Rahman Shahbandar An Independence Leader of Interwar Syria

Philip S. Khoury

There is surprisingly little systematic scholarship on the political careers of the leaders of Syria’s national independence movement. What exists either focuses on prominent Muslim intellectuals who resided outside of Syria and Lebanon or is prosopographical.¹ Moreover, in the past generation, historians have largely abandoned the study of Syrian political elites for the study of peasants and workers, women and minorities, and new institutions and mentalities. These historians want to examine Syrian society from the bottom up, although their sources often limit them to the middle rungs.²

The sources for writing the political biographies of individual Syrian nationalist leaders are limited. Published and unpublished collections of speeches, political writings, memoirs, and diaries are available for some politicians. Other useful sources include Syrian newspaper collections and unpublished documents found in the Syrian National Archives (Dar al-Watha’iq) in Damascus, the French Foreign Ministry and Consular archives in Paris and Nantes, the British Public Record Office, and the National Archives of the United States. Opportunities to interview the younger political associates of independence-era leaders or their immediate family members are fading fast.

This essay is an effort to use some of these sources to sketch the political career of Dr. ‘Abd ‘Abd al-Rahman Shahbandar.³ Why have I chosen Shahbandar? The objective reason is simple: he was one of the most prominent, controversial, and misunderstood Syrian independence leaders. But there is also a subjective reason. I have long thought that, of all

the early Arab nationalists, Shahbandar is the one that Professor Walid Khalidi would have empathized with most. This is because of the difficult intermediate position in which Shahbandar found (or located) himself between an emerging Arab world and the west. Khalidi would also find himself in a similarly difficult intermediate position at different times in his career.

Although they grew up a generation apart, Shahbandar and Khalidi have much in common. They were city boys, Shahbandar from Damascus and Khalidi from Jerusalem. They hailed from notable families that were comfortable but not wealthy. Shahbandar married into an absentee-landowning and bureaucratic family of Damascus and Khalidi into a merchant and absentee-landowning family of Beirut. They obtained modern, secular educations in western institutions, Shahbandar at the Syrian Protestant College (renamed the American University of Beirut, or AUB, in 1920) and Khalidi at the University of London.⁴ Shahbandar taught briefly at the AUB, where Khalidi was a professor for two decades. Both had active professional careers, Shahbandar as a practicing physician and Khalidi as a practicing classicist and later political scientist. Both spent long periods abroad, Shahbandar in forced exile in Cairo and Khalidi in voluntary exile in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Shahbandar and Khalidi spent much of their careers trying to explain the hopes and aspirations of their people, and the poor cards they had been dealt, to western elites. Both had strong connections to the west, and both were roundly criticized at different times in their careers for that very reason. Because of these similarities, and perhaps others, I suspect that had they belonged to the same generation, 'Abd al-Rahman Shahbandar and Walid Khalidi would have been warmly disposed to each other.⁵

Early Career

'Abd al-Rahman Shahbandar was born in Damascus in 1880 into a moderately affluent merchant family.⁶ As a child, he showed such intellectual ability that his father sent him to Beirut to complete his secondary education at the preparatory division of the American-run Syrian Protestant College, an unusual decision for a Syrian Muslim at the time. Shahbandar was then admitted to the college, taking his undergraduate degree there in 1901. He returned immediately afterward to Damascus, where he came into contact with an Islamic

reformist circle of theologians and students, presided over by Shaykh Tahir al-Jaza’iri, which was critical of Turkish policies in the Arabic-speaking provinces of the Ottoman Empire. At this time, Shahbandar wrote a controversial essay on law and personal behavior, in which he implied that the Ottoman presence in Syria was beginning to resemble a military occupation. That essay and a spurious accusation that he had sent secret correspondence belonging to the sultan to a prominent Cairo newspaper put him in disfavor with the local Turkish authorities. Only his young age saved him from imprisonment.⁷

After his scrape with the law, Shahbandar returned to Beirut to study medicine at the Syrian Protestant College, where he proved to be a brilliant student of chemistry and anatomy. He was also a student leader engaged in the political controversies of the day and was best known for stirring up protest among his Muslim classmates against mandatory attendance at the daily Christian prayer service in the campus chapel. He and his supporters won the day and the ruling was annulled.⁸

Shahbandar graduated at the top of his medical school class in 1906 and was nominated for a post on the Faculty of Medicine, where he taught for two years.⁹ He then returned to Damascus, where he set up a private practice and became involved in local politics. Still only twenty-six, his progressive education predisposed him to the reformist programs of Arab and Turkish liberals. When the Young Turk revolution took place in 1908, Shahbandar enthusiastically supported the Turkish military officers of the Committee of Union and Progress and their allies in Damascus. But when it became clear that the Unionist reform program implied the Turkification of the Syrian provinces, Shahbandar switched his allegiance to a group of Syrian deputies in the Ottoman parliament who supported political and administrative autonomy for the provinces. In taking that step, Shahbandar joined a select but growing group of educated liberals in Syria who by 1914 had begun to consider seceding from the Ottoman Empire.¹⁰

The Arab nationalism that Shahbandar and others of his background and generation subscribed to emerged in the context of a changing intellectual and political climate in Syria, including Lebanon and Palestine, and owed its existence to the widening of the region’s links with the outside world. Two types of nationalism surfaced in the early-twentieth century—one territorial, the other ethnocultural—and both coexisted in all nationalist movements in the region. Although Arab nationalism never completely shed its religious skin,

because no interpretation of Arab history and culture could deny the contribution of Islam, it nevertheless had secular inclinations. The elites that transformed the idea of nationalism into a political movement in this period demonstrated a certain discomfort with the ideas of Muslim modernists and activists who argued that Islam could provide the principles necessary to govern a modern nation-state. This attitude reflected their upbringing. They were educated in modern professional schools; had experience in the new branches of the Ottoman administration or in the modern liberal professions of law, medicine, and journalism; and demonstrated little attachment to religious institutions. Equally important, these local Arab elites shared similar political experiences in the political parties and secret societies in Damascus, Beirut, Cairo, and Paris before the First World War and, afterward, in King Faisal's short-lived Arab kingdom in Syria.¹¹

Shahbandar remained in Damascus after the outbreak of the First World War. However, when Turkish authorities hanged a number of Syrian leaders in 1915 for allegedly conspiring with the European powers against the Ottoman state, he left for safer parts, eventually surfacing in Cairo, a city in which he would take refuge time and again. There, he and other Syrian exiles carried out propaganda work in support of the Arab Revolt of 1916 and developed close contacts with the Arab Bureau, a British intelligence unit headed by the noted Oxford archaeologist, David Hogarth. This British connection would cause Shahbandar much difficulty with the French over the next quarter-century.¹²

At the end of the war, the Hashemite amir (later king), Faisal, formed an Arab government with its capital in Damascus. Shahbandar returned there in 1919. His first duty on behalf of King Faisal was to prepare key local personalities, political parties, and interest groups to receive the United States Commission of Inquiry (the King-Crane Commission) into the political aspirations of the Syrian people. During the delegation's visit that summer, Shahbandar served as interpreter for Charles Crane, the commission's co-chairman (and a millionaire plumbing magnate), with whom he developed a close friendship.

Shahbandar also served as Faisal's chief liaison with the British.¹³ In May 1920, when the recently crowned King Faisal appointed a nationalist government, Shahbandar became his foreign affairs minister.¹⁴ He barely had time to try out his new job, however; in July, France sent troops to Syria and Shahbandar, like many other nationalists, fled the country, taking up residence once again in Cairo.

Prelude to Revolt

In Cairo, Shahbandar joined with other Syrian nationalist exiles and émigrés to form a loosely knit organization, the Syrian–Palestinian Congress, which promoted national independence for Syria and Lebanon and for Palestine. One of its main lobbying efforts focused on the League of Nations in Geneva, which was responsible for the French and British Mandates over these territories. A year later, Shahbandar was back in Damascus, having availed himself of the first French political amnesty in the summer of 1921. There he and his colleagues organized in 1922 the Iron Fist Society (Jam‘iyat al-Qabda al-Hadidiya), which operated, quietly at first, to undermine the local pro-French government and develop ties to merchants, *qabadayat* (quarter bosses), and high school and university students.¹⁵ The Iron Fist Society bided its time, waiting for the right opportunity to challenge French Mandatory rule.

The opportunity came with Charles Crane’s second visit to Damascus on 5 April 1922. On Crane’s first visit in 1919, his U.S. Commission of Inquiry had discovered, after extensive investigation, that a majority of Syrians vehemently rejected the idea of a French Mandate or any other form of a French presence in Syria.¹⁶ French authorities were therefore suspicious of Crane’s motives for returning to Damascus and kept especially close tabs on him during his stay.¹⁷

Shahbandar was Crane’s host and introduced him to notables, religious leaders, merchants, and newspaper editors, who presented Crane with the harsh realities of life under French rule. He heard complaints about the local economy, which was choked by the new frontiers the French had erected between Syria and its neighbors. He was told about the once-flourishing Syrian textile trade with Palestine, which had nearly stopped because of customs restrictions. Merchants and landowners grumbled to Crane about taxes, which were anywhere from four to ten times higher than they had been before the war and which mainly supported the French military and High Commission bureaucracy. They expressed a growing fear that France was only interested in promoting industries that were beneficial to her own economy, and they cited massive unemployment in the major towns. Several delegations that met with Crane complained that the French treated the Syrian people contemptuously, showing utter disregard for their culture and customs.¹⁸

At a large gathering on Crane’s last day in Damascus, Shahbandar, in his role as translator, turned an unprovocative Crane speech into a masterpiece of anti-French vituperation. Cries for anti-French demonstrations

rang through the crowd. Crane's presence in Damascus had afforded Shahbandar and his Iron Fist Society protection from French security forces, but with Crane's departure the French struck quickly, arresting Shahbandar first. Other arrests soon followed that proved to be the catalyst for a violent citywide protest on 8 April that attracted ten thousand demonstrators and went on for several days.¹⁹

Shops in the Damascus *sugs* remained closed for another fifteen days as the town awaited the French military tribunal's decision on the fate of Shahbandar and his comrades. The trials were brief and the sentences punitive. Shahbandar received twenty years and the others five to fifteen years on Arwad Island, off the coast of Tartus in northwestern Syria.²⁰ The French had forced the Iron Fist Society underground, and additional arrests of its leaders completely shut down the organization a month after Crane's visit. Effective local resistance to French rule would take another three years to manifest itself.

Shahbandar spent seventeen months on Arwad Island. Then, French High Commissioner Weygand had him exiled. Shahbandar proceeded immediately to Paris and then to London, where some British Conservative Party members invited him to attend a session of parliament. This prompted a protest from the Quai d'Orsay, which had long suspected Shahbandar of being a British agent. After London, Shahbandar paid a brief visit to the United States, where he met with his good friend, Charles Crane. In the nine months that he was abroad, he devoted most of his time to publicizing the cause of Syrian independence on behalf of the Syrian-Palestinian Congress, which was based in Cairo.²¹

In the summer of 1924, Shahbandar was allowed to return to Syria—in all likelihood a gesture of good will on the part of the Cartel des Gauches, which had recently come to power in France. Almost immediately upon his return, he set out to build up a new political organization, the People's Party (Hizb al-Sha'b), which was officially inaugurated in June 1925.²² The new party focused its efforts on discrediting the puppet Syrian cabinet that the French had put in place. It also took advantage of a brief visit by Lord Balfour to Damascus in early April 1925 to flex its muscle. Balfour's signature had graced the 1917 British declaration, which promised British support for a national home for Jews in Palestine. Huge demonstrations were organized against Balfour, leading to a severe French crackdown on the protestors that resulted in a number of casualties. Fears of reprisal against the town's ancient Jewish community prompted the French authorities to tighten security throughout Damascus.²³

In early 1925, the People's Party gradually expanded its ranks and consolidated its organization under Shahbandar's leadership. Some one thousand Damascenes had joined the party by June.²⁴ Most members belonged to the educated elite of the town: absentee landowners, merchants, lawyers, engineers, doctors, teachers, and journalists.²⁵ The French prevented Syrian government officials from joining the party, but there was passive support for it in local government circles. Contributions came from landowners and merchants and from professional associations like the Lawyers' Union. Funds also came in from the Syrian-Palestinian Congress and Syrian emigrants in the Americas with whom party leaders were in contact. Funds subsidized the rent of the party's headquarters in Hijaz Railway Station and were used to finance *al-Mufid*, a leading nationalist newspaper in Damascus.²⁶

At the People's Party inauguration on 5 June 1925, more than a thousand people crowded into Damascus Opera House to hear their leaders express freely and legally, for the first time since the Syrian Congress of 1920, the will of the Syrian people. Shahbandar, who was the most renowned orator in the country and the most popular politician in Damascus, gave a rousing speech in which he likened the party to the Committee of Union and Progress, which had launched the revolution in Istanbul in 1908. He said that the party "was the instrument of liberation which would shatter the despotic rule Syria was now forced to live under." He added that the party was interested not only in Syrian unity and independence but also in the unification and independence of the Arab nation.²⁷

Prominent party members who would go on to have significant political roles in the Syrian independence movement included the lawyer, Faris al-Khuri, Shahbandar's fellow Syrian Protestant College graduate and link to the Christian minorities in Damascus; Jamil Mardam, a wealthy Paris-educated absentee landowner; and Hasan al-Hakim, a former Ottoman functionary from the popular Maydan quarter of the town who had gone to prison with Shahbandar. The public held these leaders and others in high regard because they had been imprisoned or exiled as a result of their anti-French political beliefs and activities. Some were among the most articulate members of the Syrian intelligentsia and were recognized as natural spokesmen for and interpreters of the aspirations of Syrian society. In spite of its popular support, the People's Party was essentially an elitist organization. Five of the twelve members of the People's Party Central Committee had been educated at western universities (including three at the Syrian Protestant College).²⁸

The Great Syrian Revolt

A major uprising erupted in the summer of 1925 in Jabal Druze, the rugged mountain region 120 kilometers southeast of Damascus. Members of the People's Party were in direct contact with the Druze rebel leader, Sultan Pasha al-Atrash, and reported to Shahbandar on the strength and depth of the uprising.²⁹ Shahbandar held a secret meeting in August with Druze emissaries and encouraged Sultan al-Atrash to organize an assault on Damascus in order to take advantage of the temporary absence of French troops in Jabal Druze and Hawran, the grain-producing plain located between the Syrian capital and Jabal Druze. The attack did not succeed because French forces were able to halt the Druze advance eight kilometers shy of Damascus. Meanwhile, a French dragnet in the capital led to the arrest and imprisonment of a number of prominent nationalist leaders and the dismantling of the People's Party. Shahbandar and a few party leaders managed to avoid capture, taking refuge among Atrash forces in Jabal Druze.³⁰

Barred from Damascus, the People's Party and the Druze leadership established a national provisional government in Jabal Druze on 9 September. Their stated goals were Syrian unity and independence, from the Mediterranean coast to the depths of the Syrian interior. Nowhere in the program for action was there a call to pan-Islamism or to revolution against the French on religious grounds.³¹

Uprisings, first in Hama and then in Damascus in October, ignited rebellions all over Syria, some of which were coordinated. Contrary to French hopes, a broad nationalist front was forged as the revolt spilled into Lebanon. For nearly a year, the revolt stymied French military forces and attracted much attention throughout the Arab world and in European diplomatic circles, including the League of Nations.

By the spring of 1926, the French had reinforced their military in Syria and Lebanon and recaptured control of the rebellious countryside around Damascus, Homs, and Hama. Soon thereafter, Shahbandar, Atrash, and the other revolt leaders took refuge outside of Syria as the revolt teetered on the brink of collapse. By early 1927, the French had extinguished the largest popular uprising they would encounter in any of their colonies and mandates during the interwar years.

Factionalism

'Abd al-Rahman Shahbandar's fourth period of exile took him back to Cairo where he worked in close association with the Lutfallah family and

the Syrian–Palestinian Congress. The congress had financed Shahbandar’s short-lived Iron Fist Society in Damascus. Shahbandar had met the Lutfallahs during his first stay in Cairo. They belonged to the wealthy and cosmopolitan Levantine Christian community of Cairo, having made their fortune in the cotton trade in Egypt. Sharif Husayn had awarded Habib Lutfallah the hereditary title of *amir* (prince), owing to the Lutfallah family’s financial and diplomatic services to the Hashemites during the Arab Revolt. Together with several other Syrian émigrés in Cairo, Habib’s son, Michel, founded the Party of Syrian Unity at the end of the First World War. During his second exile in Cairo, in 1920–21, Shahbandar had assisted Michel Lutfallah in activating the recently established executive committee of the Syrian–Palestinian Congress, over which Michel presided. He and his brother were also the congress’s biggest financial backers.³²

The Syrian–Palestinian Congress had supported Shahbandar’s third exile in 1923 and 1924, when he traveled to Europe and the United States to promote the Syrian nationalist cause. Similarly, Shahbandar’s People’s Party, which had played a prominent role during the Great Syrian Revolt, received its strongest external financial support from the congress’s executive committee in Cairo. Shahbandar and Michel Lutfallah were linked by more than a financial relationship and a mutual fondness for Cairo. Both men attended western-oriented schools and maintained strong ties to the Hashemites and to British political and intelligence officers operating in Egypt.

It was only after the military balance during the Great Syrian Revolt began to shift irreversibly in France’s favor in the spring of 1926 that factionalism within the loosely organized Syrian independence movement became dangerously divisive, crippling it for an entire generation. One clear indication of this factionalism was the establishment of a rival fundraising organization to the Lutfallah-controlled Syrian–Palestinian Congress.³³

Throughout the early 1920s, political fundraising outside Syria was an integral function of the congress; it had been one of the main reasons for its establishment. Normally, funds collected in the Americas, Arab countries, and the wider Muslim world were sent directly to congress headquarters in Cairo. Some funds were then secretly channeled to nationalists in Syria. The rest were used to support congress operations in Cairo; expenses of the permanent delegation in Geneva, which acted as a lobby at the League of Nations; and political exiles and their families.³⁴

Other funds and materiel reached Syria without passing through the congress network, especially from Turkey and Transjordan, but flow was more erratic than the flow from Cairo.³⁵

Before the 1925 revolt, it is unclear how dependent nationalists in Syria were on external funding for their various activities. French authorities were convinced that nationalist activities in Syria were orchestrated and financed by the Syrian–Palestinian Congress, which the Quai d’Orsay felt was little more than a front for the Hashemites and their British patrons.³⁶ The French were especially suspicious of the Lutfallah family and ‘Abd al-Rahman Shahbandar.

One matter is clear: once the revolt erupted and the leadership of the People’s Party assumed its direction, there was suddenly a much greater demand for regular external aid. The congress responded by exploiting its existing contacts and exploring new ones in the Arab world and the west.³⁷ A promising new source of funds that had yet to be tapped was Ibn Sa‘ud, who in 1924 had dislodged King (formerly Sharif) Husayn and the Hashemites from their stronghold in Hijaz. Although the Lutfallahs were in charge of congress finances, their declared pro-Hashemite leanings made them unsuitable candidates to approach the Saudis.³⁸ Moreover, Shahbandar and rebel chiefs like the Bakri family of Damascus were known to be proponents of the idea of a Hashemite-led Arab federation. Shahbandar had personally sought Ibn Sa‘ud’s aid when he secretly journeyed from his Jabal Druze hideout to Hijaz in November 1925. He returned empty-handed, Ibn Sa‘ud having little tolerance for friends of the Hashemites.³⁹

One Syrian nationalist who was able to gain Ibn Sa‘ud’s ear was Shukri al-Quwwatli.⁴⁰ His access to the Saudi ruler was facilitated by his family’s commercial relations with the Sa‘ud family and, more immediately, through one of Ibn Sa‘ud’s most trusted advisers, Yusuf Yasin, himself a Syrian whom Quwwatli had originally recommended to Ibn Sa‘ud. Quwwatli had by this time become Shahbandar’s major political nemesis among Syrian nationalists.

Quwwatli was born in Damascus in 1891 into a family of prosperous landowners, merchants, and bureaucrats of the populist Shaghur quarter, and he was educated at Maktab ‘Anbar, the elite secondary school of the city, and in Istanbul. In Istanbul, he came into contact with one of the earliest secret Arab nationalist societies, al-Fatat, and participated in the Arab Revolt of 1916, ending up in prison and eventually in the limelight as a nationalist hero.⁴¹ Forced to flee Syria in July 1920 under French sentence

of death, he took up residence in Cairo and soon became something akin to a roving ambassador for the Syrian–Palestinian Congress. He traveled widely, becoming a key link between exiled nationalists in Europe and nationalist organizations operating in Arab countries.⁴² Quwwatli was a leader of the pan-Arab Istiqlal organization and had strong ties to like-minded Palestinian nationalists. Unlike Shahbandar, he was an avowed anti-Hashemite and deeply suspicious of British intentions in the region owing to what he had observed in Palestine.⁴³

By the outbreak of the Syrian Revolt in 1925, Quwwatli had positioned himself as the main intermediary between Ibn Sa‘ud and the Syrian–Palestinian Congress, in the process posing a challenge to the pro-Hashemite Lutfallahs, who were aligned with Shahbandar.⁴⁴ This challenge assumed serious proportions when allies of Quwwatli persuaded the Palestinian nationalist leader, Hajj Amin al-Husayni, to establish a special finance committee in Jerusalem in support of the revolt. The Jerusalem Committee (Lajnat al-Quds) was also designed to counter the influence of the Lutfallah-dominated Executive Committee of the congress, though rivalries only surfaced once Syrian nationalist forces began to suffer setbacks in the spring of 1926 and rebel leaders fled to Jerusalem and Cairo. These rebel leaders, including Shahbandar and the Bakri brothers, accused the Jerusalem Committee of usurping the congress’s financial role and of using its contacts among Syrian émigrés in the Americas to divert funds collected for the revolt to Jerusalem and in the name of the Istiqlal Party, to which Quwwatli belonged.⁴⁵

Exiled rebel leaders learned that there was to be little or no aid available to them because the Jerusalem Committee had decided to continue financing the revolt after it was all but a lost cause. Those who had risked their lives in the name of Syrian independence reacted bitterly as they helplessly watched others who had not carried arms or known the hardships of rebellion dictate strategy. They accused the Jerusalem Committee and its supporters of being schismatics, men of a “doctrinaire literary type” who had never been in touch with the realities of the revolt. Although Shahbandar and his comrades admitted that they had called off the revolt, which provoked accusations of betrayal and treason from their critics, they had had no alternative because the Jerusalem Committee had withheld the funds and provisions required to keep it going.⁴⁶

Rebel leaders accused the Jerusalem Committee of misappropriating funds and demanded that a new financial organization be established,

one dedicated to assisting those individuals who had actually participated in the revolt and who were forced to take refuge outside the Syrian homeland.⁴⁷ Jerusalem Committee and Istiqlal Party supporters replied with an equally venomous series of accusations, claiming that had the congress executive committee given priority to financial assistance to rebel forces rather than to exiled rebel leaders, there would have been no reason to establish the Jerusalem Committee. Jerusalem accused Cairo of doing just what rebel leaders accused Jerusalem of: withholding funds earmarked for the Syrian insurgents.⁴⁸

To make matters worse, the Istiqlalis bitterly criticized the leadership for calling off the revolt before the Syrian rebels had been decisively checked and defeated. This accusation was in fact true, but only because Shahbandar and other rebel leaders saw the hopelessness of continuing the revolt in the face of a new French military offensive in the spring of 1926, which was accompanied by a French declaration that there would be no negotiations with Syrian rebels until their revolt had been crushed.

The charges hurled back and forth between the two rival factions as to who had diverted, withheld, or pilfered funds designated for the revolt illustrated the depth of division within the Syrian independence movement. The internecine rivalries also reflected the extent of the frustration and helplessness that pervaded the movement as the revolt began to lose its momentum and its leaders their determination. Divisions wracked the independence movement, which by the summer of 1926 had lost its territorial base in Syria. Defeated and forced into exile, its leaders had little to do but argue over who was to blame and to fight among themselves for control of the movement in exile. Radical pan-Arabists associated with the Istiqlal Party seized the offensive in their struggle with the Lutfallah-Shahbandar faction of the Syrian-Palestinian Congress.

In fact, the Istiqlali call for renewed armed resistance inside Syria at a time when the revolt's leaders were fleeing the country in droves was calculated to discredit these leaders and their allies on the Congress executive. Theirs was not an irrational plea made by misinformed individuals who had sat out the revolt on the sidelines and—as Shahbandar and others claimed—who were ignorant of the immense military obstacles to keeping it alive. Rather, it was a stratagem employed to gain dominance within the Syrian independence movement. There is no evidence to suggest that the Istiqlalis seriously intended to prolong the revolt; they understood that such efforts would be wasted.

On the surface, differences between the Istiqlalis and the People's Party, or between the Jerusalem Committee and the Lutfallah-Shahbandar-dominated executive committee of the Syrian-Palestinian Congress, reflected little more than the personal ambitions and struggles for power of Syrian nationalist leaders at home and in exile. A closer investigation reveals more profound conflicts involving the independence movement's political strategy and ideological orientation.

Shahbandar and his allies in the People's Party and on the congress executive committee were close to the Hashemites and willing to cooperate with the British to accomplish their more limited goal, the establishment of an independent Syrian state. This faction also appeared willing to accept the notion of a Greater Lebanon, independent of Syria. Meanwhile, the faction associated with Shukri al-Quwwatli was avowedly pan-Arabist, anti-Hashemite, and opposed to cooperating with the British. It stood for the liberation of all Arab peoples and territories from foreign rule and the establishment of a unitary Arab state.⁴⁹

These rivalries and differences were sufficiently pronounced by the end of 1926 to create permanent lines of division in the Syrian independence movement. One year later, two separate and antagonistic Syrian-Palestinian Congress committees in Cairo existed, one associated with Shahbandar and Lutfallah and called the 'Abdin Committee (because of its proximity to 'Abdin Palace), and the other associated with Quwwatli and headed by the radical religious reformer, Shaykh Rashid Rida.⁵⁰

A Decade in Exile

The brand of nationalism espoused by the leadership of the Syrian independence movement in the aftermath of the Great Syrian Revolt was no longer identified with revolution. Rather, it was restorative in that it aimed to establish a more favorable balance between Syria and France with the ultimate goal of gradually relaxing French control. Its method was a mixture of intermittent popular protest, diplomacy, and outreach for support within the wider Arab world and the international community. Armed struggle was no longer a viable option.

The timing of French amnesties in some sense helped to determine which nationalist leaders got control of the Syrian independence movement after the collapse of the revolt. The first amnesty in 1927 led to the formation in that year of a new organization, the National Bloc (al-Kutla al-Wataniya), which would lead the independence movement for the

next twenty years. The bloc adopted a strategy of “honorable cooperation” with the French Mandate authorities. The bloc’s goal was to oblige the French to acknowledge that it was the political organization they would have to work with in order to govern Syria effectively. Jamil Mardam, who would form Syria’s first National Bloc government a decade later, was among those amnestied in that year. A second major amnesty in 1931 enabled some radicalized Syrian nationalists associated with the pan-Arab Istiqlal Party to return home. Among them was Shukri al-Quwwatli, who would challenge Mardam for leadership of the National Bloc in the years ahead. The last nationalists amnestied were the principal leaders of the Syrian Revolt, ‘Abd al-Rahman Shahbandar and Sultan Pasha al-Atrash, who were permitted to return to Syria after the National Bloc formed its first government in 1937.

Throughout the 1930s local struggles for political power and influence in Syria took place mainly within the framework of the independence movement. There was competition within the National Bloc itself and between its various branches in the major Syrian towns. There was competition for control of high school and university students and the different youth organizations that had emerged to channel the political and social activities of young men and women in the towns. There was competition for positions in government between National Bloc leaders and more moderate political elites whom French Mandate authorities supported. And there was competition between the National Bloc and what the Syrian press simply referred to as “the opposition” (*al-mu‘arada*), or the movement associated with Shahbandar.

At first Shahbandar and his followers played out their conflicts with their rivals in exile, and mainly with the Istiqlalis associated with Quwwatli. Each faction continued to present its own version of why the revolt had failed and to apportion blame accordingly.⁵¹ But after Quwwatli had been amnestied and emerged as a fullfledged member of the National Bloc in Damascus, all Shahbandar could do was fester in exile while he kept a close watch on political developments in Syria. His long years in Cairo led him to establish his own private medical practice in order to better support himself and his family while he enjoyed various accolades from the many Arab political leaders who visited him during this period. That the French were not disposed to amnestying him only enhanced his reputation as a pure and selfless leader who had paid a heavy price for his steadfastness. Of course, the main reason the French authorities were reluctant to grant amnesties to Shahbandar and

other revolt leaders was their pro-Hashemite and pro-British dispositions, which the French found threatening and therefore unacceptable.⁵²

The election of the Popular Front government in France in 1936 at long last opened up new possibilities for the National Bloc, which had until then stuck to its pragmatic program of “honorable cooperation” with the mandate authorities. National Bloc members were part of the Syrian delegation that negotiated the Franco-Syrian Treaty of 1936 in Paris, which on paper was intended to give Syria her independence a few years later. Some of these same delegates would form the first nationalist government in Syria in early 1937. Soon thereafter, in April, the French declared their last major amnesty, permitting Shahbandar and other former rebel leaders to return to Syria.

In the two years that preceded his return, Shahbandar played politics from Cairo through a new organization in Damascus whose creation he had inspired. The National Unity Party, which was led by the nationalist lawyer, Zaki al-Khatib, attracted disaffected members of the National Bloc and others who had been part of the Shahbandar support network during his years in exile. It adopted a less compromising platform than the bloc’s and denounced the 1936 treaty on the grounds that its terms would prolong French hegemony in Syria for another quarter-century.⁵³

Return to Syria

Enormous parades and demonstrations greeted Shahbandar’s return to Syria.⁵⁴ His decade in exile had boosted his reputation within Syria. He represented the era of revolutionary fervor and heroism when the Syrian people had sought complete and immediate independence. He had not been compromised by the National Bloc’s policy of “honorable cooperation” and its experiment with delicate diplomacy. By the spring of 1937, there was already considerable evidence that the new National Bloc government headed by Jamil Mardam was making little headway toward independence. Rampant inflation, the reappearance of local separatist movements in regions containing Syria’s compact minorities (the Druze and ‘Alawis), Turkish encroachment on the *sanjak* (subprovince) of Alexandretta, rebellion in Palestine, and an unsympathetic government in Paris jeopardized hopes for independence and the bloc’s wish to be in the driver’s seat when independence finally arrived. For disaffected nationalists, Shahbandar’s appearance was a breath of fresh air, even though he lived more on his past glory than on any recent achievements.

The National Bloc did not warmly embrace Shahbandar's return. Its Istiqlal wing, headed by Shahbandar's old nemesis, Shukri al-Quwwatli, applied pressure on newspaper editors to cease referring to Shahbandar as "the Great Syrian Leader."⁵⁵ The bloc feared that Shahbandar would direct his criticisms not at the French but at the government of Prime Minister Jamil Mardam. In National Bloc circles there was considerable debate about how best to handle Shahbandar. Should he be welcomed into the bloc and honored, or should efforts be made to isolate and discredit him? Some Istiqlalis who had observed him in Cairo over the years found Shahbandar honest and committed but politically naive and hence prone to being led astray by more wily companions. They strongly encouraged Quwwatli, who now headed the bloc, to reach an agreement with Shahbandar because Quwwatli might be able to play him off against Mardam in their own competition for control of the bloc. Although Shahbandar loathed Quwwatli, he did ask his trusted friend Hasan al-Hakim to mediate between himself and Quwwatli.⁵⁶

Meanwhile, Mardam, as prime minister, at first tried simultaneously to win Shahbandar's support and to get him out of the way by asking him to represent Syria in international forums in Europe. There was mention in the Syrian press that the National Bloc was prepared to open its doors to Shahbandar and that a Mardam-Shahbandar axis would be formed. Mardam and Shahbandar had no history of personal antagonism. With Quwwatli making his ascent as the most admired National Bloc leader owing to his strong connections to and support of younger radical pan-Arabists, it made sense for Mardam to enlist Shahbandar's support.

Shahbandar arrived in Damascus in May 1937 with vengeance in his eyes. His one-month stay galvanized the opposition, which focused on the treaty, the sanjak of Alexandretta, and Jamil Mardam himself.⁵⁷ At this level of politics, the line between issues and personalities was a fine one. The opposition newspaper accused Mardam of one devious act after the next that served to undermine the effort to gain Syria's independence. It had no qualms about blowing up the slightest bit of unsubstantiated evidence into a major scandal in an effort to discredit Mardam. In time, the opposition focused its assault solely on Mardam in a bid to drive a wedge between him and his cabinet and ultimately to force his resignation.⁵⁸

Mardam met Shahbandar blow for blow. He resurrected the familiar accusation that Shahbandar was a British agent who had diverted Syria from her rightful goal of independence. He denounced as unsavory his ties

to Amir Abdallah in Transjordan by emphasizing that Abdallah was the only Arab leader to support the British Royal Commission's 1937 partition plan for Palestine. Mardam got the French High Commission to support his government's decision to deny Shahbandar the right to open a political office in Damascus, compelling him to use his medical clinic for this purpose. Mardam enforced strict press censorship laws to prevent opposition newspapers from printing unflattering articles about him. He dismissed government bureaucrats known to be sympathetic to Shahbandar's movement. After facing large demonstrations against his compromises with the French government over oil and Banque de Syrie concessions in late 1937 and early 1938, Mardam cracked down on the Shahbandar organization, arresting Zaki al-Khatib and other prominent opposition leaders and shutting down anti-government newspapers. When Shahbandar returned to Syria permanently in early 1938, the Mardam government confined him to Bludan, a hill town resort near Damascus. After his release, he was kept under close police surveillance, with gendarmes stationed in front of his Damascus residence round the clock.⁵⁹

Tensions between Mardam and Shahbandar reached new heights when an explosive device went off in Mardam's car on 16 June 1938 as he returned to Damascus from a trip to the countryside. Miraculously, he escaped unharmed, and immediately blamed elements close to Shahbandar. Syrian government prosecutors accused six men of the assassination attempt, including Shahbandar's wealthy brother-in-law, Nazih Mu'ayyad al-'Azm, the reputed ringleader.⁶⁰

Unlike Mardam and Quwwatli, Shahbandar was not a master of patronage politics. He had no personal clientele in specific local quarters in Damascus. Nor did he come from one of the established political families of Damascus. Still, Shahbandar was able to draw on the political machines of Zaki al-Khatib and Hasan al-Hakim and the financial resources of the Mu'ayyad al-'Azm family into which he had married. These provided him with a fairly diverse patronage network that also included some former rebel leaders with whom he had remained close, such as Nasib al-Bakri; several wealthy merchants who had parted company with the National Bloc; Nassuh Babil, the editor of *al-Ayyam*, a nationalist newspaper that had turned against the bloc in 1935; and Munir al-Ajlani, the former leader of the Steel Shirts, the bloc's paramilitary youth organization in Damascus.

Two vital areas of Damascus in which the Shahbandarists were noticeably stronger than the National Bloc were the Maydan and Kurdish quarters on the Damascus's southern and northern peripheries. The key

to the Maydan was Hasan al-Hakim, Shahbandar's friend and comrade from the days of the 1925 revolt, whose family had been prominent in local politics in Maydan for several generations and who attracted the support of its wealthy grain merchants.

In the Kurdish quarter, relations between its local leaders and the National Bloc had never been positive, perhaps because the Kurds, an ethnic minority, disliked the bloc's heavy stress on Arabism. There, Shahbandar relied on several Arabized Kurdish notables. Kurds generally aligned with political organizations that deemphasized pan-Arabism. The major political rivalry in the Kurdish quarter was not between Shahbandarists and the National Bloc but rather between Shahbandarists and the emerging Communist Party, under the leadership of Khalid Bakdash, who was himself a Kurd.⁶¹

Shahbandar's movement capitalized on the increasingly bankrupt political strategies of Jamil Mardam's government and the fragmentation of the National Bloc. The aura around Shahbandar, whom a new generation knew only through the hagiography of the Great Syrian Revolt, certainly furthered his movement's aims. The denial of his right to reside in Damascus after his return only contributed to his image as a patriot dedicated to saving Syria from corrupt politicians masquerading as nationalists while they enriched themselves with French support.

Shahbandar became a critical focal point around which politicians out of favor with the National Bloc or those with some grievance against it rallied. When Nasib al-Bakri, another hero of the Great Syrian Revolt, resigned as vice-president of the bloc in late 1938, he returned to Shahbandar's camp. Shahbandar also attracted followers in Homs, where the radical pan-Arab League of National Action (*'Usbat al-'Amal al-Qawmi*), the National Bloc's other nemesis, was stronger than the bloc, but not in Hama, where the bloc prevailed.⁶² In Aleppo, several prominent politicians who opposed the bloc's grip on that town's politics were linked to his organization, including members of wealthy families that were long-time rivals of the bloc's leading family in that town, the Jabiris. Here, Shahbandar exploited the growing divisions in Aleppo's National Bloc organization. And, for a brief moment after the French finally rejected the treaty at the end of 1938, Shahbandar even formed an alliance with one faction of the League of National Action to organize strikes against the arrival of the new high commissioner and against the Mardam government, whose resignation they demanded. But because Quwwatli, whose influence over the league was paramount, opposed the strikes, the

league quickly backed out of the alliance, making any further collaboration impossible.⁶³

Shahbandarists operated within the traditional framework of factional politics in Syria and largely thrived on their opposition to the National Bloc government and Jamil Mardam. But when Mardam was forced to resign as prime minister in February 1939, the Shahbandarist opposition lost much of its *raison d'être*. Efforts to reconcile Shahbandar and Mardam failed as their personal relations sank to a new low. Meanwhile, the Shahbandar patronage network began to disintegrate. A bitter dispute over what strategy the opposition should pursue pitted the newspaper editor, Nassuh Babil, against the more radical Munir al-‘Ajlanī and his followers in the Shahbandarist youth organization. ‘Ajlanī established a new organization, the People’s Parliamentary Bloc, and *al-Nidal*, a rival newspaper to Babil’s *al-Ayyam*. Meanwhile, a long-simmering rivalry between Zaki al-Khatib and Sa‘id al-Mahasini, the moderate president of the Lawyers’ Union, finally boiled over. Khatib emerged as the leader of the *abrar* (liberals) faction of the Shahbandarist organization. By the summer of 1939, other alliances within the Shahbandar political machine turned into rivalries, further fracturing the movement.⁶⁴ Shahbandar was now powerless to prevent this fragmentation as he desperately tried to repair his relations with the French, who soon rebuffed him by rejecting his secret offer to negotiate a new treaty on the basis of a very large measure of administrative decentralization for Syria.

Jamil Mardam’s resignation in 1939 had temporarily relegated him to the political sidelines, as he stood accused of making too many unfavorable concessions to the French. Radical nationalists, meanwhile, were conspicuously absent from politics as the French Mandate authorities reimposed their authority in preparation for the coming world war. A few important French officials, including High Commissioner Gabriel Puaux, began to view Shahbandar as an increasingly attractive nationalist leader with whom to cooperate. This was largely because of his strong public support for the Allied cause and his unsparing public criticism of the National Bloc, which was now out of government and cast in its original role of the political opposition. Shahbandar had also been able to attract a following among conservative Syrian notables “who, after having accepted loyally the Mandate experience, found in [Shahbandar’s] party a protection against the bloc at the moment when France appeared to be transferring power to their adversaries.”⁶⁵ When Shahbandar was not extolling the virtues of moderate pan-Arabism, he was

fiercely criticizing radical nationalists like Shukri al-Quwwatli who were outspokenly anti-French. French reservations with Shahbandar had by then been whittled down to one: his pronounced pro-British sympathies.

Assassination

By the time France capitulated to the Axis powers in 1940, Shahbandar had reemerged as the leading political figure in Syria. But he had not turned away his British friends. On the contrary, he went to great lengths to secure British support for his plan for a loose confederation of Syria, Lebanon, Transjordan, and Palestine under the kingship of Amir Abdallah. Shahbandar's bitter denunciations of his nationalist rivals, his close ties to Abdallah, and his flirtations with the British and with certain French officials engendered growing suspicion among his rivals. In a rare act (or at least in a rarely successful act) of political violence in Syria, he was assassinated in Damascus on 6 July 1940.

Although Shahbandar's assailants were captured, brought to trial, and executed or imprisoned for life, there was much speculation about the actual motives behind his assassination. Such speculation arose from the way justice was meted out. The trial began more than four months after the assassination and took nearly a month to complete. A special court presided over by a Frenchman was convened and no provisions were made for appeal. One individual was charged with premeditated murder and thirteen others with attempted murder and complicity in premeditated murder. What made the trial even more sensational was that among those charged with complicity were Jamil Mardam; Lutfi al-Haffar, a prominent National Bloc merchant and former government minister; and Sa'dallah al-Jabiri, the leading National Bloc leader from Aleppo who was also a former government minister. All had avoided arrest by fleeing to Iraq before warrants could be issued.⁶⁶

Shahbandar's supporters were certain that French officials had been involved in the plot and had allowed Mardam and the others to escape. Of the seven men actually brought to trial, one was Mardam's personal secretary, 'Asim al-Na'ili. He was alleged to have been the intermediary between the nationalist leaders and the assassins—the individual, in other words, who made the payoffs. That the public prosecutor dropped all charges against Na'ili together with those against Mardam, Haffar, and Jabiri only aroused greater suspicion.⁶⁷

There were various allegations as to the source of the payoffs. It could have been French intelligence agents sympathetic to Vichy who took advantage of France's capitulation to Nazi rule to get rid of Britain's man in Syria; Italian agents who wanted to eliminate pro-British activities associated with Shahbandar; the Palestinian independence leader, Hajj Amin al-Husayni, who wanted to block Amir Abdallah's bid for a Syrian throne, which Shahbandar sponsored; Iraqi agents who wanted to thwart Abdallah; or the National Bloc chiefs whom Shahbandar had worked so hard to eliminate as local contenders for power. All were possibilities, though some were more likely than others.⁶⁸

Shahbandar's supporters were convinced that Jamil Mardam was ultimately responsible. The public, too, was suspicious of Mardam. There was evidence that National Bloc lieutenants supplied the weapons and the role of 'Asim al-Na'ili seemed pivotal.⁶⁹ Mardam's deep distrust and fear of Shahbandar were well known. Even if he did not order the assassination, he may well have wished it. A loyal lieutenant like Na'ili could easily have interpreted that wish to be an order. One witness testified that Mardam had asked him in the past to murder Shahbandar, and there had been an earlier attempt on Shahbandar's life in January 1939, at the height of his efforts to force Mardam's government to resign. In addition, Shahbandar supporters had been arrested for trying to assassinate Mardam in 1938.⁷⁰

Whether French officials knew in advance of the assassination plot or were involved in a cover-up is unclear. They could have tipped off Mardam and his National Bloc colleagues that charges were to be brought against them, giving them enough time to escape to Iraq.⁷¹ By avoiding an examination of the political motives behind the assassination, the court was able to drop all charges against Jamil Mardam and the other National Bloc leaders. In any case, the sudden departure of these influential nationalists from Syria weakened nationalist ranks even further, which suited French purposes.⁷²

The four men who were found guilty and executed in February 1941 (two others had their sentences commuted to life imprisonment) included a peddler, a furniture maker, and a small-shop employee.⁷³ They claimed that the assassination had been a political and a religious act. They accused Shahbandar of being a spy for Britain and an enemy of Islam. The first accusation was familiar, based on the numerous contacts Shahbandar maintained over the years with British officials in Cairo and Damascus and his frequent visits to the British Consulate in the months before his assassination. The second was refuted by a statement from the

leading *'ulama* of Damascus, although Shahbandar had suggested on numerous occasions that Islam should be removed from politics and relegated to the private realm.⁷⁴ But the court's French judge did not allow the political dimensions of the case to be examined. The prosecutor seemed to treat 'Asim al-Na'ili with kid gloves. The judge allowed the witnesses, whose testimony seemed to support Na'ili's and Mardam's complicity, to be ridiculed and treated harshly. When the decisions were handed down, the motives of the assailants were explained in terms of "mistaken religious zeal."⁷⁵

The assassination crippled Shahbandar's political organization. It had never been particularly sophisticated, depending heavily on the charismatic personality of its leader. Although Shahbandar stood head and shoulders above his rivals in terms of intellectual prowess and personal prestige, he had always been a maverick in the world of patronage politics. He had left no institutionalized network to survive his demise. His assassination threw the National Bloc back into the political limelight, but under a new leader, Shukri al-Quwwatli, as Jamil Mardam receded into the political background, damaged by allegations that he had been involved in Shahbandar's assassination.⁷⁶

Conclusion

'Abd al-Rahman Shahbandar's career was atypical of the most prominent Syrian independence leaders of the interwar years. He belonged to a lesser family of urban notables than his more socially prominent colleagues and rivals. He received his higher education at a local American institution in Beirut and not in Ottoman or French schools. He never gave up his medical practice while he was engaged in politics. He was a bona fide revolutionary leader during the Great Syrian Revolt of 1925. He spent many more years exiled from Syria than other nationalist leaders. He never established his own personal system of political patronage in his native Damascus, but lived off the patronage networks of his closest colleagues and family members. He remained pro-Hashemite during his career and committed to the idea of establishing a constitutional monarchy in Syria, whereas his fellow nationalist leaders were mostly anti-Hashemite and republicans. He maintained close relations with British officials throughout his career, whether in Damascus or Cairo. He was also the only major Syrian national independence leader to be assassinated during the French Mandate era.

Probably the harshest accusation Shahbandar faced during his abbreviated career was that he was Britain’s political agent. Although French officials in Syria and in Paris leveled this accusation at him regularly, they were not alone: a number of Syrian independence leaders were equally venomous. Shahbandar’s connections to the British were political and dated to the First World War, when he came into direct contact with the Arab Bureau, but they were also cultural in that he spoke and wrote fluent English and felt much more comfortable than his fellow nationalists in an English-speaking environment. On balance, however, the political explanation trumps the cultural one. This is because Shahbandar understood, especially after the failure of the Great Syrian Revolt, that to ease the French out of Syria required the kind of extra leverage that the national independence movement could not produce on its own. He understood that the regional balance of power all along favored Britain and that collaboration with the British was the price to be paid if Syrian nationalists hoped to loosen the French stranglehold on Syria (and Lebanon). He understood long before other Syrian nationalist leaders that in the murky world of late imperial Levantine politics, “your enemy’s enemy is your friend.” In this sense, he also understood long before others that to ensure British assistance in the struggle to dislodge the French from Syria required that Syrian nationalist leaders increasingly turn a blind eye to British support for the Zionist movement in Palestine. No one paid a higher price in interwar Syria for this understanding than did ‘Abd al-Rahman Shahbandar.

Notes

1. See William L. Cleveland, *Islam against the West: Shakib Arslan and the Campaign for Islamic Nationalism* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1985), and Philip S. Khoury, *Syria and the French Mandate: The Politics of Arab Nationalism, 1920–1945* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987). Biographies in Arabic are unexceptional and tend to be unilinear and hagiographic. An exception is Nihal Bahjat Sidqi’s biography of the politician and populist poet Fakhri al-Barudi, *Fakhri al-Barudi fi shi’rihi wa-nathrihi* (Beirut: Dar al-Quds, 1974). Historians need to make better use of the personal paper collections that exist in the Syrian National Archives (Dar al-Watha’iq) in Damascus and at the Institute for Palestine Studies in Beirut.
2. See Philip S. Khoury, “The Urban Notables Paradigm Revisited,” *Revue du monde musulman et de la Méditerranée* 55 (1990), pp. 215–28; James L. Gelvin,

- Divided Loyalties: Nationalism and Mass Politics in Syria at the Close of Empire* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1998); Elizabeth Thompson, *Colonial Citizens: Republican Rights, Paternal Privilege, and Gender in French Syria and Lebanon* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000).
3. Significant parts of this sketch have been extracted from Khoury, *Syria and the French Mandate*.
 4. Khalidi's father, Ahmad Samih Khalidi, was a Syrian Protestant College graduate (class of 1919). See the American University of Beirut Alumni Association, *Directory of Alumni 1870–1952* (Beirut: American University of Beirut, 1953), p. 127.
 5. I had the privilege of studying with Professor Khalidi at AUB in 1970 and I have written about that experience elsewhere. See Philip S. Khoury, "Lessons from the Eastern Shore," *MESA Bulletin* 33, no. 1 (Summer 1999), pp. 2–9.
 6. Shahbandar was known as the "Zaghlul of Syria" (in reference to Sa'd Zaghlul, the leader of the Egyptian nationalist movement) and the "Father of Liberty." France: Ministère de la Défense (hereinafter MD), 7N 4185 Renseignement of 30 November 1923. See also Muhammad Adib Taqi al-Din al-Husni, *Muntakhabat al-tawarikh li-Dimashq* (Damascus: al-Haditha, 1928), vol. 2, p. 901. Shahbandar derived income from his wife's lands—she belonged to the landowning-bureaucratic family of Mu'ayyad al-'Azm—and inherited some property from his grandmother. Markaz al-Watha'iq al-Tarikhia (Center for Historical Documents; hereinafter MWT), al-Qism al-Khass, Nazih Mu'ayyad al-'Azm Papers. Shahbandar (Paris) to al-Mu'ayyad, no. 51, 27 December 1923.
 7. Hasan al-Hakim, "Mujaz tarjamat hayat al-za'im al-khalid al-maghfur lahu al-duktur 'Abd al-Rahman al-Shahbandar," unpublished biographical sketch, p. 1; Virginia Vacca, "Notizie biografiche su uomini politici ministry e deputati siriani," *Oriente moderno* 17 (October 1937), pp. 473–74; 'Abd al-Rahman Shahbandar, *al-Thawra al-suriya al-wataniya: mudhakkirat 'Abd al-Rahman Shabbandar*, 2nd ed. (Damascus: Wizarat al-Thaqafa, 1993); *Rasa'il 'Abd al-Rahman al-Shabbandar, 1879–1940* (Damascus: Wizarat al-Thaqafa, 2002).
 8. British Foreign Office (hereinafter FO) 684/7/1, vol. 2257.
 9. Hakim, "Mujaz tarjama," p. 2; Vacca, "Notizie," p. 474; AUB Alumni Association, *Directory of Alumni*, p. 42.
 10. Vacca, "Notizie," p. 474.
 11. See Philip S. Khoury, *Urban Notables and Arab Nationalism: The Politics of Damascus, 1860–1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983). James Gelvin has argued that another kind of nationalism had emerged by the beginning of the interwar period in Syria, one that was more organic and populist

- and that appealed to the urban masses (see Gelvin, *Divided Loyalties*). This other ‘nationalism’ was probably even less well articulated than the elitist brand and might better be viewed as Islamic anti-imperialism doubling as a counter-weight to the nationalist elite’s effort to monopolize local political life in the towns through the manipulation of the new ideology of Arab nationalism.
12. FO 684/7/1, vol. 2257; Vacca, “Notizie,” pp. 474–75; Hogarth, in a letter to the British Foreign Office, wrote that Shahbandar was a “Syrian Patriot,” “an honourable and cultivated man,” and a “very loyal admirer of ourselves.” FO 371/5774, vol. 10164. Shahbandar was one of seven nationalists who on 11 June 1917 met Sir Mark Sykes in Cairo and received from him a British pledge (known as the Declaration to the Seven) that supposedly contained “assurances” that the Arab provinces of the prewar period and the Arab provinces liberated by the military actions of their inhabitants during the war would become completely independent (T.E. Lawrence in the *Times*, 11 September 1919, p. 11). See also Wajih Kawtharani, *al-Dawla wa-l-khilafa fi-l-khitab al-‘arabi abbana al-thawra al-kamaliya fi Turkiya: Rasbid Rida, ‘Ali ‘Abd al-Razzaq, ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Shahbandar* (Beirut: Dar al-‘Aliya, 1996).
 13. Vacca, “Notizie,” pp. 474–75; Hakim, “Mujaz tarjama,” p. 3; FO 37/2043, vol. 10164, 19 September 1923.
 14. Hasan al-Hakim, *Mudhakkirati: safabat min tarikh Suriya al-haditha*, 2 vols. (Beirut: n.p., 1965–66), vol. 2, p. 151.
 15. United States National Archives (hereinafter USNA), Syria, 890d 000/100, telegram to Secretary of State, 13 April 1922.
 16. The commission’s findings were disregarded in Washington and at the Versailles Peace Conference. See George Antonius, *The Arab Awakening: The Story of the Arab National Movement* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1938), pp. 295–98. Antonius’s fascinating and controversial book might never have been written had he not received the generous support of Charles Crane, to whom the book is dedicated. See also Harry N. Howard, *The King–Crane Commission: An American Inquiry in the Middle East* (Beirut: Khayats, 1963).
 17. MD, 7N 4184, Dossier 2, Telegrams of 8 April 1922 (Armée) and 13 April 1922 (de Caix).
 18. USNA, Syria, 890d/00/120; FO 371/4442, vol. 7846, 8 April 1922.
 19. FO 371/4442, vol. 7846, 12 April 1922; FO 371/4803, vol. 7846, 22 April 1922.
 20. See Hakim, *Mudhakkirati*, vol. 1, pp. 87–100.
 21. *Oriente moderno* 17 (1937), p. 32; FO 371/2043, vol. 10164.
 22. See Shahbandar, *al-Thawra al-suriya al-wataniya*, p. 126; *La Syrie*, 1 September 1925; Hisham Nashabi, “The Political Parties in Syria, 1918–1933” (Master’s thesis, American University of Beirut, 1952), p. 95; Muhammad Harb Farzat, *al-Hayat*

- al-hizbiya fi Suriya bayn 1920–1955* (Damascus: Dar al-Rawad, 1955), p. 103; Ministère des Affaires Etrangères (hereinafter MAE), *Rapport à la Société des Nations sur la situation de la Syrie et du Liban 1925*, pp. 9–10; MD, 7N 4186, Dossier 7.
23. USNA, Syria, 800d/00/191, Damascus Consulate to Secretary of State, 19 April 1925; Muhyi al-Din al-Safarjalani, *Tarikh al-thawra al-suriya* (Damascus: Dar al-Yaq'a al-'Arabiya, 1961), pp. 121–23.
 24. *Oriente moderno* 5 (1925), p. 462.
 25. Students were not legally permitted to participate in any political activities or demonstrations. MWT, *al-Intidab al-faransi: qadaya mukhtalifa*, 7/1109/1093, Subhi Barakat to Minister of Interior, 23 April 1925, citing Arrêtés, no. 70, 15 April 1925.
 26. *al-Mufid* was founded in 1924 by the Haydar family, a prominent Shi'a landowning-bureaucratic family of Baalbek. Adham al-Jundi, *Tarikh al-thawrat al-suriya fi 'abd al-intidab al-faransi* (Damascus: Matba'at al-Ittihad, 1960), pp. 183–84. Stuart Carter Dodd, *A Post-war Bibliography of the Near Eastern Mandates* (Beirut: American Press, 1933), pp. 43–51.
 27. He even added that while “Communism does not suit the Eastern instinct . . . a reasonable degree of socialism is not incompatible with Eastern ideals.” *Haflat iftitah Hizb al-Sba'b* (pamphlet) (Damascus: n.p., 1925); Nashabi, “Political Parties,” pp. 92–95.
 28. Ahmad Qudama, *Ma'alim wa a'lam fi bilad al-'Arab* (Damascus: Alif Ba', 1965), vol. 1, p. 355; Jundi, *Tarikh*, pp. 1893–84; Conversation with Jubran Shamiya (Beirut, 29 July 1975); FO 371/5398, vol. 20067, 26 August 1926; FO 684/32/146, Smart to FO, 12 August 1925.
 29. On the origins of the Syrian revolt, see Philip S. Khoury, “A Reinterpretation of the Origins and Aims of the Great Syrian Revolt of 1925–27,” in George N. Atiyeh and Ibrahim M. Oweiss, eds., *Arab Civilization: Challenges and Responses* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1988), pp. 241–71; Birgit Schabler, *Aufstände im Drusenbergländ: Ethnizität und integration einer ländlichen gesellschaft Syriens vom Osmanischen reich bis zur staatlichen unabhängigheit, 1850–1949* (Gotha: Justus Perthes Verlag, 1996); Michael Provence, *The Great Syrian Revolt and the Rise of Arab Nationalism* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2005).
 30. FO 371/5273, vol. 10851, Damascus to FO, 25 August 1925; Elizabeth P. MacCallum, *The Nationalist Crusade in Syria* (New York: Foreign Policy Association, 1928), p. 124.
 31. MD, 7N 4171, 2eme Bureau, 15 May 1926.
 32. MAE, *Syrie–Liban 1918–1929*, Renseignement, 24 October 1922, vol. 208, p. 68; MAE, *Syrie–Liban 1918–1929*, Note, 20 July 1925, vol. 211, pp. 94–97.

33. Philip S. Khoury, "Factionalism among Syrian Nationalists during the French Mandate," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 13 (November 1981), pp. 441–69.
34. Shakib Arslan and Ihsan al-Jabiri led the delegation in Geneva. See Cleveland, *Islam against the West*; Khoury, *Syria and the French Mandate*, chapter 9.
35. MAE, *Syrie-Liban 1918–1929*, Note, 20 July 1925, vol. 211, pp. 94–97.
36. MAE, *Syrie-Liban 1918–1929*, 1922, vol. 40, pp. 48–49; Note, 10 December 1926, vol. 211, pp. 222–24.
37. French sources estimated that at least LE100,000 was sent to Syria from the United States, Brazil, Iraq, Arabia (including Hijaz), Hyderabad, the Jerusalem Committee, and the Cairo Committee. MAE, *Syrie-Liban 1918–1929*, 16 August 1927, vol. 213, pp. 85–86.
38. MAE, *Syrie-Liban 1918–1929*, 27 January 1926, vol. 210, p. 105. Michel Lutfallah had served as Sharif Husayn's banker and adviser before he was driven out of Hijaz by Ibn Sa'ud, who turned down Lutfallah's request to open a bank in Hijaz after its conquest.
39. H. St. John Philby Papers, Rosita (McGrath) Forbes to Philby, 23 May 1927, Box 4, File 3, Middle East Centre, St. Antony's College, Oxford.
40. For a sketch of Quwwatli's political career, see Philip S. Khoury, "Shukri al-Quwatli," in Bernard Reich, ed., *Political Leaders of the Contemporary Middle East and North Africa: A Biographical Dictionary* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1990), pp. 433–39.
41. Patrick Seale, *The Struggle for Syria: A Study in Post-war Arab Politics* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 26; Husni, *Kitab muntakhabat*, vol. 2, pp. 861–62; *Salname: Suriye vilayeti*, AH 1288/AD 1871–1872, p. 72; *Salname: Suriye vilayeti*, AH 1308–1309/AD 1890–1891, p. 66; *Salname: Suriye vilayeti*, AH 1309–1310/AD 1892–1893, pp. 102, 124; *Salname: Suriye vilayeti*, AH 1312/AD 1894–1895, p. 71; George Faris, *Man huwa fi Suriya* (Damascus: Maktab al-Dirasat al-Suriya wa-l-'Arabiya, 1950), pp. 6–8; Vacca, "Notizie," p. 490.
42. Faris, *Man Huwa* 1949, pp. 6–8; Vacca, "Notizie," p. 490; MAE, *Syrie-Liban 1918–1929*, 10 December 1925, vol. 210, pp. 38–40.
43. The Syrian Istiqlal Party was an active pan-Arab organization in Damascus during the short-lived period of Arab independence between 1918 and 1920. It was more or less an amalgamation of leaders from the two pre-mandate secret nationalist societies, al-Fatat and al-Ahd. Syrian Istiqlalists like Quwwatli had been connected from pre-mandate days to like-minded Palestinians, who had their own Istiqlalist organization. See Khoury, *Urban Notables and Arab Nationalism*, chap. 4.
44. MAE, *Syrie-Liban 1918–1929*, Cairo to Briand, 21 January 1926, vol. 210, p. 93; vol. 213, pp. 82–83.

45. MWT, al-Qism al-Khass, Shahbandar Papers, no. 10/26, Shahbandar to Hasan al-Hakim, 22 April 1927; MAE, *Syrie-Liban 1918-1929*, Cairo, 24 August 1927, vol. 213, p. 159; 16 August 1927, vol. 213, pp. 85-86; Yehoshua Porath, *The Emergence of the Palestinian-Arab National Movement, 1918-1929*, vol. 1 (London: Frank Cass, 1974), p. 203.
46. The "doctrinaire literary type" was probably in reference to Shakib Arslan, to whom Quwwatli and others were linked. MWT, al-Qism al-Khass, Shahbandar Papers, no. 7/23, Shahbandar to Hasan al-Hakim, 15 March 1927.
47. MWT, al-Qism al-khass, Nazih Mu'ayyad al-'Azm Papers, Petition of Zu'ama of Ghuta and Damascus, 11 August 1927; MWT, al-Qism al-Khass, Nasib al-Bakri Papers, no. 30. Nasib al-Bakri to Michel Lutfallah, 12 March 1927.
48. MAE, *Syrie-Liban 1918-1929*, Muhammad Trabulsi to 'Adil Arslan and Nabih Bey (most likely al-'Azma), 29 December 1925, vol. 211, pp. 142-50.
49. MAE, *Syrie-Liban 1918-1929*, Notice by Enkiri, 25 October 1927, vol. 214, pp. 18-21; *Oriente moderno* 7 (1927), pp. 564-66. In the early 1920s, the Lutfallahs and their in-laws, the Sursuks, who were among the wealthiest members of the Lebanese bourgeoisie with branches in Beirut and Cairo, had already begun to engage in joint ventures with French capitalists in Lebanon. For the Lutfallahs, whose activities in the Syrian-Palestinian Congress made them personae non gratae with the French High Commission in Beirut, there was a growing need to mend their fences in order to pursue their various financial ventures unencumbered by travel restrictions and other obstacles, which the High Commission imposed. See FO 371/97112, vol. 10162, Lord Allenby (Cairo) to Beirut Consulate, 8 November 1924.
50. FO 371/4744, vol. 12303, Henderson (Cairo) to Chamberlain; *Oriente moderno*, 7 (1927), pp. 564-66, and 8 (1928), p. 56; Conversation with Nasuh Babil (Damascus, 20 February 1976); Conversation with Hasan al-Hakim (Damascus, 12 March 1976); MWT, al-Qism al-Khass, Nazih Mu'ayyad al-'Azm Papers, no. 15, Diary (1927).
51. FO 371/853, vol. 20065, Kerr (Baghdad) to Eden, 5 February 1936; FO 371/979, vol. 2.
52. In the early 1930s, the French toyed with the idea of establishing a monarchy in Syria, and Hashemite candidates were rumored to have been under consideration. See Khoury, *Syria and the French Mandate*, pp. 351-58.
53. George Antonius File, no. 17, Antonius memorandum (Jerusalem), 8 February 1936; FO 371/1293, vol. 20018, Palestine to Colonial Office, 18 February 1936.
54. Yehoshua Porath, *The Palestinian Arab National Movement: From Riots to Rebellion, 1929-1939*, vol. 2 (London: Frank Cass, 1977), p. 160; FO 371/1515, vol. 20018, Air Ministry (Palestine) to FO, 26 February 1936.

55. FO 371/1624, vol. 20065, MacKereth to Eden, 17 March 1936; FO 371/1941, vol. 20065, MacKereth to Eden, 4 April 1936.
56. Nabih al-‘Azma Papers [Syria], Institute for Palestine Studies, Beirut, file no. 5/249, As‘ad Daghir to ‘Azma, 1 May 1937; Conversation with Hasan al-Hakim (Damascus, 12 March 1976); MWT, Shahbandar Papers, nos. 24/40, 25/41, 26/42, 27/43, Shahbandar to Hakim, 2 May 1937 and 7, 23, and 25 July 1937.
57. MWT, Nazih Mu‘ayyad al-‘Azm Papers, no. 43, Shahbandar to Mu‘ayyad al-‘Azm, 20 May 1938; FO 371/7010, vol. 2694, MacKereth to Baxter, 19 November 1938.
58. Conversation with Nasuh Babil (Damascus, 20 February 1976); Mu‘ayyad al-‘Azm Papers, no. 45, Shahbandar to Mu‘ayyad, 15 February 1938.
59. Conversation with Hasan al-Hakim (Damascus, 21 March 1976); the Damascus satirical magazine *al-Mudbik al-mubki*, no. 397 (10 December 1938), p. 4; no. 396 (3 December 1938), p. 5; no. 420 (24 June 1939), p. 18; MWT, al-Qism al-Khass, Mu‘ayyad al-‘Azm Papers, no. 112.
60. Nabih al-‘Azma Papers [Syria], File 6/374, Transcript of Court Trial, 16 October 1938; *al-Ayyam*, 18 March 1938.
61. *al-Mudbik al-mubki*, no. 380 (30 July 1938), p. 5; Conversation with Nasuh Babil (Damascus, 20 February 1976); *Oriente moderno* 18 (1938), pp. 118–19.
62. See Philip S. Khoury, “The Paradoxical in Arab Nationalism: Interwar Syria Revisited,” in James Jankowski and Israel Gershoni, eds., *Rethinking Nationalism in the Arab Middle East* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), pp. 373–87.
63. *al-Mudbik al-mubki*, no. 402 (14 January 1939), p. 12; no. 403 (21 January 1939), pp. 6–7; Khoury, “The Paradoxical in Arab Nationalism,” pp. 373–87.
64. *al-Mudbik al-mubki*, no. 409 (18 March 1939), p. 7; no. 419 (17 June 1939), p. 7; no. 407 (4 March 1939), p. 15; no. 404 (11 February 1939), p. 14; no. 425 (29 July 1939), p. 20; no. 415 (29 July 1939), p. 20; Conversation with Nasuh Babil (Damascus, 20 February 1976).
65. Gabriel Puaux, *Deux Années au Levant: souvenirs de Syrie et du Liban* (Paris: Hachette, 1952), p. 37.
66. FO 371/655, vol. 27330, R.A. Beaumont Memorandum, 11 January 1941.
67. FO 371/655, vol. 27330, R.A. Beaumont Memorandum, 11 January 1941; FO 371/2365, vol. 24591, Gardener to FO, 27 July 1940. Jamil Mardam was tipped off that the French had decided to bring charges against him and his fellow National Bloc nationalists so he warned Lutfi al-Haffar and Sa‘dallah al-Jabiri. Mardam and Haffar fled Damascus and Jabiri fled Aleppo on 16 October, only hours before warrants were issued for their arrest. See Salma Mardam Bey, *Syria’s Quest for Independence, 1939–1945* (Reading: Ithaca Press, 1994), pp. 19–20.

68. Conversations with Hasan al-Hakim (Damascus, 12 March 1976); Nasuh Babil (Damascus, 20 February 1976); FO 371/3082, vol. 24595, Gardener to FO, 11 December 1940; MWT, al-Qism al-Khass, Mu'ayyad al-'Azm Papers, Mu'ayyad al-'Azm to General H. M. Wilson, August 1941; MAE, Gabriel Puaux Papers (no. 252), Carton 33, Dossier 5–8. Hauteclouque (Damascus) to Puaux, 15 September 1940; Carton 36, Dentz (Beirut), 13 January 1941; FO 371/172, vol. 27330, Gardener to FO, 11 January 1941; FO 371/2365, vol. 24591, Gardener to FO, 27 July 1940.
69. MAE, Puaux Papers, Carton 34, Affaire Shahbandar, Puaux Telegram, 13 July 1940.
70. FO 371/655, vol. 27330, Beaumont Memorandum, 11 January 1941; MAE, Puaux Papers, Carton 34, Telegram, 14 January 1939.
71. Salma Mardam Bey, Jamil's daughter, denied that the French had tipped him off. She claims a certain Fuad told him he was about to be arrested. Mardam Bey, *Syria's Quest*, p. 19.
72. In defense of her father's innocence in the Shahbandar affair, Salma Mardam Bey claims: "There was a consensus in Arab nationalist opinion that what the French were pursuing was not justice for murder committed, but the trial of nationalism which they hoped to discredit." Mardam Bey, *Syria's Quest*, p. 19.
73. MWT, Mu'ayyad al-'Azm Papers, Lieutenant Colonel Couetroux Memorandum on Shahbandar Assassination, July 1940.
74. On Shahbandar's views on social problems in the Arab world, see 'Abd al-Rahman al-Shahbandar, *al-Qadaya al-ijtima'iya al-kubra fi-l-'alam al-'arabi*, ed. Muhammad Kamil Khatib, 2nd ed. (Damascus: n.p., 1993).
75. FO 371/655, vol. 27330, Beaumont Memorandum, 11 January 1941; Conversation with Nasuh Babil (Damascus, 20 February 1976). For a different interpretation of the court proceedings, see Mardam Bey, *Syria's Quest*, pp. 21–22.
76. FO 371/2709, vol. 24594, Crosthwaite Note, 2 October 1940; MAE, Guerre 1939–45, London (CNF), vol. 39, Report of 15 October 1940, pp. 26–28.

4

The Later Tanzimat and the Ottoman Legacy in the Near Eastern Successor States

Butrus Abu-Manneh

This article examines the transformation of the Ottoman government from an Ottoman-Islamic system to a westernized system, the motives behind that transformation, and its impact on the Ottoman peoples. The Ottoman-Islamic system in the classical period was based on the supremacy of the shari'a and the sultanic regulations (*kanuns*) and was safeguarded by a system of checks and balances, both at the center and in the provinces. Its objective was to guarantee justice and to prevent governors from resorting to arbitrary rule. However, in the period of Ottoman decline (from approximately the late seventeenth- to the early nineteenth-century), the system of checks and balances was grossly undermined and arbitrary and despotic government prevailed both at the center and in the provinces.

The response to this situation was the Tanzimat Reforms, which fell into two distinct periods. During the first period (1839–54), the Tanzimat reformers attempted to restore the supremacy of the shari'a and *kanuns* and to reestablish a system of checks and balances. In the later Tanzimat period (1856–71), by contrast, the emphasis was placed on strong state organs and a powerful bureaucracy, armed with a new set of laws borrowed from western legal systems. Instead of the Islamic ideal of justice, state power became the ultimate goal. One of the casualties of the new system was the system of checks and balances. The result was that the ordinary subject stood humbled and unprotected before this powerful machine. It was this new system of government, along with the new classes that it helped to promote, that formed the Ottoman state legacy in the ex-Ottoman lands of the Near East.

The Classical System and the Search for a Just Government

Writing about provincial administration in his book, *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age, 1300–1600*, Halil Inalcik stated that the sultans “had appointed two authorities to administer a district—the bey [governor], who came from the military class . . . and the kadi [judge], who came from the ‘*ulama*.”¹ The kadi, he explained, was independent of the bey and received his instructions directly from the Porte. According to Inalcik, the Ottomans considered this “division of power in the provincial government as essential to a just administration.”² With the expansion of the empire, the sultans united several districts to form a *beylerbeyilik* (later called *eyalet*) governed by a *beylerbeyi*, or governor general. Among the higher functionaries in the province was the *hazine defterdari*, who was awarded responsibility for revenue collection for the central treasury and who, like the kadi, was independent of the governors and enjoyed direct access to Istanbul.³ The Janissary garrisons in the cities, too, were independent of the governors and received their orders directly from Istanbul.⁴

The idea behind this system was that beys or *beylerbeyis* sent to remote provinces, who enjoyed military and executive authority, should have checks and balances on their power lest they become too powerful and resort to arbitrary government.⁵

The provincial governor’s prerogatives were basically military and financial. In his military capacity, the governor served as the commander of the cavalry (*sipahis*, to whom agricultural *miri* land known as *timar* was assigned in the countryside for their livelihood). He commanded the cavalry in military campaigns whenever summoned by the sultan. The *sipahis*, under his leadership, were also charged with maintaining law and order in the province, outside the cities. Another responsibility of the governor was to ensure the levying of the taxes for the treasury.

The kadi, on the other hand, was entrusted with the application of the shari‘a and *kanuns*. However, many other functions of a civil nature fell within his prerogatives. The maintenance of law and order in the cities and towns was performed by an officer called a *subashi*, who was one of the kadi’s prominent aides and who was “a legal police and . . . a high security official with executive authority.”⁶ Also among the kadi’s functions was the appointment of the religious functionaries in the mosques of cities and towns; the instructors in the *medreses*; the controllers of *waqfs* (*nazirs* and *mutawallis*); and supervisors of the markets and other

functions of civil character, as mentioned, all of whom came from among the local *'ulama*. "The real men of the pen were the ulama who filled the religious, legal, and educational functions," wrote H.A.R. Gibb and Harold Bowen.⁷ Moreover, the kadi's deputies (*nurwawab*; singular *na'ib*) also came from the local *'ulama*, whether in the principal court where he presided or in the neighborhood courts of big cities or in towns throughout the province.⁸ In other words, the local *'ulama* formed the class upon which the kadi depended to carry out his duties. Their functions marked the considerable share that they, as local *'ulama*, had in running the day-to-day affairs of their towns and cities.

Because the kadi enjoyed such wide prerogatives and was closely associated with the local *'ulama*, he was able to act as a counterbalance to the bey. As long as the checks and balances between the bey and the kadi were maintained, and as long as the separation of military and legal-civil authority was preserved, Ottoman rule in the provinces was characterized by good administration, justice, and stability. This was the essence of the Ottoman classical system of government, and it remained an ideal for later generations.

The Decline of the Classical System

The survival of this system depended, among other things, on a strong central government and a stable socioeconomic order. However, a variety of factors, which can be dealt with only cursorily here, led to the decline of this system of administration and to the rise of arbitrary government, both at the center and in the provinces.⁹ First of all, the expansion of the use of firearms made the *sipahis* useless in battle. Thus, the sultans started to replace the cavalry with infantry. But whereas the *sipahis* had lived on income from the land, the infantry had to be paid salaries. Consequently, starting from about the end of the sixteenth century the state stopped distributing *timars*. Instead, it began to lease the collection of taxes in a system known as *iltizam* (tax farming). This system was soon expanded, as the Porte was hit by spreading inflation and faced a growing need for cash to pay for its increasing expenses.¹⁰ Soon the governor general of a province became the chief *multazim* of his province. He was required to pay the annual tribute to the central treasury in advance and then levied the taxes himself for his own treasury, usually by subleasing their collection to agents. In the absence of efficient control, the sums collected far exceeded the sums paid to the

central treasury at Istanbul.¹¹ Partly as an attempt to levy taxes, the governors general employed at their own expense mercenary troops that functioned as private armies. This was a source of much oppression for the subjects. Meanwhile, the Janissary garrisons posted in the towns and cities, which were supposed to serve as a check on the governor, became involved in local affairs, in commerce, trades, and crafts, and even as sub-contractors of *iltizam*.

Corruption also crept into the judiciary, and the kadi, "the backbone of the Ottoman administration,"¹² lost much of his moral stature and dignity in the eyes of the public.¹³ As a result of this and for other reasons, the kadi could no longer either guarantee the rule of law or act as a check on the governor or military authority. In other words, the military authority prevailed over the legal-civil authority. Arbitrary rule throughout Ottoman lands became the norm, with governors abusing the law, whether shari'a or sultanic.

My aim in this brief background description is to emphasize that during the classical age, social forces in the urban centers, especially those represented by the *'ulama*, had an important and effective share in local government. As the kadi's main body of subordinates who served as functionaries in the legal system or in many other civil duties, they exerted considerable influence on public life in the city and the province. Thus, they contributed considerably to the kadi's role as a counterbalance to the governor and played a substantial role in guaranteeing justice in the city. But in the period of decline, in which arbitrary and despotic government became the norm, they suffered along with all other classes of society.

The First Tanzimat Period and the Restoration of Checks and Balances

In an article I wrote some years ago about the Gülhane Rescript, the edict that ushered in the first Tanzimat period, I showed that its reformist ideals were rooted in Islam and in the Ottoman classical past.¹⁴ The preamble of the rescript stated: "In the last one hundred and fifty years, because of . . . diverse causes, the sacred Sheriat was not obeyed nor were the beneficent regulations followed [meaning the sultanic laws]; consequently, the former strength and prosperity have changed into weakness and poverty."¹⁵ In other words, the Gülhane Rescript was intended to herald the end of arbitrary government and the restoration

of the rule of law. Writing in 1840, within a year of the rescript's proclamation, Lutfi Efendi, the official historian of the empire, wrote that the "Tanzimat . . . were a measure for the abolishing of the old tyrannical methods."¹⁶ Promising to guarantee "perfect security for life, honor, and property," the Gülhane Rescript declared that both *iltizam* (tax farming) and the practice of leasing provincial tax collection to the governor general as against advance payment of a lump sum, which "amounts to handing over the financial and political affairs of a country . . . to the grasp of force and oppression,"¹⁷ must be abolished. In issuing this edict, the sultan pledged to restore the rule of the shari'a and the laws in the state and to guarantee justice. The question is, in what way could the implementation of this pledge be guaranteed in the provinces?

Among the measures enacted by the Porte following the proclamation of the Gülhane Rescript were, first, the application of a system of separation between the civil, military, and financial authorities, and second, the reintroduction of a system of checks and balances to the government of the provinces. It should be noted that this principle of separation between the authorities had already been introduced at the level of the Porte during the last years of Sultan Mahmud II's reign. As of the mid-1830s, the grand vizier's prerogatives began to be confined to civil and political matters, while military functions became the exclusive domain of the *ser-asker* (the commander-in-chief of the armed forces). The Tanzimat continued this trend and extended its application to the provinces.¹⁸

There, the functions of the governor were confined to civil matters, while military affairs were entrusted to the *mushir*, the commander of the military forces. Moreover, upon the abolition of the *iltizam*, the Porte appointed a collector of taxes (*muhassil*). This functionary and the *mushir* were both independent of the governor and accountable to their respective ministries in Istanbul.¹⁹ Perhaps even more significant for provincial governance than the separation between authorities was the establishment of provincial administrative councils. Thus, barely two months after the proclamation of the Gülhane, instructions went out from the Porte to establish an administrative council (*meclis-i idaret*) in all the provincial capitals (and later on, and on a smaller scale, in the capital cities of the subprovinces, or *sanjaks*). The councils were to be composed of government officials and local notables. The government officials that were represented in the councils of the provincial capitals included the kadi, the *muhassil*, the *mushir*, the chief of police (*zabtiyye*), and two scribes. Significantly, the governor general (*vali*) was *not* a member of the

council. As for the local members of the councils, these included, *ex officio*, both the mufti and the *naqib al-asbraf*, along with four other local notables, mostly from the higher *'ulama* of the city or town. Representatives of the local non-Muslim communities were also included.²⁰ With the kadi, the mufti, and the *'ulama*, about half the members of the administrative councils were men of religion. As Roderic Davison has pointed out, "Members of the *'ulama* on the council retained great influence."²¹ The inclusion of the kadi and the mufti as permanent members in the council was intended to guarantee the supremacy of the shari'a and the laws. It is noteworthy that all the *'ulama* were local except for the kadi, who was sent from Istanbul.

The checks and balances that were embodied in the system were not accidental. The fact that the governor general was officially denied membership throughout the first Tanzimat period would seem to indicate that maintaining checks and balances was an important concern for the policymakers at the Porte. Davison, discussing the purpose behind the establishment of the council, argued that Mustafa Reshid, whom he regarded as the architect of the Tanzimat, had "wanted the provincial councils to act as a check . . . on the Istanbul-appointed officials."²² Moshe Maoz, writing about the councils in the Syrian cities, noted "the unprecedented amount of power with which it was invested by the Porte"²³ and added that the councils "constituted a further check on the Pasha's [the governor general's] authority."²⁴ In other words, the establishment of the administrative council can be seen as another indication that the framework of principles guiding the early Tanzimat reformers was drawn from the classical age of the empire, when checks and balances had been the norm.

Despite sharing these guiding principles, the classical and the first Tanzimat systems had clear differences. While the kadi in classical times was assured of the backing of the *'ulama*, upon whom he depended to carry out his functions and because it served their interests, the early Tanzimat reformers chose to institutionalize local involvement through the structure of the council, which provided a relatively large role for the *'ulama* and local dignitaries in the affairs of their province.²⁵ Similarly, although a central element of both the classical period and the early Tanzimat was the separation between military and civil functions, this took a different form in each era. In the classical period, military power was in the hands of the governors general of the provinces and the governors of subprovinces, while the legal and civil authority was the

domain of the kadi and the courts. Following the inauguration of the Tanzimat, the *vali* (governor general) no longer had military authority but was entrusted with civil functions, while military affairs were placed in the hands of the commander-in-chief (*mushir*) of the army units.

In summary, the major aim of the first period of the Tanzimat was to restore the supremacy of the shari'a and laws in the governance of the empire, and hence to guarantee justice and security to the empire's subjects. Justice and security, it was deemed, would ensure the prosperity of the subjects and reinforce their loyalty to the sultanate. As the Gülhane Rescript proclaimed, if a man "enjoys perfect security, it is clear that he will not depart from the ways of loyalty." In addition, if the individual "feels complete security about his possessions, then he will be preoccupied with his own affairs, which he will seek to expand, and his devotion to the dynasty [*devlet*] and to his community [*millet*] and love for his country [*watan*] will steadily grow."²⁶

The rescript did not call for equality between Muslims and non-Muslims, although it did pledge equality before the law. In fact, equality before the law was not new with regard to the *kanuns*, or sultanic law. Former sultans issued "general kanunnames applicable to the whole empire."²⁷ However, equality before the law is not the same as civil or political equality. One example is the fact that non-Muslims continued to have to pay the *jizya*, the yearly poll tax—a clear sign of inequality—until it was abolished in 1855 during the Crimean War.²⁸ In other words, the Gülhane was framed within the Islamic concept of the state.

The principles and ideals inherent in the Gülhane Rescript constituted the dominant trend of this period. This trend was led by Mustafa Reshid, backed by many among the upper *'ulama*, including two successive chief jurisprudents (sing. *shaykh al-Islam*)—Mustafa Asim Efendi (1833–46) and Arif Hikmet Bey (1846–54)—and segments of the senior bureaucracy. But already during the same period another very different political trend was gathering strength in Istanbul, one that advocated the supremacy of the state and of sultanic power. The proponents of this trend believed in a powerful sultan who respects the shari'a but whose will is supreme.²⁹ For them, Mustafa Reshid's policies, including the limits to the provincial governors' powers and the system of checks and balances, were unacceptable. This second trend was led by a number of politicians left over from the later years of Sultan Mahmud II's reign, most prominently the Damads (sons or brothers-in-law of the sultan) Mehmed Sa'id, Mehmed 'Ali, and later Ahmet Fethi. Another leading

member of this trend was Hasan Riza, who was brought up at the court and served for many years as the *ser-asker*. Despite such imperial connections, this trend failed to gain the support of Sultan Abdulmecid.³⁰ In August 1852, Reshid was dismissed from the grand vizierate under pressure from these politicians. When, after a brief interval, Damad Mehmet 'Ali was elevated to the post of grand vizier, one of his first acts was to invest *valis* with full powers. On 28 November 1852, a firman was issued according to which every branch of the provincial administration, including the administrative council, was placed under the jurisdiction of the *vali*.³¹ This measure found confirmation in the Vilayet Law of 1864.

Meanwhile, the outbreak of the Crimean War further weakened the Gülhane trend. Reshid, who was the foreign minister at the time, found himself isolated within Istanbul's political circles and discredited among foreign representatives in the city, apparently because of his failure to halt the drift to war.³² The weakening of Reshid's hold on power led to the rise of two men, 'Ali and Fuad, who had been among his principal aides and who, while ostensibly his disciples, were actually inclined toward state power. Thus the Gülhane trend, which had gathered strength after the destruction of the Janissaries in 1826, gained ground in Ottoman politics, and dominated the government after the death of Sultan Mahmud II in 1839, finally fell out of favor following the fall of Reshid after the outbreak of the Crimean War.

'Ali Pasha, Fuad Pasha, and the Genesis of the Modern State

Modern historians of the period tend to attribute the measures undertaken by the Tanzimat statesmen to their resolve "to preserve the Ottoman Empire by reinvigorating it"³³ or to preserve "the integrity of the empire . . . [and] the imperial political and social system."³⁴ Although such assessments are undoubtedly sound, 'Ali Pasha and Fuad Pasha took the Tanzimat in quite a different direction from the course undertaken in the early period. Indeed, their vision of the function of the state in society appears to have differed from that of Mustafa Reshid. In addition, their policies and course of action were in no small measure shaped by the challenges they met along the way.

Perhaps the most daunting of these challenges was a growing and deep discontent among large sectors of the population. Initially, the advent of 'Ali Pasha and Fuad Pasha to power in 1855 represented the rise of a new

stratum within society, with strong middle-class and especially lower-middle-class elements gaining ground at the expense of the higher classes that had controlled power since the last phase of Mahmud II's reign. However, these groups were alienated by one of the first measures undertaken by 'Ali and Fuad, the proclamation of the Reform Edict of 1856. Drafted with the active participation of the ambassadors of England, France, and Austria, the edict granted civil equality to the sultan's non-Muslim subjects. Granting such equality amounted to a gross breach of the shari'a and aroused deep anger in the Muslim public, which, by contrast, had hailed the Gülhane Rescript.³⁵ At the same time, the transformation of the economy of Ottoman lands from one of subsistence to a market economy, hastened by the economic expansion of Western Europe,³⁶ had a devastating effect on local handicrafts, forcing many artisans and merchants out of work.³⁷ This process, which reached its zenith during the ascendancy of 'Ali and Fuad, aggravated the discontent aroused by the Reform Edict. Also contributing to the rising discontent were political difficulties faced by the Porte in the 1860s, which compelled 'Ali and Fuad to make concessions concerning the Ottoman dependencies of Belgrade and Crete.³⁸ In short, the Porte faced during this phase a growing alienation among wider sections of its Muslim subjects, which led to polarization within the Muslim communities in Istanbul and in other cities of the empire.

The discontent aroused by the Reform Edict found expression early on in an 1859 plot involving *'ulama* and military personnel against 'Ali and Fuad and even against the sultan. This plot is known in Ottoman historiography as the Kuleli Affair. A more important challenge, perhaps, was the emergence around 1865 of the movement of the Young Ottomans, which formulated many of the arguments against the policies of 'Ali and Fuad and which reached a wide audience through the printed media.³⁹ Both the Kuleli and Young Ottoman movements seem to have found much sympathy among the upper classes in Istanbul and perhaps in other cities.⁴⁰ Further, both seem to have been rooted in the wave of Sunni-Orthodox Islam that prevailed in Istanbul in the first half of the nineteenth century, following the expansion of the Naqshbandi-Mujaddidi order, a shari'a-minded order, into the city. This wave had been invigorated by the expansion of the Naqshbandi-Khalidi suborder,⁴¹ a branch of the Naqshbandi-Mujaddidi.⁴² Thus, the mounting protest at the policies of 'Ali and Fuad and the discontent they aroused appear to have taken the shape of a new trend in Ottoman politics that was permeated by Islamic ideals. In

combating this trend, the two statesmen strengthened their hold on power and hardened their authoritarian political course, enjoying the backing of the senior bureaucracy and the army higher command.⁴³

Inalcik's observation that "while the *'ulama* represented the Islamic ideal, the *kuttab* (bureaucrats) represented the idea of state power"⁴⁴ fits well the later Tanzimat period. Under the force of the aforementioned circumstances on the one hand and in light of their concept of the state on the other, 'Ali and Fuad worked to insure that the state should enjoy full power exercised exclusively by its organs and representatives. In this sense, they were the inheritors not of the first Tanzimat period but of Sultan Mahmud II's policies in his later years.

The issue at stake was not the secularization of the state, as some historians claim.⁴⁵ Neither the Ottoman Empire nor other Muslim states were theocracies or states controlled by the tenets of religion or by religious hierarchies. Rather than ensuring secularism as an end in itself, the issue was reforming and strengthening the civil and military authorities and empowering them with new state laws and regulations borrowed from western legal systems and implemented by civil officialdom, not by the kadi or the *'ulama* as in former times. Moreover, as in western countries, such authorities or regulations stood in direct relation to the citizen, which meant the application of direct rule. In other words, these organs of the state functioned as the regulators of the life of the citizen and of society, in contrast to the norms followed in the Muslim state where the shari'a was the regulative principle and where semiautonomous intermediary bodies, dominated by the *'ulama* or other dignitaries in the cities and towns, local chieftains in the countryside, or the religious functionaries of the non-Muslim communities, stood in between the authorities and the subjects. In a modern state, such bodies would be marginalized or abolished altogether.⁴⁶ Thus, the modern state structured by 'Ali and Fuad was founded on the bureaucracy and the army. A deeper look at the 1860s shows that these two statesmen expended great efforts to strengthen these two pillars of the state. The bureaucracy, for instance, became far better trained following the establishment in 1859 of the Mülkiye as an institute for training civil officials. As the number of ministries increased and as direct government spread, the bureaucracy expanded accordingly. It was indeed transformed "into something more like a modern civil administration or even a civil service,"⁴⁷ armed with new laws that were strange and indeed incomprehensible to the ordinary citizen. Moreover, 'Ali and

Fuad reorganized and strengthened the army and equipped it with modern weapons.⁴⁸ The police (*zabtiyye*), including the gendarmerie, was also reorganized and in 1870 a ministry of police founded.⁴⁹ Finally, the new court system (*nizamiyye* courts) was extended to every city and town under the Porte.⁵⁰ "There is no doubt," concludes Donald Quataert, "that the late-nineteenth century state exerted more power over its subjects . . . than ever before in Ottoman history."⁵¹

These measures and institutions were implemented without the establishment of a counterbalance in the shape of a constitution or parliament. No social or political force could have constituted a check upon this powerful machine. In the first Tanzimat period, the administrative council, the *'ulama*, and other local dignitaries had been adequately represented and had thus served as a check upon the provincial authorities. This situation ended with the later Tanzimat. The *'ulama* were for all practical purposes marginalized. So too was the mufti, who had been an ex officio member of the council, which was now entirely dominated by the *vali*. Whereas the *vali* was officially denied membership in the council throughout the early Tanzimat period, he was given effective control over it as of 1852 and was formally made its president under the Vilayet Law of 1864, which also endowed him with far-reaching powers "over police, political affairs, financial affairs, the carrying out of judicial decisions, and the execution of imperial laws."⁵² Meanwhile, the kadi's prerogatives were shorn and his duties ultimately confined to the legal aspects of personal status issues.

As a result of these measures, the state organs were left without checks and balances and were freed from the semiautonomous and intermediary bodies through which governmental authority had formerly filtered down. Thus, in place of the local chiefs or notables (such as the *'ulama* and other dignitaries), whom the subject had known and generally trusted, stood new government officials armed with new laws and powers, who were largely strangers to him and often ignorant of his ways of speech and habits. Consequently, the subject stood before this powerful political machine weakened, perplexed, and understandably resentful.

The State and the New Upper Class

'Ali and Fuad seem to have become isolated soon after assuming power. They faced mounting discontent, especially from segments of the upper classes in Istanbul, which was nourished by the Orthodox Sufi revival of

the first half of the nineteenth century. Few statesmen supported them. So unpopular was 'Ali Pasha that he was described by the derogatory term *kapuci-zade* (son of the gatekeeper) and denounced as "a very bad man who brought ruin to the country."⁵³ 'Ali and Fuad depended on the bureaucracy and the army, but this was not enough. Their dilemma was how to rally societal support to counter their opponents and contain mounting resentment.

To counterbalance various oppositional forces, 'Ali and Fuad endeavored to cultivate certain Sufi orders, especially the Mevlevi order, which appealed to the Turkish middle and lower middle classes and which was regarded as tolerant and apolitical. To this end, the Porte bestowed favors upon leading Mevlevi *dedes* (shaykhs) and provided the order, which was based in Konya, with generous and unprecedented grants. For example, the head of the order at the time, Mehmed Sa'id Hemdem (called Çelebi Efendi), saw his debts paid in 1855 and the cost of building a new mansion for him in Konya covered by the state treasury in 1858.⁵⁴ There is no question that these favors were politically motivated.⁵⁵ 'Ali, Fuad, and other statesmen and senior bureaucrats also had close relations with Osman Salahuddin, the shaykh of the Yenikapi Mevlevi lodge in Istanbul.⁵⁶ "It would seem," concluded D.S. Margoliouth in his entry on the Mevlevi order in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, that "reforming sultans used the Mawlawi order as a makeweight . . . against the 'ulama'."⁵⁷ Nor were the Mevlevi the only Sufis to benefit from this policy. The Bektashi order, known for its heterodox and eclectic beliefs and popular among the lower classes, which had been legally abolished in 1826, began during this period to reopen its *tekkes* (lodges) in Istanbul. By the end of the 1860s, most of its *tekkes* were again operating in the open, and a printing press set up in the Eyup suburb began to publish Bektashi literature.⁵⁸ As far as it is known, the firman that abolished the order was never revoked, but the order's open activity would not have been possible without the tacit approval of the authorities.

The cultivation of these two orders provided 'Ali and Fuad with substantial public support in Istanbul and other Turkish towns in Anatolia, where the orders had a strong presence. However, the Mevlevi and Bektashi orders were almost exclusively Turkish and their presence in non-Turkish provinces (except for the Bektashi order in Albania) was negligible. The policy's effectiveness was therefore limited and it was necessary to generate support among other communities and other quarters.

As referred to above, the Ottoman economy had been undergoing a profound transformation since the early decades of the nineteenth century and especially following the implementation of the 1838 Balta Liman commercial treaty between Britain and the Porte. As similar treaties with other European countries followed, the volume of trade between the empire and the west expanded rapidly.⁵⁹ Basically, Ottoman lands were wide open to manufactured goods from Europe, while European countries imported from the Ottomans raw materials and agricultural products. The growth of this trade was greatly enhanced by the deployment of steam navigation.

Among the effects of this economic transformation was the emergence of a new socioeconomic elite of big merchants in the large port cities and of landlords in towns and cities. This elite was coming into its own during the later Tanzimat period, and 'Ali and Fuad did not fail to find backing and support in it. Both groups had a high interest in the existence of powerful organs of the modern state.

Indeed, the Porte had begun to encourage the expansion of agriculture in Ottoman lands and to promote the export of agricultural products in the early 1840s. To that end, it established the Agricultural Council in Istanbul under the auspices of the ministry of finance in 1843,⁶⁰ and the next year it set up similar councils in the provinces, with a director of agriculture (*zira'at müdürü*) appointed in each province with deputies in district towns "in order to stimulate the growth of agriculture in them."⁶¹ As the export of agricultural products increased, the demand for arable land was intensified and agriculture expanded accordingly.⁶²

The growing importance of agriculture in turn spurred the Porte to introduce a radical change in the landholding system. In April 1858, the Land Law was enacted, according to which it became possible to possess *miri* land (state land) and register it in the land registry and acquire a title deed.⁶³ Villagers whose lands were regarded as *miri* could register them under their name and receive a title deed. Before the year ended, a second law, the Tapu Law, was enacted with the aim of enforcing the Land Law.⁶⁴

The Land Law had a particularly transformative effect in the Asiatic and especially Arab provinces, where large tracts of potentially fertile and arable *miri* land lay fallow, open to the incursion of nomads. Under the Land Law, these state lands were offered for use against certain fees, on condition that they be reclaimed, cultivated, and entered into the production cycle.⁶⁵ The main beneficiaries of this law were city notables close to the authorities, as well as persons of means such as rich merchants of

the port cities.⁶⁶ These two groups, especially the notables, acquired vast tracts of land for cultivation, and within a few decades an elite of landlords with large estates had emerged in the cities of the Asiatic provinces.⁶⁷ As a result of the Porte's agricultural policy and the application of the Land Law, agriculture was undoubtedly stimulated and the export of agricultural products was greatly increased, to the satisfaction of Istanbul and the new elite of landlords, big merchants, and brokers in the seaports.

However, the policy was not without ill effects. In contravention of the Land Law, many members of the new landowning elite acquired excessive quantities of land from peasants and even entire villages,⁶⁸ transforming large numbers of peasants into sharecroppers and tenant farmers.⁶⁹ Naturally, these developments aroused discontent among the peasants. Coupled with the resentment of the traditional class of merchants and artisans, who were, within a few decades, practically ruined economically by the free trade policy of the Porte, the discontent reached a dangerous level. It is hardly surprising then that "the Porte . . . decided to cultivate the landholders and use this stratum to form the foundation of the state."⁷⁰ In fact, it was natural for this stratum to provide the Porte with the support it needed, bound as it was by common interests. The authorities gained from "selling" the *miri* land to them, from the taxes on its production, and from custom duties on the exported products. The landowners, meanwhile, gathered much wealth from selling the agricultural products without actually investing much.

The rise of the landowning elite as a powerful socioeconomic stratum in the cities was a new phenomenon in the Ottoman Empire. In earlier centuries, certain privileged notables administered *ex-timar* lands as *malikane* (*iltizam* for life), but they were too few to form a stratum in its own right and did not officially own the land. Moreover, the agricultural produce was largely for local consumption and not for export. The new landlords unquestionably constituted a new social class in the cities and towns throughout the empire, far exceeding the wealth, power, and influence of the former traditional elite of *'ulama* and merchants.

In contrast to the local *'ulama*, who, along with the kadi or as members of the council, had constituted a counterbalance to the power of the *vali* at the provincial level, this new landlord class worked hand in hand with him. Indeed, this new elite had a vested interest in the powerful state that emerged in the later Tanzimat, which it regarded as the best guarantee for protecting its newly acquired property and wealth and for

keeping the peasantry at bay. The big merchants of the port cities (who also often had a share in acquiring large estates) had the same vested interest in the powerful later Tanzimat state because it served their commercial interests, which depended on the free movement of commodities and the security and safety of inland transportation to and from the ports. Both the new landowners and the new merchants, then, gave the system their full support.

Soon this class was to exercise political influence as well. The *valis*, armed with powers accorded to them by the Vilayet Law of 1864, turned the administrative council into an instrument in their hands. They reshuffled it, bringing in members of the new landed elite and the new commercial class.⁷¹ Following these social and political changes, the rising classes became, within a few decades, the leading classes in the provinces, to the obvious detriment of the *'ulama* and merchants. What aggravated the situation of the *'ulama* was that many civil functions they had formerly performed now passed into the hands of the new civil officialdom.

Conclusion

The changes in the economic, social, and political spheres that the later Tanzimat introduced to the provinces of western Asia in general and particularly to the non-Turkish provinces affected their future in a decisive way. The Porte worked to establish powerful state organs such as a modern army, bureaucracy, and other coercive organs, but it failed to establish a system of checks and balances. Moreover, in the words of official historian Abdulrahman Sheref, "Ali Pasha was not a partisan of a constitution,"⁷² which implies that he was not a partisan of a parliament. Along with that, and as a result of the economic expansion of Western European countries, a sociopolitical change took place in the region. According to this change, the older elite of *'ulama* and merchants lost its status and was supplanted by the new landed elite and the big merchants and brokers in the ports.

This new elite provided the Porte with the social and political backing necessary to face the opponents of the new system and, with the army and the bureaucracy, furnished it with the societal base upon which it established its rule. It might be emphasized, moreover, that the guiding principle of the later Tanzimat statesmen was no longer to guarantee justice (as had been the case for the architects of the first Tanzimat period) but state power and interest.

In other words, the policies and acts undertaken by 'Ali Pasha and Fuad Pasha laid the foundations of the modern state in Ottoman lands. After the demise of the empire, the organs and institutions of the modern state, along with the new socioeconomic stratification, were the Ottoman legacy to successor states. The new elite of landowners and big merchants, along with the ex-Ottoman bureaucrats, despite their limited numbers, dominated those new states both socially and economically. On the whole, this elite shifted its allegiance to the mandatory governments, which, for their part, did not challenge the existing sociopolitical order but acted within its framework.

Notes

1. Halil Inalcik, *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age 1300–1600* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1973), p. 104.
2. Inalcik, *The Ottoman Empire*, p. 104. See also Metin I. Kunt, *The Sultan Servants: The Transformation of the Ottoman Provincial Government, 1550–1650* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), pp. 9, 12; Hasan al-Burini, *Tarajim al-a'yan min abna' al-zaman*, ed. Salah al-Din al-Munajjid (Damascus: al-Majma' al-'Ilmi al-'Arabi bi-Dimashq, 1963), writes in vol. 2, p. 74: "The governor of Damascus on the part of the military was . . . Hasan Pasha and on the judicial-civil part was 'Ali Efendi" (author's translation). Muhammad Amin al-Muhibbi, *Khulasat al-athar fi a'yan al-qarn al-hadi ashar* (Beirut: Maktabat Khayyat, 1966), vol. 3, p. 80, calls the governor general "hakim al-'urf," or governor of the military rule.
3. Inalcik, *The Ottoman Empire*, pp. 117–18.
4. Inalcik, *The Ottoman Empire*, p. 105.
5. Inalcik, *The Ottoman Empire*, p. 118.
6. Osman Nuri Ergin, ed., *Mecelle-yi Umur-i Belediye* (Istanbul: Arsak Garoyan Matbaasi, 1922), vol. 1, p. 902. See also H.A.R. Gibb and Harold Bowen, *Islamic Society and the West*, vol. 1 (London: Oxford University Press, 1950), part 1, p. 154.
7. Gibb and Bowen, *Islamic Society*, part 1, p. 45. See also Ilber Ortayli, *Hukuk ve Idare Adami olarak Osmanli Devletinde Kadi* (Ankara: Turhan Kitabevi, 1994); Ilber Ortayli, "The Role of the Ottoman Kadi in Provincial Administration," *Turkish Public Administration Annual* 3 (1976), pp. 1–22; Halil Inalcik and Carter Findlay, "Mahkama: The Ottoman Empire," in C.E. Bosworth et al., eds., *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2nd ed. (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1991), vol. 6, pp. 3–11.
8. I.H. Uzuncarseli, *Osmanli Devletinin Ilmiye Teskilati* (Ankara: TTK Basimevi, 1965), pp. 117–18; I. Ortayli, "The Role of the Ottoman Kadi," pp. 5–11; Gibb

- and Bowen, *Islamic Society and the West*, part 2, p. 124; Colin Imber, *The Ottoman Empire, 1300–1650: The Structure of Power* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), p. 232.
9. For a good analysis of the causes of decline, see Mustafa Nuri, *Neta'ic ul-Vuku'at*, 4 vols. (Istanbul: Matbaa-i Amire, 1877–1909), vol. 1, pp. 148–49, and vol. 2, pp. 92ff.; Inalcik, *The Ottoman Empire*, pp. 41–52.
10. Mehmed Genç in *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi* (Istanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı, 1988–present), vol. 22, pp. 154–58; Abdulrahman Vefik, *Tekalif Kavaidi* (Istanbul: n.p., 1910–11), vol. 1, pp. 62, 102–103.
11. Genç, in *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 22, p. 157.
12. Inalcik, *The Ottoman Empire*, p. 118. See also Colin Imber, *Ebu's-Su'ud: The Islamic Legal Tradition* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997), pp. 6–7.
13. Imber, *Ebu's-Su'ud*, pp. 6–7; Gibb and Bowen, *Islamic Society and the West*, part 2, p. 109; Koci Bey, *Koci Bey Risalesi*, ed. Ali Kemali Aksut (Istanbul: Vakıf Kutuphanesi, 1939), pp. 34ff.; Pal Fodor, “State and Society, Crisis and Reform, in 15th–17th Century Ottoman Mirror for Princes,” *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hung* 40, nos. 2–3 (1986), pp. 217–40 (see pp. 231–33).
14. See “The Islamic Roots of the Gülhane Rescript,” in Butrus Abu-Manneh, *Studies on Islam and the Ottoman Empire in the 19th Century (1826–1876)* (Istanbul: Isis Press, 2001), pp. 73–99.
15. The text is found in Ahmet Lutfi Efendi, *Tarih-i Lutfi*, vols. 1–8 (Istanbul: Matbaa-yi Amire, 1873–1911), vol. 6, pp. 61–64; translated from Ottoman Turkish into English in J.C. Hurewitz, *The Middle East and North Africa in World Politics: A Documentary Record* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975), vol. 1, pp. 269–71. This translation is not complete. A long and important paragraph at the end is missing; in it, the sultan pledges not to act contrary to its stipulations (see pp. 63–64 in Lutfi). However this paragraph is found in J.C. Hurewitz, *Diplomacy in the Near and Middle East* (Princeton, NJ: Van Nostrand, 1956), vol. 1, pp. 113–16. See p. 115, column 2, from “The laws regulating the military service” until the end.
16. Lutfi, *Tarih-i Lutfi*, vol. 6, p. 107: “The Tanzimat was a law for the eradication of old tyrannical methods” (author’s translation). Nuri, *Neta'ic ul-Vuku'at*, vol. 4, pp. 101–102; Ahmet Rasim, *Osmanlı Taribi*, vol. 4 (Istanbul: İktisat Kutuphanesi, 1912–14), p. 1928; Roderic Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire, 1856–1876* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1963), p. 43.
17. Hurewitz, *Middle East*, p. 270; see also Halil Inalcik, “Application of the Tanzimat and Its Social Effects,” in *The Ottoman Empire: Conquest, Organization, and Economy* (London: Variorum, 1979), p. 8.
18. Edouard Engelhardt, *La Turquie et le tanzimat*, 2 vols. (Paris: A. Cotillon et Cie, 1882–84), vol. 1, p. 107.

19. Engelhardt, *Turquie*, p. 108.
20. On the *Meclis*, see Roderic Davison, "The Advent of the Principle of Representation in the Government of the Ottoman Empire," in William R. Polk and Richard L. Chambers, eds., *Beginnings of Modernization in the Middle East: The Nineteenth Century* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1968), pp. 93–108, especially p. 98; Inalcik, "Application of the Tanzimat," pp. 6ff.
21. Davison, "Advent of the Principle of Representation," p. 98.
22. Davison, "Advent of the Principle of Representation," p. 99. See also Davison, *Reform*, p. 48.
23. Moshe Maoz, *Ottoman Reform in Syria and Palestine* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), p. 93.
24. Maoz, *Ottoman Reform*, p. 95.
25. For the powers of the *Meclis*, see Halil Inalcik, "Tanzimat'in Uygulanmasi ve Sosyal Tepkileri," *Belleken* 28 (1964), pp. 626–27; Maoz, *Ottoman Reform*, pp. 93–94.
26. Hurewitz, *Middle East*, p. 270.
27. Inalcik, *The Ottoman Empire*, p. 71.
28. Davison, *Reform*, p. 53 and n. 6; Engelhardt, *La Turquie et le Tanzimat*, vol. 1, pp. 126–27; Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 114.
29. See "The Roots of the Ascendancy of Ali and Fu'ad Pashas at the Porte," in Abu-Manneh, *Studies on Islam*, pp. 115–25.
30. Abu-Manneh, "The Roots of the Ascendancy," pp. 116–17. See also Halil Inalcik, "On Secularism in Turkey," *Orientalische literatur-zeitung* (September–October 1969), p. 439.
31. Engelhardt, *La Turquie et le tanzimat*, vol. 1, p. 109; Enver Ziya Karal, *Osmanli Tarihi*, vol. 6 (Ankara: TTK Basimevi, 1954), pp. 32–33; M.A. Ubicini, *Letters on Turkey* (London: John Murray, 1856), vol. 1, p. 45.
32. Ali Fuad, *Ricali Mubimme-i Siyasiye* (Istanbul: n.p., 1928), pp. 23, 32; Harold W. Temperly, *England and the Near East: The Crimea* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1936), pp. 325–26, 331–32.
33. Davison, *Reform*, p. 406.
34. Halil Inalcik, "Between Europe and the Middle East," in *From Empire to Republic: Essays on Ottoman and Turkish Social History* (Istanbul: Isis Press, 1995), p. 144.
35. See "The Islamic Roots of the Gülhane Rescript," in Abu-Manneh, *Studies on Islam*, p. 94; Ahmet Cevdet Pasha, *Tezakir*, ed. Cavid Baysun (Ankara: TTK Basimevi, 1953), vol. 1, pp. 7–8.
36. For the text of Balta Liman treaty, see J.C. Hurewitz, *Middle East*, vol. 1, pp. 265–66. For the impact of this treaty, see Charles Issawi, ed., *The Economic*

- History of the Middle East, 1800–1914* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), pp. 38–39, 41ff.
37. See Feroz Ahmad, “The State and Intervention in Turkey,” *Turcica* 16 (1984), pp. 53–54.
38. See Ahmet Lutfi, *Tarih-i Lutfi*, vols. 10–16, ed. M. Munir Aktepe (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basimevi, 1989–93), vol. 10, p. 73; Lutfi, *Tarih-i Lutfi*, vol. 11, pp. 41–42, 73–74, 93–94; the *layiha* (memorandum) of ‘Ali Pasha in Lutfi, *Tarih-i Lutfi*, vol. 11, pp. 118–28. See also Şerif Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1962), pp. 17, 24ff., 35ff.
39. For example, the Young Ottomans took up the cause of the traditional merchants and artisans who had lost their livelihoods because of their inability to compete against imported commodities, and they attacked ‘Ali and Fuad for their failure to protect this class from ruin. See Ahmad, “State and Intervention,” p. 56; Ihsan Sungu, “Tanzimat ve Yeni Osmanlılar” in *Tanzimat* (Istanbul: Maarif Matbaası, 1940), pp. 835–40.
40. See Abu-Manneh, *Studies on Islam*, pp. 126–28; Davison, *Reform*, pp. 100–102, 172ff.; Mardin, *Genesis*, pp. 18ff.
41. Abu-Manneh, “Islamic Roots of the Gülhane Rescript.”
42. On the Orthodox Sufi revival, see Abu-Manneh, *Studies on Islam*, pp. 41–59, 105–15, 125–40. See also Huseyin Vassaf, *Sefine-i Evliya*, vol. 2, ed. Ali Yilmaz and Mehmet Akkuş (Istanbul: Kitabevi, 1999); Şerif Mardin, “The Nakşibendi Order in Turkish History,” in Richard Tapper, ed., *Islam in Modern Turkey* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1991), pp. 121–42, especially pp. 129–30; Hür Mahmut Yücer, *Osmanlı Toplumunda Tasavvuf (19 Yüzyıl)* (Istanbul: Haziran, 2003), pp. 248–93, on the expansion of the Naqshbandi-Mujaddidi order and the Khalidi suborder.
43. See “The Roots of the Ascendancy of Ali and Fu‘ad at the Porte,” in Abu-Manneh, *Studies on Islam*, pp. 122–24.
44. See Halil Inalcik’s review of Niyazi Berkes’s *The Development of Secularism in Turkey* (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1964), in *Orientalische literaturzeitung* 64 (September–October 1969), p. 439.
45. Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey*, pp. 89–135, 155ff.
46. Donald Quataert, *The Ottoman Empire, 1700–1922* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 63–64.
47. Carter V. Findley, *Ottoman Civil Officialdom: A Social History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), p. 10 (see also pp. 88, 114–15); Mardin, *Genesis*, pp. 117ff.
48. “Tanzimat ve Ordu,” in Necati Tacan, *Tanzimat* (Ankara: Maarif Matbaası, 1940), pp. 129–37; Lutfi, *Tarih-i Lutfi*, vol. 12, pp. 110–11; Davison, *Reform*,

- pp. 264ff.; "Islahat Firmani Devri, 1861–1876," in Enver Ziya Karal, *Osmanlı Tarihi VII. Cilt, Islahat Firmani Devri 1861–1876* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basimevi, 1956), pp. 183ff.
49. Lutfi, *Tarih-i Lutfi*, vol. 10, p. 91; vol. 13, p. 54; Nuri, *Mecelle-i Umuru Belediye*, vol. 1, pp. 934–42.
50. "Islahat Fermani Devri, 1861–1876" in Karal, *Osmanlı Tarihi*; C. Findley, "Mahkama," *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2nd ed. (Leiden: Brill, 1954–present), vol. 6, pp. 5–9.
51. Quataert, *Ottoman Empire*, p. 63.
52. Davison, *Reform*, pp. 147–48; Lewis, *Emergence*, pp. 381–82.
53. Ali Suavi, *Ali Paşa'nın Siyaseti* (Istanbul: Kutuphaneyi İslam ve Askeri, 1907), pp. 1–39, especially pp. 4, 7, 8, 10–11, 39 ("a very bad man . . ."); Mardin, *Genesis*, pp. 17ff.
54. For the March 1855 agreement by the sultan to grant Celebi Effendi (Mehmed Sa'îd Hemdem) 200,000 kurush "in order to pay his debts," see Basbakanlık Osmanlı Arsivi (hereinafter BOA), Dahiliye Iradeleri, no. 22004, dated 26 Rabi' al-Thani AH 1272 (5 January 1856). For the state's covering the costs of a new mansion, see Abdülbaki Gölpınarlı, *Mevlanadan Sonra Mevlevilik*, (Istanbul: İnkilap Kitabevi, 1983), p. 176, referring to Dahiliye Iradeleri, no. 26793.
55. It happened before that a sultan had forged a relation with a Mevlevi shaykh, as Sultan Selim III had with Ghalib Dede, the shaykh of Galata Mevlevihanesi (d. 1795), but this relation was not politically motivated. Both the sultan and Shaykh Ghalib were poets, and the latter was a noted one (see Gölpınarlı, *Mevlanadan Sonra Mevlevilik*, p. 271). The relation of 'Ali and Fuad with the head of the order was politically motivated.
56. Mehmet Ziya [İhtifalci], *Yenikapı Mevlevihanesi* (Istanbul: Yavuz Senemoglu, 1913), pp. 180, 192ff. See also Gölpınarlı, *Mevlanadan Sonra Mevlevilik*, pp. 256ff.; Abu-Manneh, *Studies on Islam*, pp. 138–39.
57. D.S. Margoliouth, *Encyclopedia of Islam*, vol. 6, p. 888.
58. A. Rifki, *Bektaşî Sirri* (Istanbul: Asir Matbaası ve Kitabevi, 1907), pp. 147–48; Ekrem Işin, "Bektaşilik," in *Istanbul Ansiklopedisi* (Istanbul: İstanbul Ansiklopedisi ve Nesriyat Kollektif Şirketi, 1958–71), vol. 2, pp. 131–37, especially pp. 136–37; vol. 1, p. 130, col. c.
59. See the text of the treaty in Hurewitz, *Middle East*, vol. 1, pp. 265–66. See also Issawi, ed., *Economic History*, pp. 38–41; Donald Quataert, "The Age of Reforms, 1812–1914," in Halil İnalcik and Donald Quataert, eds., *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, 1300–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), especially pp. 825ff.
60. Lutfi, *Tarih-i Lutfi*, vol. 7, p. 66.

61. Lutfi, *Tarib-i Lutfi*, vol. 7, p. 90. For a memorandum to the directors of agriculture issued by the Porte, see pp. 120–23.
62. Issawi, ed., *Economic History*, pp. 9, 19; Doreen Warriner, “Land Tenure in the Fertile Crescent,” in Issawi, ed., *Economic History*, pp. 72–78, especially pp. 77–78.
63. For an English translation of this law, see R.C. Tute, *The Ottoman Land Laws, with a Commentary on the Ottoman Land Code of 7th Ramadan 1274* (Jerusalem: Greek Convent Press, 1927), pp. 1–125. See also Doreen Warriner, *Land Reform and Development in the Middle East* (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1957), pp. 68–70; Haim Gerber, *The Social Origins of the Modern Middle East* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1994), pp. 67–90.
64. The Tapu Law was passed in December 1858. For the text of the Tapu Law of AH 1275 translated into English, see Tute, *Ottoman Land Laws*, pp. 129–37.
65. Inalcik and Quataert, eds., *Economic and Social History*, pp. 859ff.
66. Roger Owen, *The Middle East in the World Economy, 1800–1914* (London: Methuen, 1981), pp. 118–19, 174–75; Gerber, *Social Origins*, pp. 72–73.
67. Kemal Karpat, “Some Historical and Methodological Considerations Concerning Social Stratification in the Middle East,” in Kemal Karpat, *Studies on Ottoman Social and Political History* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2002), pp. 307ff. See also Karpat, “Land Regime, Social Structure, and Modernization in the Ottoman Empire,” in Karpat, *Studies*, especially pp. 349–51; Peter Slugglet and Marion Faruk-Slugglet, “The Application of the 1858 Land Code in Greater Syria: Some Preliminary Observations,” in Tarif Khalidi, ed., *Land Tenure and Social Transformation in the Middle East* (Beirut: American University of Beirut Press, 1984), pp. 409–21, who suggest that “this development seems to have been taking place for some time” (p. 413).
68. See Article 8 of the Land Law in Tute, *Ottoman Land Laws*, p. 17; Warriner, *Land Reform*, p. 69.
69. Warriner, “Land Tenure,” pp. 77–78.
70. Ahmad, “State and Intervention,” p. 56.
71. Karpat, *Studies*, pp. 307–308; cf. Ahmad, “State and Intervention,” pp. 56–57.
72. Abdulrahman Sheref, *Tarih Musababeleri* (Istanbul: Matbaa-i Amire, 1339), p. 96.

5

Rereading the 1834 Revolt against Muhammad ‘Ali in Palestine and Rethinking Ottoman Rule

‘Adel Manna‘

In the mid-1980s, prior to the first Palestinian intifada, I taught a required course on modern Palestinian history at Birzeit University. I would begin my meetings with new students, who each year numbered over a hundred, by asking what they knew about the history of Palestine during the nineteenth century. More specifically, I would ask them to mention names of leading personalities from the Holy Land during the period. Usually, they would respond by mentioning Zahir al-‘Umar and then Ahmad Pasha al-Jazzar. Since the first had lived and died in the eighteenth century and the second had died in 1804, I would repeat the question. At that point, the students would mention the names of leading Jerusalem families such as the Husaynis and the Khalidis, or Nablus families such as the ‘Abd al-Hadis and Tuqans. The fact that none of the students could recall the names of any of the individual members of these families is a clear indication of the extent to which that era is absent from their knowledge and collective memories.

My experiences with the students led me to publish a biographical lexicon of Palestine during the late Ottoman period (1800–1918).¹ During the course of my research, in order to supplement documents and secondary sources, I set about looking for collective or family memories that preserved information on notables of the Ottoman era. I met Anwar Nusaybah, among others, at his home in the Shaykh Jarrah quarter of Jerusalem. I briefly described the purpose of my visit, and my host’s reaction did not conceal his lack of interest. He was more concerned about the present challenges facing the Palestinians and their

future, he said. The late scion of one of the most prestigious Jerusalem families concluded his opinion about the past by saying, "When we have a history that is worth documenting, we will do so."

I managed to find bits and pieces of what I needed to complete my research in public libraries and in the private collections and homes of families such as the Husaynis, the Khalidis, the 'Alamis, the Abu al-Sa'uds, and the al-Imams. But Mr. Nusaybah's words remained in my mind. His attitude toward our history in the Ottoman period was quite astonishing for its candor but far from unique, and I found the same prejudice among many of the Palestinian intellectuals with whom I spoke at the time. Any interest in the Ottoman period seemed frivolous to them. This personal experience awakened me to the fact that Arabs in general, and Palestinians in particular, through their negative attitude toward their own history during the Ottoman centuries, have unwittingly become party to the marginalization of their own role, and in so doing have left the field unchallenged in the face of orientalist and Zionist historical narratives from which Palestinians are largely absent. In these histories, the major players are outsiders: Ottomans or Turks, Europeans, Egyptians, and Jews or Zionists, but not the indigenous Muslim or Arab majority and its leaders. Perhaps one of the most telling examples of this self-erasure is the historical treatment accorded to the 1834 revolt against Muhammad 'Ali Pasha's rule in Palestine.

In 1834, for the first time in Palestine's history, people from across the country and from all segments of society came together in rebellion against what they considered to be oppressive policies decreed from above—in the event, military conscription, disarmament policies, and other "reforms" imposed on them by Muhammad 'Ali Pasha and his son, Ibrahim. This kind of popular revolt should have engaged the attention of twentieth-century scholars for its historical and contemporary relevance. It has been ignored, however, by successive generations of Palestinian historians and writers, who have been absorbed by more immediate nationalist questions and the contemporary challenges presented by the British Mandate and Zionism, and later by Israeli state policies and occupation. The events of 1834 were seen through the prism of opposition to the Ottoman state and support for the modernity represented by Muhammad 'Ali and his government. Instead of empathizing with, or at least trying to understand, their ancestors and the reasons for their revolt, the 1834 events were studied from the perspective of the rulers and their power struggles, effectively eliminating the Palestinians'

own role. Therefore, the Palestinian people's absence from accounts of their history cannot be ascribed merely to Eurocentric or Zionist narratives, but also to what Arabs themselves wrote about the land and its people under the Ottomans.

This article aims at examining the relationship between the various readings of the 1834 revolt and the ideologies of the successive generations that have concerned themselves with it. In other words, the intention is not to analyze the details of the event so much as to present a critical analysis of how past and present generations have written about it.² The 'Egyptian' rule in Palestine (1831–40) is not an insignificant era in the history of the land, and many historians highlight Muhammad 'Ali's rule as the beginning of the modern history of Palestine. Against this background it is particularly interesting to examine the role accorded to the 1834 revolt in the national history of Palestine and its people. Although the focus of this study is the 1834 revolt, this same inquiry could usefully be applied to other phases of Palestine's pre-twentieth-century Ottoman history.

The Nature of the Revolt and Its Background

In 1834, Palestine was a geographical term not often used by its inhabitants. The country was divided into five administrative districts (*sanjaks*), some governed from Acre and others from Damascus. Despite these divisions, the revolt against Muhammad 'Ali Pasha erupted in all five districts, uniting people from the Galilee in the north to Gaza in the south, as well as in the central hill areas of Nablus, Jerusalem, and Hebron (al-Khalil), which constituted the stronghold of the uprising. Palestinians were not the only ones in Bilad al-Sham (modern-day Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Israel, and the Occupied Territories) to rise up against Muhammad 'Ali's rule; revolts also occurred in regions such as the Nusayriya and Druze mountains, as well as Mount Lebanon, but these were limited areas whose people were united by religious or ethnic affiliations. What was remarkable in the Palestinian case was that, unlike anywhere else in the Arab lands in this pre-nationalist era, people widely separated by geographical features, local cultures, and even religion were united in the same struggle.

What made people in Palestine unite and rebel against Muhammad 'Ali's policies in the spring of 1834 and what was the nature of this revolt? Was it made up of 'disturbances and riots' instigated by the Ottomans

and local feudal leaders against the modernization policies of Muhammad 'Ali and his son, who wanted to establish a "united Arab kingdom"? Or was it merely a peasant uprising against the heavy taxation and the new policy of conscription to the army? In other words, were the rebels tools in the hands of Ottomans and others, or were they defending their own interests, which were endangered by the new rulers' policies? Lastly, does the 1834 revolt resemble only rebellions against the Ottomans prior to 1834 or does it have something in common with the revolts of the twentieth century? These questions will be touched upon briefly through the comparative and critical reading of the historical literature of the 1834 events in Palestine. But first, a word should be said about the historical context of the revolt.

In October 1831, Muhammad 'Ali Pasha, the powerful and ambitious Ottoman viceroy of Egypt since 1805, decided once again to extend his power beyond Egypt and dispatched an army under his son, Ibrahim Pasha, to Bilad al-Sham. By the following year, after many months of siege, Muhammad 'Ali's army succeeded where Napoleon Bonaparte's had failed in 1799 and occupied Acre on Palestine's northern coast. The fall of the city on 26 May 1832 paved the way for the occupation of all of Bilad al-Sham, which for the rest of the 1830s remained out of reach of the Ottomans. Unlike Napoleon, Muhammad 'Ali was no stranger to the people of Palestine and was not seen as a foreign invader. Hence, the people did not join the Ottoman armies in resisting his forces, even during the six-month siege of Acre, notwithstanding repeated demands from the Ottomans and the besieged governor of the city, 'Abdallah Pasha, to join the fighting.

The people of Palestine were the first in Bilad al-Sham to rise up against Muhammad 'Ali's rule, but it was not until the full effect of the new centralizing policies, especially the orders for local conscription and the disarmament of the population, that opposition gained momentum. Of particular importance was the curtailment of the prerogatives of the local elites, who, as we shall see, since the late seventeenth century had grown used to a large degree of autonomy in running their affairs. Although Palestine's central hill regions (Nablus, Jerusalem, and Hebron) constituted the setting for the revolt's main events, the revolutionary flames fanned out from the Galilee in the north to Gaza in the south. Putting down the revolt took five months (April–August 1834) and resulted in heavy losses on both sides in terms of dead and wounded, not to mention the massive destruction of villages and towns—particularly

Hebron and al-Karak—that had supported and harbored the insurgents. In these areas, Ibrahim Pasha unleashed his troops to loot, pillage, murder, and rape in revenge and to terrorize the inhabitants so as to quash any thoughts of a repeat of their actions against his government. And indeed, there was no further unrest of any significance in Palestine until 1840, when the Ottoman army regained control of the area with considerable European, particularly British, help.

The 1834 revolt against Muhammad 'Ali's rule was not the first popular uprising in Palestine's history. More than a century earlier, in what is called the *naqib al-ashraf* revolt (1703–1705), insurgents in Jerusalem, protesting excessive taxes and heavy-handed and repressive local policies, expelled the new Ottoman governor and his troops from the city and enjoyed almost two years of self-rule led by the *naqib*, Muhammad Bin Mustafa al-Wafa'i al-Husayni.³ A number of features of the Jerusalem revolt, which expressed a localized patriotic sentiment that preceded modern understandings of nationalism, were replicated in later popular uprisings in Bilad al-Sham. Among such features was active support for the Jerusalem rebels by both Muslim and Christian townspeople and peasants from neighboring villages. The revolt of the *naqib* in Jerusalem was the first popular uprising in Palestine during the Ottoman period and represented the rise of power of the local notables of the city.

Similar characteristics describe the revolt of 1825–26 in Jerusalem, also against forcible tax collection. Once again, local partisanship expressed the interests of local inhabitants across the religious and class spectrum and won the backing of the nearby rural population. Although both the *naqib al-ashraf's* revolt and the 1825–26 uprising involved various classes and segments of the population, it is important to emphasize that both were geographically limited to Jerusalem and its immediate vicinity. For the approximate two-year period that each took, life in other Palestinian towns such as Gaza, Jaffa, Nablus, and the Galilee went on as usual, unaffected by the exhilarating events in Jerusalem. What is striking about the 1834 revolt, which was also supported by all classes and religious groups, is that for the first time in the country's history the overwhelming majority of Palestine's people, rural, urban, and nomadic, from north to south, were united.

Just as the 1834 revolt was not the first popular uprising against the authorities in Palestine, so Muhammad 'Ali Pasha was not the first local ruler to defy his Ottoman overlords by attempting to carve out an autonomous domain for himself. In Bilad al-Sham, Fakhr al-Din al-Ma'ni,

amir of Mount Lebanon, took control of most of what is today Lebanon and the Galilee in the early seventeenth century. In Palestine, the most important challenge to imperial rule came with the rise of the Zaydani family in the Galilee in the first half of the eighteenth century. This family, which had only recently moved into the lower Galilee, managed to extend its influence over the region and was able to withstand the governor of Damascus's repeated attempts to end its rule in Tiberias and other Galilean towns (at the time heavily fortified). Zahir al-'Umar al-Zaydani, a second-generation member of the family, eventually came to control all of the Galilee and beyond, making Acre his military, economic, and political capital in 1748.⁴ Despite the discontent on the part of the Porte and local Ottoman governors (particularly the 'Azms in Damascus) regarding the Zaydani family's regional rule, the Ottomans did not intervene until the beginning of the 1770s, when Zahir al-'Umar joined forces with 'Ali Bek al-Kabir, the governor of Egypt, with the aim of forcibly extricating their territories from the Ottoman Empire and dividing the region between them. Their armies even managed a defeat over the sultan's troops, and for a short while held Damascus.⁵

Ultimately, Zahir al-'Umar's cooperation with 'Ali Bek accelerated the decision of the sultan to take action, and his rule was forcibly brought to an end in 1775. He was succeeded by Ahmad Pasha al-Jazzar, the Ottoman-appointed governor of the *vilayat* (district) of Sidon, who promptly moved his official capital to Acre. Having removed Zahir al-'Umar's children and followers, Jazzar set up a powerful central government in the region, but never openly challenged the Ottoman authorities in Istanbul.⁶ Nor did his less powerful successors, Sulayman Pasha the Just (r. 1804–19) and 'Abdallah Pasha (r. 1819–31), who ruled the Galilee in the early decades of the nineteenth century. 'Abdallah Pasha even helped the Ottomans suppress the 1825–26 revolt in Jerusalem. Overall, the sociopolitical realities of Palestine and neighboring lands in the first three decades of the nineteenth century were not different from those of the previous century, when local elites had played an important role in local Ottoman administration.⁷

Indeed, one of the features of decentralized Ottoman governance from the late seventeenth century onward was the policy of granting considerable autonomy to local elites, thereby incorporating powerful families into the empire's ruling institutions. Local elites took advantage of the Ottoman state's political and military weakness and set up principalities and tribal rule in various parts of the empire. In Palestine, the ramifications

of decentralization were most obvious in the central highland regions stretching from Nablus and Jenin in the north to Hebron in the south. Some notables even set up armies and militias for which local people readily volunteered, as belonging to them secured their status and interests. With the patron–client relationship between the local notables and inhabitants forming an essential feature of the sociopolitical fabric of the region, Zahir al-'Umar had not tried to curb the powerful families in his domain, and indeed continued to work with them even as he strengthened his rule in the Galilee and defied the Ottoman central government. The rise of the Zaydanis in the Galilee occurred from the bottom up, not unlike other powerful families who maintained their bonds with their clients even after seizing control of their area. Ahmad Pasha al-Jazzar, who eradicated Zahir's rule, was an exception, brutally crushing the urban and rural elites, especially those who had supported the Zaydanis.⁸ The elites of Nablus, Jenin, Hebron, and Jerusalem, however, who were under the governance of Damascus, were little affected. Jazzar's successors, Sulayman Pasha and then 'Abdallah Pasha, did not try to follow his example with regard to the local elites.⁹ Even the suppression of the 1825–26 revolt in Jerusalem did not undermine the prerogatives of the notable class, which was similarly unaffected by the military and administrative reforms of Sultan Mahmud II on the eve of Muhammad 'Ali Pasha's campaign in 1831.¹⁰ This background and tradition of local autonomy had an important part in galvanizing opposition to Muhammad 'Ali's centralizing policies at the expense of the local elites on the eve of the 1834 revolt.

Despite earlier challenges to Ottoman rule, Muhammad 'Ali Pasha's defiance was unique and unprecedented. The successes of Zahir al-'Umar al-Zaydani and others who defied Ottoman authority up to this point were temporary and did not truly threaten Ottoman regional rule. Even after being forced to withdraw with his troops from Bilad al-Sham in 1840–41, Muhammad 'Ali succeeded in making his viceroyalty of Egypt hereditary, establishing a dynasty of quasi-autonomous rulers in Egypt that survived until 1952. It was the uniqueness of Muhammad 'Ali's challenge, the scope of his ambitions, and the kind of governance he sought to impose that set him apart from earlier challengers. It was these same characteristics that made his rule an attractive subject for later historians by virtue of its importance to East–West and Arab–Turkish relations, as well as for the contrast between what were seen as the antiquated, outdated practices of the Ottoman regime and the modern rule and policies Muhammad 'Ali introduced.

Historiography of the 1834 Revolt in the Interwar Period

Modern history writing by Arabs began during the heyday of Arab nationalist consciousness following the First World War, which brought about the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire. In addition to an anti-Ottoman nationalist ideology, the westernization and modernization project played an important role in contemporary thinking, reinforcing negative clichés about the last of the great Islamic empires. The final decades of Ottoman rule had, without a doubt, been oppressive, tyrannical, and corrupt, but these late excesses were projected backward to characterize the entire Ottoman period without differentiation. Thus, in the haste to embrace modernity and Arab nationalism after the war, four centuries of Palestinian history were erased from Palestinian collective memory. In the new post-Ottoman atmosphere, all signs of underdevelopment—often described as decadence—were blamed on the Turks, and the Arab revival was hailed as the salvation of the region's peoples from Ottoman darkness. This discourse, which held European standards of modernity in one hand and a liberalist nationalist ideology in the other, became the prevailing discourse of Arab nationalists, including the cultural and political elites, in Palestine and the rest of the region, and could not but influence the historical narratives written about the period. One of the unintended consequences of this ideological stance was the playing down of the historical role of the Palestinians themselves, as Palestinians were presented as victims and passive recipients of the policies of outside forces, whether foreign or local.¹¹

It was in this political and cultural atmosphere between the two world wars that the history of Muhammad 'Ali Pasha's campaign in Bilad al-Sham and the Palestinian popular revolt against his rule in the spring of 1834 was written by Arab historians. The interwar period saw a proliferation of such works.¹² Thus, concurrent with the denigration and erasure of the Ottoman centuries was the apotheosis of Muhammad 'Ali Pasha, who was presented not only as a modernizing reformer against Ottoman backwardness and the liberator of Egypt from Ottoman rule, but even, for some, as a nationalist and a precursor of Arab unity who attempted to establish a united Arab kingdom comprising Egypt and the Syrian lands.¹³ These two narratives—of Ottoman oppression/backwardness and of Muhammad 'Ali as liberator/modernizer—were to become the pillars of the dominant historiography of the region, both Arab and European, for almost half a century.

Egypt was the pioneer in national history writing among the Arabs and greatly influenced subsequent work. The country had emerged from the First World War and the 1919 revolt against the British with a quasi-autonomous constitutional government headed by a member of Muhammad 'Ali's line. After having been 'sultan' for five years, Fuad I became Egypt's king in 1922. In the rush to write the country's modern history, Muhammad 'Ali was crowned with titles such as the "founder of modern Egypt" and the "hero of the war of the liberation of Egypt and the Arab world from the Turks," and was credited with having been the first to call for a united Arab nation with equal rights for Christians and Jews as well as Muslims.¹⁴ Moreover, since the Franco-British struggle for dominance in the Middle East was as sharp following the First World War as it had been during Muhammad 'Ali's time, contemporary history writing on the period, besides reflecting the Egyptian regime's national liberal ideology, foregrounded the importance of the "Eastern Question," that is, the fighting among the great European powers over the lands of the Ottoman "Sick Man of Europe." In such a political historiography, native populations inevitably become pawns manipulated by greater powers (in this case the Ottomans or Europeans), their actions mere reactions to external provocations or incitement against, or in defense of, the empire.

European history writing on the Muhammad 'Ali period did not differ substantially in its broad outlines from the Egyptian version. It hardly bears mentioning that European orientalist writing about the nineteenth-century Arab world in general, and Muhammad 'Ali Pasha's regime in particular, marginalized the role of the native Arab peoples. This sort of European narrative was thoroughly deconstructed in the wake of Edward Said's influential *Orientalism*.¹⁵ When 'local agency' was featured, it was that of the rulers. With regard to Muhammad 'Ali, even Henry Dodwell's relatively balanced account in *The Founder of Modern Egypt*,¹⁶ published in 1931, does not stray far from the prevailing view of him as a reformer and modernizer fighting corruption and regressive thinking. Dodwell also gives credence to interpretations of Muhammad 'Ali's wars against the sultan as aiming toward an independent Arab caliphate, with those rising against him, as in Palestine, depicted as "troublemakers" taking their orders from Istanbul.¹⁷ It is useful here to quote from the preface of the Arabic translation of Dodwell's work: "If one mentions modern Egypt, then one mentions the glorious royal family." Describing the historical role of Muhammad 'Ali's dynasty, the

translators note that it “transformed Egypt from a modest Turkish province into an independent kingdom with a powerful role.”¹⁸ These words represent the dominant political and cultural thinking in Egypt during the period between the two world wars.

In Bilad al-Sham—by then partitioned into four countries governed under French and British mandates—Asad Rustum was the first and most influential to study Muhammad ‘Ali Pasha’s rule in the Syrian lands, making it the subject of his doctoral dissertation at the University of Chicago in 1923.¹⁹ His interest in the subject did not end when he returned to Beirut to teach at the American University, and indeed he devoted two decades of his life to studying the history of Bilad al-Sham under Muhammad ‘Ali. In addition to a number of English-language books, Rustum published two major documentary collections in Arabic in the 1930s and 1940s that have become indispensable resources for scholars of Muhammad ‘Ali’s rule: a five-volume work in which he assembled all the available Arabic material on the period,²⁰ and a four-volume collection of a large number of documents, either in their original form or in summary versions, from the Egyptian archives in ‘Abidin Palace.²¹ These latter documents were the basis of Rustum’s 1938 study in English, entitled *The Royal Archives of Egypt and the Disturbances in Palestine, 1834*,²² which discusses the causes and consequences of the 1834 events and which he explicitly acknowledges reflects Cairo’s perspective.²³ It should be noted that his tangible bias toward Muhammad ‘Ali did not prevent him from questioning many common assumptions about the roles played by Russia, the Ottoman Empire, and other external powers in sparking the revolt.

Rustum’s reliance on the archives of one side alone and his extensive quoting from the reports regularly sent to Cairo by Egyptian administrators in Jerusalem inevitably conveys the impression that the insurgents were manipulated by the Ottomans and reactionary feudalists, rather than motivated by legitimate grievances and interests of their own. Subsequent reliance on the work of Rustum—for many decades the only scholar to have thoroughly researched the period using original sources—had the unfortunate consequence of perpetuating an unbalanced and ultimately inaccurate view of Palestinian motivation during this crucial period. That does not detract from the importance of his meticulous scholarship, which remains to this day an essential source for researchers on the period.²⁴

Aside from contemporary Egyptian reports in archival collections, one of the rare first-hand accounts of the 1834 revolt is that of a Cypriot

monk who lived in Jerusalem throughout Muhammad 'Ali's reign in Bilad al-Sham and who devoted about forty pages of a memoir to the uprising. Unlike the archives on which Rustum's works are based, where information must be gathered and then pieced together, the memoir provides a clear chronological sequence of the revolt, starting from Ibrahim Pasha's arrival in Jerusalem for a visit in April 1834, detailing the beginning of the disturbances a month later, and turning finally to Ibrahim Pasha's return from hunting down the insurgent leaders in the Transjordan region. The memoir, translated into English, was published in 1938 (about a hundred years after it was written and in the year of publication of Rustum's *Royal Archives of Egypt*) by the Association of Eastern Studies in Palestine under the title *Annals of Palestine, 1821–1841*.²⁵ The continuous narrative of the monk's memoir both fills out the somewhat fragmentary picture offered in Rustum's documents and to an extent confirms Rustum's interpretation concerning the Palestinian motivation. Indeed, the monk's viewpoint very much reflects that of the Greek Orthodox Church in the Holy Land, which he served and whose attitudes were deeply colored by an anti-Ottoman perspective exacerbated by the Ottoman wars against the Greek independence movement a decade earlier, combined with Muhammad 'Ali's promises of equality for the non-Muslim minorities in Palestine. Notwithstanding, the memoir added much valuable information about the period. Unfortunately, no other contemporary account of the 1834 events from Palestine is known to exist.

In general, it would seem that Palestinian towns from the early nineteenth century onward did not have chroniclers who recorded events of the late Ottoman period in Palestine for future generations.²⁶ As could be expected, the ample consular reports and travelers' accounts published in various European languages, which constitute another important source about the history of Palestine in late Ottoman times, all but exclude the local population, especially the Muslims, from their depiction of events. There is thus a serious dearth of sources representing or corroborating local viewpoints. The lack of written Palestinian accounts is compounded by an apparent gap in the collective memory, and any oral testimonies that might still have been tapped were not tracked down and preserved in interwar Palestine, when preoccupations lay elsewhere. Indeed, the Palestinian collective memory after the First World War was so consumed by the looming problem of Zionism that century-old narratives—including of the 1834 revolt—appear to have

been erased. Moreover, Palestine lagged behind Egypt and Lebanon in universities that may have nurtured such historical inquiries. For these objective reasons, and for others relating to political and cultural consciousness, anything concerning the Ottoman period was to a large extent neglected or stereotyped.

There were, however, some Palestinians, especially within the Nablus elite,²⁷ who realized the importance of collecting and recording their history during Ottoman times. The most prominent of these was Ihsan al-Nimr, whose first volume of *Tarikh Jabal Nablus wa-l-Balqa* was published in Damascus in 1938.²⁸ This tome and the three volumes that followed contain a wealth of valuable documents and information about political and social life in Nablus and Balqa' during Ottoman times. With regard to the 1834 revolt, Nimr, too, downplayed the role of the local population, but for entirely different reasons than the other sources. In his case, it was not out of antipathy to the Ottomans, but in order to highlight the role (real or exaggerated) of one of his ancestors, Ahmad Agha al-Nimr, whom he credits with having saved the city from the wrathful vengeance of Ibrahim Pasha and his soldiers.²⁹ The book also highlights the Nimr family's regional contributions over the centuries while critiquing their adversaries. Although the family bias diminishes the book's credibility, its incorporation of numerous Ottoman and local documents from family archives, some of which are summarized, while others are reproduced in their entirety in appendices, make it extremely valuable.³⁰ Especially in light of the aforementioned dearth of sources, Ihsan al-Nimr's documentation and his collection of family and other oral testimonies of Nablus in the Ottoman period achieved something rare in the Palestinian historical vacuum between the two world wars.

Palestinian Arab resistance to British mandatory policies and Zionism greatly intensified during the interwar period, culminating in the Great Arab Revolt of 1936–39. Given the accelerating nationalism of the period, it could seem surprising that the historically minded would not have compared that revolt to the events of 1834, which, however different the contexts, not only took place in the same land but had certain similarities. That no such comparative work was carried out underlines the disconnect in Palestinian collective memory, even in areas such as Nablus, Hebron, and Jerusalem, which had been the theaters for the 1834 events and which were among the wellsprings of the 1936–39 revolt.³¹ This is not the place to explore the possible reasons why such comparisons were not

made, but it seems likely that an important contributing factor was the continued dominance of the European–Egyptian version of events and the presentation of Muhammad 'Ali and his son, Ibrahim, as Arab modernizers and nationalist symbols, as is argued in the following section.

Writing the History of the 1834 Revolt after the 1948 *Nakba*

Neither the cataclysmic dislocations and massive political transformations wrought by the *nakba* nor the further displacements and radically changed realities in the wake of the June 1967 war managed to dislodge the collective thinking about the Ottoman period forged earlier in the century. Indeed, if there was one thing shared by pan-Arab nationalists (whether Nasserist or Ba'thist), communists and other radicals, and, later, the Palestinian resistance leaders who after 1967 gradually replaced the traditional urban elites, it was a common perception of the Ottoman centuries as uniformly backward, corrupt, and tyrannical.³² These attitudes continued to cloud the real history of the region for many years in the second half of the twentieth century.

The writing of Palestinian history in the years following the *nakba* was dominated by men who had already been writing during the inter-war years, and whose work after 1948 did not reflect any change in their perceptions about the Ottomans/Turks. The most noteworthy are 'Arif al-'Arif of Jerusalem (1892–1973), rightly considered one of the most important historians of Palestine of his generation, and Mustafa al-Dabbagh of Jaffa (1898–1989). Others also produced, and played roles in, Palestinian history during that time, but I will limit my remarks to these two as largely representative of their generation's thinking on certain aspects of the Palestinian past.³³ Notwithstanding the differences in the scope and nature of their writings, they shared the same negative perceptions of the Turks and Ottoman rule in Palestine so prevalent at the time.

Before the *nakba*, 'Arif al-'Arif had published many historical studies, including a history of Bir Saba' (Beersheba) and its tribes as well as histories of Gaza, 'Asqalan, and the holy sites of Jerusalem. In 1955, he published a history of Jerusalem, expanded and republished a few years later as *al-Mufasssal fi tarikh al-Quds*,³⁴ which has become a key source of the city's history from early times until the mid-twentieth century. However, although he devotes almost half of his chapter on Jerusalem during Muhammad 'Ali Pasha's reign to the 1834 revolt,³⁵ his description of it does

not diverge from earlier accounts. This is not surprising, as 'Arif al-'Arif did no original research on the revolt, but rather relied principally on Asad Rustum's work, and the *Annals*, which, as mentioned, remained for many years the main sources for the history of the revolt.

Like 'Arif al-'Arif, Mustafa Murad al-Dabbagh began his geographical and historical studies of Palestine before the *nakba*, and he returned to these while in exile. His encyclopedic collection, *Biladuna Filastin*,³⁶ again an essential source, is organized around separate entries for the country's villages, towns, and regions. This being the case, his account of the 1834 revolt is scattered throughout the work's many volumes. Given that he, too, used Rustum and the *Annals*, his interpretation of the events does not differ greatly from previous ones, though some post-*nakba* Palestinian nationalist ideas do inflect some of the entries. For example, in writing about the Hebron region, he notes that Ibrahim Pasha vanquished the *Palestinians*.³⁷ In a later volume he writes that "the Palestinian rebellion and other rebellions across Bilad al-Sham encouraged the Ottoman government to fight Muhammad 'Ali."³⁸ Defining the 1834 revolt in Palestine as a "Palestinian rebellion" and the rebels of 1834 as Palestinians was an act of nationalizing the history of that event and represented a new nationalist approach compatible with 1960s Palestinian slogans.

Illustrative of the tenacious hold of Arab nationalist attitudes toward Muhammad 'Ali's role in Bilad al-Sham, and more specifically toward the 1834 revolt, is the way these subjects are treated in part one of *al-Marwa'a al-filastiniya*, published in Damascus in 1984.³⁹ In the entry under "Revolt" in volume I, there are descriptions of the 1920 disturbances in Jerusalem, the al-Buraq revolt of 1929, and of the 1936–39 rebellion, to which a large number of pages are justifiably dedicated.⁴⁰ The editors classify Shaykh 'Izz al-Din al-Qassam's movement separately under the heading "1935 Revolt." No mention is made of the 1834 revolt or of other popular insurgencies during the Ottoman period. The 1834 revolt is described in volume II in the context of a long entry devoted to Muhammad 'Ali's rule in Bilad al-Sham, specifically in Palestine. But although the discussion of the causes, leadership, chronology, and consequences of the revolt takes up eight pages,⁴¹ the pan-Arab nationalist perspective is obvious. In discussing the causes, for example, the encyclopedia states, "It was easy for the local leadership to provoke followers and to emotionally manipulate the people because of the socioeconomic structure which supported them." Even more striking, the encyclopedia notes in its concluding remarks that one of the consequences of the 1834 revolt

was that "the Egyptian project to create a united Arab Kingdom to oppose the Ottoman Empire was aborted."⁴²

The second part of the Palestinian encyclopedia, comprising six volumes,⁴³ was published in Beirut six years after part one. The 1834 revolt is dealt with in volume II, devoted to historical studies, in a massive chapter on the late Ottoman period in Palestine by Abdul-Karim Rafeq, a preeminent historian of Ottoman-era Syria.⁴⁴ While considerable space is devoted to Muhammad 'Ali Pasha's campaign and rule in Bilad al-Sham, only three pages are dedicated to the revolt, sometimes characterized as "disturbances."⁴⁵ However, these pages, while focusing especially on the facts and chronology of the events without attempting a new critical reading, are noteworthy for their fairness at a time when most Arab histories were still marred by an anti-Ottoman nationalist bias and uncritical praise of Muhammad 'Ali's rule (and consequently denigration of the revolt). Also welcome is the fact that the chapter does not present Muhammad 'Ali as a great reformer and liberator/unifier of the Arab peoples from the Ottoman yoke.

Toward a Reassessment

The writing of Palestinian history, which has been colored by a nationalist impulse inherently hostile to the Ottomans, as well as by the tendency to emphasize the perspective of the rulers and European nations at the expense of the people's role, has been slow to change. Even today, most Palestinian historians continue to favor other periods, particularly those with relevance to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and Zionism. Nonetheless, in the last few decades, a growing interest in the social history of the Ottoman period has slowly encouraged a rewriting of history from the bottom up. This kind of historiography takes into account popular narratives and reveals perspectives previously neglected by the political histories emphasizing empires and rulers. Among those who have been reassessing the Ottoman centuries in Palestine, it is worth mentioning the works of Butrus Abu-Manneh and some of his students at Haifa University. Other scholars focusing on the social and cultural history of Palestine during the Ottoman period are Rashid Khalidi, Beshara Doumani, and Salim Tamari.

The rewriting of Palestine and the Palestinians into the history of the Ottoman period is a most welcome development. By rescuing Ottoman Palestine from the overarching and distorting generalizations about

backwardness and oppression, the door is now open to the reevaluation of four centuries rich in events, including the 1834 revolt.⁴⁶ Yet a certain resistance to studying this important episode in Palestine's history has lingered among Palestinian historians. When the first intifada broke out in 1987, for example, many hastened to compare what was then happening in the West Bank and Gaza to the 1936–39 revolt, but the tendency to look into the past for precursors did not lead them to the 1834 revolt, where the grounds for comparison are many.⁴⁷

This study has suggested that an important obstacle to consideration of the 1834 rebellion has been the double bind of anti-Ottoman perspectives and ingrained notions of Muhammad 'Ali as a modernizer and liberator from the Ottoman yoke. The logical conclusion of these interlocking perceptions is that the people of Palestine at the time, in rising up against Muhammad 'Ali and his son, must have been either egged on and manipulated by the Ottomans or reactionaries resisting modernization—in other words, they were either simple tools in the hands of others or unaware of their own best interests. Such a narrative could hardly encourage the study of the period by Palestinians.

New work on the Ottoman centuries in Palestine that challenges longstanding misconceptions has thus facilitated reassessment of the 1834 revolt by Palestinian scholars, though thus far few have taken up the gauntlet. I was therefore particularly pleased to see the publication of Khaled Safi's *The Egyptian Rule in Palestine, 1831–1840: A Critical Reassessment*, based on his doctoral dissertation at the Free University of Berlin, which devotes a chapter to the 1834 revolt and emphasizes the role of the people in their history.⁴⁸ Safi was one of my students at Birzeit University some two decades ago, and his decision to focus on the period and the critical approach he takes are a good example of the change in attitude among the young generation of Palestinian historians, more liberated from the dogmatic negative stereotypes about the Ottomans found in earlier generations marked by pan-Arab nationalism.⁴⁹

One of the important dimensions to be looked at in any history that gives agency to the population is the relationship between 'rulers' and 'the ruled.' In this regard, the 1834 revolt, and the entire Muhammad 'Ali Pasha interlude in Bilad al-Sham, yields important insights. Without a doubt, due consideration must be paid to changes in rulers and policies, but the role in events played by people's determination to defend their interests must not be minimized. In his ambition to create a powerful state for the dynasty he sought to found, Muhammad 'Ali

utilized a policy of modernization and reform, but his concept of modernization did not include the notion of providing for the people in exchange for the duties he exacted from them (such as conscription). The Ottoman rulers had not provided the people with much, but they did not demand much beyond obedience to the sultan and taxes for the treasury. They also had allowed populations a considerable measure of local control. The people of Palestine were therefore not accustomed to interference from their rulers, and any attempt to abolish their privileges would have provided grounds for rebellion.

As already noted, Muhammad 'Ali's entry into Palestine in 1831 was not resisted by the people, despite the sultan's decrees declaring him to be in rebellion, because he was not initially seen as an outsider. He was, after all, an Ottoman governor who had earlier fought on behalf of the Ottomans in wars considered just by Palestine's inhabitants, and power struggles with the Porte were far from unknown. It is therefore likely that the possibility of an eventual accommodation between the ambitious governor and Istanbul may have encouraged the people to adopt a wait-and-see attitude, and it was only when Muhammad 'Ali and his son began to impose unprecedented policies that they came to be seen as oppressors and invaders.

In this regard, it is important to emphasize that earlier popular uprisings, in 1703–1705 and 1825–26, had been not against sultanic or Ottoman rule *per se*, but against Ottoman local governors whose policies went beyond the tolerated limits. Indeed, the infrequency of popular rebellions during the long Ottoman centuries is a mark of the inclusiveness of the imperial regime. Thus, throughout most of the Ottoman period and up until the emergence of nationalism as a force in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Muslim majority and its elites felt that they were partners with the Ottomans rather than occupied or oppressed by foreign rulers. Such perceptions of Ottoman occupation and oppression were imposed later by twentieth-century histories.

The 1834 revolt was distinguished from earlier revolts in Palestine not only by its countrywide nature and the breadth of the support it garnered but also by the ruthlessness and mercilessness of the suppression led by Ibrahim Pasha. The local populations suffered thousands of deaths and even more injuries and displacements. At least six villages were destroyed, and cities that had supported the insurgents, such as Hebron and al-Karak, were sacked. The oppression and extensive destruction carried out by Muhammad 'Ali's army—perhaps a foretaste

of another modern state that would rule Palestine with the instruments of oppression and destruction—had never been experienced by Palestinians under Ottoman rule. In putting down the various revolts that erupted in Palestine and other Arab lands during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Ottomans generally abstained from excessive means of repression and almost invariably employed the carrot as much as the stick. In the context of relations between the rulers and the ruled, suppression of 'dissent' in Palestine by Muhammad 'Ali and his son Ibrahim in 1834 was far more 'modern' than anything the Ottoman sultanate had meted out. Even the notorious Ahmad Pasha al-Jazzar's army had not managed to kill as many insurgents, as it did not have the modern artillery used by Muhammad 'Ali's army to end the revolt.

A beginning has been made in enriching Palestinian historiography by moving beyond a reflexive anti-Ottoman bias. Much remains to be done, however, and the rich Ottoman centuries still await serious scholarship aimed at critically evaluating its events, particularly from the perspective of the local population, whose accounts have long been absent from the story. The 1834 revolt, which as we have seen has been studied primarily from the European, Ottoman, and Egyptian (that is, pro-Muhammad 'Ali) perspectives, can benefit in particular from fresh scrutiny. Local documents have been only partially tapped, and could shed new light on the interests of the local population during the period. This window on the events of 1834 also underscores the need to critically reevaluate ideological readings that oppose Ottoman rule on national principle.

This essay, then, is an invitation to researchers, primarily historians, to rewrite the history not only of the 1834 rebellion but also of other important events of the Ottoman era. The Arab, orientalist, and Zionist canons are full of histories of Palestine during the Ottoman era until the late nineteenth century from which the Palestinian people are absent. It is high time for the imbalance to be rectified.

Notes

1. 'Adel Manna', *Al'am Filastin fi awakhir al-'abd al-'uthmani, 1800–1918* (Jerusalem: Association for Arab Studies, 1986). I would like to take this occasion to pay tribute to the late Faisal Husayni, director of the Arab Studies Association at the time of the book's original publication, who enthusiastically supported and financed the project. The book has been reissued twice, with minor modifications, once in 1995 and again in 1997 by the Institute for Palestine Studies in Beirut.

2. The events of the 1834 revolt are well known and undisputed; what differs among researchers is their interpretation of those events. The 1834 revolt is covered in my previous studies including my doctoral dissertation submitted to the Hebrew University (1986), as well as articles in English and Arabic. Two recent books in English—Judith Mendelson Rood's *Sacred Law in the Holy City: The Khedival Challenge to the Ottomans as Seen from Jerusalem, 1829–1841* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2004) and Khaled Safi's *The Egyptian Rule in Palestine, 1831–1840: A Critical Reassessment* (Berlin: Mench and Buch Verlag, 2004)—each devote a chapter to the 1834 revolt. The studies and documentary compilations of Asad Rustum and others, which will be mentioned later, remain the primary sources for the topic. Arabic readers can refer also to my book, *Tarikh Filastin fi awakbir al-'abd al-'uthmani, 1700–1918: qira'a jadida* (Beirut: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1999), pp. 131–64.
3. Manna', *Tarikh Filastin*, pp. 21–41.
4. See Tawfiq Mu'ammār al-Muhami, *Zahir al-'Umar*, 2nd ed. (Nazareth: Matba'at wa Offset al-Hakim, 1990); Ahmad Hassan Joudah, *Revolt in Palestine in the Eighteenth Century: The Era of Shaykh Zahir al-'Umar* (Princeton, NJ: Kingston Press, 1987). Other sources worth consulting include the manuscript of Ibrahim al-Danafi al-Samari in Musa Abu-Dia, ed., *Zahir al-'Umar wa hukum Jabal Nablus, AH 1185–1187/AD 1773–1775* (Nablus: al-Najah University, 1986).
5. For more about Zahir al-'Umar and his partnership with the Mamluks under 'Ali Bek al-Kabir against the Ottomans, see Abdul-Karim Rafeq, *Bilad al-Sham wa Misr min al-fath al-'uthmani ila hamlat Napoleon Bonaparte (1516–1798)* (Damascus: n.p., 1968), pp. 330–409.
6. See the two chapters on the Zaydanis and their rule in the Galilee and the subsequent Ahmad Pasha al-Jazzar era in Manna', *Tarikh Filastin*, pp. 47–76, 77–103.
7. This conclusion was highlighted in my Ph.D. dissertation submitted to the Hebrew University (1986) and lately reinforced in my book based on that dissertation (Institute for Palestine Studies in Beirut, forthcoming).
8. For more details on this topic, see Manna', *Tarikh Filastin*, pp. 82–87.
9. Manna', *Tarikh Filastin*, pp. 105–25.
10. The crackdown on the Janissaries in Istanbul (1826) and the administrative reforms declared in the aftermath of the military events did not affect the sociopolitical realities in the provinces, including the districts of Palestine.
11. Beshara Doumani highlighted such a conclusion in the early 1990s in his article, "Rediscovering Ottoman Palestine: Writing Palestinians into History," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 21, no. 2 (Winter 1992), pp. 5–28.
12. This study does not incorporate the works published in this field during the 1920s and 1930s. Suffice it for our purposes to note the names of Khalil Tawtah

and 'Umar Salih al-Barghuti in addition to George Antonius's *The Arab Awakening* (London: Hamilton, 1938), which was translated into Arabic and has been read widely since its publication.

13. An excellent illustration of this nationalist narrative in Palestine is Antonius's *The Arab Awakening*.
14. Muhammad Sabri, Shafiq Ghurbal, and 'Abd al-Rahman al-Rafi'i were among the prominent Egyptian historians of the post-First World War era. The works on Muhammad 'Ali were published in Arabic, English, and French. They were followed by later generations from Egypt and across the Arab world.
15. Published by Pantheon Books, New York, 1978.
16. Henry Dodwell, *The Founder of Modern Egypt: A Study of Muhammad 'Ali* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1931).
17. Dodwell's book was translated into Arabic by Ahmad Muhammad 'Abd al-Khaliq Bek and Ahmad Shukri and titled *Muhammad 'Ali: mu'assis Misr al-baditha* (Nazareth: Daniel, n.d.). The quotes in the following are from the second edition of the Arabic translation, pp. 174–75.
18. 'Abd al-Khaliq Bek and Shukri, trans., *Muhammad 'Ali*, p. 1 in the translators' preface.
19. Asad J. Rustum, "Syria under Mehmet 'Ali" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1923).
20. Asad Rustum, *al-Usul al-'arabiya li tarikh Suriya fi 'abd Muhammad 'Ali*, 5 vols. (Beirut: American University of Beirut Press, 1930–34).
21. Asad Rustum, *al-Mahfuzat al-malakiya al-Masriya*, 4 vols. (Beirut: American University of Beirut Press, 1940–43).
22. Beirut: American University of Beirut Press, 1938.
23. Rustum, *Royal Archives*, p. 2.
24. Both Judith Mendelson Rood and Khaled Safi refer to it in their chapters on the 1834 revolt and the history of the 1830s in general (see note 2).
25. S.N. Spyridon, ed., *Annals of Palestine, 1821–1841: A Manuscript by the Monk Neophytos of Cyprus* (Jerusalem: Syrian Orphanage Press, 1938).
26. Ibrahim al-'Awra (d. 1863), who lived through the post-Jazzar period in Acre and later wrote *Tarikh Sulayman Basha al-'Adil*, which was concluded on 19 September 1853, is an exception.
27. In addition to Ihsan al-Nimr, it is worth mentioning Muhammad 'Izzat Darwaza, also an important political figure, and Akram Zu'aytar.
28. Ihsan al-Nimr is rare among Palestinians of the mandate era for his interest in writing the history of the country during the Ottoman period. Perhaps his well-known admiration for the Ottoman period and his desire to advertise

his family's role in the history of Nablus and the region led him to undertake such pioneering work.

29. Ihsan al-Nimr, *Tarikh Jabal Nablus wa-l-Balqa'*, vol. 1, 2nd ed. (Nablus: Printers' Co-op, 1975), pp. 326–28.
30. al-Nimr's work has indeed become an important source for research on the Ottoman history of Palestine in general and the Nablus district in particular. Here, it should be noted that the Nablus court records prior to Napoleon Bonaparte's invasion in 1799 have mostly been lost, making the material about the eighteenth century and earlier in Nimr's book all the more valuable.
31. Some oral histories about the elite's resistance to the rulers and the revolt in 1834 remained alive in limited circles until the end of the twentieth century. I heard stories from certain members of the Abu-Ghush, Amru, and Jayyusi families about their forefathers' exploits in the nineteenth century.
32. See, for example, Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*; 'Abd al-Wahab al-Kayyali, *Tarikh Filastin al-hadith* (Beirut: al-Mu'assasa al-'Arabiya li-l-Dirasat wa-l-Nashr, 1970); V.B. Lutski, *Tarikh al-aqtar al-'arabiya al-hadith* (Moscow: Dar al-Ta'qaddum, 1971). These books are still taught in universities and read by intellectuals concerned with the history of the region at the end of the Ottoman era.
33. In addition to the al-Nabulsi historians and political leaders mentioned above, it is possible to refer to Ahmad Shuqayri, Emil al-Ghuri, Musa al-'Alami, and others.
34. Jerusalem: al-Ma'arif Press, 1961.
35. al-'Arif, *al-Mufasssal*, pp. 279–85.
36. Mustafa Murad al-Dabbagh, *Biladuna Filastin* (Beirut: Dar al-Tali'a, 1965–74). A new edition has been reprinted in ten volumes (Kfar Qira': Dar al-Huda, 1991).
37. Dabbagh, *Biladuna Filastin*, 1991 ed., vol. 5, p. 123.
38. Dabbagh, *Biladuna Filastin*, 1991 ed., vol. 10, p. 26.
39. *al-Mawsu'a al-filastiniya*, part 1, 4 vols. (Damascus: Hay'at al-Mawsu'a al-Filastiniya, 1984).
40. *al-Mawsu'a al-filastiniya*, vol. 1, pp. 611–22, 625–42.
41. *al-Mawsu'a al-filastiniya*, vol. 2, pp. 262–70.
42. *al-Mawsu'a al-filastiniya*, p. 269.
43. *al-Mawsu'a al-filastiniya, al-dirasat al-khassa*, part 2, 6 vols. (Beirut: Hay'at al-Mawsu'a al-Filastiniya, 1990).
44. *al-Mawsu'a al-filastiniya, al-dirasat al-khassa*, vol. 2, pp. 858–990. Rafeq contributed another massive chapter (pp. 697–848) on the earlier period of Palestinian history, from the beginning of Ottoman rule in the sixteenth

century until the end of the eighteenth century, but did not mention the *naqib al-asbraf* revolt in Jerusalem in 1703–1705.

45. al-*Mawsu'a al-filastiniya, al-dirasat al-khassa*, vol. 2, pp. 858–60.
46. Including my own "al-Intifada wa-l-thawra fi tarikh Filastin al-hadith," *Qadaya* 2 (February 1990), pp. 3–22. Published in English as "Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Rebellions in Palestine," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 34, no. 1 (Autumn 1994), pp. 51–66.
47. One of the early books to highlight the Palestinian national implications of the 1834 revolt was *Palestinians: The Making of a People* (New York: Free Press, 1993) by the late Israeli scholar, Baruch Kimmerling, and Joel S. Migdal. The book is a study of the modern history of the Palestinians through their uprisings and begins with a chapter on the 1834 revolt. The work was viciously attacked by orientalist, particularly Israeli orientalist, who targeted in particular the authors' interpretation of the 1834 revolt as a national uprising at a time when ideas of a unified people fighting for their freedom and independence had not yet emerged.
48. Safi, *Egyptian Rule*. In addition to the third chapter on the revolt, the book's five chapters consist of a survey of Palestinian history on the eve of Muhammad 'Ali's military campaign, the military campaign itself, the administrative policies of Muhammad 'Ali's government in Palestine, and the attitudes of the Ottoman sultan and the great European powers vis-à-vis Muhammad 'Ali's government in Bilad al-Sham in general, and particularly in Palestine, until 1840. The fifth and final chapter is a fair assessment of the consequences of "Egyptian rule" and its effects on Palestine and its population during the 1830s and beyond.
49. See Mendelson Rood, *Sacred Law*. Based on her 1993 doctoral dissertation at the University of Chicago, one of the book's seven chapters is devoted to the 1834 revolt. My review of Rood's book appears in the *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 38, no. 2 (May 2006), pp. 312–14.

6

The Great War and the Erasure of Palestine's Ottoman Past

Salim Tamari

Soldiers' diaries, especially those from the First World War, are powerful reminders of the horrors of war. A large number of such memoirs have reached us from the ranks of the Allied forces, particularly British, French, American, and Anzac soldiers, as well as fighters of the central powers of Austria and Germany.¹ Much less material has been available from the Ottoman side, particularly the Syrian provinces. This article conveys the experience of the war as seen through the eyes of a Palestinian soldier in the Ottoman army.² It attempts to address two important sets of questions about the impact of the war. First, inasmuch as the war constituted a break with the pre-war normative system and cultural landscape in Palestine and the Arab East, what was the nature of modernity that emerged in its wake? Was it a rupture between two forms of modernity—Ottoman and colonial—or did it herald the introduction of new modes of living, thinking, and behaving that undermined a centuries-old communitarian system? The second set of questions revolves around what Falih Rifki, the Ottoman essayist and modernist, called—with the benefit of hindsight—the “Turkish problem” in Syria, namely, the inability of Ottoman constitutional reform to create a multiethnic domain in which the Syro-Palestinian provinces would be an integral part. In both cases, far-reaching transformations took place in the short but critical six years separating the constitutional revolution of 1908, with its project of a representative multiethnic state, from the collapse of this project under the dictatorial regime of Jamal Pasha.

These questions of modernity and identity are addressed in the diary of an ordinary recruit in the Ottoman army, Ihsan Hasan al-Salih al-Turjman (1893–1917).³ His life was short and undistinguished: after serving briefly as a foot soldier in Nablus and Hebron, he was posted as a clerk to the logistics department (*manzil*) at the Ottoman military headquarters in Jerusalem, and he died under mysterious circumstances not long before Allenby's troops entered the city. His diary—reflective, discursive, and meandering—seems to have been intended mainly to provide an outlet for his private thoughts, political and personal, but his observations on how the unfolding military events affected his relationship to his city and his nation are unparalleled in their vividness and intimacy. The power of these diaries lies in their exposure of the texture of daily life, long obscured by the political rhetoric of nationalist discourse, and in their depiction of a world hidden by the subsequent denigration of the Ottoman past—the life of communitarian alleys, of obliterated neighborhoods, of heated political debates projecting possibilities long since annihilated, and the voices of street actors absent in elite memoirs, including soldiers, peddlers, prostitutes, and vagabonds.

By the third year of the war, the diaries project a desperate search for *normalcy* in daily life—the normalcy of prewar Ottoman Palestine that seems to have eluded its citizens ever after. Although the diary focuses entirely on Jerusalem, the devastation seen in the city during the war—food shortages, disease, pauperization, and mass deportation—were experienced in varying degrees throughout the region. The city was the crucible in which the breakdown in the normative system and the subsequent rupture with the region's Ottoman past were first experienced; from the city it proceeded to engulf the country as a whole. The significance of Ihsan's diary is that it reflects the cosmology of a common soldier and an ordinary citizen of the city at a critical period of Palestine's history, ushering in the demise of four centuries of Ottoman rule and the beginning of a yet unknown future, as the British army was advancing on Gaza and Beersheba from the south and bombarding Jaffa and Haifa from the sea.

Almost all chronicles that we have inherited from this period were authored by political leaders (ʿAwni ʿAbd al-Hadi, Muhammad ʿIzzat Darwaza, and Rustum Haydar), military commanders (Fawzi al-Qawuqji), or intellectuals (Khalil al-Sakakini, and Najati Sidqi). Ihsan's diary is the only one that provides the detailed observations of a foot soldier, written with intimacy and simple but keen reflections on a besieged city. As such, it is

one of the very few subaltern chronicles that has reached us from the Ottoman period. It contains a wealth of observations on daily life in Jerusalem in 1915–16, including the reactions of the urban poor and artisans to deprivation, the disasters that accompanied the locust attacks, and army confiscation of property, means of transport, and work animals.

The diary begins in 1915, the “Year of the Locust” (*am al-jarad*) in the popular memory of Palestinian peasants and townspeople alike. Four generations later, the locust invasion still evokes the collective memory of natural disasters combined with the manmade devastation of war. Indeed, the First World War brought about a radical break with the Ottoman past in the entire Arab East, not only with regard to the established constitutional regime but also in the system of governance, local administration, and identity politics. The consequence was an erasure of four centuries of a rich and complex Ottoman patrimony in which popular narratives of war and nationalist ideology colluded. This anti-Ottoman rewriting of history took place simultaneously, and in the same abrupt manner, on the Turkish side (in the guise of modernizing the state and making it geographically manageable) and on the Arab side (in the sustained annals of nationalist historiography). In the Arabic discourse of what became known as “the days of the Turks,” the erasure achieved a retrospective replacement of four centuries of relative peace and dynamism, the Ottoman, by four miserable years of tyranny symbolized by the iconic features of the First World War: the military dictatorship of Ahmad Jamal Pasha in Syria, *seferberlek* (forced conscription and exile), and the collective hanging of Arab patriots in Beirut's Burj Square on 15 August 1916.

A Totalizing War

This essay deals with the totalizing nature of the First World War. By totalizing I refer not only to the manner in which it molded the soldiers' work and living habits but also to its impact on the daily life of civilians. The war created an atmosphere of continual panic, uncertainty about the availability of food and essential commodities, and worries about safety from arbitrary army actions (arrest, population transfer, and the conscription of older people as the war progressed). This period also saw the first systematic forms of press censorship and the scrutinizing of private mail. Inevitably, these totalizing features had transformative aspects, in particular as concerns social norms and relations with the state. With regard to the first, because large numbers of adult males were

absent from their households due to the war, many families were exposed to extreme poverty, famine, and disease, driving them to take drastic measures that undermined traditional normative behavior. Begging, theft, and prostitution became daily features in the streets of Jerusalem to a degree before unimaginable. At the same time, the war had an unanticipated emancipatory effect on society. This aspect is not well discussed in war literature, which stresses instead the period's devastation, dehumanization, and disruption of normalcy. Yet in many respects it was precisely the instruments of brutalization and destruction—and particularly the disruption of normalcy—that accounted for new social horizons in society.

Ultimately, the war contributed to a redefinition of the nature of the state and its relationship to its subjects. In the case of Palestine, the war was a watershed that ended Ottoman rule, separated the country from its vast Syrian hinterland, and ushered in British colonial rule, decisively undermining what had been evolving into a multinational, multiethnic state and giving rise to narrow and exclusivist nationalist ideologies and provincial affinities. This mobility galvanized a new national identity from what had hitherto been a dormant ethnicity. It was also the context for the introduction of literacy on a wider scale, as well as transport networks and electrification to urban society.

In Palestine, the war transformed the country into one huge construction site. The Syrian and Palestinian Labor Battalions (*tawabir al-'amal*, or *amele taburlari* in Turkish) were mobilized by the Ottoman Corps of Army Engineers to modernize the communication and transportation system.⁴ Many features of Palestine's modernity attributed to the British colonial administration were in fact initiated by the Ottoman authorities during this period, just as increased literacy, modernized education, and other processes fostering social change had already been set in motion by the Ottoman reforms of the 1850s and now were accelerated several-fold. In the first history of modern Palestine in the new century, published in 1920, Khalil Totah and 'Umar Salih al-Barghuti discuss the major changes brought about by the technological exigencies of war. Water wells were drilled all over the country, and potable water was piped to the major urban centers. Railroads linked the north of the country to the southern front, and a network of telephones and telegraph lines connected the country to the outside world. Post offices, which originated in consular European services, were now unified and replaced by the Ottoman postal services. Roads were expanded to

allow for military traffic and mechanized cars (automobiles and buses).⁵ Public hospitals, clinics, and pharmacies were introduced in all provinces to combat the malaria, cholera, and typhus epidemics during the war. In those construction projects the conscript “volunteer” Labor Battalions were crucial instruments. Battalion members were recruited from among released prisoners, from villages chosen by lottery, and from the ranks of the urban poor.⁶ In this regard, it is important to distinguish between the organization and functions of the “volunteer” conscripts (Labor Battalions) and the conscript army (*nizamiya*), which undertook the main brunt of fighting on the front and in which Ihsan served.

Despite their differences, volunteers (who often belonged to minority groups, deemed by the Ottomans as unreliable for the front) and regulars were both affected by the emancipatory features of war. Both types of soldiers experienced army discipline in military camps, both were uprooted from their traditional communities and traveled throughout the empire for the first time, and both came in contact with the ‘ethnic others’ in the imperial army—Turks, Kurds, Syrians, Albanians, and Bulgarians—as well as Austrian and German officers from the ranks of the European Allies.

The war period also witnessed substantial transformations of lifestyles and work habits. Pocket watches were now worn by the urban population and regulated the beginning and end of workdays. Coffee houses replaced home visits as meeting places for men. An increasing number of middle-class women removed the veil and joined the work force and the emerging secular public culture. In Jerusalem and Jaffa (as in Beirut, Aleppo, and Damascus), nightclubs and bordellos became available to members of the armed forces under the legal regulation of the state.⁷

In their history of turn-of-the-century Palestine, Totah and Barghuti observe the beneficial interaction between civilians and the military, as well as the impact of travel to Beirut, Damascus, and Aleppo on people from small towns. They also lament in judgmental and moralistic tones, however, the decline of the old order that resulted from exposure to the “degenerate” influences of army life. At the same time, they are ambivalent about the impact of war on Palestine. They, too, suggest that war contained an element of progress and discipline, and certainly of the ushering in of an era of nationalism to the Arab East. Their fears were as much the result of uncertainty about the new secular modernity as about Palestine's unknown future following the loss of the Ottoman motherland.

In the annals of history writing on the First World War, much rethinking about the evolution of Arab and Turkish nationalisms is now being undertaken. Among Arab historians, this has mainly taken the form of rectifying the nationalist historiography of scholars like Khaldun Sati' al-Husary.⁸ On the Turkish side there is a reexamination of the Arab "betrayal" of the Ottomans during the Arab Revolt of 1916–17. Historian Gurcel Goncu, among others, noted recently that Arab recruits constituted about 300,000 soldiers, a third of the total Ottoman forces in 1914—far more than the total number of soldiers who followed the banner of the Arab Revolt.⁹

Australian historian Bill Sellers has noted that Mustafa Kemal Atatürk succeeded in defeating Allied attacks in Gallipoli thanks in large part to the fighting stamina of his Arab recruits. He notes, "Two-thirds of the troops who made up his 19th Division . . . who faced the first wave of the Allied invasion were Syrian Arabs [that is, soldiers from Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, and Palestine], comprising the 72nd and 77th regiments of the Ottoman army."¹⁰ Of the 87,000 troops who died in the defense of Gallipoli and the Dardanelles Straits, many were Arabs. Yet these victories are portrayed today as Turkish, not Ottoman, victories. (In the 2004 ceremonies marking the eighty-eighth anniversary of the Ottoman victory at Gallipoli, the participation of individual soldiers from such places as New Zealand, Australia, and other western nations was duly noted, but not the huge presence of soldiers from the Arab provinces, all of whom were subsumed under the Ottoman banner.) This pattern is equally true for the battles of al-'Arish, Suez, Gaza, Megiddo, and Kut al-'Amara, where native soldiers (that is, Iraqi, Hijazi, Palestinian, and Syrian recruits) constituted a large component of the Ottoman troops. This silenced feature of the ethnically mixed army comes to light in the diary of Ihsan al-Turjman and others,¹¹ but only as the loyalty of the various nationalities to the idea of Ottomanism began to crack under the strain of the war.

Chronicle of a Disappearance

Ihsan's diary disappeared after his sudden death just before the end of the war. He may have given it to a friend, possibly Hasan Shukri al-Khalidi, his cousin and closest confidant, for safekeeping, although it is also possible (given where it ultimately turned up) that it was taken with other books and papers from his family house during the 1948 war. During the mid-1920s, the Turjmans, like many middle-class Jerusalemites under the

mandate, moved out of the old city to a new house in the Musrara neighborhood near Shari' al-Anbiya', where they had inherited a substantial piece of land. This property, later known as Hayy al-Turjman, was alluded to in the diary during a discussion of how the municipality had sequestered part of the family property to build a connecting road.

When the diary finally resurfaced during the 1990s in the "Abandoned Arab Property" section of the Hebrew University library,¹² the handwritten name on the cover was "Muhammad al-Salih." The only published mention of the diary, in 'Adel Manna's *History of Palestine*,¹³ refers to it in the context of Jamal Pasha's campaign against deserting soldiers in the First World War as being that of a Jerusalem soldier named Muhammad 'Adil al-Salih, who was stationed in Jerusalem and who narrates "the suffering of soldiers during the war." Another scholar who used the manuscript, Abigail Jacobson, also refers to the author as Muhammad al-Salih.¹⁴ In fact, however, the name was a false lead.

Nevertheless, there is a connection. Salih was the legal name of the Turjmans, and 'Adil was the name of Ihsan's youngest brother. When I acquired a photocopy of the diary in 2005, the family did not know of its existence. The only clue to the identity of the diarist was the appearance of the name Ihsan five or six times when family members directly addressed the writer. Luckily I was able to find another diary, that of Khalil al-Sakakini, Ihsan's teacher and friend, then also unpublished, which included entries for the years covered by the other diary, 1915–16. I was able to find four dates where the two diaries had corresponding entries. For one of these, the entry of 31 March 1915, the as yet unidentified diarist recorded a visit to al-Sakakini, where the main topic of discussion was al-Sakakini's impending conscription. The writer offers his family's intervention with the mayor to help al-Sakakini pay the 50 Ottoman pounds in lieu of military service (*badal*).¹⁵ Al-Sakakini's entry for the same date is as follows:

I must register here my gratitude to my friend Husayn Effendi Salim al-Husayni, the mayor, for he offered to pay 22 Ottoman liras to pay half of my *badal*. I was also told that his niece, the daughter of Zaki al-Dawudi, offered to arrange for the *badal* in conversation with my sister Milia. *Ihsan al-Turjman informed me that his family is very worried about me, considering me one of their members, when they heard that I am to be sent as a soldier to Beisan.*¹⁶ [my emphasis, S.T.]

With this entry the identity of the author was finally revealed.

In the Service of Roshen Bey

Ihsan al-Turjman grew up in Jerusalem's old city, in a three-story house at the entrance of Bab al-Silsila overlooking the Haram plaza from the east and the Wailing Wall and the Magharbeh quarter from the south. He came from an established clerical family, the Turjmans (officially known as Salih in court records), who had served for centuries in the Ottoman civil service and in Jerusalem's Islamic court as translators (hence their name).¹⁷ One of Ihsan's great grandfathers was Qasim Bey al-Turjman, in whose name a *sabil* (public water fountain) was endowed near the Haram area (opposite Bab al-Silsila) in 1701. He owned an open-court market in Bab al-'Amud and acquired substantial properties in the Old City.¹⁸ Another ancestor, Ahmad Bey al-Turjman, lived in Harat al-Sharaf, near what later became the Jewish quarter, and owned a large plaza in the area known as Sahit Ahmad Bey al-Turjman.¹⁹ Both were prominent translators in the court.

Ihsan's father, Hasan Bey al-Salih, inherited many of these properties, but most were either tied up in public endowments or leased. Hasan Bey had lived for two decades in a childless marriage until his first wife prevailed on him (according to contemporary stories) to marry his second wife, Nabiha al-Khalili. She was a descendant of Shaykh 'Ali al-Khalili, a prominent Jerusalemite and one of the first city dwellers to build a mansion outside the city walls in al-Baq'a neighborhood. Nabiha bore Hasan Bey six children (three boys and three girls), of whom Ihsan was the eldest.²⁰ But Hasan remained faithful to his first wife, Safiya, and continued even after his second marriage to live with her, until her death during the war, in a separate apartment on the third floor of their home.

Ihsan grew up with Safiya as his second mother. He studied in Qur'anic schools near the Haram al-Sharif and then went to a local *nizamiya* school for his primary education. After 1909 he joined Khalil al-Sakakini's Düsturiya College, which offered an Arab secular curriculum. From then on, Ihsan considered al-Sakakini his mentor and confidant, as is evident from his diary.

When the general mobilization was announced by the Ottoman government in November 1914, Ihsan, then twenty-three years old, was conscripted into the Ottoman army. He was first stationed in Dhahriya in the Hebron district and then transferred to Nablus. He was on the verge of being sent to the Suez front, but his family's connections secured him a post at the Jerusalem central military headquarters, known as the *manzil*. The commander was 'Ali Roshen Bey, an Albanian

officer whose administrative skills led to his promotion as military *qa'im maqam* in charge of army logistics on the southern front.²¹ In that capacity, he was responsible for the mobilization and training of soldiers for military and auxiliary tasks, as well as for the overall administration of army logistics—feeding, munitions, and the setting up of army camps in southern Palestine.²² Roshen Bey was the highest military officer in Ottoman Palestine, subject only to Jamal Pasha, who was the commander of the Fourth Army based in Damascus and who visited Jerusalem periodically. Roshen Bey remained in Jerusalem to the very end, commanding a battalion and—according to the eyewitness account of Sarkis Boghosian, an Armenian officer who served under him²³—fighting tenaciously against Allenby's advancing army in Nabi Samuel.²⁴

Ihsan served as a petty clerk in Roshen Bey's headquarters, located in the sequestered Notre Dame building opposite Jerusalem's New Gate.²⁵ This location made it possible for Ihsan to commute to work at the *manzil* from his home near Bab al-Silsila. His main job ("when I was not playing with my mustache") was to review petitions for exemption from service and to file paperwork for the Ottoman military bureaucracy. In that capacity he was privy to political discussions among Turkish, Albanian, and Syrian officers in Palestine—as well as the occasional German visiting officers—and was in a position to observe the deteriorating mood of the rank and file.

It was while he was working for Roshen Bey that he began, early in 1915, to keep a diary of his intimate thoughts and activities as a way of venting his frustration at the drudgery of military life. In so doing, he emulated his teacher and mentor at Dusturiya College, al-Sakakini, who since 1906 had been keeping a diary, excerpts of which he often read aloud to his inner circle. Ihsan's daily commute between the central military command at New Gate and his family's home in the Old City meant that he lived in two worlds, with windows onto both the military circles of the Ottoman officer corps and the tribulations of the urban street in wartime. It is interesting to note that the military *manzil* was the first building in Jerusalem to introduce electric power (1915) using its own generators, which made a twenty-four-hour workday possible. In Ihsan's mind, the *manzil* represented modernity, exemplified by army uniforms, electric lighting, and the automobile, while his home near the Haram al-Sharif (where he wrote his diary late at night by candlelight) represented tradition. Other aspects of the modernity that grew out of the wartime service were the notions of discipline and time awareness, which were

inculcated at Notre Dame's military headquarters. As had been the case with Muhammad 'Ali Pasha in Egypt a century earlier, army discipline transformed the daily habits of the conscripts; work hours, lunch breaks, afternoon breaks, evening shifts, and so on were strictly observed.

Ihsan's diary opens with a self-interrogation about the destiny of the Holy Land after the war. "I know that the days of this [Ottoman] state are numbered. There is no doubt that it is heading for dissolution sooner or later. But what will be the fate of Palestine after the war?" he wrote on 28 March 1915. This was the burning issue among his fellow soldiers and the officers in Jerusalem's central command, within his family, and within his social circle, which met daily in the municipal park and in cafés inside Jaffa Gate.

Quite a few Jerusalem intellectuals during the war still hoped that Palestine would remain under a reconstructed (and constitutional) Ottoman regime. Some of these were strong supporters of Jamal Pasha's political line and opponents of the emerging Arab nationalist trend. They included well-known political figures such as Shaykh As'ad al-Shuqayri from Acre (Akka), Mufti Tahir Abu Su'ud and 'Ali Rimawi from Jerusalem, and Shaykh Salim al-Ya'qubi from Jaffa. Darwaza tells how the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), the party in power, mobilized these figures in September 1915 to go on a publicity tour to Istanbul and Gallipoli in support of the war effort, where they openly attacked the Arab nationalists for "undermining the unity of the Sultanate and Turkish Arab brotherhood."²⁶ In Gallipoli, according to Officer Mehmed al-Fasih, a contemporary of Ihsan's from Mersin in Anatolia, the group was welcomed by Turkish and Arab fighters alike. Fasih makes the following entry in his diary on 21 October 1915: "17:30 hrs. . . . Delegation of Syrian literati visits Regimental HQ with a gift of Damascus *baklava* for the officers. Each of us receives a slice."²⁷ According to Darwaza, however, Jamal Pasha used the support of this group to justify his repression of the Arab nationalist movement and the execution by hanging of its leaders in Beirut.²⁸

In Jerusalem, several members of the intelligentsia continued to the end of the war to hope that Palestine would remain an Ottoman province. These included Shaykh Muhammad al-Salih, director of the Rawdat al-Ma'arif school; Mahmud al-Jawish, the principal of al-Salahiya College; and 'Adil Jabr, a prominent young lawyer and journalist, editor of *al-Hayat* in Jerusalem and Jaffa, and a member of the intellectual circle around al-Sakakini.²⁹ Jabr was the only member of the al-Sakakini circle

who never wavered in his support of Jamal Pasha and the CUP, defending Ottoman policy in heated debates with Nashashibi, al-Sakakini, and Musa 'Alami to the end of the war. Such debates were not isolated phenomena; they reflected the tension building in that period between the Arab secessionists and the Ottomanists within the Palestinian (and Syrian-Lebanese) intelligentsia. It was this schism in the ranks of Arab political groups that Jamal sought to foster between what he considered "extreme nationalists" and moderate Arab nationalists.³⁰ In his autobiography, Ihsan's friend, 'Umar Salih al-Barghuti, writes of a meeting held by Jamal Pasha with Arab leaders in Jerusalem and Damascus in 1916 and 1917 to discuss a Turkish-Arab confederation.³¹

In contrast to the die-hard Ottomanists mentioned above, most Ottoman loyalists in this period were not hostile to Arab nationalism. In fact, many who began as CUP or Decentralization Party sympathizers began to move toward the Arab nationalist camp and ended up joining it. Among Ihsan's acquaintances, this was true of Is'af Nashashibi, 'Umar Salih al-Barghuti, and Khalil al-Sakakini. The memoirs of the latter two reflect a noticeable shift during the last two years of the war from ambivalence toward the Ottomans to increasing identification with Amir Faisal and the Arab Revolt, which they eventually joined. Even writers Muhammad 'Izzat Darwaza and Rustum Haydar, who began as Ottoman decentralists, ended up with the nationalists. (Haydar, in fact, became Faisal's private secretary.) For all of these men, the turning point was the military trials of Syrian nationalists in 'Aley in Mount Lebanon and their hanging in Beirut in August 1916.

Ihsan's diary is exceptional for its extreme positions against Jamal Pasha and the CUP leadership—extreme not when compared to Arab nationalist historiography of the postwar period but to documents such as Darwaza's memoirs and Haydar's autobiography. Ihsan records a sustained tirade against Jamal Pasha and Enver Pasha, especially after Jamal's failed campaign in the Suez and the Sinai Desert fronts, which involved many of Ihsan's friends and relatives. A recurring nightmare of Ihsan's was that he would be sent to the front. His portrayal of Jamal is contradictory, however. On the one hand he shows him as pandering to Jewish and Christian soldiers to win the support of the minorities by favoring them with exemptions from military service and assignments in clerical jobs. On the other, he attacks both Enver and Jamal for humiliating Jerusalem Jews and Christians by conscripting them in the Labor Battalions to clean streets and undertake heavy road and railroad construction.

Many members of these battalions perished from hunger and disease in the backbreaking work. Contemporary descriptions are replete with the humiliating impact of these battalions on the local population. In one of several entries on this subject, al-Sakakini makes the following observation:

Today a large number of Christians were recruited as garbage collectors to Bethlehem and Bayt Jala. Each was given a broom, a shovel, and a bucket and they were distributed in the alleys of the town. Conscripts would shout at each home they passed, 'send us your garbage.' The women of Bethlehem looked out from their windows and wept. No doubt this is the ultimate humiliation. We have gone back to the days of bondage in Roman and Assyrian days.³²

When he was appointed as a temporary clerk in the Jerusalem military command in charge of exemption from service, Ihsan tried, unsuccessfully, to ameliorate the suffering of these soldiers.

The height of Ihsan's wrath against Jamal Pasha is recorded during the latter's campaign against secret nationalist groups. The attack began with the hanging of two soldiers in Damascus Gate on 30 March 1915 for being "spies for the British army" and reached its height in the repression of members of the Arab society and the secret "Ahd" group among Arab officers following a summary trial in 'Aley. But Ihsan's anti-Ottoman sentiments are tempered by positive references to Turkish and Albanian commanders, toward whom he had great affection. Those included his commander-in-chief 'Ali Roshen Bey (an Albanian), Nihad Bey (chief of staff of the Jerusalem garrison, a Turk), and many Turkish officers with whom he worked. When he was assaulted and threatened by another commanding officer (an unnamed Albanian), he sought the protection of Roshen Bey and not that of fellow Arab officers.

Ihsan's diary is full of recriminations against Arab submissiveness to Ottoman military repression. He repeatedly describes the Syrian and Palestinian people as a subservient lot (*ummatun dbalila*) and no match for the Turks. No proud nation would tolerate being led to slaughter, and not rebel. Although a pacifist at heart, he occasionally rejoices at Ottoman victories in Gallipoli and Kut al-'Amara (southern Iraq), and his national identity is interchangeably described as belonging to "the Ottoman nation" and to "the Arab nation," but never to an "Islamic nation"—a category that Jamal Pasha began to cultivate after 1917 to win Persian and

Indian support to the Ottoman side. The *'ulama* and shaykhs were a particular object of scorn in Ihsan's diary. Shaykh As'ad al-Shuqayri, the mufti of the Fourth Army from Acre, is described as a hypocrite for traveling to Istanbul with a number of religious bodies from Palestine to eulogize the Ottoman martyrs in Gallipoli and the Dardanelles.³³ Only when Sharif Husayn and the tribes of Hijaz rebelled with British support against the Ottomans did Ihsan express his vindication and pride at being an Arab: "Salute to the Hijazis. May God lead Husayn to victory, so that the blood of our martyrs in Beirut shall not go in vain." But he calls them the *'urban* (bedouin) and is aware that their revolt was not entirely altruistic. Among the reasons he cites for their rebellion is that Jamal Pasha stopped paying protection money to the Hijazis for securing the Damascus–Medina rail tracks and pilgrimage routes.

Unsentimental Education

Given Ihsan's traditional family milieu, limited education, and even more limited life experience when he was drafted into the army, the cosmopolitan outlook evident in the diary is striking. We know that his father had insisted that his children receive a Qur'anic education before being sent to (mostly) secular schools.³⁴ His natural (that is, nonideological) pacifism was no doubt a reaction to the carnage of war and the high death rate caused by disease and famine. But his outlook was most probably formed through his interaction with several intellectual figures in that period: 'Umar Salih al-Barghuti, 'Adil Jabr, Musa 'Alami, Khalil al-Sakakini, Is'af Nashashibi, and his cousin Hasan al-Khalidi, who had just received his medical degree from Beirut. To these we must add the towering figure of Rustum Haydar, the deputy director of al-Salahiya College in Damascus, who visited Jerusalem frequently and whom Ihsan met at his teacher's home. Within this group, Ihsan, a young and impressionable soldier, was primarily an observer. Of those figures, the crucial link was al-Sakakini, his teacher at Dusturiya College whom he continued to visit at least three or four times a week during the war years, and it was from al-Sakakini that he absorbed a certain critical thinking about nationalism and progressive views on education and women.

The topics that preoccupied Jerusalem's intelligentsia recounted in Ihsan's diaries challenge the now prevailing notion—axiomatic since the 1950s—that the acquisition of a secular and modernist education for Arabs in the late Ottoman period was mainly confined to missionary

schools (leading examples include the Russian seminaries in Nazareth and Bayt Jala; the Frères de la Salle in Jaffa and Jerusalem; and the St. Joseph's, Sisters of Zion, and Bishop Gobat's schools, also in Jerusalem) or to their 'national' alternative, the Imperial War Academy in Istanbul and the regional military colleges in cities like Damascus and Baghdad, available to the select few. Al-Sakakini, aided by advocates of the Arab Enlightenment such as Nakhla Zurayk, established an educational system that challenged the confessional system and attracted hundreds of Palestinian students who preferred to avoid the sectarianism of the Christian missionaries. Dusturiya College (later known as al-Wataniya College) was established in 1909 in the spirit of the new Ottoman constitution, basically as a protest against the Greek ecclesiastical orthodox hierarchy. It was in this college that Ihsan received his basic education and with whose graduates and teachers he continued to associate while in the military.

Often overlooked today is the modernist Ottoman educational system introduced after the revolution of 1908. Most public schools in Jerusalem began to introduce secular curricula along European lines. The most important public school in the city was al-Rashidiya, from which many of the leading figures of reform in that period graduated. Individual reformers such as Shaykh Muhammad al-Salih were inspired by the Islamic reformism of Afghani and 'Abdo. Shaykh Salih established the Rawdat al-Fayha' school, which took the daring step of converting all curricula in history, geography, literature, and religious studies from Turkish to Arabic.³⁵

The most important Ottoman college in Palestine in Ihsan's day was al-Salahiya, established in 1913 at Jamal Pasha's initiative on the grounds of St. Anne's (a crusader church near the Haram area, confiscated from the French during the war). *Salabuddin-i Eyyubi Kulliyeye-i Islamiyyesi*, as it was known in Turkish, was Jamal's ambitious attempt to create an institution that could train the cadre of a loyalist Arab civil service for the new regime and create an Arab intellectual base for a pan-Islamic movement under Ottoman sponsorship. According to Martin Strohmeier, Jamal Pasha aimed to train "theologians who would be both open-minded and intellectually equipped to deal with secular and scientific concepts" in the spirit of Muhammad Abdo.³⁶ The latter had been greatly admired by al-Sakakini's circle—the group that later became known as the *sa'alik* (vagabond) circle—but they had moved beyond Abdo's objectives of Islamic reform into perspectives that were essentially secular and (in a few cases) antireligious.

The college included a two-phased twelve-year study program after primary education, making it a university-level institute, its curriculum a mix of theological studies and the latest secular disciplines available in the period.³⁷ The college was administered by three protégés of Jamal Pasha: 'Abd al-'Aziz Shawish, Shakib Arsalan, and 'Abd al-Qadir al-Mughrabi, all early supporters of the Young Turks and champions of Ottoman decentralization. But the most important figure in al-Salahiya was Rustum Haydar (1886–1940), who established the secret Arab society, al-Jam'iya al-'Arabiya al-Fatat, in 1911 with 'Awni 'Abd al-Hadi and Ahmad Qadri.³⁸ Haydar features prominently in Ihsan's diary as a friend of al-Sakakini and a fierce exponent of Arabism in the Ottoman state. Two other prominent intellectuals with whom Ihsan had contact also taught at al-Salahiya: Is'af al-Nashashibi, who taught Arabic, and 'Adil Jabr, who taught French and geography. Al-Sakakini also taught at al-Salahiya when his busy schedule at his own college allowed. With the advancing British troops getting closer to southern Palestine, Jamal Pasha was compelled to move the college, together with the students and teaching staff, to Damascus, but most of its staff, including al-Sakakini and Haydar, ultimately defected. Al-Sakakini escaped from Damascus to Jabal Druze after he was released from jail (in 1918) and went over to the rebel side, where he was credited with writing the Arab national anthem. In the end, al-Salahiya College failed in its objectives for two reasons: it was unable to recruit students from outside the Syrian-Palestinian areas (that is, from India and Indonesia) as Jamal had hoped it would, and it was too short-lived to develop an independent school of thought.

In his diary, Ihsan expressed hostility toward both Nashashibi and Jabr for their arrogance and elitism. He was especially venomous toward Jabr, calling him an apologist for Jamal Pasha and even a secret agent for the government. In a diary entry of 15 May 1915, Ihsan claims that Jamal Pasha sent Jabr to Jaffa and approvingly quotes his cousin Hasan al-Khalidi's remark that Jabr was "an Ottoman spy."³⁹ There is no indication whatsoever that the spying accusation had any basis in fact, and in all probability Jabr's mission was to recruit for al-Salahiya College. (It is possible, however, that Jabr was secretly vying for the attention of Suraya, the young woman Ihsan was interested in.)

Also contributing to Ihsan's unsentimental education were his own readings, which were eclectic. The family had a substantial library at home from which Is'af al-Nashashibi and Musa 'Alami used to borrow books. Ihsan also added a few volumes during his apprenticeship at Dusturiya

College. In the long waiting hours at his desk while serving under Roshen Bey, Ihsan would read Zamakhshari and other Arab classics, such as the *History of Arab Civilization* by Muhammad Kurd 'Ali, a chief supporter of al-Salahiya's pan-Islamic program. Ihsan read and admired Qasim Amin's book, *Tabrir al-mar'a* (*The Liberation of Women*, published in Cairo in 1899). He was also a heavy consumer of romantic novels, or what today would be called pulp fiction. In addition, he read "marriage manuals," such as "Selecting One's Wife" (*Intikhab al-zawja*), "The Night of the Wedding" (*Laylat al-'urs*), and "Our Reproductive Life" (*Hayatuna al-tanasuliya*), most of which were written by European authors. These were most likely local translations of English and French pamphlets, which he read surreptitiously at work for fear of being caught by his father. Ihsan narrates how his Turkish, Albanian, and Arab military officers (such as Faris Effendi and Isma'il al-Mani) would rebuke him whenever they caught him reading, more out of anti-intellectual motivations than considerations of work discipline (at least this is what Ihsan claims). He also read with great enthusiasm the local press. His favorite was a weekly of political satire called *al-Himara* (The Donkey), which poked fun at the CUP leadership, suggesting that the Ottoman censor was more lax during the war years than has been claimed.

Beggars and Prostitutes

Ihsan's sustained attack on the ethos of war did not spring from an ideology of pacifism as much as from a revulsion to conditions of social disintegration and the loss of an earlier era of stability—conditions that he attributed to the megalomania of the new Ottoman leadership. The new politics of nationalist aggrandizement, ethnic oppression, and carnage brought with them an irrational and incoherent world. The impending loss of empire created a sense of geographic fragmentation, of disorientation and disconnection from old certainties, which led to a certain alienation and acquiescence in giving priority to ideology over politics.⁴⁰

Ihsan's daily impressions of the war's progress bear this out. The large-scale military impounding of grain from the peasants led to skyrocketing food prices in the city, followed by the disappearance of vegetables and meat. Long queues of women and children (most young men had been conscripted) fought for meager amounts of bread in front of bakeries. Famine struck every major town in Syria, Palestine, and Mount Lebanon, and, as Ihsan notes, it was a manmade famine caused first by the British economic

blockade of the Palestine coast and later by military sequestration of food, and not by scarcity. In Lebanon the famine was compounded by economic sanctions imposed by Jamal Pasha to punish the nationalist leadership for its presumed collaboration with the French authorities.⁴¹ By the summer of 1915 the locust attack had reached Jerusalem, followed by the spread of cholera, typhus, and other epidemics.

Beggars began to appear everywhere. Given the graphic descriptions in European travel literature, one would assume that begging was a perennial feature of the Jerusalem cityscape, but if this had been so it would not have figured so prominently in the diary of someone like Ihsan who had spent his whole life in the Old City. As in provincial capitals throughout the empire, endowments known as *takaya* ran soup kitchens for the very poor, and in most neighborhoods people took care of their own through confessional and family networks. With the onset of war, however, communal solidarities broke down, and the disintegration of family life caused by the wide-scale absence of male breadwinners from poor families created an army of beggars. The monthly salary of an Ottoman soldier was 85 piasters, hardly enough to buy his monthly consumption of tobacco. During the war, tobacco became a medium of exchange among soldiers and a prime commodity on the black market. Ihsan's diary has at least twelve entries dealing with the absence of cigarettes causing crises among soldiers and civilians alike. The absence of tobacco became a metaphor (recurrent in all war diaries) for the general deprivation experienced by cityfolk. On 23 April 1915, Ihsan makes the following entry:

Cigarettes are again not to be found in Jerusalem. People everywhere were distraught to miss their *tutton* [Arabo-Turkish for rolling tobacco]. In recent days basic items like sugar, kerosene, and rice disappeared, but their loss was nothing compared to tobacco. Nobody could give it up. Many people as a result protested and started blaming the government for declaring this war.⁴²

Officers were given preference when new consignments of tobacco arrived, and they often supplemented their salaries by selling it (especially choice brands from Istanbul, such as Sampson and Murad) to soldiers.

With the economic collapse of many households, Jerusalem, like Damascus and Beirut, began to witness the emergence of a new institution: prostitution. The Ottoman military had introduced their own

bordellos in the holy city for the relief of soldiers. There are several references in contemporary writings to concubines kept by the higher officer corps, as well as by potentates and city notables.⁴³ By the second year of the war, however, prostitution was widespread among all categories of army personnel, most of whom were separated for months and years from their families and female company. On the occasion of Sultan Muhammad Rashad's ascension to the throne on 27 April 1915, Jamal Pasha hosted a big party in the garden of the *manzil* for the Ottoman army brass and local notables. Fifty prostitutes were brought in from city bordellos to accompany the officers, while the city notables brought their wives. Ihsan's shock at the mixing of prostitutes with "respectable" ladies was compounded by the fact that the party coincided with the battles at Gallipoli, when thousands of fellow soldiers, Arabs and Turks, were being slaughtered.⁴⁴

Prostitution soon spread to the streets of the Old City. To illustrate the depth of moral degeneration in the city, Ihsan cites the case of three well-known teachers in a public school in al-Baq'a who were caught with local prostitutes on school premises during teaching hours. The Jerusalem governor dismissed all three (including the religious instructor, Shaykh Ya'qub al-Azbaki), but former mayor Faydi al-'Alami, then a member of parliament in Istanbul, intervened and had their sentence reduced to a fine of 150 *qirsh*.⁴⁵ Ihsan protested:

Teachers should be professionals first, whose conduct is above reproach, and second, they should be equipped with knowledge in the training of children. In our case, by God, both traits are lacking entirely. It is true that teachers are human beings and have needs to satisfy their basic desires, but they should exercise control over their instincts. In all cases they should never be allowed to bring women of easy virtue to their schools where children are [exposed] to these practices and are given a bad example in ethical conduct.⁴⁶

But Ihsan also expressed compassion for Jerusalem's prostitutes. In his own neighborhood and near Damascus Gate, many poor war widows were seen selling their bodies for a few piasters. Ihsan saw them daily on his way to work near the New Gate. One evening, while he and his cousin, Hasan al-Khalidi, were on their way to have dinner with al-Sakakini, they saw a streetwalker near the Austrian Hospice.

I said to Hasan, "Poor woman. She is waiting for her own misery to come." Hasan replies, "What can she do? She has to live. She will take a quarter *majidi* to spend on herself." I pity these prostitutes; they sell their bodies for few pennies to satisfy the animal instincts in men. They must be the most miserable of God's creations But they could only have chosen this profession because they have no alternative or because they were forsaken by men who promised to marry them and then disappeared.⁴⁷

Such thoughts were part of his general compassion for Muslim women. He had read and admired Qasim Amin's call for women's emancipation, *Tabrir al-mar'a*, and believed that the overall backwardness of Arab society was related to the confinement of women. He also called for the removal of the veil and linked the women's struggle to the fight against the Turkish dictatorship of the CUP. When the department of education banned the performance in public schools of plays that alluded to the heroism of historical Arab figures (in this case, a play about Tariq bin Ziad, the conqueror of Andalusia), he wrote, "We have entered into a compact with this [Ottoman] state that can only work if we are treated on equal footing with the Turkish [subjects]. Now, however, the state has chosen to treat us as a colonized possession, and the time has come to break the partnership."⁴⁸ Then he adds:

I spoke to Hilmi Effendi about the condition of Muslim women and I said that the veil is the obstacle to their advancement, but they should not remove it at once. It must be removed gradually. Then I added: "How can we advance in this world when half of our body is paralyzed and unable to act. Before anything else we must educate our women. Before teaching our children we must teach our female half."⁴⁹

By the spring of 1915, Jerusalem, along with the rest of the Syrian provinces, was overwhelmed by a sense of impending catastrophe.

Our lives are threatened from all sides; a European onslaught, an Ottoman war, rising costs of living, an unbearable financial situation, and an invasion of locusts. To top it all epidemics and diseases have spread throughout the Ottoman lands; may God protect us.⁵⁰

Ultimately, under the impact of such accumulated catastrophes, Ihsan, like many Jerusalemites, began to react with the indifference or apathy that people often acquire as self-defense.

Usually when I am confronted by the smallest quandary I lose sleep with worries, but now that I and the whole of society have been hit with disaster I have stopped worrying. Since this devastation has been heaped on our lives we cannot focus on any one single calamity. One disaster overwhelms the other; and when we think of all these misfortunes coming together we stop caring at all.⁵¹

One year later, hunger was setting in:

Monday July 10, 1916. No more crops in the city. Jerusalem has not seen more difficult days. Bread and wheat are not available anymore. The municipality until recently used to distribute free bread to the poor after nine o'clock, [but not anymore]. I remember going home from military headquarters at eleven o'clock. I saw a long line of women coming from the bakeries grabbing pieces of black bread the likes of which I have never seen. They used to fight over this bread and wait for it until midnight.⁵²

As conditions deteriorated, anti-Turkish sentiment grew. The resentment increased as Jamal Pasha escalated his measures against Arab nationalists. With fighting intensifying in the Sinai and Suez, more Jerusalem residents were taken either to the front or into the Labor Battalions to undertake public works for the army. In September 1915 a new order was issued by the Fourth Army banning the stationing of soldiers in their own townships—an order that would have transferred Ihsan from his clerical work to the Suez front and that prompted the following declaration:

Why should I go to the *jul* [Turkish for desert]? To defend my country? I am Ottoman in name only, for I am a citizen of the world. Even if they told me that by going there we would liberate Egypt [from the British] I would still refuse to go.⁵³

This expression, “I am Ottoman in name only,” must have seeped into Ihsan’s vocabulary from al-Sakakini, who had written similarly in

his own diary: "Why do the authorities want to exile me from Jerusalem? I am not a Christian, nor a Buddhist, nor a Muslim, nor a Jew. I do not see myself as an Arab, or an Englishman, or a Frenchman, or a German, or a Turk. Above all I am a member of the human race."⁵⁴

In Ihsan's case, such lofty ideals and especially his amorphous humanism were unattached, as it were, to any ideological commitment, whether socialist, nationalist, or religious. Basically he had no political grounding and was free from all ideological constraints, as a result partly of his lack of a rigorous education (like al-Sakakini and Mikha'il Na'imi) and partly of a naive belief in a more humanistic future. Such optimism was soon to end: in the Syrian-Palestinian arena, the war's end gave rise not to internationalism but to new nationalisms. Instead of social emancipation it gave rise to a vivid experience of modernity enhanced by the machinery of war and the undermining of communal solidarities through the creation of mass society manifested in the press, public education, and notions of citizenship—features already present in Europe for over a century. But these two experiences—modernity and the emergence of a new national identity—were only conceptually intertwined. As we shall see, in the mind of our young soldier and his generation, they took place as two separate life events.

Excursions into Modernity

The new rhythms of daily life that were at the heart of the modernity of war included the creation of a new sense of time (discreteness); a new geography (the decentering of Palestine within the imperial domain); mobility (brought about by the railroad and the automobile); a new military work discipline; and the conquest of the night (through electrification and guarded streets outside the city walls). This meant that people in the city began to socialize and seek amusement in the evening.⁵⁵ Ihsan's diary refers to daily excursions into the municipal park in Manshiya on Jaffa Road, where Ottoman military bands would entertain the public. Ya'kov Yehoshua, father of Hebrew writer A.B. Yehoshua, mentions in his memoir of Jerusalem that the "army band played there twice a week conducted by a person called Kovalsky (who had a music instruments shop)."⁵⁶ In the same period, musician Wasif Jawhariya refers to Manshiya as a major place of entertainment in the city; his father, Girgis, had a concession for a café there, where he and his brother played the oud. The place was especially popular among soldiers.⁵⁷ The new mobility

meant that people's work and social networks began to extend beyond the horizons of their townships. Thinking about marriage toward the end of the war, Ihsan began to contemplate finding a partner outside Jerusalem—a possibility that was unthinkable a generation earlier.⁵⁸

Another wartime development was mass circulation newspapers and popular books. Papers were read aloud in cafés for those who were illiterate or unable to afford them.⁵⁹ Certainly, the daily press in Palestine, as in Syria and Egypt, dates back to an earlier period, but the war enhanced circulation because people were hungry for news from the war fronts (Iraq, Suez, and the Dardanelles) where family members were stationed. From Ihsan's list of reading we learn that novellas (many of them Arabized translations of European romances) and manuals were popular among literate young men and women. Within the army, "marriage manuals" helped young recruits familiarize themselves with the sexual facts of life. In addition, as discussed, prostitution had become widespread during the war.

Ihsan's diary reflects a young soldier's obsessions with personal grooming. Here, again, we see the influence of Dusturiya College, which had introduced physical education to the curriculum. Similarly, in Muhammad al-Salih's *Rawdat al-Ma'arif*, paramilitary classes had been introduced.⁶⁰ Al-Sakakini was famous for his regimen of daily cold showers and rigorous physical training, and amateur wrestling was one of his favorite pastimes. Many of his students (including Ihsan) and fellow teachers followed his example. Ihsan himself was a mild hypochondriac, examining himself daily for symptoms of disease and fearful of catching malaria, cholera, or typhus, all of which had ravaged Palestine during the war. Many of his comrades and acquaintances had died from the latter two diseases.

For a provincial Ottoman city, Jerusalem was well equipped with medical facilities. Both government clinics and mission hospitals gave Palestinians a wide choice of medical services.⁶¹ Two of Ihsan's cousins, Hasan and Husayn al-Khalidi, were newly trained doctors serving as medical officers in the Jerusalem area. His neighbor, Rustum Effendi, was an *ajzakhbani* (pharmacist). Another doctor, Tawfiq Kanaan, the famous dermatologist and ethnographer from Bayt Jala and the director of Jerusalem's Military Hospital, was also a family friend; thanks to him, Ihsan was often able to obtain medical leaves from army duty. When Ihsan discovered a rash on his genitals one day, Hasan after examining him informed him that he probably had a venereal infection (*al-da' al-ifranji*, the Frankish disease). Ihsan panicked, using the same language attributed

to the Virgin Mary upon being told by the angel of the Lord that she was with child—*lam yamassani basharun* (“I was not touched by a human being”).⁶² When Hasan suggested that perhaps it came from an “association with soldiers” (*mu‘asharat al-‘asakir*), Ihsan threatened to commit suicide. He was particularly concerned that catching any disease would jeopardize his chances with Suraya, the woman he wanted to marry. Eventually the rash disappeared.

From contemporary observations, it seems that homosexuality was widely practiced in the Jerusalem garrison, as in armed forces worldwide. Ihsan was horrified when one of his superiors, an Albanian officer, took a sudden fancy to him, pursuing him relentlessly and writing incessant letters expressing the desire to play with his hair and “kiss him between the eyes.”⁶³ When Ihsan rebuffed the officer, the Albanian began to visit his house late at night, threatening to kill him if he did not yield. Finally, in desperation and for fear of retribution, Ihsan reported the captain to Roshen Bey, who of course was also an Albanian. It is at this point that the diary abruptly ends, casting dark shadows on the cause of Ihsan's death. Family sources assert that he was killed by an Ottoman officer in December 1917, just before the entry of Allenby's troops into Jerusalem toward the end of the war.⁶⁴ In light of this evidence, however, it is more likely that he was killed a year earlier, and for reasons entirely unrelated to desertion.

Ihsan's diary dwells at length on his search for love. His experience is typical of young Arab men at the turn of the century, as more women began to appear in public and encounter men at work and in their neighborhoods. Literacy and mobility allowed men and women to exchange letters and to have chaperoned meetings, sometimes without their families' blessings. The availability of romantic correspondence from the 1910s and 1920s indicates that young people were influenced by European romantic novels in articulating notions of love and intimacy.⁶⁵ Studio photographers like Khalil Ra'ad and Garabed Krikorian catered to the desire of friends and couples to exchange photographs during holidays as a kind of ritual, offering tokens of remembrance for periods of extended absence or travel. Subjects were posed in their most impressive posture and dressed in their best attire, often wearing their official uniform and (for soldiers) holding a gun or a ceremonial sword.⁶⁶

Unlike the experiences of middle-class intellectuals like 'Alami, Sidawi, and al-Sakakini, Ihsan's experience of love was more sublimated because the object of his affections, Suraya, was unattainable. Her family was not ready to accept him, presumably because he was an

ordinary soldier with few prospects of a decent income. To complicate matters, she was veiled and he could steal a look at her only by hiding near her house in the Old City and waiting for her to remove her veil as she entered the house. Ihsan gave his photograph to Suraya's brother to pass on to her, hoping that she would reciprocate. He was frustrated by the appearance on the scene of a rival for Suraya's affections—a more established and financially better-endowed intellectual who he refers to as "A.B." From the cryptic narrative it is possible that the reference is to 'Adil Jabr. Although A.B.'s overtures were not reciprocated, it seems that Ihsan's attacks on Jabr's pro-Ottoman politics were also a cover for his personal jealousy over the latter's attempts to win Suraya's heart.

Ihsan's love for Suraya and the impossibility of its consummation became emblematic of his search for a life of normalcy denied to him by the war and army life. His daydreams always contained an element of escape from military service—of going to the countryside, becoming a farmer, and settling down with Suraya. Because his adult life was spent mostly as a soldier, in his imagination peace was construed as a life of tranquility that unfolded in a different land (often the Swiss countryside), almost assuredly borrowed from the pages of the popular romances he consumed at his desk job. His inability to reach Suraya led him to reflect on the condition of Arab and Muslim women in general. The new postwar era was linked in his mind with the emancipation of women and the end of their domestic confinement and physical seclusion.

The search for normalcy became an all-consuming passion for the vast majority of young men, soldiers, and civilians who experienced the military horrors of the First World War. In their yearning, the war's end became the anticipated turning point for the new cherished freedoms. The end of the Ottoman era was also seen as the beginning of a new 'rational' order, whose features were contested within a spectrum of national identities variously referred to as the "Syrian homeland," "Egypto-Palestinian federation," or simply "the Arab nation." Unlike many of his contemporaries, however, Ihsan expressed this yearning in terms of a desire for a military defeat of his own army and the dissolution of 'his' imperial state.

Conclusion

The subjective experience of war is articulated here at two levels: the national/identity domain and the internalization of modernist sensibilities. These two levels of awareness, which would appear as an

integrated discourse a century later, were clearly felt as distinct realms during the devastating years of the Great War. Modernist sensibilities of an intimate individualism, of romantic love, of professional advancement, and of moving away from the family sphere—though not necessarily family patronage—were experienced independently from the national predicament of Palestine as a country. Although the two were linked structurally in that one provided the context for the other, they were delinked at the level of experience. And whereas the emergence of an autonomous individualism was intense and vivid, the articulation of nationalist (that is, extra local) sentiments, contrary to expectations, was opaque and nebulous.

The significance of Ihsan al-Turjman's diary is two-fold. First, it was written by an ordinary soldier unencumbered by official accountability for his actions, except in the narrow sense of self-responsibility, and second, it was written in the heat of the moment, reflecting the language of the times and the observation of events as they unfolded. The account is obviously mediated by the soldier's social milieu in the Old City (a mercantile family experiencing the loss of traditional income in wartime Jerusalem), but, unlike memoirs written decades later, it remains unreconstructed in light of retrospective consciousness.

War diaries have the ability to throw fresh light on the nature of the new urbanities of the Arab East at the end of the Ottoman era, revealing an amorphous ethnic consciousness that prevailed within the ranks of the Ottoman army. Far more Arabs fought, and died, on the Ottoman side than on the side of the Arab rebellion, and they identified in varying degrees with the aims of the imperial army. Many of these soldiers were admittedly unwilling conscripts in a brutal war, but many others—if not most—identified with the Ottoman state once mobilized. This was especially true after the 1908 constitutional revolution, which opened new horizons for the empire's Arab subjects. "My father could have easily sought an exemption from service for my brother Khalil—by marrying him off to a foreign resident or by claiming him as an artisan," wrote a Jerusalemite Christian officer about his family's war experience, "but he chose to have him join the army in the prime of his life, in devotion to the state and the defense of the country."⁶⁷

But the war, and its carnage, created new realities that shattered this consensus. Contrary to the ideological vision of nationalist historians, the nature of debates among the urban population about the future of Syria and Palestine was highly diverse. Jamal Pasha's attempts to create Islamic

affinities in the intellectual stratum and in the ranks of his army had powerful Arab adherents. The eventual triumph of the Arab nationalists, however, was the result less of successful agitation among the population than of the sudden (some would say unnecessary) repression of nationalist intellectuals and their movements. The failure of the Egyptian campaign in Suez and Beersheba was also a factor in creating the atmosphere of betrayal that culminated in the Hijazi–British alliance against the Ottomans. Even at that late date, however, the Syrian and Palestinian intelligentsia and political leadership did not agree on what should come next. Although the Arab populace was restless with expectations for peace and restoration of normalcy, the Syrian independence trend was only one among several. One contingent saw Palestine's future as part of an Egyptian union, while many others continued until the last years of the war (and even beyond) to favor Palestine within a decentralized Ottoman system.

Above all, the First World War marked a rupture with an earlier era, one that was expressed succinctly decades later in Palestine by Muhammad 'Ali Awad, an Ottoman officer (*umbashi*) from the village of Anabta. Having fought on the Suez front and in Gallipoli, Awad reflected, "I fought the English at Gallipoli for an Ottoman homeland that no longer exists, and yet I continued living on the same land."⁶⁸ The war diary discussed here takes us to a "different country" hardly recognizable by our modern sensibilities four wars later. In this Ottoman country, Zionism was hardly an issue, the city defined the boundaries of social bonds and alliances, and the new borders were defined by the fronts in the Dardanelles, Suez, and Kut al-'Amara. The devastation of war, however, made people question their basic assumptions about family, work, and nation. The amorphous possibilities that existed during the war were sealed by the coming of the mandate. Popular expectations about a future settlement were now delineated by new physical boundaries and psychological horizons that redefined the Syrian and Egyptian expanses of the empire. The city was no longer the communitarian world of its citizens but the center of a larger unit, which created a network connecting Jerusalem with Nablus, Haifa, and Jaffa. The mobility of war (conscription of soldiers and forced transfer of citizens) gave way to the voluntary mobility of commerce, career enhancement, and the search for wage labor. No subsequent war over Palestine—and there were many—had a similar impact. Even the war of 1948 that dismembered the country and dispersed the coastal people inland, creating a nation of exiles, actually served to consolidate a separatist Palestinian consciousness.

Notes

1. A good selection of First World War soldiers' diaries can be found in Edward Lengel's *World War I Memories: An Annotated Bibliography of Personal Accounts Published in English since 1919* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2004). For Ottoman sources, see Altay Atli, "Turkey in the First World War," <http://www.turkeyswar.com>. This site has an extensive section on Palestine.
2. I am grateful to Linda Butler, Rema Hammami, Beshara Doumani, George Hintilian, and Issam Nassar for their critical comments on an earlier draft. Ayse Cavdar, Sibel Sayek, and Nazmi Ju'beh helped me with Ottoman Turkish terms. Ayse was particularly helpful in locating old photographs and maps. I am also grateful to Abigail Johnson for bringing the diary to my attention, and to Khader Salameh for obtaining a copy of the manuscript of Ihsan al-Turjman's diary and to 'Adel Manna' for his helpful comments. Muhammad Ghosheh provided historical material on the Salih/Turjman family from Jerusalem Islamic Court records. Above all, I am indebted to Salih and Nabila al-Turjman, the grandchildren of Hasan Bey, and to Muhammad al-Khalidi in Amman for their kindness in answering my endless questions about their family and for providing valuable records and family photographs. Baha Ju'beh took photographs of the old Turjman house inside al-Haram al-Sharif. I provide more extensive acknowledgment in "Am al-jarad," the Arabic introduction to the diary of Ihsan al-Turjman diary (Beirut and Jerusalem: Institute for Palestine Studies, 2008).
3. Unless explicitly stated otherwise, all data about Turjman's personal life come from the manuscript of his diary, henceforth referred to as Turjman, *Diary*.
4. For a history of these units, see Erik Jan Zürcher, "Ottoman Labour Battalions in World War I," Working Papers Archive, Department of Turkish Studies, Leiden University, March 2002.
5. Khalil Totah and 'Umar Salih al-Barghuti, *Tarikh Filastin* (Jerusalem: Bayt al-Maqdis Press, 1920), pp. 248–52.
6. Totah and Barghuti, *Tarikh Filastin*, p. 249. See also Khalil al-Sakakini, *Yarwmiyat Khalil al-Sakakini, al-kitab al-thani: al-nabda al-urthuduksiya, al-barb al-'uzma, al-nafi ila Dimashq, 1914–1918*, ed. Akram Mousalam (Beirut: Institute for Palestine Studies, 2004); Turjman, *Diary*.
7. See 'Umar Salih al-Barghuti, *al-Marabil: tarikh siyasi* (Beirut: al-Mu'assasa al-'Arabiya li-l-Dirasat wa-l-Nashr, 2001), p. 192; Jens Hanssen, "Public Morality and Marginality in Fin-de-siècle Beirut," in Eugene Rogan, ed., *Outside In: On the Margins of the Modern Middle East* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2002), pp. 186–89.
8. The works of 'Aziz al-Duri, Philip S. Khoury, 'Adel Manna', Abdul-Karim Rafeq, Dina Rizek, and Rashid Khalidi come to mind. See, most recently,

- Muhammad 'Afifi, *'Arab wa 'uthmaniyun: ru'ya mughayira* (Cairo: Dar al-Shu-ruq, 2005).
9. Quoted by Jonathan Gorvett, "The Forgotten Arabs of Gallipoli," Aljazeera.Net, <http://english.aljazeera.net/news/archive/archive?ArchiveId=762> (accessed 14 January 2004).
 10. Gorvett, "The Forgotten Arabs of Gallipoli."
 11. See Mehmed Fasih, *Gallipoli 1915: Bloody Ridge, Diary of Lt. Mehmed Fasih, 5th Imperial Ottoman Army* [in English translation], ed. and trans. H.B. Danisman (Istanbul: Denizler Kitabevi, 2003). See also Salim Tamari, "Am al-jarad," for an extensive comparison between the Fasih and Turjman war diaries.
 12. National Library (Hebrew University), listed as "Yawmiyat Muhammad al-Salih min ahali al-Quds, 1333" [1914–15], manuscript section, AP. AR 8 46.
 13. *Tarikh Filastin fi awakhir al-'abd al-'uthmani, 1700–1918: qira'a jadida* (Beirut: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1999).
 14. Abigail Jacobson, "Negotiating Ottomanism in Times of War: Jerusalem during World War I through the Eyes of a Local Muslim Resident," paper presented at the conference "The Roots of Liberal Thought in the Eastern Mediterranean," Erlangen, Germany, 30 July–3 August 2005. I am very grateful to Dr. Jacobson for bringing the diary to my attention and for providing missing pages from the Hebrew University copy.
 15. Turjman, *Diary*, 31 March 1915. Turjman writes, "We stood at Jaffa Gate waiting for Khalil Effendi Sakakini, for he went to the mayor's office to ask for his help in paying the *badal*. Suddenly he appeared and told us that his payment will be delivered today, which made all those present very happy. Then we went on walking and chatting" (author's translation).
 16. al-Sakakini, *Yawmiyat*, vol. 2, pp. 158–59. This entry is dated 28 March and covers a ten-day period.
 17. According to Salih al-Turjman, Ihsan's nephew, the Turjmans, also known as the Salihs, were *asyad* (plural of *sayyid*), tracing their origins to the family of Prophet Muhammad. In the eighteenth century they were challenged in the court of Aleppo to produce evidence of this lineage, and upon producing a valid genealogy, they were allowed to continue bearing the title of sayyid. Author interview with Salih al-Turjman, January 2006.
 18. For details on the Turjman family properties, see Hijjat Waqf Qasim Bey al-Turjman, Islamic Court of Jerusalem, file no. 201, p. 130. I am grateful to Dr. Muhammad Ghosheh for providing this information about the properties of the Turjman family in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.
 19. Hijjat Waqf Ahmad Bey al-Turjman, Islamic Court of Jerusalem, file no. 227, p. 289.

20. Most of this information comes from Huda al-Khalidi (Mrs. 'Abd al-Shafi) and from Hasan Bey's grandson, Salih al-Turjman (author interviews in October 2004 and January 2005).
21. 'Umar Salih al-Barghuti attributes the initial success of the Ottomans on the Egyptian front to the organizational skills of Roshen Bey. Barghuti, *Marabil*, p. 165.
22. Barghuti, *Marabil*, p. 154.
23. Sarkis Boghosian, *Diary of an Armenian Officer in the Ottoman Army* [in Armenian], 2 vols. (Paris: n.p., 1931). I am indebted to Mr. George Hintilian for bringing this diary to my attention.
24. Aside from local contemporary sources, such as the Barghuti and Jawhariya memoirs, no records could be found about the fate of 'Ali Roshen Bey. Ottoman military archives contain four telegraphs sent in code from the governor of Siwas, Muhyi al-Din, in which Roshen Bey is identified in the context of military maneuvers involving Mustafa Kemal, all dated Huzeiran 1335 (June 1919), so he must have still been active in Anatolia toward the end of the war. Dahiliye Nezareti, Emniyet-Umumiye Mudiriyeti, Evrak Numarsu [Ministry of Interior]: 4562–954, 8 Haziran 1335 (June 1919).
25. To this day the road connecting the New Gate to Damascus Gate is popularly known among the Jerusalem elderly as 'Aqbat al-Manzil.
26. Muhammad 'Izzat Darwaza, *Mudbakkirat*, 1887–1984, vol. 1 (Beirut: Dar al-Gharb al-Islami, 1993), pp. 258–59.
27. Fasih, *Diary*, p. 26.
28. Darwaza, *Mudbakkirat*, vol. 1, p. 260.
29. In the north, especially in Nablus, pro-Ottoman sentiments continued to be strong even after the Ottoman defeat in Jerusalem. Such sentiments were articulated by Muhammad 'Izzat Darwaza and Ihsan al-Nimr, among others.
30. These are the expressions used by Muhammad 'Izzat Darwaza in his memoirs. See, for example, *Mudbakkirat*, vol. 1, pp. 220–22. Martin Strohmeier writes from a different perspective but reaches basically the same assessment of Jamal Pasha's objectives. Martin Strohmeier, "Al-Kulliyya al-Salahiya: A Late Ottoman University in Jerusalem," in Sylvia Auld and Robert Hillenbrand, eds., *Ottoman Jerusalem: The Living City, 1517–1917* (London: Altajir World of Islam Trust, 2001), pp. 57–62.
31. Barghuti, *Marabil*, p. 187.
32. al-Sakakini, *Yawmiyat*, vol. 2, pp. 158–59 (28 March 1915).
33. The impact of this rupture in Ottoman identity on Turkish–Arab relations can be fruitfully traced from the Turkish side in another war diary, that of Falih Rifki, Jamal Pasha's private secretary in Damascus and Jerusalem and a keen

- observer of Arab-Turkish relations inside the armed forces. His observations are particularly valuable because he was close to the events as they unfolded. Falih Rifki Atay, *Zeytindagi* (Istanbul: n.p., 1932). I have relied here on Geoffrey Lewis's essay on Rifki, "An Ottoman Officer in Palestine, 1914–1918," in David Kushner, ed., *Palestine in the Late Ottoman Period: Political, Social, and Economic Transformation* (Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi Press, 1986), pp. 401–16.
34. I thank Mr. Salih al-Turjman for this piece of information. Author interview, 11 January 2006. Ihsan studied at Dusturiya College, 'Adil and Hasan at St. George's College, and the three girls (Asma, Sirat, and Yusra) at the Sisters of Zion school in Jerusalem.
 35. Ya'qub al-'Awdat, "Shaykh Muhammad al-Salih," in *A'lam al-fikr wa-l-adab fi Filastin* (Jerusalem: Dar al-Isra', 1992), pp. 342–43.
 36. Strohmeier, "Al-Kulliyya al-Salahiya," p. 61.
 37. Strohmeier, "Al-Kulliyya al-Salahiya," p. 62.
 38. Strohmeier, "Al-Kulliyya al-Salahiya," p. 60.
 39. Turjman, *Diary*. See two entries: "Adil Jabr Defends the Government," 5 May 1915, and "Is 'Adil Effendi an Ottoman Spy?" 15 May 1915.
 40. For the way this played out in Europe, see John Berger, *About Looking* (New York: Vintage Books, 1991), p. 130.
 41. Darwaza, *Mudbakkirat*, vol. 1, p. 220.
 42. Turjman, *Diary*, "The Government Imposes a Locust Tax on Jerusalemites," 23 April 1915, ms. pp. 33–34.
 43. See, for example, Wasif Jawhariya, *al-'Uds al-'utbmaniya fi-l-mudbakkirat al-jawhariya: al-kitab al-awwal min mudbakkirat al-musiqi Wasif Jawhariya, 1904–1917*, ed. Salim Tamari and Issam Nassar (Beirut: Institute for Palestine Studies, 2003).
 44. Turjman, *Diary*, "Jerusalem Prostitutes Celebrate Sultan Muhammad Rashad's Assumption to the Throne," 27 April 1915, ms. pp. 47–48.
 45. Turjman, *Diary*, "Teachers Bring Prostitutes to Classrooms," 12 May 1915.
 46. Turjman, *Diary*, "Teachers Bring Prostitutes to Classrooms," 12 May 1915.
 47. Turjman, *Diary*, "Meeting with a Prostitute," 29 April 1915. A *majidi* was 20 piasters.
 48. Turjman, *Diary*, "When Roshen Bey Gets Drunk, the Military Command Goes on Vacation," 28 April 1915.
 49. Turjman, *Diary*, "When Roshen Bey Gets Drunk, the Military Command Goes on Vacation," 28 April 1915.
 50. Turjman, *Diary*, 2 May 1915.
 51. Turjman, *Diary*, "Misfortunes Invade Us All at Once—War, Inflation, Locusts, and Disease," 9 May 1915.

52. Turjman, *Diary*, "The Rebellion of Sharif Husayn against the Ottoman Authority," 10 July 1916.
53. Turjman, *Diary*, "I Am Ottoman in Name Only, Because I Am a Citizen of the World," 10 September 1915.
54. Khalil al-Sakakini, *Yawmiyat Khalil al-Sakakini, al-kitab al-awwal: New York, Sultana, al-Quds, 1907-1912*, ed. Akram Mousalem (Beirut: Institute for Palestine Studies, 2003).
55. Hanssen, "Public Morality," pp. 189-95.
56. Ya'kov Yehoshua, *Yerushalaim Tmol Shilshom* (Jerusalem: Rubin Mass, 1979), part 2, pp. 33-36. I am grateful to Yair Wallach for alerting me to this reference.
57. Jawhariya, *al-Quds al-'uthmaniya*, pp. 328-29.
58. Although upper-class and merchant families had been making strategic marriage arrangements across regions for many years, such arrangements were typically beyond the reach of most people.
59. Ami Ayalon, *Reading Palestine: Printing and Literacy, 1900-1948* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2002).
60. 'Awdat, "Shaykh Muhammad al-Salih."
61. Kamal al-'Asali, *Muqadima fi tarikh al-tibb fi-l-Quds* (Amman: University of Jordan Publications, 1994).
62. Turjman, *Diary*, "I Was Not Touched by a Human," 10 September 1915.
63. Turjman, *Diary*, "I Thought of Committing Suicide," 17 August 1915.
64. Ihsan's death is recorded by Khalil al-Sakakini, who was in prison in Damascus at the time. Al-Sakakini, *Yawmiyat*, vol. 2, p. 348.
65. I have been able to find three sets of love correspondence for this period in Palestine: love letters exchanged between al-Sakakini and Sultana 'Abdo; Musa 'Alami's letters to 'Alia Jabiri from Aleppo, whom he later married; and
66. See Issam Nassar, *Laqatat mughayira: al-taswir al-mahalli al-mubakkir fi-Filastin, 1850-1948* (Beirut and Ramallah: Kutub Publishing and Qattan Foundation, 2005).
67. Jawhariya, *al-Quds al-'uthmaniya*, p. 139.
68. Communicated to me by his grandson, Dr. Samir Awad, Ramallah, 16 July 2006.

Photography as Source Material for Jerusalem's Social History

Issam Nassar

Despite important headway, historians have not yet adequately considered the question of photographic documentation and representation. Most scholars, even today, see photography at best as a convenient way to illustrate their books and articles rather than as historical evidence, except perhaps as an entirely secondary source not meriting serious consideration. The use of photographs almost exclusively as illustrations—in other words, as mere confirmation of what the writer already claims in the text—is indicative of the assumption that photography has little to offer beyond its ability to depict the subject matter in front of the camera, as was suggested by Oliver Wendell Holmes in the nineteenth century when he wrote that the photograph is simply a “mirror with memory.”¹ The present essay argues that beyond ‘mirroring’ the historical event, photographs provide a window that allows the historian not simply to see history but also to see into it.

Photography, History, and Jerusalem

Soon after Louis-Jacques-Mandé Daguerre announced his photographic invention in 1839, many French photographers, soon followed by their British colleagues, set off for distant lands to bring back visual evidence of the wonders that existed beyond the imaginary boundaries of the western world. Among the many places that attracted them were Egypt and Palestine, two regions whose connection to European thought and

tradition goes back to antiquity. In December 1839, just months after Daguerre's invention became public, Horace Vernet and Frédéric Goupil-Fesquet landed in Palestine, the first to arrive with the purpose of photographing the country. They were soon followed by an influx of others who further documented Palestine and its religious sites.²

Photography's first encounters with Jerusalem mirrored the dominant European historical narrative of the city, which saw it primarily as a biblical site. This narrative had been shaped principally by travelers and theologians, but as of the nineteenth century, Jerusalem's history had become a fashionable topic for amateur and professional historians. A striking feature of these historians' writing is what appears to be a shared historiographical framework, with a chronology that begins with the founding of King David's capital and ends with the visit of the author. What was given prominence was the city's biblical history, with the many intervening centuries and other histories that unfolded there relegated to mere footnotes.

Within a short period of time, photography had become a tool to document distant lands for the purposes of research, curiosity, and colonial domination (direct or indirect). More specifically, it was used by governments, missionary organizations, and research institutes to support such diverse activities as archaeology, the biological and geological sciences, ethnography, and travel writing (for the production of travel guides). As an invention that coincided with the age of European colonial expansion, it played an important role in the depiction, justification, and articulation of European colonial expansion. Thanks to photography, images of colonized lands and peoples were now available for the citizens of colonial powers to contemplate, allowing them to articulate the idea of difference *visually*. To what extent photography contributed to the articulation of racism is a subject yet to be fully explored, but it is certainly not far-fetched to suggest that it played some role. Furthermore, photography, far from offering a simple objective depiction of its subject, very much offers a *construction* of that subject. Such constructions are conditioned not only by the photographer's choice of what to photograph and how, but also by the expectations and experiences of the viewer. All in all, photographs are never outside of the discourse of history, but very much part of the process of its making. The photography of Jerusalem in the nineteenth century clearly illustrates this point.

Generally speaking, nineteenth-century European photographers presented Jerusalem in the same way as contemporary historians have, as

a biblical site with a landscape conforming more to their biblical imagination than to the Ottoman city that it was. Far from attempting to capture the vitality of Jerusalem as it must have been at the time, they chose to photograph its sites and locations mentioned in the Bible, often providing captions that directly quoted or referred to biblical verses. Thus, the Jerusalem depicted in nineteenth-century European photography mirrored the European Christian imagination rather than a real place in this world. For these photographers, Palestine was reduced to Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and Nazareth, whose images, thanks to their efforts, became a commodity widely available to the European public.

Whether intentional or otherwise, the photographic 'biblification' of Palestine proved fruitful to European colonial projects at a time when the Ottoman Empire was at its weakest and most vulnerable to outside intrusions. The fact that Jerusalem was shown as largely uninhabited, with people appearing only when they seemed to evoke biblical scenes or as part of a religious ceremony, gave the impression of a place with meaning for Europe alone, and as a place in need of European dynamism, vision, and control. The legacy of such photographic representation without doubt also served the Zionist movement that began to emerge late in the century, when the slogan of Palestine as "a land without a people for a people without a land" was propagated to great effect. One can speculate that the photographic representation of Palestine as a virtually empty land may have counted for something in this context. Certainly, such photographs have proved useful to later writers in illustrating the Zionist presentation of Jerusalem as a stagnant backwater of the Ottoman Empire before the advent of Zionism and European Jewish immigration to the city. According to this version of history, the city's sole importance in Ottoman times related to its biblical history, with whatever modernity it possessed initiated by visiting missionaries and other Europeans. In this sense, the claim can be made that the nineteenth-century photographic depictions of Jerusalem did not merely reflect (and shape) the European popular imagination at the time, but also how the history of the city has been written. The virtual absence of Palestinians from the historical narratives is clearly echoed in the photographs in which they rarely appear.

In addition to their clear political agendas and their teleological nature, such images of the city, one could argue, are not about Jerusalem itself, but rather about it as a European city—better perceived or imagined. Although Zionist and Eurocentric historiography, and photographic representations, of Jerusalem is a topic of great importance, space limitations

do not allow me to dwell further on it in this essay.³ What concerns me here is whether a historical narrative (and imagination) of Jerusalem that is about the city itself—rather than about Europe, Christianity, Judaism and Israel, and Islam and its civilization and states—is even possible. In other words, is it possible to conceive of a history of Jerusalem that is not about any or all of the above?

It is not easy to answer such a question, as it would depend on a history whose writing has yet to be attempted. But this does not mean that fragments of such a history do not already exist or are not possible to write into the existing narratives. For the task is not to do away with the histories that have been written, but to subvert them by highlighting the contradictions they contain and the things that have been left out. In other words, the undertaking is to challenge their historicity and to write a history that gives agency to the native populations. The people of Jerusalem are the city; they need to be taken into account in the study of the history of their city. Without them, there would perhaps be no city, only an archaeological site. It does not necessarily follow that other voices and actors could not be incorporated into such a history. It means, rather, that the agency of the indigenous population as active subjects must become a part of any narrative produced—a narrative that would then be grounded in a multiplicity of overlapping modernities that shaped and reshaped the ways in which Jerusalemites lived and had their lives transformed.

But how can such a narrative be produced if the bulk of the documentary sources available to historians ignore the very presence of the native population? For most of the modern period, neither the Jerusalemites in particular nor the Palestinians in general have had a central governmental institution that specializes in gathering, preserving, and classifying historical documents. The institutions that eventually came into being and started to collect and preserve, such as the Institute for Palestine Studies in Beirut and the ill-fated Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) research center, were established outside of historic Palestine and after a great number of documents were lost during the *nakba*. Still, in the absence of a state with a national archive, museum, or library, the closest thing we have today is the Institute of Palestine Studies, which has a large library and archive in Beirut. The fact remains, however, that the core of the archival material available to historians of this area is not Palestinian nor is it fully devoted to the lives of the Palestinians. Archives such as the Ottoman in Istanbul, the British in London, the U.S. National Archives, and the Library of Congress in Washington,

as well as the Zionist or Israeli state archives, might include some materials on the Palestinians, but the scope of their collection practices and their institutional goals do not include or mandate the task of preserving Palestinian history and heritage.

Therefore, to write a history that breaks free of 'the sovereign imagination' requires the historian to search for other types of source materials, such as personal papers, family documents, memoirs, and photographs. Memoirs and family and personal papers are already being utilized by historians (though to an insufficient degree), but photographs have been almost entirely ignored. In what follows, I will limit myself to examining photographs as sources for the study of Jerusalem. Because of Jerusalem's centrality in the life of Palestine, its share of photographs and photographic activities surpasses that of any other city in the country.

In order to use photographs as historical evidence, however, we need to reorient our way of seeing them. We need to discard the 'essentialist' depth—where a photograph stands for a specific meaning usually to be found in the captions assigned to it, in this case by the colonial representational regimes—and instead give validity to what actually appears on the surface of the image. In other words, what is needed is to strip away the 'colonial' positioning of people locked into fixed identities from which they were not expected to escape. The task, then, is to free the persons photographed from the 'narrativized depth' that characterizes them, to 'denarrativize' them so as to restore them to who they were, socially and individually. This process is, in effect, an act of subversion insofar as it 'deforms' the sovereign narrative. In essence, the attempt is to relegate the dominant European narrative to the margins, while seeing in each photograph the people, the places, and the events that appear.

In what follows, I will examine early photographic practices in Jerusalem, with the aim both of placing Jerusalemites at the heart of their city's history and of illustrating how photography can help the historian "break free from the model of a sovereign 'Western' [or Zionist] consciousness and reason" about the city and its history.⁴

Photography as Indigenous Practice

It was not long before photography became a practiced craft in the main cities of Palestine. Already by the early 1860s, a local school teaching photography had been established in Jerusalem by Armenian Patriarch Yessai Garabedian, whose passion for photography competed—if not

conflicted—with his duties as a religious leader. But instead of practicing photography himself, the patriarch opted to have young Armenians taught the new art. Within a few decades, photographic studios were emerging in Jerusalem, Jaffa, and other important Palestinian towns. The first photographic establishment in Jerusalem was that of Garabed Krikorian, a student of Garabedian, in the mid-1880s. Next came Khalil Ra'ad, who set up his studio in 1890. Both were located just outside the Jaffa Gate of Jerusalem's Old City. Several other photographers also established their studios there or nearby in the first two decades of the twentieth century. These included the photographers Saba (known as Savides), Yusuf (or Joseph) Toumayan, Sam'an al-Sahar, Abu 'Issa Freij, and Elia Kahwajian, among others. Judging from the sheer number of its commercial practitioners, the photographic trade appears to have become a profitable business.⁵

Like the earlier European photographers, Jerusalem's early local photographers continued to photograph biblical-style landscapes and important religious sites such as the Dome of the Rock, the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, and so on, all destined primarily for the tourist market. The continuing importance of the tourist trade can be seen in the local photographers' advertisements in foreign languages and in the fact that some of them even used foreign names: the above mentioned Arab photographer Saba, for example, was better known as "Savides," the Greek form of his name, doubtless to appeal to the large number of Greek pilgrims coming into the city, and Anton Karmi, also an Arab, who became the official photographer of the Russian Church, signed his pictures as "Karminov." Upon visiting the shops of the local photographers, the tourist was able to choose pictures to buy by looking at large albums that contained numbered pictures with captions. Some such album books survived, though most were lost during the 1948 war.

Nonetheless, an examination of the work of these early local photographers—based on the collections of negatives and photographs they left, as well as on pictures in private family collections—indicates that the core of their work was portrait photography of various kinds. They were also frequently commissioned to record important family and communal occasions. Their portrait work and commissioned work outside is what sets them apart from their European, and perhaps Zionist, counterparts of the time. It is also in these particular genres of photography that the work of the local photographers constitutes a window onto the lives of the city's natives and their society.

Public demand for photographs increased with the proliferation of studios. People wanted to appear in pictures and went to the studios for this purpose, paying the price demanded for the product they wanted. In other words, in contrast to the stock images recalling biblical history or exotica captured by professional photographers for the tourist trade, here it was the subjects *themselves* who initiated the photography, and the resulting product belonged to them alone. Thus, the posing customers wanted to see themselves in ways that would satisfy their specific social, legal, or personal needs; clearly, they posed as their individual selves, not as representatives of a group or as characters in a historical narrative. Furthermore, following the purchase of their own photographs, they framed them, placed them in albums, or tucked them away in a drawer. What they did *not* do was to publish them in books or illustrated Bibles, or exhibit them as works of art. Without meaning to, by the sheer act of personalizing and claiming the pictures, they were subverting historical narratives and other representations that made use of photography.

Take, for example, the photographs of women from the local bourgeoisie shown in Bedouin attire. This trend appeared early in local photography and seems to mimic the nineteenth-century European tradition of photographing 'types' of people in the Holy Land, such as Bedouin or peasants, Christian clergy, rabbis, and Samaritans. The identities of the persons photographed in almost all such pictures were never revealed, since they were meant to represent not individuals but archetypes. Making sense of that essence or archetype required a minimum knowledge of the European, or later on Zionist, worldview. Later this practice mutated into a fashion among certain European travelers, who liked to have themselves photographed in a foreign land in 'native dress.' Stephen Graham, for example, who visited Jerusalem a few years before the outbreak of the First World War, described a large crowd gathered near the Thomas Cook travel office in Jerusalem that was watching what at first appeared to be a visiting princess. In fact, it turned out to be an Englishwoman dressed in a garment reminiscent of those found on Babylonian statues posing for a camera outside a photographer's shop.⁶ The practice was not limited to women, and men also had themselves photographed in Bedouin robes. Francis Frith, one of the earliest photographers of the Near East, had his own photograph taken in what appears to be a Syrian traditional dress. In Jerusalem, several early local photographers, including Krikorian, Ra'ad, and Toumayan, often advertised their specialization in this type of photography. Below is an

advertisement in German by Toumayan picturing a range of local costumes—in styles particular to Ramallah, Bethlehem, and the Bedouin, among others—available for his clients.

The principal clients for such photographs, however, were not European, but Palestinian, for the practice of being photographed in ‘local dress’ soon became widespread among Palestinian women of the middle and upper classes. Once the mode had been appropriated by the local population, clearly the meaning changed. Thus when my great aunt Julia

J. TOUMAYAN

Königlich Spanischer Hofphotograph

Werkstätte am Neuen Tor gegenüber N. D. de France JERUSALEM

Gegründet 1907

Künstliche Photographien und Vergrößerungen

Photographien in Trachten der Eingeborenen

von Bethlehen — Ramallah

Beduine und Beduinen (auch in Gruppen.)

Photographien der Pilgergruppen auf Bestellung.

Eintwicklung und abziehen der Platten und Films innerhalb 24 Stunden

Verkauf von Platten und Films aller Firmen.

Trachten der Eingeborenen Stehen zur Verfügung unserer Kunden



Advertisement from the collection of Rona Sela; it also appeared in her book *Tsilum be-Palestine bi-sbenot ba-sbeloshim veba-araba'im* (Photography in Palestine in the 1930s and 1940s) (Tel Aviv: Hotza'at ha-Kibutz ha-Me'uhad, 2000). Used with permission.



Julia Lucy (left) and a friend in a studio portrait, circa 1920.

Lucy, for example, visited a local photographic establishment around 1920 with a friend of hers and asked that they be photographed dressed in village garments and holding the kind of water jug used by peasant women to fetch water from the spring, her motivation was not biblical or ethnographical or to imitate what certain European travelers liked to do. She simply wanted to have a picture of herself and her best friend taken in a style that had become fashionable among women of her social class; indeed, such photographs actually signified belonging to a certain stratum of Palestinian society. Thus Aunt Julia, in ordering such a photograph, was not interested in presenting archetypes but in representing herself and her friend as *individuals*. This photograph made it to all her relatives in the various parts of the world: her sister who had immigrated to Ecuador, her brothers in Jerusalem, and her other relatives in Amman, Ramallah, and Beirut. In other words, Julia, like all Palestinian women who had themselves photographed in this way (and countless such photographs are to be found today in family collections) was appropriating this originally orientalist mode of representation for her own very individual purposes.

Another common practice among the local Jerusalem photographers relates to the production of family portraits, which took hold first among Christian Arab families from the late nineteenth century but had been

adopted by wealthy Muslim urban families by the 1920s. The patriarchal nature of Arab society in Palestine at the time is evident in such photographs, where the father is usually shown standing in the center of the photograph with the mother next to him, either seated or placed in a such a way as to make her look shorter, even if she was not. Their children would be gathered around them or, if they were very small, carried by the mother. As time went on, family photographs without the father became more common, particularly in towns where emigration was a noticeable phenomenon, such as Ramallah and the Bethlehem area. Emigration to the Americas or wartime conscription might explain the father's absence (indeed, it is likely that such photographs were taken for his benefit).

Yet another common type of studio photograph was of men in military uniform. This genre attained great popularity during the Great War (1914–18). While portraits of military and civilian Ottoman or Jerusalemite leaders were common in the prewar period, such as the portraits of mayors, governors, and officials such as Jamal Pasha and 'Ali Roshen,⁷ during the war the portraits of the younger, and poorer, generation in Ottoman army uniform became widespread. It is likely that such pictures were for the benefit of the loved ones left behind when the soldier took off for distant fronts to fight in the name of the sultan. These photographs were often the first and the last ever taken of these young men, many of whom never came back from the war.⁸ This practice long survived the First World War, with photographs of men posing in uniform—as British police under the Mandate, as fighters during the 1948 war, as Jordanian soldiers, and still later as PLO resistance fighters—are still to be found in almost every Palestinian home. While Krikorian, Ra'ad, and Toumayan (among others) produced this type of portrait in their studios, the next generation of local photographers, such as Hanna Safieh and 'Ali Zarur, took such photographs outside, in the field. Several photographs from the 1940s by Safieh, for example, show leaders like 'Abd al-Qadir al-Husayni posing for the camera surrounded by other armed men from the al-Jihad al-Muqaddas guerrilla forces that he led.

With the emergence of a state apparatus during the British Mandate period, photography in Palestine became an important tool of governmental control and surveillance, was already the case in Europe. With the introduction of identity cards and passports, most Palestinians—certainly the men in urban areas—were now in possession of a studio photograph of themselves. But the passport photograph, although a portrait in itself, should not be confused with the patterns discussed thus far.

In such photographs, not only was the subject required to hold a certain pose ordained by the authorities, but the attire had to be civilian. Military uniforms and posing with friends or family members were not allowed in such pictures. On the other hand, the fact that most people now had at least one photograph of themselves—the passport photograph—no doubt contributed to the gradual disappearance in Palestine of a very specialized type of photography—postmortem photography—to be discussed below.

Besides portrait photography, the other major category practiced by local photographers involved communal and familial special occasions. These included religious ceremonies, family events such as wedding and funerals, and school graduations. It was also rather common for schools, particularly foreign or missionary schools, to hire photographers to produce images of class graduations and of their charitable activities, which must have been useful for fundraising overseas. A good example of this type of commissioned work can be seen in the work of Khalil Ra'ad and 'Issa Sawabini of Jaffa. Both photographed school and college graduating classes throughout the British Mandate period, possibly a custom picked up from elite schools in Britain, such as Oxford and Cambridge, or even from Ottoman military schools.

While there is little about most of the special occasion photography that is particular to Palestine, postmortem photography (photographing the deceased before or during the funeral) deserves special attention. This type of photography seems to have been more common among Christians than among Muslims or Jews.⁹ Photographs of deceased clergy, especially patriarchs and bishops, can be found in the photographic archives of many churches of Palestine as of the late nineteenth century. This tradition, which was apparently limited at first to the clergy, seems to have become popular among the Christian laity in the early part of the twentieth century. In fact, it was not uncommon for local photographic studios to advertise a specialization in funereal photography. In many instances, the deceased, surrounded by family, would be photographed in what appeared to be a near-standing position, with the coffin raised. There is no record of how postmortem photography emerged in the Near East, but it was not unknown in other parts of the world in this period, being relatively common not only in Europe and the United States but also in India, as a recent study of Indian photography by Christopher Pinney illustrates.¹⁰ Resort to postmortem photographs in the case of Palestine was perhaps the outcome of a desire to preserve the image of a person who had never been photographed. It also

demonstrates a more general human trait: taking a picture with the deceased surrounded by family members was perhaps, as Pinney points out, “an expression of a combination of love . . . and the need for grief-stricken relatives to cling to memories of the deceased.”¹¹

Besides local professional photographers, photography eventually became accessible to a wider amateur public in Palestine. Particularly in the period following the British occupation in 1918, individuals began to own cameras and to take photographs themselves. One can find in the archive of the Arab Image Foundation in Beirut, a recently established foundation that collects old photographs from the Arab world, many examples of photographs taken by amateurs such as Jad Mikhail of Ramallah and Hisham ‘Abd al-Hadi of Jerusalem.¹² These pictures were of limited public use if compared with those taken by the professionals, but they, too, offer a window into family and social life in Jerusalem. Similarly, in the large collection of photographs preserved at the archive of the Institute for Palestine Studies, one can find many photographs taken by amateur photographers, in addition to professional work such as the collection of Khalil Ra‘ad.

Intimate Histories: Family Albums as Narratives

Palestinians who had the means to be photographed with any frequency, or those (increasingly numerous as the mandate progressed) who came to own cameras and therefore took pictures themselves, cherished their photographs and cared for them by placing them in albums. As collections of photographs carefully organized in certain sequences, photographic albums are rarely studied by scholars as subjects in themselves. Yet it is my conviction that albums represent an important arena in which the ‘western’ narrative and historiography of Jerusalem and Palestine can most effectively be challenged. In addition to the individual pictures that they contain, they form a narrative and tell stories carefully plotted by their owners.

If photography’s arrival in Jerusalem and its adoption as a local practice is a relatively recent phenomenon, photographic albums are even more recent. The history of the photographic album in Europe goes back to 1854, following the appearance of a new kind of *carte-de-visite*: a small photograph mounted on a card. To collect and organize these cards, albums came into use. At the outset the albums were somewhat impersonal insofar as the photographs they contained were not yet of an

intimate or family or social nature, and the albums themselves were necessary only as a kind of depository. It is thought that the new "tradition" was "spurred on by the example of Queen Victoria" and quickly became a craze, first in Britain and then in North America, from the 1860s on.¹³

The tradition took longer to catch on in Palestine, especially among the indigenous population, but it is likely that some of Jerusalem's European visitors or residents began arranging photographs in albums early on. After all, the Prince of Wales's visit to the East, including Palestine, in 1862 had produced an album of photographs by Francis Bedford, who accompanied him specifically to document the journey. Other European dignitaries, including the wife of British consul James Finn, who served in Jerusalem from 1846 to 1863, also collected photographs; Mrs. Finn's collection was preserved in photograph albums now found at the Palestine Exploration Fund in London. Similarly, the Ottoman sultan, 'Abd al-'Aziz, the sovereign ruler of Palestine, had initiated in 1862 a grand scheme for photographing the empire, and to this end dispatched photographers to various parts of the realm, including Palestine. By the early twentieth century, a number of establishments in Jerusalem, such as the Franciscan Press, were selling albums of photographs of the Holy Land encased in olivewood covers, sometimes with dried Palestinian flowers glued inside. These albums, which mirrored the journey a Christian pilgrim would have taken at the time, included photographs of all the biblical locations—but not of the inhabitants—in the holy cities of Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and Nazareth. By the 1930s, official visitors were often presented with photograph albums of various sites in the country. The Mufti of Jerusalem presented one such album to the Archbishop of Canterbury when the latter visited Palestine.

At a more general level, albums entered Palestinian society in the form of a kind of family record. Family albums focused not on sites in Palestine, but on the life, family, and social circle of the person who assembled them. Photographic albums were gaining popularity in Palestine from as early as the last decade of Ottoman rule.

Personal or family photograph albums did not contain only, or even mainly, photographs taken by the family itself. But even if they were taken professionally (which was most often the case, especially in the early years), they would be of a private nature, often arranged to narrate the life of the person or family whose album it was. My great aunt, Julia Lucy, for example, carefully compiled a series of albums, and the photograph (reproduced above) showing her and her friend in Bedouin attire

was carefully placed in one of these albums along with photographs of her friends and family taken in the same period. Another of her albums narrates her life with her husband in Haiti, where they owned a business and, judging from the photographs, led an upper-class life. Yet another album depicts their life in Palestine upon their return, probably in the 1930s, and records various projects such as the building of their house in the Talbiya quarter of Jerusalem, and the construction of a large modern building (owned jointly with her brother) on Ben Yehuda Street, just off Jaffa Road, the main commercial street in the new city. The building was rented to businesses, including some Jewish organizations, which is probably why it was bombed by Palestinians in the tit-for-tat bombing and other attacks by Jews and Arabs in the early stages of the fighting that followed the passage of the United Nations partition plan in November 1947.

It goes without saying that family photographs convey the particular, unique experiences of the family in question. Yet from my great aunt's albums, and from the albums I examined of the Salti family, who used to live in the western suburbs of Jerusalem (and today in Amman and Beirut), the Khalil al-Sakakini family of Jerusalem, and the albums of the late Fayege Tamari of Jaffa, who lived for some time in Hebron before settling in Ramallah after the *nakba*, as well as other albums, certain patterns emerge. Beyond the recording of personal and intimate moments in individual lives, home architecture and garden landscape seem to be part of the general story told in photographs. People built houses they were proud of and furnished them with elaborate European-style furniture, at the same time making sure to include intricate local art and artisanal works in the display. They posed for the pictures always dressed up nicely, even when picnicking by a hillside. Their social and familial occasions—weddings, baptisms, engagements, graduations, holidays, and other such events—are depicted in great detail.

Given the preciousness of photographs in the early years, most of the albums were compiled little by little as the photographs were taken. Even when put together much later, an album was generally made by the person whose life and family it illustrated. Some albums, however, have been constructed by family members of a later generation. Such was the case of Mona Halaby, who put together an album of photographs of her mother, aunt, and other relatives taken when they lived in Jerusalem, before they had to leave their homes forever in 1948. In these albums, Halaby set out to preserve a family history, reconstructing through photographs their lives and indeed the life of an entire society, or a section of

it, that had disappeared forever. Along with the photographs, she collected personal items and memorabilia, including letters, documents, and notebooks. Through her act of collecting, organizing, and preserving, Halaby was able to piece together the life her mother had led before Halaby herself was born, in a time and place she had never known.

From the trove of photographs, letters, and notebooks that came into her possession, she also reconstructed the courtship of her great aunt, 'Afifeh, and the man she was to marry, Alfonzo, writing a short essay entitled "Courtship in Ottoman Jerusalem: The Intimate Correspondence of Alphonse and Afifeh."¹⁴ In this essay, illustrated by some of the photographs that she acquired, Halaby was able to "open a window into the mores and taboos of that era. What is most interesting, however, is the depth and complexity of feeling as the young couple progresses from friendship to engagement to marriage."¹⁵ From her collection, we see the Jerusalem of 'Afifeh and Alfonzo. This was the Jerusalem that was termed 'new' because its center of activity lay outside the Old City, in neighborhoods built starting in the early decades of the twentieth century. The family lived in al-Baq'a, west of the Old City. They had a network of friends and relatives who lived close by and who appear to have been an integral part of their social and familial life.

Old photographs almost always call forth a sense of sadness, but the sadness one feels looking at the family albums I saw is perhaps more acute given the awareness of how it all ended. Interestingly, in most of these albums and collections, photographs of the post-*nakba* period are rare if not entirely absent, as if to underline the suddenness of the break. Consider the photograph reproduced below from Mona Halaby's collection. It is of a group of people standing at a bus stop. There is little in the photograph to indicate anything tragic or definitive. Yet I know from Mona that it was taken in the spring of 1948, when these family members were waiting for the bus to take them on what they thought would be a short "vacation" until the hostilities subsided. They could not have known at the time that they would never be allowed to return. These homes, which they had designed and built with such pride—like all the other grand Arab houses built in al-Baq'a, Qatamun, Talbiya, and other Arab neighborhoods of West Jerusalem—would be given by Israel to new Jewish immigrants or to the more privileged members of what became the Israeli elite. Four decades after the much-lauded 'unification' of Jerusalem in 1967, the situation remains unchanged.



This photograph was taken in al-Baq'a area south of Jerusalem in April or May 1948. Pictured from left to right are Zakia Jabr, Melly Ishaq Ziadeh, Tina Shamas, Alice Shamas, an unidentified girl, Afif Jabr, Spiro Shamas (Tina and Alice's father), and an unidentified man. From the collection of Mona Halaby.

With the destruction of Palestinian society in 1948, family memoirs and photographs have become all the more precious, as they are documents not only of a given family or individuals but also of a society now vanished. In this sense, memoirs and photographs from the period could be used much more extensively than they have been thus far by social historians. And the photograph album is a record that combines both memoirs and photographs. Its nature as a chronologically organized document mirrors the narrations of the autobiographer and can offer insights that a single photograph often cannot.

It is important to remember, however, the limitations of photographic albums—at least taken alone—as sources for the study of history. They need to be seen first and foremost as objects relating to memory. Their relationship to memory involves not only the act of remembrance but also possibly of forgetting, or blotting out. The image, preserved on the surface of the photograph, can help preserve a specific memory. As one of many organized in an album, however, the individual photograph exists in a totally different moment in time and narration—that is, context—than the image it preserves. It is now seen

not in relation to the specific event it depicts but to the totality of the storyline that the album, through its ordering of photographs, has been constructed to tell. When Mona Halaby arranged the photographs of her deceased relatives, she was recreating their lives through the photographs she chose to include. She was restructuring their lives to highlight certain elements or relations, while downplaying or completely omitting others, either through the positioning or exclusion of photographs. The albums in this case constitute not a record of the lives they depict, but a reconstruction or reformulation of those lives. Thus the album, as an object of memory, is a compilation of images, each constituting a trace that could evoke a corresponding moment in the memory of the compiler of the album.

Wasif Jawhariya and the “Photographic History of Palestine”

Most photograph albums, as we have seen, were for family use, but there were rare exceptions of more public albums compiled by individuals. Certainly the most remarkable in this category known to date is the collection of albums of Wasif Jawhariya (1897–1973), a musician whose recently published memoirs cover his life in Jerusalem from about 1904 until his involuntary departure in 1948.¹⁶ While writing the memoirs, Jawhariya put together what he described as the photographic history of Palestine during the late Ottoman period and the British Mandate. This unique collection is remarkable for its sheer volume and meticulous presentation: close to nine hundred photographs carefully arranged in seven volumes, accompanied by several notebooks providing descriptions of each and every photograph.¹⁷ With careful attention to documentation, each photograph was given a serial number linking it to the corresponding caption in the notebooks. Although a resource in themselves, the albums were apparently compiled primarily to complement the memoirs, as can be seen from the fact that every now and then Jawhariya refers readers to a specific photograph illustrating an event he has just narrated, indicating the photograph's serial number and its location in a particular album.

The first of the seven albums is devoted to Jerusalem during the Ottoman period, while the others present the general history of Palestine during the more than forty years covered in Jawhariya's memoirs. Each album reflects an overall chronological arrangement, within which

there is an arrangement by themes. Some sections represent a who's who of the time, with photographs of Jerusalem notables and public figures; Ottoman, and later British, officials; patriarchs and clergy of the various Christian denominations; and the Mufti of Jerusalem and various Muslim dignitaries. Noteworthy events are recorded: the funeral procession of the Sharif Husayn of Mecca, the landing of the first airplane in Jerusalem at the end of the Ottoman years; the entry of General Allenby's troops after the Ottoman defeat, and the arrival of the first British High Commissioner. With the onset of the British Mandate, a number of photographs point to growing unrest: rallies and demonstrations, the Emergency Relief Committee formed to help Palestinians afflicted in the 1929 riots, and Jewish victims of those same riots in Hebron; a somber commemoration of Balfour Day; various Palestinian delegations to successive political conferences; the assembled participants of the Pan-Islamic Conference; the Arab Higher Committee after the outbreak of the 1936–39 Arab revolt; British police searches and house demolitions; and so on. The albums also present many photographs of happier events, such as visits to Palestine by various celebrities of the day, including the Egyptian actor, 'Ali al-Kassar; Sami al-Shawwa, a well-known violinist; and other personalities. Finally, many photographs depict more everyday scenes or occurrences: motorcades, funeral processions, hospital inaugurations, newly laid railroad lines, student bodies and staffs of local schools, villagers of various regions of Palestine, teas and receptions, religious processions and outdoor celebrations involving tens of thousands of people, student bodies of various schools, local musicians, singers, and dancers (including one of Jawhariya's favorite belly dancers), and the members of the Jerusalem Radio Orchestra.

Jawhariya collected the photographs; he did not take them. Indeed, some are of the generic sort sold in large numbers by local photographers to tourists and others, including panoramic shots, photographs of various religious sites (but always with people in them), and so on. Jawhariya did not give any importance to the original intention of the photograph or to the identity of the photographer. He himself never noted such information, though some of the photographs are signed or stamped on the back with the photographer's logo, and I have been able to identify the photographers of a number of additional pictures. The photographs were taken by a range of photographers who worked in or visited Palestine, and especially by Jerusalem-based photographers, including Ra'ad, Krikorian,



Larsson's photograph on the occasion of the surrender of Jerusalem on 9 December 1917. According to Jawhariya, the people in the picture are: Front row, left to right: police commissioner 'Abd al-Qadir al-'Alami; Burhan Tahir al-Husayni; Amin 'Abd al-Latif al-Husayni; British sergeant; Daoud Muhammad Salih al-Husayni; Jawad Isma'il al-Husayni; British sergeant; police officer Husayn al-'Assali; mayor of Jerusalem Husayn Salim al-Husayni; advocate Rushdi al-Muhtadi; Tawfiq Salih al-Husayni; police commissioner Ahmad Sharaf; unknown police officer. Back row, Salim Elias al-Shimandi and Hanna Iskandar al-Laham. Jawhariya does not identify the British officers, but in the photograph's handwritten caption they are named as Sergeants Sedwick and Harcourt of the 2/19th Battalion, London Regiment.

Safieh, and Kahwajian. Quite a few were taken by Jewish photographers working in Jerusalem, and others by American Colony photographers such as Erik Matson and his apprentices.

But this was not the kind of information that interested Jawhariya. In his own captions he documented content: the names of the people and places shown, the nature of the event recorded, and sometimes anecdotes about individuals pictured. His interest was clearly to bring together images that would convey his city and country over a given period of time. Taken together, they provide a valuable and vivid visual, social, and political history of a crucial period of modern Palestine. In terms of “placing the Palestinians in their history,” the many photographs from the Ottoman period are especially noteworthy, giving a clear sense of the vibrancy, movement, and life so absent from European presentations.

One picture in particular, taken by Lars (Lewis) Larsson, one of the photographers of the American Colony in Jerusalem, stands as an excellent example of the simultaneous, nonintersecting histories as seen from the differing perspectives of ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ that this essay has sought to convey. The photograph in question shows what was thought to be Jerusalem officials’ surrender to the British forces on 9 December 1917 (in fact the British officers refused the surrender because they were only sergeants, but agreed to be photographed). It has been reproduced in a number of books on the First World War, and the captions invariably name only the two British officers depicted. The same photograph appears in Jawhariya’s album, and there, the caption lists the names and positions of everyone in the picture—everyone, that is, except for the two British officers. In his accompanying text, he writes about being with his brother and mother that day at his older sister’s house near the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA), and lists the names of the others who were with them at the time—many of them soldiers in the Ottoman army who had deserted their positions in the chaos and disarray of the final defeat. Then, continuing his account, he talks about the surrender and the photograph. His narrative and commentary—a striking and unintentional counterpart to the prevailing narrative in the west—reminds us of the city’s people and of their lives during that historic moment. It provides us with a precious opportunity to bridge nonintersecting histories and incorporate the voice of Jerusalemite life into history.

Notes

1. Oliver Wendell Holmes, "The Stereoscope and the Stereograph," in Alan Trachtenberg, *Classical Essays on Photography* (New Haven, CT: Leete's Island Books, 1980), pp. 71–82.
2. For further details about European photographers of Jerusalem in the nineteenth century, see Issam Nassar, *European Portrayals of Jerusalem: Religious Fascinations and Colonialist Imaginations* (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 2006), pp. 121–48.
3. For further discussion of Eurocentric histories of Jerusalem, see my chapter, "Jerusalem in the Late Ottoman Period: Historical Writing and the Native Voice," in *Jerusalem: Idea and Reality*, ed. Tamar Mayer and Suleiman Mourad (London: Routledge, 2008).
4. Christopher Pinney, *Camera Indica: The Social Life of Indian Photographs* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), p. 202.
5. For a detailed history of the various studios, see chapter two of my previous study, *Laqatat mughayira: al-taswir al-mahalli al-mubakkir fi-Filastin, 1850–1948* (Beirut and Ramallah: Kutub Publishing and Qattan Foundation, 2005).
6. Stephen Graham, *With the Russian Pilgrims to Jerusalem* (London: Macmillan, 1913), pp. 116–18.
7. Ahmad Jamal Pasha was the governor of Syria, which included Palestine, during the First World War, while 'Ali Roshen was Jerusalem's military governor during the same period.
8. It is commonly believed that a third of the Ottoman army was wiped out during the war.
9. The apparent absence of the practice among Muslims and Jews is most probably related to prohibitions in both religions against graven images (Deut. 5:6–10 and Qu'ran 6:103), prohibitions that would be particularly observed in the rituals of death and burial.
10. Pinney, *Camera Indica*.
11. Pinney, *Camera Indica*, p. 139.
12. These photographs are available for viewing on the website of the Arab Image Foundation at <http://www.fai.org.lb>.
13. See Nancy C. Micklewright, "Personal, Public, and Political (Re)Constructions: Photographs and Consumption," in Donald Quataert, ed. *Consumption Studies and the History of the Ottoman Empire, 1550–1922: An Introduction* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2000), p. 271.
14. Mona Hajjar Halaby, "Courtship in Ottoman Jerusalem: The Intimate Correspondence of Alphonse and Afifeh," *Jerusalem Quarterly*, no. 26 (Spring 2006), pp. 30–51.

15. Halaby, "Courtship in Ottoman Jerusalem," p. 31.
16. Wasif Jawhariya, *al-Quds al-'uthmaniya fi-l-mudbakkirat al-jawhariya*, ed. Salim Tamari and Issam Nassar (Beirut: Institute for Palestine Studies, 2003); Wasif Jawhariya, *al-Quds al-intidabiya fi-l-mudbakkirat al-jawhariya*, ed. Salim Tamari and Issam Nassar (Beirut: Institute for Palestine Studies, 2005). The first volume of the memoir covers his life in Jerusalem from about 1904 until 1917, and the second from 1917 until his involuntary departure in 1948.
17. This collection is one of a number of collections archived by the Institute for Palestine Studies in Beirut. Unfortunately, space permitted the inclusion of only a handful of excerpts from a vast collection in the two-volume memoir.

8

Excavating Memory Oral History and the Case of Suhmata

May Seikaly

Why? O why my little one? Suhmatan is my father,
and Suhmata is dear to me.
They ask me where I was born, O my pretty little one.
I was born in Suhmata, and Suhmata is dear to me.
Suhmata I won't forget your graces, Suhmata I won't forget you,
nor forget your olives, nor forget those who dwelt in you.¹

This improvised poem (*zajal*), spoken spontaneously by a simple, uneducated old woman in the course of an interview, can be said to encapsulate the feelings of all those who have their roots and heritage in the hundreds of Palestinian villages destroyed during the *nakba* of 1948–49. The village here is Suhmata, and its story, even if the details, timing, and immediate circumstances may differ, is similar to that of all Palestinian villages erased by the Zionist forces in the process of creating Israel. It is a story of people dispersed and exiled from their villages, of their ongoing sense of injustice and trauma, their persistent attachment to their roots, and their yearning to return. For many years, the voices of these people went unheard. When the narrative of the victorious and powerful silences the narrative of the powerless and dispossessed, voice and memory remain as the documents of history and the witnesses to its truth.

This chapter focuses on the story of one village, Suhmata, as excavated from the memories and memorials of those who themselves lived through the *nakba* or whose lives were forever shaped by the expulsion

and dispersal it caused. The chapter is based on oral documentation from Suhmatans dispersed over the globe and on interviews with those who experienced expulsion as adults or as children, or through the memories of their parents. It is the testimonial of the victims on what actually took place, and the tenacity of their roots, their identity, and their demand to return to their villages and land.

National Narratives, Suppressed Voices

For historians, to record the ‘historical truth’ in its various dimensions, to investigate the sources and records and their basis in fact, is a professional duty. More often than not, the ‘truths’ of the official establishment—mainly the records and ‘truths’ of the victors—are recognized and encoded, while other truths—of the vanquished, the unrepresented, the marginalized—go unrecorded and are ignored. It is thus that a crucial part of history is lost, amputated, or at best silenced.

National and nationalist narratives have traditionally been constructed as manipulative instruments of power, often knowingly at the expense of truth. Such has been the Israeli official nationalist narrative, particularly its story of the “war of independence.” Israel’s version of its own heroism and self-sacrifice in building its state and its complete denial of the central role it played in the destruction of Palestinian society have been encapsulated in a national narrative, tightly controlled by state power and ideology, aimed at ignoring, negating, or denigrating the Palestinian narrative of the events of 1948. While the Israeli account of 1948–49 is perhaps the most obvious example of the state’s manipulation of facts, it is but one part in a long history of such manipulation—starting from the notion of a “land without a people”—aimed at forming a narrative programmed to become embedded in the psyche and unconscious mind frame of Israeli society. Such a narrative, stemming from within the philosophical premise of Zionism and aimed at the creation of a pure Jewish state, was instilled gradually, nurtured by ideological indoctrination and within a contrived environment of eternal strife propagated by the Zionists. For such a strategy—whose unstated goal was the ethnic cleansing of Palestine—to succeed, dehumanizing the Palestinians was essential. Part of this dehumanization involved making sure Palestinians’ voices were not heard.

While the Israeli narrative willfully suppressed the voices of the *nakba*’s victims, the Palestinian side, too, paid little attention to documenting the

human dimensions of the history of dispossession. Although details of the *nakba* and the dispersal and fragmentation that followed were set down by faith-based, humanitarian, and international organizations, as well as by some scholarly works at the time, for the most part the refugees' own stories went unrecorded. Contributing to the silence were the destitution and low educational levels of those worst hit by the expulsions of 1948, notably those coming from the villages destroyed by the Zionist troops, compounded by trauma, fear, feelings of powerlessness, and shame. It should also be noted that Palestinian historiography was burdened with survivalist concerns: the hostile environments where historians ended up, whether in Israel for the minority or the Arab countries for the majority, contributed to the suppression and introversion of their narratives. Finally, the Palestinian national discourse that emerged following the 1948 trauma, and particularly with the rise of organized armed struggle in the 1960s, continued to reflect the orientation of the traditionally nationalist (even chauvinistic) and elitist (urban, more literate, more politicized) strata of society, which paid scant attention to the accounts of the rural refugees.

It is only in the last two decades that the signal importance of the forgotten, overlooked, or suppressed voices of the powerless has been recognized, and that oral history has come into its own as an area of study. As a result, a more balanced historical narrative is being shaped. Whether recorded or orally transmitted, facts are human perceptions of 'truth' as experienced and reported. As such, they have the same power to create historical legacy and knowledge of the past. This new historiography faces the challenge of humanizing the fields of investigation by drawing in the oral narratives from the memory of those who lived the experience, and so verifying and enlarging alternative interpretations of the past. Through this method, genuine historical consciousness is developed.

While the story of Suhmata and other destroyed Palestinian villages has been ignored in the official narratives—willfully by the Israelis, neglectfully by the Palestinians—memories of the villagers themselves have been kept vibrant and alive, told and retold for more than a half-century, out of existential need, belief in justice, and the hope of ensuring the truthful exposure of their plight. For Suhmatans, as for all dispossessed Palestinians, the tales of the *nakba* are relayed through the ever-present oral tradition of the culture in all its forms: stories, reminiscences, spontaneous poetry (*badd*, *sajal*), song, dance, and performance. Although memories of these events came from people of varied socioeconomic and religious

backgrounds today, they all give similar impressions and evince deep, powerful emotions. It is clear that memories of injustice are remembered, communicated, and reconstructed more vividly and trenchantly than others as a result of their emotional impact and long-lasting effects.

The Nightmare of Suffering

Whether Palestinians are from towns or villages, whether they remained under Israeli rule or dispersed to camps and cities in the Arab world and beyond, and whatever the economic or social status they have achieved, the experience that has left the deepest collective wound on the community is 1948. The particular traumatic experiences of that fateful year had an impact on the later life of all who lived through them. Even for those to whom the experience came secondhand, from parents, 1948 has stood as a landmark in their lives. The details of attack, panic (*bala'*), flight, suffering, and exile are retold with precision and vividness not only by those who lived the experience but also by those who were nurtured on its memory.

For Suhmatans, the nightmare occurred in late October 1948, when the village was attacked from the air and then occupied by Israeli land forces. The stories of these fateful days, of what happened in the village itself and the surrounding fields, have been repeated and corroborated by survivors and witnesses interviewed in Israel, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon, as well as in testimonials published in newspapers since the 1990s. Furthermore, the march of death of those who were expelled to the Lebanese and Syrian borders, as well as the desperate attempts of others to remain in the neighborhood or return to Suhmata, is remembered with anguish, anger, and frustration. During the interviews, memories that had clearly been relived many times since the events released a flood of emotion and names of victims. Descriptions of incidents and personal contributions, reactions, and analyses were vivid and trenchant. Today, in addition to the very large number of websites, memorials, and other publications by survivors of the catastrophic events that accompanied 1948, the details of the information they provide have been corroborated by international and Israeli historians with access to the Zionist and Israeli archives.

The events of late October in Suhmata must be viewed against the historical background of the period and the conditions in western and upper Galilee at the time. In early April 1948, the Zionist forces

launched a massive military offensive known as Plan Dalet aimed at seizing the territory (which often had at least as many Arabs as Jews) assigned to the Jewish state under the November 1947 UN partition plan.² By 15 May, the date that the Israeli state was declared, they had already occupied almost all those territories, as well as large areas earmarked for the Arab state, and much of the international enclave around Jerusalem. By that time, too, at least 400,000 Palestinians had been turned into homeless refugees. After the capture of the villages in the Jerusalem area and the fall of the major towns of Tiberias, Haifa, and Jaffa in April, the Zionist forces moved into the Galilee, bringing the fighting much closer to Suhmata and its neighboring northern villages. Safad fell on 12 May and Acre on 16 May, along with scores of villages in the vicinity. Farther south, Lydda and Ramleh were captured on 6–8 July, and Nazareth on 16 July. Except for Nazareth, all these towns—either wholly Arab or with large Arab concentrations—were subjected to brutal inducements and terror campaigns to push their civilian inhabitants into fleeing beyond the borders of the new Jewish state.

By the fall of 1948, almost all of the Galilee had been cleared of Arabs. What remained unconquered was a heavily Arab triangle of mostly small villages in the central part of upper Galilee, not far from the Lebanese border, with an Arab population of about 50,000–60,000 at that time, as observed by international personnel in the area. This number included many refugees who had come from the already occupied regions and cleansed cities in the south. The fall assault on upper Galilee was part of a mopping-up operation to incorporate into Israel this last pocket of Galilee territory, which had been assigned to the Arab state under partition, and to clear it of its Arab inhabitants. Operation Hiram, involving four Israeli brigades, was launched on 29 October, with an air attack over the whole area, to prepare the way for the ground assault on individual villages that began early the next day, during which the area's inhabitants were expelled under threat of death and in the wake of a campaign of terror.³ The entire operation was over in sixty hours, by which time almost 80 percent of the civilian, unarmed population of the pocket had fled.

The Zionist determination to clear the area of Arabs—for the ethnic cleansing had been carried out with clear vision and premeditation—explains the noticeably greater brutality of the assaults against this last enclave of the Galilee. Massacres at Safsaf, Aylabun, Bi'ni, and Deir al-Assad are but a few of those committed by the Israeli forces. Characteristic features of assault and expulsion as

described by those who lived through them were rape, murder, looting, forced expulsion at gunpoint, and acts aimed to terrorize the civilian population to put it to flight. These have been corroborated by the UN, the Red Cross, and other international human rights observers who were at the scene at the time to protect the vulnerable Arab populations, as well as by Arab and other scholars based on eyewitness accounts.⁴ Another feature of the Israeli attacks throughout the Galilee was the discriminatory use of force on the basis of sectarian or ethnic affiliation: the attackers were softest on the Druze and the Circassians, somewhat soft on the Christians, and brutal against the Arab Muslims. Nevertheless, the intention to empty (or, as it was often referred to in Zionist official statements, “to cleanse”) the territory of Arabs was clearly the aim, regardless of sectarian or ethnic affiliation.

By the time Operation Hiram was unleashed on Suhmata and its neighbors, the villagers were well aware of the danger closing in on them and the probability of a final showdown. The overwhelming balance of power in Israel's favor had been blatantly obvious for months, as the Arab armies that entered the newly declared Israeli state on 15 May had soon been shown to be totally incapable of stemming the tidal wave of Israeli advances. Moreover, by October the pattern of Israeli assaults was known to the people who remained in the as yet unoccupied areas. Between May and October, Suhmata had witnessed caravans of exhausted, fear-driven refugees from elsewhere in Palestine trekking northward toward the Lebanese border, carrying with them news of atrocities in villages such as Deir Yasin, ‘Aylabun, and others, including Safsaf, just before their own village was attacked.⁵ These accounts, told by refugees from the villages, could not but augment the atmosphere of uncertainty, dread, and fear among the Suhmata villagers, eroding their capacity to withstand the assault. With the perilous consequences of flight now well known, the Central Committee for the Galilee, a branch of the Arab Labor Union originally based in Haifa and at the time headquartered in the village of Tarshiha (whose secretary, Ahmad al-Yamani, was a Suhmatan), had called on the population of the villages to remain put, whatever the atrocities and the sacrifices required. This committee represented the more politically conscious elements of the population and its few members were mostly young, more educated men, experienced in unionist activities.

As for the Arab Liberation Army (ALA), the volunteer force sponsored and organized by the Arab League, it had never been a real threat

in any case (as confirmed by Israeli sources). The ALA had entered the northern districts of the Galilee in December 1947 and January 1948, and the Suhmatans had been involved in providing wood and food to the army fighters. However, according to Suhamatans interviewed, the ALA was at no time involved in the fighting. Be that as it may, by the time the Israelis were gearing up for their final assault on the upper Galilee, the ALA was in flight and had barely informed the villagers of its retreat.

Suhmata was one of the last villages of the Galilee enclave to be attacked, initially in the aerial bombardment that hit all the villages of the north in preparation for land entry and occupation. The fact that central and eastern Galilee had experienced similar preparatory air strikes before the entry of ground troops (such that the Suhmatans already knew the pattern of Israeli operations) in no way lessened the terrifying impact of the assault. At least five villagers—three men and two women—were reported killed while in their houses. Two men were shot dead while on their way back to the village from the olive and fig groves, where a number of villagers in recent days had been spending the night, in fearful expectation of such an attack. Moreover, despite the stories of atrocities and the miserable condition of refugees who had already crossed the borders out of Palestine, some families, fearing the worst, sent their womenfolk and children to Syria and Lebanon, while many of the Christian families took refuge with relatives or friends in the neighboring villages. Thus, although a core group of villagers—possibly a few hundred—remained in their homes during the air strike and the entry of Israeli troops, many more had hidden in groves or sought refuge neighboring villages.

On the morning of 30 October (many reported it to be the 29th), an Israeli force entered the village, led by a commander identified as Ghazal.⁶ The population, mostly males but with a few females, was dragged out to the main square and threatened with various punishments, including shooting and the demolition of its houses, if it did not cooperate and hand over its weapons. All in all, twelve old guns were collected. While the process was going on, one man who was accompanied by a soldier to hand over his weapon was killed in cold blood in front of his house; another young man, Muhammad Kadura, who had been hit by the aerial attack the night before was accused of being injured because of collusion with the ALA and was shot dead in front of his father and the whole village. The events of that day and the picture they conjure up of a helpless civilian population facing a brutal armed force intent on harm

defied description in the memories of those interviewed. During these two days of encounters with the Israeli forces from air and on land, sixteen Suhmatans were killed. Their names and identities are retained and remembered by surviving villagers.

By the evening, five young men were chosen to stay behind while the villagers were ordered to scatter and run in the direction of Lebanon. "The commander screamed at us to go and follow the *jaysb al-inqadb*, the ALA and Qawuqji,"⁷ then the soldiers started shooting over the heads of the people who had to run for their lives. The village had been sealed from three directions, the northern outlet having been left open so people could flee north toward Jabal Amil and Lebanon. Families and children were running everywhere. Some people were able to hide in the olive groves for a day or so before they were scared off again and forced to continue on their way to the north.

The five young men were ordered by the commander to serve the army or face death. Among them was Ahmad al-Yamani, who had been active in the Haifa Arab labor union and secretary of the Central Committee for the Galilee. During the following days, the young men, along with other workers, were made to load the goods stolen from the houses of their village—grains, oil, all kinds of provisions, milling equipment, even wooden doors—onto trucks. The Israelis had intended to demolish the village to ensure that the villagers would find no refuge if they returned, but before doing so they wanted to take away all salvageable goods. The army brought into the village a Druze contingent (from 'Isifiya) that had been serving with the Zionist forces since April 1948. One of the Druze soldiers recognized Yamani as an active labor unionist from Haifa and informed the commander. As a result, Yamani was arrested and, as he told me, he and a fellow villager were tied to the front of a jeep and driven thus to Tarshiha. There, he was interrogated and sent to a Prisoner-of-War center in Nahalal until he was freed a few months later under the auspices of the Red Cross.

One woman, who was eight years old at the time, told of hiding among the trees during the assault, with her mother, who was in labor, and older brother until her mother gave birth.⁸ Afterward, with her mother still bleeding for days, they trekked toward Lebanon. The newborn could not survive and died a few days later, and she and her brother had to beg for food when they arrived in Lebanon.

The ordeal of the villagers, who were to become permanent refugees, had begun that day and would take many forms. There were those who

left for Syria and Lebanon only to live in one refugee camp after another—a life of uncertainty, humiliation, and need. There were those who remained in Israel, where they were subject to an existence of suspicion and discrimination and a “present absentee” status that meant they could see and live close to their original sources of livelihood but could not claim them, nor visit the remains of their villages. All remained refugees.

The village itself was not fully destroyed immediately. Jewish Romanian refugees were housed in the village homes while a settlement was built for them on lands belonging to the village. Two other settlements were to be built on lands belonging to Suhmata with no compensation to its owners, though some of them are living in Israel. The village was finally destroyed in 1952. Now, only three low walls from the church remain and the whole site has been encircled with barbed wire.

The Role of Memory

Today, there are some 12,000–13,000 descendants of the original population of Suhmata, which numbered about 1,400 people in 1948. They are spread all over the globe, involved in a whole range of professions and jobs, and represent all social and economic levels. They live in villages near the ruins of Suhmata or in towns in Israel, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, and further abroad. They live in rich urban quarters or more modest middle-class dwellings, in refugee camps or shantytowns. They include businessmen and housewives. They may be educated and politically sophisticated or naive and unschooled. Some experienced the trauma of 1948 firsthand, while others live it through the memory carried into the culture of exile. Yet what binds all these people, almost sixty years after the *nakba*, is the memory of Suhmata, the attachment to the physical place interlocked with the love for the people identified with the place.

Memory is the repository of Suhmata’s live data, the core ingredient of its history. This repository feeds the existential reality of Suhmata’s survivors and newer generations who still identify with their roots in the village. Although the physical village has been bulldozed, the picture of an original Suhmata—beautiful, simple, and serene in the majestic natural setting of the green forested hills of upper Galilee—survives in vibrant imagination. At the same time, the need to keep alive the memories of painful traumas remains powerful, ensuring continuity in the recognition of collective catastrophe and pain. Thus, the

expulsion from Suhmata and its impact on the community mingle with images of a happy society, disrupted by hate and violence.

With the tesserae of their recollections, Suhmatans rebuild the shattered mosaic of their community. Remembrance resurrects the village as a physical and metaphysical reality, and the role of memory in forging a sense of belonging is as strong for those who never knew the actual Suhmata. In the words of a man born after 1948, "I have lived in Suhmata through memory, imparted by my parents, my grandparents and my relatives. I was nurtured on the love of Suhmata."⁹

Indeed, what is perhaps most striking about the interviews, whether conducted in Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, or Syria, is the similarity of the sentiments expressed. A Suhmatan who now lives in Haifa explains his sense of belonging to the village he knew only as a teenager:

Suhmata still lives in my flesh and blood. In Suhmata a continuous festival of life was celebrated. . . . When I visit the remains of the village, my feelings cut across half a century of exile. I enter its land and feel as one with its earth. I tell myself: here is my homeland, here is my country, my birthplace, and I will not trade it with the whole of America, because it is my homeland!¹⁰

In Damascus, a Suhmatan describes with emotion how

not one day passes without the memory of Suhmata visiting me. I recall and visualize all its quarters, all its alleys, every street and every outpost, every stone I rested upon, in the Hara, in the public square, in the schoolyard. All is as vivid to me now as speaking to you at this moment are. My nostalgia to Suhmata is stronger than that to my absent children.¹¹

Another, in Amman, sees Suhmata "in my waking dreams and I still smell its beautiful air and taste its figs."¹² In a memorial book compiled by the "sons of Suhmata" in the mid-1990s, we read the testimony of a woman now living in the village of Buqay'a near Suhmata's ruins, who says, "We send stones from the village to Suhmatans in Lebanon and Syria, who ask for them to remember and hope for the return."¹³

In these voices, heard more than a half-century after the *nakba*, one finds, in one form or another, the same message of attachment to the physical place intermingled with love for the people identified with that place.

Suhmatans encountered in meetings and interviews retell their stories, expressing the importance of their memories to their rational existence. The stories give them, as individuals and as a group, reference and significance, grounding them in their past and defining who they are and what they have become. It is the kindled energy of community identity that sustains them in the world of their dispersal, their individual stories interwoven within the collective memory of the dispersed group and the physical and the psychological village, reflecting the wider memory of the nation, the displaced and dispersed of Palestine. The message that comes through, powerful in its simplicity and its directness, is, "We carry the living memory of Suhmata/Palestine; in it we rebuild the mosaic of our collective body, our identity and our history." Wherever you meet them, and whatever their generation, they identify as Suhmatans. Against all odds and forms of suppression, this spirit and memory survive, soft and tender but unshakable.

Bonds of Identity

The bare facts of Suhmata are these: in 1922 the village had a population of 632, which by 1931 had become 796 and by 1945 had grown to 1,130. Suhmata's population in 1948 was approximately 1,350 to 1,400, of which fifty to sixty were Christians and the rest Muslims. Suhmata's Christian community (at most, four extended families) belonged to the Greek Catholic Church, the largest in the Galilee villages. Church endowments included a church and some olive groves, but members of the Christian community also owned large tracks of land in and around the village.

Despite the small size of its Christian community, Suhmata's *mukhtar* (the village headman, officially appointed and community approved) was a Christian. His name was Jiryis Kaysar Sim'an. The story of this *mukhtar*, whose father occupied the position before him and who continued in this role in exile in Lebanon, is, according to the oral testimony of the displaced villagers, a symbol of the strongest forms of village identification and bonding. While most of his relatives and coreligionists in 1948 found refuge in nearby Christian villages, he chose to leave with his community, which settled in the refugee camps of Lebanon. He preferred to share the fate of those who had become refugees, living the wretched life of the camps in exile. When Greek Catholic Archbishop Maximos Hakim offered in 1948 to use his influence to try and repatriate Sim'an

and his family to Israel, Sim'an declined the favor unless it included all Suhmatans in exile. He lived the rest of his life with his community.¹⁴

The identity of Suhmatans is nourished by such stories, recounted by both Muslim Suhmatans now residing in the wider exile of the Arab world and Christian Suhmatans in internal exile within Israel. Visions of a cohesive, loving, and cooperative community are depicted and praised:

We were all Suhmatans, living a harmonious life, no difference between Muslim and Christian. We celebrated the happy and the sad events together and with each other. My friends came from both sects with no conscious differentiation.¹⁵

The people of Suhmata lived like two locked hands [shows two interlocked fists]: united, respectful, and loving. For weddings, a Muslim would take a Christian as his best man and vice versa.¹⁶

I welcome all Suhmatans, Christians, and Muslims. We still hold a long history in common.¹⁷

Our *mukhtar* was Christian, though the majority of the people were Muslim, but we wanted him as our leader.¹⁸

The struggle of groups to preserve their identity and social honor is an existential need. It is this that explains the bonds of collective memory and the group's interpretation of historical events, positive and negative. This attachment to identity is especially strong among people whose historical experience has been clouded by a sense of injustice. Similar to other communities with such experiences, Suhmatans (and Palestinians in general) are haunted by their memories of injustice and fragmentation, and yearn for their roots and social references. Such longing is to some extent assuaged through the sustained collectivity that comes from communicating shared experiences.

It is thus that Suhmatans, despite distance, economic hardship, and the passage of time, have established a web of links with each other in their diaspora. Through the efforts of an internationally relinked community, Suhmatans initiated the recording of their communal memories in writings, memorials, and literature, which in turn solidified the reconstruction of a community in spirit. In Israel, for example, the Suhmatans who remained after 1948—mostly Christians, with a few

Muslims—today number about 520 divided among Muslims and Christians almost equally. To them, the site of the village and the community legacy are made alive by communal pilgrimages and the holding of memorials to commemorate their links and affiliation as a group. They have been involved in a legal battle with the Israeli authorities to permit them to clean and maintain their cemeteries, which they do again as a group. Their young people are encouraged to identify with their roots through the holding of summer camps and storytelling about the village, its life, and its community's love and bonds. It is noteworthy that young interviewees from Suhmata solidly identified with their village although they had never resided in it or experienced its beauties and dramas, and the trauma of 1948.

These efforts have been crowned by the acclaimed theatrical play, *Suhmata*, based on the story of the village community as seen through the eyes and memory of one of its elders, which reflects the highly prized communal bonds and legacy of pride and suffering.¹⁹ Memory is the theme around which the play evolves. It serves to voice a position and a message denied through other means, saying clearly that the past and the legacy of the past, whether of Suhmata or other dispossessed Palestinians, remains alive against all odds. It is interesting to note that the play has been strongly welcomed and performed in Israel and in Scandinavian countries more so than in the Arab world, where it has not been shown because of restrictions imposed on its performance.²⁰ Another combined effort has resulted in the publication of a book bringing together the memories of the dispersed community and paid for by its wealthier members. In such activities, whether those of the community that lives in Israel today or in the communication between those who live in the west and those who reside in the Middle East, an identity is entrenched and the demand for restitution and return is kept alive.

In these journeys of memory, of rediscovery and reminiscences, the significance of being Suhmatan/Palestinian is reflected as an anchor in a past-present dialogue. It is a past that is ever present, powerful and gripping, but it is also a past that promotes introspection, criticism, and a search for solutions. In these recollections, Suhmatans contextualize the present in relation to Israeli occupation, dispersal, unending strife and suffering, and their aspirations for self-determination and the right of return. These recollections challenge the discourse of power and the story of the victorious. By keeping the flame of memory alive, and in common with other beleaguered and traumatized communities through

history, Palestinian survivors of the ethnic cleansing operations of the Israeli "war of independence" demand recognition of the wrong done to them, as well as retribution.

The Claims of History

Memories are awarded historical significance and a democratizing role through the voice of the common man, and particularly the voice of individuals and groups whose story has been suppressed and ignored. Memory gives history and its writing the voice of live experience, the humane and passionate aspect of the facts, and promotes the aesthetic medium through which people document the subtleties of social change and transformation. By the act of remembering, people are involved in the most intimate and secret communion with the essence of human life, where life's experience and the values of existence are confronted and interpreted. It is in that process that people are drawn to review, criticize, and evaluate their experience in terms of the present.

The oral recording of memory is a crucial tool in documenting and preserving a source of knowledge and facts subject to depletion. Today, as the generation of Palestinians that experienced the first exile shrinks, the need to document this oral memory is imperative, both to the community itself and to a rectified historical record. It marks a cornerstone in the investigation of histories of subaltern peoples and those whose narratives have been denied exposure. The need that has impelled Palestinians to use oral recordings of their memories is not limited to their particular experience; societies with similar histories of uprooted, dislocated, beleaguered, and colonized communities have also resorted to oral histories. Along with peoples of the third world, aborigines and natives of many continents, as well as uprooted and maligned ethnic communities, Palestinians feel that their history has been expropriated.

More than ever before, Palestinians are involved in a process of recalling the past and in setting the record straight by rebuilding their historical legacy. Scholars have become aware of the necessity to salvage the story of the 'other,' the 'invisible' Palestinian, and it is a tribute to a new breed of Israeli scholar that Israelis have contributed to the proliferation of literature on the subject. In the last two decades the Israeli version of a corroded, falsified, and manipulated Palestinian historiography has been seriously contested and questioned by a new generation of Israeli revisionist historians (Benny Morris, Avi Shlaim, Ilan Pappé, and many

others). Their version has vindicated the claims of the eyewitness- and memory-based narrative of the unheard voices and experiences of Palestinians—voices that had been relegated to oblivion, writings on which had been ignored. It is obvious, however, that only with continuous retelling will the Palestinian story achieve recognition and the plight and injustice borne by its people acquire attention. For that, it is essential to encode the subjective story of human experience into the realm of objective historiography in order to give voice to all dimensions of the truth in historical writing.

Notes

1. Author interview with L. (All names of interviewees are withheld and substituted with identifying letters only.) This article makes use of interviews with ten people from Suhmata. These interviews took place in Amman (interview with M.K.), Damascus (interviews with H.J., Z.Z., and F.M.), Beirut (interviews with A.Y. and S.M.), and Israel (interviews with W., L., N.S., and E.). Of the interviewees, two were female and eight were male, and six were Muslim and four were Christian.
2. The earliest published article in English signaling the importance of Plan Dalet was Walid Khalidi's "Plan Dalet: Master Plan for the Conquest of Palestine," *Middle East Forum* 37 (1961), pp. 22–28. Indeed, starting in 1959, Khalidi was the earliest scholar to expose the events of 1948 and the forces behind them. See Walid Khalidi, "Why Did the Palestinians Leave?" *Middle East Forum* 24 (July 1959), pp. 21–24; "The Fall of Haifa," *Middle East Forum* 35 (December 1959), pp. 22–32.
3. Benny Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1917–1949* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 218.
4. See David Gilmour, *Dispossessed: The Ordeal of the Palestinians, 1917–1980* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1983); Michael Palumbo, *The Palestine Catastrophe: The 1948 Expulsion of a People from Their Homeland* (London: Faber and Faber, 1987); Simha Flapan, *The Birth of Israel: Myths and Realities* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1987); Nur Masalha, *Expulsion of the Palestinians: The Concept of "Transfer" in Zionist Political Thought, 1882–1948* (Washington, D.C.: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1992). An important recent book on the subject is Ilan Pappé's *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2006). See also Naji Habib Makhoul, *Akka wa quraba*, vols. 1–2 (Acre: Maktab al-Aswar, 1979); Jamil Arafat, *Min qurana al-mubajjara fi-l-Khalil* (n.p.: n.p., n.d.); Nur al-Din Masalha, *Tard al-filastiniyin* (Beirut: Institute for Palestine

- Studies, 1992); Elias Sanbar, *Palestine 1948, l'expulsion* (Washington, D.C.: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1984).
5. Author interviews with N.S., Z.Z., and L.m on 25 August 2000, 11 May 2000, and 27 August 2000 respectively.
6. Author interview with N.S., 25 August 2000.
7. Author interview with A.Y. and S.M., on 18 November 2000 and 12 November 2000 respectively.
8. Author interview with F.M., 5 November 2000.
9. Author interview with E., 25 August 2000.
10. Author interview with W., 26 August 2000.
11. Author interview with H.J., 5 November 2000.
12. Author interview with M.K., 28 October 2000.
13. *Submata, zabra min riyad al-Jalil al-A'la* (Haifa: Abna' Suhmata Association, n.d.), p. 107. This memorial book, produced by the Abna' Suhmata (Sons of Suhmata) Association, was possibly published in 1994 or 1995.
14. See the eulogy of Sim'an by Ahmad al-Yamani, the foremost Suhmatan and a former member of the leadership of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, in the *Submata* memorial book. This information was confirmed in my interviews with E. and W.
15. Author interview with W.
16. Author interview with N.S.
17. Author interview with M.K.
18. Author interview with Z.Z.
19. The play's author, Lutfi Nasif, was a Palestinian citizen of Israel from Buqay'a who, according to interviews, grew up among the displaced Suhmatans in his village and was inspired by their bonds to and love of their roots and community.
20. Author interviews with E. and W.

9

Abd al-Nasser and the Palestinian National Movement Chronicle of a Stormy Affair

Eric Rouleau

The history of Nasser's Egypt and Arafat's Palestinian national movement bears a certain resemblance to a stormy love affair—a mixture of attraction and aversion, respect and suspicion, quarrels and reconciliations. The ambivalence is rooted in a number of factors—shifting regional and international stakes, the sometimes converging, sometimes diverging interests of a state versus those of an (outside) national movement, and parallel or incompatible analyses and strategies. Finally, of course, there is the encounter of two strong personalities: Gamal Abd al-Nasser, the head of a state, and Yasser Arafat, the head of a national liberation movement.

Arafat: A “Dual Identity”

Yasser Arafat, who was to become the virtual embodiment of the Palestinian cause, had strong connections to Egypt. He was Egyptian by his paternal grandmother, his birth, his education in Egyptian primary and secondary schools and at Cairo University, and his upbringing. After the death of his mother when he was three, his father remarried twice, both times to Egyptian women. He was fluent in colloquial Egyptian and his Arabic remained tinged with an Egyptian accent, a source of amusement (but not offence) to his fellow Palestinians. His first political battles were fought alongside Egyptian nationalists. Despite these powerful influences, the three years he spent with his mother's family in Jerusalem, from the ages of five to eight (1934–37), marked him for life.

Thus, some measure of a dual identity led the young Arafat to embrace Egyptian as well as Palestinian popular aspirations.

Arafat frequented the circles of Hajj Amin al-Husayni, the preeminent Palestinian leader during the mandate period, who lived in intermittent exile in Cairo as of 1946. Yet it was with an Egyptian organization, the Muslim Brotherhood, that he fought in the Palestine war of 1948–49 against the Zionist forces on the Gaza front. Despite his sympathy for the nationalist dimension of the brotherhood's ideology, Arafat never joined the movement, though in 1950 he again fought alongside its members, taking part in their guerrilla actions against the British occupying forces in the Suez Canal zone. During that same period, he was also deeply involved in Palestinian student politics in Cairo, where he was known for his energy and dynamism (among other things, he trained recruits for anti-British guerrilla activities and in the fall of 1951 led demonstrations against the Arab League protesting its failure to help needy Palestinians). Refraining from joining any political faction, and widely popular, Arafat was elected president of the Palestinian Student Union in September 1952. When the British, French, and Israelis invaded Egypt in the Suez war of 1956, he immediately joined the Egyptian army as a second lieutenant, becoming a reserve officer after the war.

For all his back-and-forth involvement in Egyptian and Palestinian politics and causes, Arafat always insisted on his wholly Palestinian identity. Yet, in 1991 he made an astonishing confession in an interview with the Tunisian researcher and writer, Nadia Benjelloun-Ollivier: "It was only shortly before 1948 that I became politically aware of the Zionist presence in Palestine."¹ In a similar vein, it is worth noting that immediately after the 1948–49 Palestine war, he applied (unsuccessfully) to the University of Texas to pursue his studies in the United States, an indication that however all-embracing his commitment to Palestine was to become, he was not yet thinking of devoting his life to the cause.

Arafat was thrilled when, on 23 July 1952, the Egyptian monarchy under King Farouk was overthrown by the Free Officers led by Gamal Abd al-Nasser. Arafat wholeheartedly subscribed to their analysis of the causes for the loss of Palestine, which they blamed on the corruption of the Arab regimes (including Egypt's), combined with Transjordan's complicity with Israel. He also fully shared their anti-imperialism and enthusiastically backed their declared intention to force the British out of Egypt in order to make the country fully sovereign.

Arafat's enthusiasm for the new regime waned, however, when Nasser pushed aside the man he and his fellow officers had made the figurehead of the revolution, General Muhammad Naguib, and took his place as president of Egypt in 1954. Arafat, like the Muslim Brotherhood and the other Egyptian political formations (all of which had been banned), sided with Naguib, a liberal who favored a multiparty system. That same year, Nasser launched a repressive campaign against the Muslim Brotherhood, which had made an attempt on his life. The leaders of the assassination conspiracy were summarily judged and hanged, and scores of arrests were made. Arafat was one of those arrested, but was cleared and released a month later. In the meantime, large numbers of Palestinian students in Cairo, not to mention Palestinian militants operating in the Gaza Strip (under Egyptian administration since the 1949 Israeli-Egyptian armistice agreement), were put under surveillance and harassed. For the Mukhabarat (the Egyptian secret service), mere suspicion was reason enough for arrests and detentions. In the eyes of Arafat and many of his fellow Palestinians, the new regime had turned out to be scarcely better than the other Arab regimes, all seen as unfriendly and deeply distrusted.

Indeed, Palestinian distrust of the Arab regimes, and the conviction that they had consistently "betrayed" the Palestinians, predated the 1948 war. Rightly or wrongly, the Arabs were held responsible for failing to mobilize sufficiently to prevent Britain's assumption of the mandate over Palestine in the wake of the First World War, which enabled it to implement its "Jewish national home" project inscribed in the Balfour Declaration. Palestinians also blamed the Arab states for failing to give adequate support to the 1936-39 popular revolt in Palestine, which Britain brutally suppressed, exiling the Palestinian leadership and completely disarming the population at a time when the Haganah, the Zionist military organization, was arming itself and building up its offensive capability. While it is difficult to know how the Arab states could have altered these developments or prevented the passage in November 1947 of the United Nations General Assembly resolution recommending the partition of Palestine into Arab and Jewish states, there is certainly no doubt that the Arab regimes had consistently acted out of narrow self-interest to the detriment of Palestine. The intervention of the regular Arab armies, which entered the country after the declaration of the Israeli state on 14 May 1948, was neither well conceived nor planned with any degree of seriousness. Even worse, the main preoccupation of certain Arab states was

less Israel's defeat than preventing Transjordan from annexing the part of Palestine assigned to the Arabs under the UN partition plan, to say nothing of King 'Abdallah's coordination with the Israelis to do precisely that. According to American political scientist William Quandt, "In general, the Arab leaders were more willing to compromise than the Palestinians, since their vital state interests were not at stake in the conflict."²

Nasser and Palestine

Palestine was no more a vital state interest for the Egyptian republic than it had been for the monarchy, as the Palestinians learned soon after the July revolution. Nasser, for all his pan-Arabism and despite his later championship of the Palestinian cause, was first and foremost an Egyptian nationalist, his actions always guided by what he saw as Egypt's interests. His upbringing, ideology, preoccupations, and main objectives quite obviously were not—nor could they be—the same as those of Yasser Arafat.

Gamal Abd al-Nasser had been politically engaged from early youth in activities against the British occupation of his country, against a corrupt monarchy often complicitous with British policy, and against the 'comprador' bourgeoisie working hand-in-glove with the palace and foreign business circles. Nasser fought bravely and with distinction in the 1948–49 Palestine war, and with the brigade he commanded took part in the heroic Battle of Faluja. Surrounded and besieged by Israeli forces as of October 1948, the Egyptians, trapped in what became known as the "Faluja pocket," refused to surrender and were only evacuated under the terms of the Egyptian–Israeli armistice agreement of February 1949. During a truce in the fighting, Nasser was designated by his command to meet with the designated representative of the Israeli army to discuss terms. While maintaining the refusal to surrender, he engaged in lengthy and cordial conversations with his young Israeli counterpart, speaking at length about Egypt's quest for sovereignty and asking questions about how the Jewish forces prior to the war had organized their underground campaign against the British. Nasser mentions the conversation himself in his *Philosophy of the Revolution*.³ Even while campaigning in Palestine, he records having been fully aware that the "real battleground" would be Egypt itself.⁴ Indeed, it was in Palestine that the conspiracy among the Free Officers who overthrew the monarchy was born.

In the early years following the 1952 revolution, Nasser's chief concern was the domestic front and consolidating the new regime's power. With Britain still occupying the canal zone, Egypt beset by grave economic problems, and a power struggle beginning to unfold with Naguib, Nasser sent a secret message to the Israeli leaders in early February 1953 indicating his desire to open a dialogue. The offer was readily accepted by Israel's new prime minister, Moshe Sharett, well known as a moderate. According to Sharett's biographer, Gabriel Sheffer, later that same month Egypt followed up with a message indicating that "regional needs dictated the search for a compromise in three spheres: resettling Arab refugees in Arab states, providing that Israel offered adequate compensation to the resettled Palestinians; a territorial link between Egypt and Jordan; and the internationalization of Jerusalem." According to Sheffer, Nasser hoped that Israel would use its influence in Washington to obtain American support for the withdrawal of British troops from Egypt as well as economic and financial aid.⁵ The secret dialogue between Nasser and Sharett, conducted through intermediaries for the next few years, even touched on the possibility of an eventual meeting, though after Israel's bloody surprise raid on Egyptian forces in Gaza in February 1955 (which Sharett had opposed), the contact was more focused on efforts to reduce tensions between the two states. Ben Gurion, at odds with Sharett, managed to sabotage the ongoing dialogue more than once.

The raid on Gaza marked a turning point in Nasser's foreign policy, bringing the conflict with Israel to the forefront of his concerns. Whereas before the raid Egypt had done its best to prevent guerrilla attacks from Gaza on Israeli settlements across the border, after February it began sending its own commandos, organized by the Mukhabarat, on cross-border raids. Moreover, in the months that followed, Nasser made a series of moves that made him wildly popular in the Arab world in general and among the Palestinians in particular. At the Bandung Conference in April 1955, he eloquently defended the right of the nonaligned countries to full sovereignty. It was at that same conference that Chinese leader Chou En-lai advised him to turn to the Soviet Union for financial and military support, and later that same year, in September, Nasser concluded an important arms purchase agreement with the Soviet camp, seen as a slap in the face to the United States. The following summer, in July 1956, he openly challenged Britain and France by nationalizing the Suez Canal Company, in which they were the major shareholders. Finally, his defiant resistance to the tripartite invasion of Egypt by the British,

French, and Israeli armies in the Suez war that fall made Nasser the hero of the anti-imperialist movement in the third world.

From that time forward, Nasser was lionized by the masses throughout the Middle East, and the Palestinians saw in him both the unifier of the Arabs and the liberator of Palestine. Palestine became an important ingredient of Nasser's pan-Arabism, but it bears emphasis that despite the warmongering intentions attributed to him by Israel and, to a lesser extent, the west, he never ceased to be a realist. His participation in the Palestine war of 1948 had allowed him to gauge firsthand the strength and efficiency of the Zionist forces, and as a statesman he was acutely aware of the international balance of power and the extent of support enjoyed by Israel. Nasser never had any illusions about the possibility of destroying Israel, and contrary to Israeli propaganda he never called for its destruction (though he did allow Cairo Radio to broadcast vociferously belligerent programs against the Zionist state). Whatever his rhetoric in public speeches may have been construed to mean, throughout his career Nasser repeatedly emphasized privately and publicly (including in interviews with this author) his preference for a peaceful solution to the conflict based on Israel's implementation of the UN resolutions on Palestine, in particular concerning the Palestinian refugees' right to return to their homeland as well as territorial compromise (with regard to the partition recommendation). In 1963, he authorized this author to use the occasion of a forthcoming interview with Israeli prime minister, Levi Eshkol, to convey his ideas, summarized above, on the basis of ending the conflict. In January of the following year, when Nasser convened the first formal Arab summit to discuss a common Arab strategy for dealing with Israel's plans to divert the waters of the Jordan River, he explicitly warned his fellow heads of state of the dangers of calling for military confrontation as long as the balance of power was in Israel's favor. At his suggestion, a unified Arab High Command was formed to deal with the water problem, but although it was headed by Nasser's chief of staff, in practice it remained inoperative. In fact, Nasser's real agenda had been to neutralize his Arab rivals, who had been criticizing him for not calling for a military solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict, through the appearance of action.

Meanwhile, Arafat and his comrades within the Palestinian Student Union back in Cairo remained skeptical of Nasser's true intentions, even in the heady days following the Suez war and despite his increasingly strong rhetoric in favor of the Palestinian cause and against the Zionist

state. They had noted his vote in favor of a diplomatic solution to the Palestine conflict at the Bandung Conference. More important, they had occasion to witness his actual policy on the ground in Gaza and along the border with Israel. Prior to Israel's February 1955 raid on Gaza, Nasser's regime had tried to prevent Palestinian "infiltrators" from crossing into Israel from Gaza so as not to provide the pretext for reprisal raids, but many fedayeen had nonetheless succeeded in carrying out attacks. After Israel's raid on Gaza, Nasser's government redoubled its efforts to stop any "unauthorized" fedayeen action, even as it sent for the first time its own Mukhabarat-organized commandos (many of whom were Palestinian refugees) on raids into Israel. But from then on, Palestinian fedayeen, who acted independently, even if they managed to cross into Israel, were arrested by Nasser's police immediately upon their return and punished for having acted on their own. From autonomous actors, they were forced to become instruments of state policy.

At the same time, Palestinian activists in Egypt were subject to tight surveillance and often harassed. Finding this strict control intolerable, Arafat, who had earned his engineering degree from Cairo University in 1956, left for Kuwait in 1957, where he had found employment and where freedom of speech and action was incomparably greater than in Nasser's Egypt. He was followed by his closest comrades, including the faithful Abu Iyad (Salah Khalaf). It was there that, two years later, Fatah (a reverse acronym from its Arabic name, Harakat al-Tahrir al-Watani al-Filastini) was born.

The Rise of Fatah

What was to become a Palestinian mass movement and the most important fedayeen organization was launched in October 1959 in Kuwait at a meeting of scarcely more than a dozen individuals—Palestinian expatriates mainly from Kuwait and Qatar. At this and several subsequent meetings, these men laid down the general principles that were to guide their movement. The participants had no allegiance either to the Left or the Right, though a number of them had worked closely with the Muslim Brotherhood (without, however, subscribing to its militant Islamist ideology). In contrast to the leaders of earlier Palestinian movements, none of those present came from any of Palestine's influential families but rather from the petite bourgeoisie of the diaspora who had become refugees during the 1948 war. Determined to found a movement that

would attract all sections of Palestinian society, they excluded from their program any economic or social objectives likely to divide their followers. Their sole rallying cry was the liberation of all of Palestine.

Their ideology was based on principles that could not but put them at odds with all the pan-Arab movements of the time, Nasser's first and foremost. Nasser's slogan had been that Arab unity would lead to the liberation of Palestine; Fatah reversed the order, proclaiming that "Arab unity will be achieved through the liberation of Palestine." They insisted on "autonomy of decision," meaning that there could be no dependence on any one Arab state. But, in need of support from all the Arab regimes, they pledged to abstain from interfering in the internal affairs of the Arab states and from taking sides in inter-Arab conflicts. Fatah's undeclared agenda was to be the spearhead of the liberation of Palestine by organizing an armed struggle that would lead to a conflict between Israel and its neighbors—a conflict that they fully believed would end in an Arab victory. As a result of differences among Fatah's founders about the right moment to launch the armed struggle (not to mention their own lack of military preparedness), five years were to pass before the group carried out its first action.⁶

Without doubt, a good dose of optimism was needed to embark upon the daring venture agreed to at the meetings in Kuwait. A year earlier, in 1958, Egypt and Syria joined to form the United Arab Republic (UAR), thought to be the nucleus of a wider Arab union that, in the words of Abu Iyad, "would submerge the State of Israel."⁷ The overthrow of the pro-British monarchy in Iraq later that same year only added to the surge of unionist forces sweeping the Arab world, which in turn put Britain and the United States on the defensive. Nasser's popularity was at its peak. Against the background of such events, Fatah's project could only seem insignificant and redundant.

Nonetheless, Fatah set patiently to work, little by little creating secret cells in various parts of the Arab world. Not long after its founding meetings, it began to publish a monthly journal *Filastinuna* (Our Palestine) in Beirut, in which anonymous articles laid out the organization's main ideas without revealing its identity or that of the people behind it. The articles for the most part dealt in generalities, for example declaring that Palestine would be liberated "by the barrel of a gun," without any detail on how this might come about. In the climate of the times, however, such vagueness mattered little, for Palestinians were eager to grasp at anything offering hope that something was being done. Moreover,

although Arab politics did not then seem propitious for the Fatah project, from a wider perspective these were heady times for the proponents of armed struggle. The same year that Fatah was founded, armed revolution had triumphed in Cuba, while the armed uprising in Algeria, then in its fifth year, was making headway. In China, a mere decade after the victory of a heroic popular struggle, Mao Tse Tung led a vast empire that did not conceal its enthusiasm for liberation movements. Why not Palestine? Abu Iyad describes in his memoirs how he devoured Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*, along with the biographies of Lenin and Mao.

On the Arab scene, Fatah's luck began to change in 1961, when Syria turned against Egypt and the UAR collapsed. Disillusioned, many Palestinians turned away from pan-Arabism, leaving traditional political parties to join the ranks of Fatah. From that time forward, Fatah began to seek support in the Arab world, especially among countries worried about Nasserist hegemony or with aspirations to rival it. In the years that followed, states such as Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Algeria (independent as of 1962), and Syria provided various forms of aid, including funds, training camps, and arms. Starting in 1964, Syria began giving Fatah the logistical support that would enable it to begin carrying out commando operations against Israel—though not from Syrian soil, but from Lebanon or Jordan.

Nasser and Armed Struggle

Although Fatah was still entirely underground and had yet to mount a military operation, talk of armed struggle was rife in the Arab world as of the early 1960s. *Filastinuna* was being distributed in various Arab countries. Secret cells were being established. Nasser, who greatly feared the repercussions of uncontrolled military operations that could catapult the regimes into a war for which they were not prepared, was aware from his secret services of Palestinian overtures to various Arab countries seeking arms and support. His concern was obvious. Speaking at a meeting of the Legislative Council in Gaza on 2 July 1962, he declared, "Those who pretend to have a program for liberating Palestine are swindlers and shady operators."

Nasser was acutely aware, however, that something had to be done to channel the growing discontent of the Palestinians, whom he knew to have been disappointed by the course of events following the breakup of the union with Syria. At the abovementioned Arab summit convened in January 1964 in response to Israel's project to divert the Jordan waters,

he convinced the other Arab heads of state of the need to create an organization that could act as an umbrella for Palestinian militants of all tendencies. In May 1964, the inaugural meeting of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) was held in Jerusalem under the auspices of the Arab League. Ahmad Shuqayri, a Palestinian lawyer and diplomat known for his opportunism and demagoguery, was chosen to head the organization. A decision was also taken to set up the Palestine Liberation Army (PLA) as part of the new organization, with units to be stationed in Arab host countries and under their command. Although it was clear to the Fatah leaders that the PLA's very creation by the Arab League condemned it to immobility, the new move was a harsh blow for Fatah, and many of its members left to join the new Palestinian body. Clearly, neither Nasser's prestige nor the credibility of the Arab states had been undermined by the Arab infighting and the breakup of the union as seriously as Fatah had believed.

Nevertheless, Fatah did not allow itself to become discouraged. It tried to make a deal with the PLO by proposing to Shuqayri (without revealing the identity of the organization) a secret agreement that would authorize it to carry out guerilla actions in Israel. As Abu Iyad expressed it, the idea was for a "secret coordination between the PLO's public activities and Fatah's underground activities," with the PLO to become a "legal front for the armed struggle to be waged by our militants."⁸ The PLO president reportedly consulted the higher Arab authorities (primarily Egyptian), stalled, and finally rejected the offer. In an apparently unguarded moment, he bluntly told Khalid al-Hassan, one of Fatah's main leaders, that he had been brought in to destroy the movement.⁹

Very probably, the establishment of the PLA as part of the PLO accelerated Fatah's decision to delay no longer and finally launch the armed struggle. Thus, eight months later, during the night of 31 December 1964–1 January 1965, Fatah militants made their first incursion into Israel. On the eve of the operation, a communiqué announcing the action was issued in the name of al-'Asifa (the Storm), Fatah's secret military arm. In the event, the operation was a failure, but the announcement was greeted enthusiastically by many Palestinians, overjoyed that at last some action was being taken against the Jewish state. Within three months, a dozen other operations were undertaken by al-'Asifa, creating a considerable stir and concern in Arab capitals, as well as serious anxiety in Cairo. In a clear response to the new developments, Nasser, speaking at the second Palestine National Congress in Cairo in

May 1965, emphasized that Egypt alone should set the timing of a conflict for which Egypt would inevitably bear the greatest costs.¹⁰

It was during this period of mounting concern about the armed operations that Arafat first attempted to establish contact with Nasser. The Egyptian president, repeatedly briefed by his Mukhabarat that Arafat and his comrades were either secret members of the Muslim Brotherhood or Syrian agents, or both, categorically refused to receive anyone associated with Fatah. But Arafat did manage to secure two meetings with highly placed officials in the hope of building a bridge to the regime. Both meetings ended in humiliating failure. The first, in the summer of 1966, was with Salah Nasir, head of the Mukhabarat.¹¹ At the second meeting, in November or December 1966 with Shams Badran, the Egyptian defense minister, Arafat asked for Egyptian help in establishing secret cells in the Negev.¹² In both cases, he was treated with condescension bordering on contempt. It was all too obvious that the Egyptians' sole aim in meeting him had been to obtain information about Fatah, its ideology, the number of its cadres, the location of its bases, and its sources of financing and weapons. Arafat was clearly seen as an adventurer whose rogue actions could lead the Arab states to disaster.

Meanwhile, members of Arafat's organization in Gaza were being arrested, interrogated, and tortured by the Mukhabarat. Further, Nasser called on all the countries bordering Israel to crack down on the perpetrators of the raids. He had already asked various Arab states to ban the distribution of *Filastinuna*, by then identified as Fatah's mouthpiece. But Syria, which aspired to outdo Egypt in militancy, denounced Shuqayri as a Nasserist agent and gave free rein to the fedayeen, using them as proxies in raids against Israel. Border incidents and Israeli retaliation escalated, with Israeli Chief of Staff Yitzhak Rabin threatening in May 1967 to attack Syria if its encouragement of fedayeen incursions continued. Nasser took the warnings seriously and, bound by the mutual defense treaty signed with Syria six months earlier, made some disastrous decisions. One of these was to close the Straits of Aqaba to Israeli shipping, which gave the Israeli leaders the pretext to launch their offensive against Egypt, Syria, and Jordan. It was thus that fedayeen action, encouraged by Syria for its own ends, set in motion the chain of events that ultimately proved Nasser's worst fears about the consequences of ill-advised armed struggle. The debacle of the June 1967 war radically changed the balance of power in the region, including that between the Palestinian resistance and Nasser's Egypt.

Nasser as Mentor

In the wake of his massive defeat, Nasser was caught in a dilemma. On the one hand, he could not oppose Palestinian organizations favoring armed struggle, whose popularity following the defeat of the Arab armies was spurred to even greater heights by Israel's annexation of Jerusalem and its almost immediate implantation of settlements in the newly Occupied Territories. On the other hand, his weakness forced him to seek a peaceful settlement of the conflict. In this regard, Nasser and King Hussein were outvoted at the Khartoum Arab summit in August–September 1967. Nasser wanted a mandate that would allow him to negotiate the best possible deal for the states whose lands had been occupied by Israel. His Arab colleagues, in order to embarrass him, lapsed into their usual verbal outbidding. The result was the publication in the summit's final resolutions of the famous “three nos” of Khartoum: no to negotiation, no to recognition (of Israel), and no to reconciliation (*sulh*). But on the sidelines of the conference, it was learned, Nasser confidentially gave a green light to King Hussein to seek a way out of the impasse by speaking directly to Israel and the United States.

Even had Nasser's position at the Khartoum conference not been known, the Fatah leadership had ample reason to distrust Nasser's intentions. Soon after the summit, on 13 October 1967, an article in the Cairo weekly, *al-Musawwar*, by its chief editor, the famous Egyptian journalist, Ahmad Baha' al-Din, created a sensation by arguing that the Palestinians should resign themselves to a state in the West Bank and Gaza, an idea that was anathema to the Palestinians, still bent on “liberating all of Palestine.” *Al-Musawwar* was not a Nasserist mouthpiece—and indeed no Nasserist publication had expressed such a view—but at the time it was widely believed, probably correctly, that the article had been approved by Nasser or someone close to him. The following month, when the UN Security Council passed Resolution 242 implying recognition of Israel in exchange for Israeli withdrawal from the territories occupied during the war, Nasser accepted it almost immediately. The UN text did not even mention the word ‘Palestinian,’ calling only for a “just solution for the refugees” without any reference to the Palestinian right of return as enshrined in earlier UN resolutions. Once again, the Palestinians loudly accused Nasser of betrayal.

Yet it was around that time that Nasser allowed himself to be persuaded by his confidant and close advisor, Muhammad Hasanayn Haykal, to receive the Fatah leaders. Haykal had convinced Nasser that they were

neither Muslim Brothers wanting to assassinate him nor Syrian agents, as the Mukhabarat had been insisting. But there was more to Nasser's change of heart than Haykal's powers of persuasion. In the radically changed realities after the war, the Egyptian president realized that he had no choice but to receive Arafat and his comrades, whose organization had become the most popular in the Arab world and beyond. Of all the Palestinian organizations, he knew Fatah to be the most moderate, avoiding the leftist politics and radical rhetoric that characterized the others, and Arafat's well-known sympathies for Egyptian nationalist causes gave reason to hope that he could be turned into an ally. Finally, from a strategic standpoint, Nasser needed Fatah as a card he could play in case Israel would not agree to a settlement based on the return of the Occupied Territories.

Haykal, always partial to theatrical effects, received Arafat, Abu Iyad, and Faruq Qaddumi, who were passing through Cairo, without telling them that he intended to take them directly to President Nasser's residence. There, yesterday's "adventurers" were given a warm reception. Nasser broke the ice, embracing them in the traditional Arab fashion and joking about the warnings he had received about them from the Mukhabarat. Frank and animated exchanges and mutual confidences followed. For example, Nasser, though he took full responsibility for the defeat, told them that he had been drawn into the war in spite of himself, hinting that he was no longer in full control of the army under Marshall 'Abd al-Hakim 'Amir. The Fatah leaders, for their part, recounted some of their frustrating experiences with the Mukhabarat and spoke freely about their movement.¹³

What was most remarkable about the meeting, however, was the unrestrained frankness of Nasser's advice to the Palestinians. He told his visitors that they needed to draw up a clear program spelling out their analysis of the situation, their objectives, and the means to attain them. He made clear his opinion that armed struggle alone could not lead to a solution and that, in fact, he had never believed that guerrilla warfare could be effective in a terrain such as Israel. Politics, he told them, is the art of the possible, and if the Palestinians wanted to succeed they would have to put aside their romantic and idealistic notions and act with pragmatism. As interesting as Nasser's frank advice to the three Fatah leaders was their reaction. A few days after their meeting, they met with Lutfi al-Khuli, an influential Egyptian journalist and writer who had been friendly to them. According to Khuli, far from being shocked or upset by

Nasser's comments, they described their fascination with the man and his views, an early indication, perhaps, of a predisposition that Nasser himself may have intuitively sensed. Be that as it may, at the end of the meeting Nasser promised to provide them with arms and to open training camps for Fatah fighters.

With this meeting, the confrontational period between the Nasser regime and the Fatah leadership came to an end. Beyond the reciprocal advantages and self-interest of each party, what is most surprising is what appears to have been the genuine affection that developed between Nasser and Arafat. The Palestinian leader later said that he came to look upon the Egyptian president as a father figure, even though in fact they were separated in age by only about fifteen years. Nasser himself seemed comfortable in this paternal role, or at the very least in the role of tutor. The mentoring dimension of the relationship is clear even in the fact that Nasser called Arafat by his first name, whereas Arafat always addressed him with the respectful "Mr. President." Continuing in the pattern set at that first meeting, Nasser did his best to encourage the Fatah leader in various ways to act with greater "realism" and to take into account the weight of the great powers on the international scene, even as he took care not to tell Arafat directly what to do.

The relationship between Nasser and Arafat was further strengthened following the battle of Karameh in March 1968, claimed as a victory by the fedayeen facing the larger forces of the Israel army. Technically, and in terms of the losses on the Palestinian side, the Battle of Karameh had been won by the Israelis. But at least in public perception, the heroic resistance of the Palestinians made them the winners. In the Arab world, still reeling from the bitter humiliation inflicted by the June 1967 debacle, enthusiasm for the fedayeen swelled to unprecedented heights. Thousands of volunteers, including many Egyptians, flocked to join Fatah. Riding on the wave of the "victory," all the Arab governments opened their arms to the "victors" of Karameh. Even King Hussein, already chafing from the presence of the Palestinian fighters on his territory, felt obliged to declaim in a speech "We are all fedayeen!" The American media were fascinated by the phenomenon. In December 1968, Yasser Arafat appeared on the cover of *Time* magazine as "Man of the Year."

Not long after the Karameh battle, at a time when the fedayeen organizations had taken over about half the seats of the Palestine National Council (the PLO "parliament") and Arafat's eventual takeover of the

organization seemed inevitable, Nasser stepped up his discreet efforts to “educate” the Palestinian leader, directly or indirectly. It is in this light that the bold decision to take Arafat with him on his state visit to Moscow must be viewed. The decision was courageous insofar as Nasser could not afford to alienate Moscow, whose support he needed, and he knew that the Soviet leaders were so ill-disposed toward Arafat and his organization that they had systematically refused over the years to receive any Fatah representative. Yet at the same time, Nasser wanted Arafat to be personally exposed to Soviet policy toward the conflict and to learn firsthand of Soviet leaders’ hostility to armed struggle and their insistence on diplomacy alone to resolve the conflict. He also thought it would be useful for the Soviet leaders to come to know the head of the Palestinian resistance.

Anticipating a Soviet veto of Arafat’s visit, Nasser decided to confront Moscow with a *fait accompli*. He included Arafat in the Egyptian delegation that was to go to Moscow in July 1968, providing him with a false passport under the name of Muhsin Amin. The plan failed in that Nasser was unable to persuade any of the top Soviet leaders—Leonid Brezhnev, the secretary general of the Communist Party; Alexey Kosygin, the premier; or Nikolai Podgorny, the chief of state—to receive Arafat. No less than the Americans, the Soviets viewed the fedayeen as dangerous adventurers. Instead, the Palestinian leader was dispatched to the Committee of Afro-Asiatic Solidarity, whose members shocked him with their brutal criticisms. He was told in no uncertain terms that his movement could not count on any support from the Kremlin unless it renounced its maximalist objective of “liberating all of Palestine” and its pursuit of armed struggle as the sole means of resistance. Moscow, he was told, was counting exclusively on diplomacy and UN Resolution 242 as the means to bring about Israel’s withdrawal from the Occupied Territories, even if this meant delaying the solution to the Palestinian problem. The “lesson” was to be a useful one, as became clear later. And there can be no doubt that this was a lesson Nasser had wanted Arafat to learn.

Meanwhile, Nasser had begun almost immediately after his first meeting with the Fatah leaders to prepare the ground for the fedayeen organizations’ takeover of the “empty shell” of the PLO.¹⁴ Among other things, Nasser secured the departure of Ahmad Shuqayri, who resigned as PLO president at the end of December 1967 and was replaced by an interim president pending more far-reaching changes within the organization. Arafat took care of the rest, winning for Fatah and its allies the

majority of the seats on the PLO executive committee and getting himself elected president in March 1969. Although this result was inevitable given Fatah's preponderance among the resistance groups, it was nonetheless arrived at only after drawn-out and difficult negotiations. For Arafat, it was not enough simply to take over the organization; he wanted to maintain good relations with all the rival groups so as to unite them in one bloc over which he would preside. He was also keen not to alienate the Arab regimes that were supporting them.

With his protégé at the helm of the Palestinian organization, Nasser did what he could to provide the Palestinian leader with the means needed to pursue the struggle. It was through his mediation and under his auspices that in November 1969, following prolonged clashes in southern Lebanon between Palestinian fighters and the Lebanese army, Arafat and the army commander signed what came to be known as the Cairo accords. Under the terms of the agreement, the fedayeen were allowed to establish a permanent presence in south Lebanon and gained unfettered access to the border, enabling them to launch raids into Israel. The agreement also stipulated that the Palestinian camps were henceforth off limits to the Lebanese army, thus laying the ground for the "state within a state"—nicknamed the "republic of Fakhani" after the Beirut neighborhood where the PLO had its headquarters—established by the fedayeen in Lebanon following their expulsion from Jordan in 1971. The implications for Lebanon's sovereignty and territorial integrity, not to mention the terrible fallout from inevitable Israeli reprisals and the repercussions for Lebanon's delicate confessional balance, should have been anticipated, but having a 'second front' against Israel served Nasser's interests at a time when the war of attrition with Israel along the Suez Canal was in full swing. In fairness, however, few people at the time stopped to measure the consequences of the accords, which were approved almost unanimously by the Lebanese parliament, with all the Christian deputies, with the single exception of Raymond Eddé, voting in its favor.

From the Rogers Plan to Black September

Despite the warm relationship that had developed between Nasser and Arafat, Palestinian and Egyptian interests could not be the same. Both parties understood this. On the subject of UN Security Council Resolution 242, for example, Nasser was well aware that the resolution totally

ignored the rights of the Palestinian people and in no way met their aspirations, and fully understood why they rejected it. As for his own point of view, he explained that the resolution's great advantage was to give international legitimacy to Israel's obligation to withdraw from the Occupied Territories, which is why Israel itself had (up to then) rejected it. This *modus vivendi* of accepting the inevitability of diverging interests was put to the test in the summer of 1970, after U.S. Secretary of State William Rogers resumed his mediation between Israel, Egypt, and Jordan aimed at implementing Resolution 242. The U.S. diplomat's earlier efforts had produced the first Rogers Plan in December 1969, which had been rejected out of hand by both Egypt and Israel. When, as a result of the diplomatic stalemate, the war of attrition intensified, with deep-penetration bombing raids into Egypt by U.S.-supplied Israeli Phantom jets, the Americans redoubled their efforts to find a more palatable formula. By the late spring of 1970, the possibility of Egypt's acceptance became real. Nasser, once again, understood that Fatah, like the Palestinians in general, would sharply criticize a plan that totally ignored it, but it was his understanding that Fatah would refrain from any direct criticism of him personally.

The second Rogers Plan, based on the principle of Israel's return to Egypt and Jordan of the territories it had occupied in exchange for peace, was announced on 19 July 1970. Egypt accepted it on 23 July, along with a cease-fire proposal. (Israel accepted it on 30 July, at the same time that it accepted for the first time Resolution 242, albeit with such reservations as to almost nullify its meaning.) As was to be expected, the Palestinian organizations vociferously rejected the plan. What had not been expected—at least not by Nasser—was the virulent personal criticism of Nasser that was broadcast over *Sawt al-'Asifa*, Fatah's radio station based in Cairo. The Fatah station, along with the PLO's *Sawt Filastin*, which had similarly attacked the Egyptian president, was promptly closed down on 28 July.

Nasser was outraged not only by the direct attacks on him by Fatah's press organs but also by the fact that Arafat, the head of the PLO, had not curtailed the vicious attacks on him as a "traitor," including a demonstration in Amman where a donkey was paraded with Nasser's photograph affixed to its face. The fallout with Nasser could not have happened at a worse time, for the Palestinians were simultaneously facing a dangerously escalating situation with the regime in Amman. On both fronts—with regard to what attitude to

adopt vis-à-vis the Rogers Plan and how to handle the crisis in Jordan—Arafat was having serious problems within his own movement. The radical Palestinian organizations, notably George Habash's Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and Nayif Hawatimeh's Popular Democratic Front (PDFLP), were engaged in a relentless game of provocation and outbidding.

Concerning the debate about the Rogers Plan, what is not well known is that Arafat had no intention of sabotaging it. He had already been convinced by Nasser that Israel's withdrawal from the Occupied Territories would not undermine the PLO's ability to pursue its struggle, though it would have to do so politically. But in the political climate of the time, egged on by the radical groups, Arafat could not have maintained such a position, which would not have been understood either by his adversaries or by his supporters. In the debates within the PLO central committee, therefore, Arafat was obliged to speak out against the Rogers Plan, but he scrupulously avoided mentioning the Egyptian president by name. Abu Iyad, who shared Arafat's views on the matter, explained their attitude in his memoirs, pointing out that "tactically, it would be suicidal to attack Nasser while we risked being stabbed in the back by King Hussein; strategically, we couldn't afford to break with the most powerful Arab country whose regional and international support was so precious to us. Finally, we believed in Nasser's patriotism."¹⁵ All that Arafat could obtain from his colleagues within the PLO central committee was authorization to head a delegation to Cairo to ask the Egyptian president for "clarifications."

Nasser at first refused to receive the Palestinian delegation, and it was only at Haykal's insistence that he finally agreed to do so. Still angry, he greeted the delegates coldly. Turning to Arafat, he asked sarcastically, "How many years do you think it will take you to destroy the Zionist state and build a unified, democratic state on the whole of liberated Palestine?" He bluntly added that a ministate in the West Bank and Gaza was "better than nothing." In any case, he said, the Palestinians had no cause for worry about the Rogers Plan, which was doomed to fail since Israel had no intention of giving up the West Bank. But at least, he explained, accepting the plan enabled him to buy time by ending the war of attrition. He would benefit from the respite in order to reconstitute his military forces with the help of the Soviet Union. A new confrontation with Israel seemed in any case unavoidable. More or less reassured, the Palestinian delegation returned to Amman at the end of August.¹⁶

By that time, a showdown with the regime was fast approaching. Arafat did not want a clash with King Hussein but was unable to stop the provocative acts of the radicals who were fueling the conflict. While the PFLP and PDFLP set the pace, the fedayeen in general followed their lead, conducting themselves as if they were in conquered territory. They took on tasks normally performed by the Jordanian government, police, and army, to the point of directing traffic in the capital. Foreign journalists arriving in Amman were surprised to be greeted not by representatives of the Jordanian Information Office but by Fatah militants dressed in combat fatigues, who handed out press cards along with propaganda brochures. A similar situation prevailed in the hotels, where representatives of the Palestinian organizations took journalists in hand, provided the information they required, and helped arrange meetings for them with resistance figures.

Posters on the walls of Amman called for the marginalization if not the overthrow of the monarchy. Although the posters were signed by the PFLP, PDFLP, and other radical groups, Fatah contributed to the agitation by denouncing "treacherous" Arab regimes willing to compromise with Israel and America, and calling for demonstrations or strikes. While Fatah condemned the PFLP's hijacking of airplanes and the taking of hostages in early September 1970, the condemnation was not strong enough to restore order. King Hussein, pressured by his army and humiliated by the fedayeen, hardened his position and clearly began to move toward an armed confrontation, while Yasser Arafat, having lost control of his movement, also lost his credibility with the Hashemite monarch.

On the evening of 16 September, the eve of the royal offensive against the fedayeen, Abu Iyad, completely at odds with the PLO propaganda, confidentially told this author, "The war will break out in the next few hours, and without any doubt we will lose it." He criticized the demagoguery and irresponsibility of the fedayeen leaders, which was leading to what he predicted to be a catastrophe. His expectations turned out to be well founded. Despite the crisis that had been intensifying for several months, astonishingly, no provisions had been made for a confrontation that seemed inevitable. No battle plan had been drawn up and no military mobilization ordered. The leaders had not provided for any system of communication among them nor prepared places where they could function underground. One of the reasons for the lack of preparation was undoubtedly the widespread belief that King Hussein would not dare take on the fedayeen. Wasn't half his army, and the majority of his

subjects, of Palestinian origin? And wouldn't Syria and Iraq rush, as they had promised, to the defense of the Palestinian resistance?

Such analyses ignored the stakes of the Hashemite monarchy and the international conjuncture. Henry Kissinger, preeminent advisor to the U.S. president, was determined not to allow the Palestinian resistance the slightest success, which, according to him, would redound to the Soviet Union. Similarly, Israel was determined to defend the Hashemite throne, while the Soviet Union was not prepared to risk a showdown with the United States to defend the Palestinian "adventurers." Meanwhile, Damascus and Baghdad, bold in rhetoric, had already shown themselves to be extremely cautious when it came to action, and were certainly not about to intervene in a conflict that was very much beyond them.

What remained was Gamal Abd al-Nasser. As the crisis moved toward its climax, rumors circulated that Nasser had given King Hussein the green light to crush the Palestinian resistance as a kind of punishment for its opposition to the Rogers Plan. In all likelihood spread by Jordanian intelligence and amplified by the radical Palestinian organizations, this rumor had the effect of further demoralizing the fedayeen, who were fighting for their lives. In fact, Nasser did not long delay in coming to their aid. On his initiative, an Arab summit was convened in Cairo on 21 September, five days after the outbreak of hostilities. Two delegations of heads of state and prime ministers were dispatched successively to Amman where they successfully negotiated a cease-fire and got Abu Iyad out of Amman and to Cairo. Arafat was then smuggled secretly out of Jordan disguised in traditional Kuwaiti robes. King Hussein was obliged to follow, and under Nasser's patronage Arafat and Hussein signed a cease-fire agreement on 27 September. Fate would have it that Nasser's last act was to stop the massacre of fedayeen and perhaps of their leader. He died of a heart attack the next day.

Eyewitnesses report that Yasser Arafat broke into sobs when he was told of the death of Nasser, to whom he referred to from then on as the "father" of the resistance. He conferred upon him the title "Martyr of the Palestinian Revolution." Fatah published a communiqué that read as follows: "Nasser, who embodied the aspirations and dreams of the entire Arab nation, fell on the field of honor. His ideas will remain forever engraved in the memory of generations to come of the Palestinian people."

One can only speculate on how different things might have been had Nasser lived. Arafat would, for the rest of his life, speak of him with great warmth, affection, and admiration. Others, however, have been quick to

point out that the Egyptian president's actions with regard to the Palestinians were always guided by motives of pure self-interest, and that he tried to co-opt and control Arafat just as he had done with Shuqayri's PLO. While there may be truth in this assessment (leaving aside the fact that Arafat cannot be compared to Shuqayri), it remains that Nasser was deeply convinced that his policies were not only for the good of Egypt but for the good of all Arabs, including the Palestinians. He consistently worked for the national independence and sovereignty of all Arab states. He never concealed his beliefs concerning a settlement with Israel and had reason to hope that Arafat, in whom he undoubtedly recognized a fellow pragmatist, would end up using political and diplomatic measures to come to terms with the Jewish state.

The end of the Nasser era opened a new chapter in the history of the PLO. The self-criticism that began in its ranks soon after the fedayeen debacle in Jordan in 1971 was followed by a radical change in strategy and tactics in a way that certainly would have pleased Nasser. As of the summer of 1974, the PLO officially embarked on the road to territorial compromise that was to lead a little more than a decade later to the adoption of the two-state strategy, envisioning a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza that would coexist with Israel. That same year, the Arab League, including Jordan, recognized the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. A few months later, in the fall of 1974, Yasser Arafat gave a conciliatory speech to the UN General Assembly, which gave him a resounding welcome, a triumph he would have shared with Gamal Abd al-Nasser.

Notes

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10

The Birth and Evolution of Palestinian Statehood Strategy, 1948–82

Camille Mansour

It is not surprising that since 1948, the question of Palestinian strategy has constituted the most popular and recurrent theme in the political discourse among Palestinians and, more generally, among Arabs and even outside observers of the Middle Eastern scene. In view of the wide gap that has separated the situation on the ground from even the most moderate Palestinian political aspirations, identifying the ‘right’ strategic choices has appeared vital (and often been divisive). While at times certain strategic choices seemed to enjoy the upper hand in the political debate, there has hardly been a choice that has not encountered criticism. In particular, Palestinian political actors have often criticized each other for following unrealistic or defeatist strategies, for lacking a clear or coherent strategy, or simply for having no strategy at all. Such mutual recriminations have intensified since the turn of the twenty-first century. This obviously denotes a lively Palestinian political society, but, undoubtedly, it is also an expression of the impasse faced by the Palestinians after the establishment of the Oslo framework.

Here I hope to contribute to the debate on the desired Palestinian strategy, not by proposing one but by reviewing the birth and evolution of the Palestinian strategy concerning statehood from 1949 to 1982, identifying its constitutive elements and determining factors, and explaining the changes through which it has passed during a quarter of a century. I hope that these insights will offer parameters to be taken into account or addressed by advocates of certain strategies today. But

before reconstructing the past, it is important to define the concept of strategy, or rather how to approach it if this exercise is to be fruitful.

For a specific actor, one might assume that strategy consists of defining an objective and mobilizing prioritized means in order to achieve it. Attribution of strategy to complex collective institutions, however, is more difficult. Taking the example of the state, even when it embodies a single nation, controls its own territory, and manages its economy and resources, a state is not a purely voluntaristic actor. The idea that the apparatus of the state indulges in due deliberation, then authoritatively selects an explicit strategy from different alternatives, then has its members and the society at large mechanically implement this chosen strategy seldom, if ever, exists in reality. External influence, social conflicts, opposing economic interests, struggle between political parties and forces, competition within the governing elite, leadership changes, bureaucratic contradictions, implementing government bodies of varying competence, all mitigate the notion of a state as a person mindfully making freely clear and rational decisions consistent with the objective, and giving unambiguous orders to obedient limbs.

This reservation about the idea of a voluntaristic actor does not mean that the state's behavior is condemned to be aimless or irrational, or that the state has no real decisionmaking capacity. Yet, a state's behavior is, to varying degrees, a mixture of free will and rationality on one side and determinism on the other. In other terms, a state's behavior is a mixture of intentional and rational decisions (adopted by policymakers in view of the internal and external environment) and outcomes resulting from internal dynamics (which may transform, alter, or distort the intentionality and rationality of policymakers). A greater degree of free will is more likely in the state's short-term behavior than in the long term, where profound societal forces are more likely to play a greater part. And considering that policymakers, especially when they enjoy a strong and stable position, are inclined to cloak their real strategy with ideological declarations, rhetoric, and maneuvering, analysts who wish to read the strategy of a state face a series of dilemmas. How much weight does one give to declared as opposed to real strategies? How does one measure the degree to which a state's strategy is the result of decisionmakers' purposefulness, given the internal and external constraints and opportunities, and the internal sociopolitical dynamics? To what extent do organs of state (bureaucracy, military forces, and so forth) actually implement the

state's strategy as designed by policymakers? To what extent does the society give policymakers its support?

It seems to me, first, that what is needed is to describe and analyze the *actual* strategy of a state, and not the declared one, or the one that is worked out in a closed room as a preferred vision, or the one that is decided on by some policymakers but not fully followed by the apparatus, except insofar as the three latter possibilities are useful to grasp the *actual* one. Second, it follows from this that the state's actual strategy is the result of the internal dynamics (whether interactive or superposed, convergent or divergent) involving all the sociopolitical forces (including naturally the authoritative ruling bodies) that shape the overall behavior of the state and make it appear as moving clearly in a given direction. In this sense, strategy is rather what is inferred by the observer *ex post facto* than what is programmatically expressed by the actor.

My specific endeavor faces several challenges. First, the time span covered exceeds three decades. Second, the subject of this paper is a 'Palestine' that is not a state. Additionally, the inclusiveness of 'Palestine,' both in terms of its operational constitutive members and its territorial base may have changed over these decades and Palestine as an *actor* has not always been self-evident. Thus, a review of Palestinian strategy requires not only dealing with objectives, forms of organization, and modes of action, but also dealing with issues such as agency, identity, and territoriality. These issues are often taken for granted in the case of an established nation-state, the national strategy requiring no more than their preservation, but in the Palestinian case they were subject to continuous construction and reconstruction since the 1950s. This process has been at the heart of Palestinian strategic alternatives in the pursuit of statehood.

1950–61: Liberation through Arabism

After the 1948 *nakba*, mandate Palestine was divided territorially into three parts.¹ The State of Israel, after the expulsion of the majority of the Palestinians from the territory it controlled, exerted its domination over the 150,000 remaining Palestinians. The West Bank was annexed by Transjordan and the Kingdom of Jordan naturalized the Palestinians of the West Bank as well as those taking refuge on the East Bank. The Gaza Strip was administered by, but not unified with, Egypt. Egypt recognized all the inhabitants of the Gaza Strip, including incoming refugees, as

Palestinians. Syria and Lebanon, and to a lesser extent Egypt proper and Iraq, each hosted a portion of refugees. Thus, Palestinians, whether refugees or living in their original towns and villages, came under differing external rule. The Arab host countries considered the United Nations responsible for creating the Palestine problem and thus held it politically and financially responsible for its consequence, the refugee problem.

From an institutional point of view, there existed no Palestinian actor capable of representing, leading, or exercising control over even one of the dispersed communities. Like the Arab Higher Committee, the All-Palestine Government established in Gaza constituted “an empty shell.”² It would be misplaced to talk about a “Palestinian strategy” during the 1950s. Yet it would also be erroneous to assume Palestinian anomie after the shock of the *nakba*. Young Palestinians quickly became involved in political activism in the places where they lived. It is noteworthy that they joined parties that had a presence in multiple Arab countries and whose platforms included missions and programs extending beyond the borders of a single country. This was the case not only for parties that explicitly called for Arab unity (such as the Movement of Arab Nationalists—MAN—headed by George Habash, or the Ba’th Party), but also for the Muslim Brotherhood. Later, people in the street identified with Gamal Abd al-Nasser as a pan-Arab leader. At the foundation of this identification were four dominant perceptions:

1. Israel is a tool of imperialism that covets not only Palestine but also the whole Arab world. As such, it constitutes a threat not only to the Palestinians but to all Arabs.
2. Arab puppet regimes and the division of the Arabs contributed to the Palestine defeat.
3. Overthrowing Arab regimes subservient to the west and unifying the Arab nation in a single state are prerequisites for the liberation of Palestine.
4. Liberation will occur through military preparation and, ultimately, a confrontation between a regular Arab army and Israel.

Given the enormous shock of the 1948 defeat, the degree of Palestinian identification with Arab unity during the 1950s seems to have been a substitute for the emergence of a Palestinian actor. However, it is important to stress that whereas in the Arab East, Arab unity was considered a value in and of itself, the Palestinian ‘street’ (including the Palestinian

activists in the MAN) seems to have valued unity as a means toward an end:³ the return to a liberated Palestine. It would otherwise be difficult to explain both the degree of Palestinian involvement in Arab politics and the tight control exerted by all governments over Palestinians, whether in Israel, Egypt/Gaza, Jordan, Syria, or Lebanon. In any case, one can infer that Palestinians felt a territorial attachment to both Palestine and the Arab homeland “from the Atlantic to the Gulf.”

However, identity and territoriality are more complex than suggested by a simple Palestinian/Arab duality. Many authors have shown that refugee camps very quickly became the “territory” appropriated by the refugee, that the village or place of origin, even the family or individual home, were “reproduced” in the camp through the reconstruction of neighborhoods that appeared to recreate the social bonds of origin. Thus, while the Arab homeland and Palestine were projections into the future, such expressions of attachment to the place of origin attempted to perpetuate the past until the moment of liberation. In this sense, the different territorial appropriations or representations (the place of origin, the camp, Palestine, the Arab homeland) were themselves dimensions of identity together with other dimensions, such as the family, clan, religious community, and social class.⁴ It would not be an exaggeration, though, to say that the aspiration to return from exile, maybe even for nonrefugees, such as those living in their West Bank towns and villages, constituted the most legitimate dimension of Palestinian identity.

1961–68: Toward the Revival of Palestinian Identity

The strong belief in liberation through Arab unity (and the latter through regime change and anti-western struggle) was reinforced in the second half of the 1950s by the nationalization of the Suez Canal (1956), the political victory against the tripartite aggression (1956–57), the establishment of the United Arab Republic (1958), the insurrection in Lebanon (1958), and the anti-monarchist coup in Baghdad (1958), in addition to the Algerian revolution and the restive situation in Jordan. Beginning in the early 1960s, however, the perception was of a trend no longer tilting toward Arab unity, not only because of the failure of the Egyptian–Syrian union in 1961, or because only three so-called progressive regimes (Egypt, Syria, and Iraq) emerged, governed by new petite bourgeoisie or military elites (followed later by Algeria), but also, and

principally, because the consolidation of these regimes did not prevent fierce competition and infighting among them in the name of Arab unity itself. The changing Arab environment appeared frustrating to many Palestinians who were not members of ideologically tight Arabist parties (such as MAN or the Ba'th Party). They included those who had joined the Muslim Brotherhood in the late 1940s and early 1950s and those who were children or adolescents at the time of the *nakba*, had grown up in refugee camps, and had progressively climbed the educational-economic ladder, including in Arab oil countries. The changing environment bore several implications.

There was, first, the feeling that the Arab liberation of Palestine was being delayed. This does not mean there was a fear that Palestine was no longer an Arab cause, whether at the popular or even the governmental level. But there was a sense that the Arab road to Palestine would be circumvolved rather than follow the linear regime change-unity-liberation path imagined in the early 1950s. Consequently, another way to position the struggle toward occupied Palestine had to be found. And what better way than by letting Palestinians struggle directly for Palestine? Palestinians, the thinking was, needed to be organized and focused only on the occupied homeland, and transformed from refugees begging for assistance from an unfair pro-Israeli world to fighters holding their own destiny. This implied that the Palestinians needed to establish (or leave their party of origin and join) an organization that would be a revolutionary avant-garde and start networking in the different Palestinian communities. The legitimacy of such a process of organizing and networking was drawn from the Algerian experience; Palestinians could point to the Algerian National Liberation Front's (FLN) success in conducting a struggle to liberate its own territory while enjoying the support of the Arab masses. If the FLN was not accused of isolationism, and if progressive Arab regimes could maintain their claims of patriotism and unity even while quarreling with each other, why should the Palestinians remain idle or, at best, put their efforts toward parties or organizations not properly Palestinian? Turning MAN's argument on its head, the struggle for liberation became the road to Arab unity, and not the other way around.

Clearly this trend among young Palestinians was a sign that the trauma of 1948 was being overcome. The momentum of this trend from the 1950s to the 1960s was represented by the creation of the Fatah movement in 1958–59 and the emergence of other small activist groups and cells in Palestinian communities in the Arab world. Talk of guerrilla operations

against Israel led movements such as MAN to accuse those espousing them of adventurism, arguing that such actions would entangle (*tawrit*) the Arab front-line states in a premature battle with Israel. Fatah did not deny this accusation, arguing instead that the idea of Arab armies suddenly waging a successful lightning war against Israel was far-fetched and that guerrilla operations would raise the struggle against Israel on the popular and governmental Arab agenda, allowing a long popular liberation war to be waged. From the Arab governments' point of view, however, even if they considered the Palestinian struggle totally legitimate, a struggle against Israel undertaken by nonstate actors could only be a threat to the Arab state system. Already the fact that the Palestinians were dispersed in a number of Arab states and that their networking and organizing, even short of guerilla operations, would necessarily take place across borders could only be a headache for competing Arab security services. It can hardly be a coincidence that in 1959 the council of ministers of the Arab League recommended "establishing a Palestinian army in the Arab host countries" and "reorganizing the Palestinian people and bringing it forward as an entity [*kīyam*] composed of a unified people and not as mere refugees, so that the world will hear its voice in the [Arab] national arena and at the international level, through representatives chosen by the Palestinian people."⁵ This idea of preventing the Palestinians from overstepping the bounds of the Arab state system was followed less than five years later by the establishment of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) under the aegis of the Arab League and the de facto sponsorship of Egypt, with Syria and Iraq active at other levels. It is interesting to note how the 1964 PLO charter reflects the Nasserite attempt to absorb and contain the revival of Palestinian identity by rhetorically reconciling the MAN motto and the Fatah one. Its article 12 declares that Arab unity is the road to the liberation of Palestine and at the same time that the liberation of Palestine is the road to Arab unity.

The shift in the strategy of the Arab states, transforming the Palestine cause into the Palestinians' cause, was an acknowledgment of an unavoidable emerging reality, which included both the awakening of the Palestinians as Palestinians and the lack of successful endeavors toward Arab unity. But it was also, for each country involved, an attempt to solidify internal control and to find the most favorable position in inter-Arab competition. For Syria, encouraging (with ups and downs, including imprisonment of its members) a resistance movement in the Mashriq, such as Fatah, coupled with permitting a mild Palestinian distinctiveness

within the country, was internally manageable (albeit with some difficulty, given the political instability at the governmental level) and potentially useful in inter-Arab relations. Iraq, which hosted a tiny Palestinian community, had already in 1959–60, under the government of ‘Abd al-Karim Qasim, created a Palestinian regiment that constituted a convenient asset in the name of Palestine, especially against Nasser’s Egypt. Because it administered a territory it did not want to annex and had to deal with the turbulent population there, Egypt saw fit in the early 1960s to put a constitution in place in Gaza and to establish a council endowed with legislative powers (albeit narrow ones). Egypt’s policy of ‘internal’ control mixed tight security with certain political rights and was accompanied by the establishment of a PLO of notables, which served not only as a tool in inter-Arab politics but also as a check on potential trans-Arab Palestinian turbulence.

The Palestinian threat to stability was greater in Lebanon and Jordan. Lebanon’s fragile communitarian equilibrium and weak state made the government especially wary of any Palestinian activism. It did not allow military units composed of Palestinian conscripts to be established on its own soil, especially if such units were under a PLO or Arab League umbrella. The maximum that Lebanon was ready to accept was a diplomatic presence for the PLO together with its research department (the Palestine Research Center). As for Jordan, the ‘Palestinization’ of the cause was dangerous because it represented a threat not only to the stability but also to the very essence of the state. After all, the unification of the West Bank with Transjordan had since 1947–48 (and probably since the late 1930s) appeared to be the key to resolving the Palestine question. By acquiring a part of Palestine (practically offered to it) and uniting the two banks of the Jordan River under the aegis of Arab unity, the kingdom had an overwhelming interest in coexisting with the Israeli state established on the other side. This interest included repressing Palestinian identity, seen as irredentist and dangerous to the unification of the two banks. In light of the growing call for the establishment of a Palestinian “entity” (*kiyan*), including the Fatah call for “having a revolutionary entity in the remaining part of our homeland [the West Bank and Gaza],”⁶ the fear was not without foundation, despite the ambiguity of what was meant by the term ‘entity.’ Apart from tightening the screws internally, Jordan could find no alternative to seeking Egyptian assurances that the PLO would be no more than an official, Arab-contained superstructure, devoid of any teeth or ambition to rule over the West Bank.⁷

The combination of Arab government measures and growing support for a militant Palestinian agenda at the grass-roots or underground level, in addition to other important initiatives,⁸ had a multiplying effect on the revival of a Palestinian identity distinct from the Arab states' identities. This convergence took place within the spaces opened between Arab states as a result of their divergent strategies for dealing with Palestine and the Palestinians, and became a common denominator within the debates over priorities and means of struggle that animated the new Palestinian networks (and in which Palestinians from MAN and the Ba'th began to be involved). An autonomous Palestinian personality (the so-called Palestinian entity) remained out of reach, however, and its attainment in the foreseeable future was a foregone conclusion. Neither the PLO nor the burgeoning organizations, whether in Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, or Gaza/Egypt, could pretend that they led a Palestinian community over the heads of the Arab governments. The absence of a leading Palestinian actor in the early and mid-1960s (until 1968) restricts any discussion of a Palestinian strategy. At most, the multilevel drive toward the revival of Palestinian identity described here was the functional equivalent of a strategy.

In any case, from the beginning of 1965, the truce lines with Israel (Jordan, Syria, Lebanon) witnessed a number of guerrilla operations. These were mainly conducted by Fatah, which was joined by others in the first months of 1967. It is difficult to say how much the guerilla operations contributed to the dynamic that ultimately led to the May 1967 crisis. However, even if these operations, which were intended, as noted earlier, to entangle the Arab front-line states in the struggle and assert the Palestinian factor, played a meaningful role in the road to the June 1967 war, the war's results—the thundering Arab defeat and the Israeli occupation of Arab land—were a long way from any objective that could possibly have been pursued by any Palestinian group. Paradoxically, the defeat and the occupation created a new reality, permitting the quick emergence of an autonomous Palestinian actor, built on the Palestinians' sense of identity that had characterized the prewar period.

1968–73: A Palestinian Revolutionary Actor?

So discredited were the governments of the front-line states and their armies in the wake of the 1967 defeat, and so intense was the sense of failure and crisis in 'Arabness' (*hawīya 'arabiya*) among the Arab elite, that

many in the Arab world turned to a new hope, the Palestinian resistance. The new territorial configuration lent itself nicely to such a framework. The whole of mandate Palestine was now unified under the same occupier and could thus become the space to exercise classical anticolonial struggle for national liberation. Before the war, the Palestinian community in Israel was so small compared to both the Israeli population and the whole Palestinian population that the struggle against the enemy was perceived as necessarily taking place from outside Israel. After 1967, a situation comparable to Algeria and Vietnam appeared to have emerged, whereby resistance could be undertaken in the interior with assistance from Palestinian fighters from beyond the front lines. Marxist and revolutionary literature, popularized by intellectuals from all over the Arab world (including Lebanon, Iraq, French-speaking North Africa, and elsewhere), became the reference for a possible praxis. Palestinian organizations that consisted before the war of a limited number of cells now enjoyed the merit of already existing at the start of the occupation, and were thus in a position to call for immediately launching the struggle against the occupier and to mobilize fresh recruits. While the Fatah movement became the dominant force among Palestinians, MAN became Palestinized through the establishment of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP).

For Fatah, the Arab official environment was not so bad. Jordan and Lebanon offered, as discussed below, a space for mobilization and a stepping stone for action. Syria, without compromising on its traditional tight control, provided the resistance with open land communication between Jordan and Lebanon, seeing an interest in permitting a certain level of guerilla operations in the occupied Golan and in using the resistance organizations to influence Palestinian, Jordanian, and Lebanese developments. Egypt, now separated from Gaza by Israeli-occupied Sinai, saw nothing to fear and possibly much to gain from organized, even turbulent, Palestinians. Iraq and the countries of the Gulf (especially Kuwait) and the Maghreb (especially Algeria) saw nothing to lose in supporting the resistance. Given its dominant influence in Palestinian developments and the overall favorable Arab environment, Egypt in particular, Fatah in 1968–69 took control of the PLO and thus itself became part of the official Arab system. With the transformation of the PLO into an umbrella institution dominated by Fatah and composed of resistance organizations, professional unions, and independent personalities, a Palestinian autonomous actor emerged for the first time since 1948.

It is useful at this juncture to clarify the attributes of the emerging Palestinian 'actor'— attributes that lasted until the 1993 Oslo accords—by comparing the PLO and the constitutive elements of the state. First, there exists a decisionmaking body, the equivalent of a government, that is not obedient to any single state. Granted, it is subject to pressure from states, pressures that are sometimes harsh and often brought to bear through Palestinian organizations subservient to one state or another, but all in all, the nature of the pressure exerted on the PLO is not markedly different from that exerted in interstate relations. Second, the decision-making body is supported by a reasonably structured bureaucracy and by a military/guerilla apparatus (though, mainly because of the diversity of the organizations that supervise its members, this apparatus is ill-disciplined). Third, the decisionmaking body exercises control over all the Palestinian communities, whether direct control (as in Jordan in 1968–70 or Lebanon in 1969–82) or from the bottom up through grassroots loyalty (as in Lebanon in 1982–93, the West Bank in 1973–93, Gaza in 1968–93, or Kuwait and other Gulf states in 1968–91). This control has had its ups and downs, but overall it is possible to say that after 1968 there has always been a meaningful body of Palestinians who have recognized the PLO as their representative, who have followed its strategic decisions, and who have either benefited from its services or contributed to them. Fourth, different stages have seen some territorial control (Jordan's refugee camps and the Aghwar region in 1968–70, Lebanon's refugee camps and South Lebanon in 1969–82,⁹ and Lebanon's refugee camps in 1983–2006), but this has been fractionalized and lacking in coherence. Fifth, there has been an almost linear ascent in the Arab world and internationally from acknowledging the PLO's role to recognizing it.

This assessment of the PLO's state-like attributes is useful in measuring the varying degrees to which, in each period, the PLO fulfilled the conditions usually met by the state, but at this point, it is enough to assert that the PLO, starting in 1968–69, became a nonstate actor with international status. The fact that its constituency was transnationally networked, that is, living in different regions (Kuwait and other Gulf regions, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, the occupied West Bank and Gaza, and elsewhere) under different rules while developing its internal multilevel connections, compensated in some ways for its lack of territorial control. Weakened in or expelled from one region, the PLO always enjoyed, in one place or another, strong loyalty (or voluntary acquiescence of control), appealing to a varying mixture of hearts, minds, and purse strings.

That no alternative state or force succeeded in challenging or replacing the PLO is testament to its authentic, intractable strength. I would also like to stress that the status of the PLO as an autonomous personality in the Arab and international arena must be understood in terms of power politics rather than international law, even if its resilience, its perceived legitimacy, and the recognition it has been granted by states and international organizations transformed its *de facto* status into a legal one. In any case, it is possible to talk about a Palestinian strategy, in the sense outlined in this introduction, after 1968, led by the PLO and Fatah.

After rising to power, the new Palestinian leadership had to present its national program. An amended charter was voted on by a new Palestine National Council (PNC) in July 1968.¹⁰ It retained the traditional themes of Arab unity, the liberation of Palestine, and the rejection of the Zionist project and partition, but it contained new provisions stressing the Palestinian character of the cause, in addition to its Arab dimension, the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, armed struggle as a strategy, and the rejection of any external interference or tutelage. In other words, the amendments expressed the importance given by the Fatah leadership to having the Palestinians recognized as an independent actor. Further amendments to the charter or clarifications of its provisions were seen at this stage as not worth a conflict within the PNC, or within Fatah itself. However, in September 1969, the PNC adopted a political resolution stating that the PLO's aim was "establishing a democratic state devoid of any form of religious or racial segregation." This was a watered down formulation of a position expressed frequently by Fatah as of the end of 1968 and during 1969, according to which the Palestinian aim was to establish a democratic state over the whole of mandate Palestine for all its inhabitants, Muslim, Christian, and Jewish (henceforth the "democratic state"). This idea bore three dimensions. First, it restricted the territorial aspect of the struggle to mandate Palestine and understood territoriality as the right to statehood. Fatah's stated goal of establishing a state as legitimate and permanent as the other Arab states thus went beyond its own anti-MAN slogan of the early 1960s, when it had argued that the struggle for the liberation of Palestine was the road to Arab unity. Second, it legitimized the presence of Jews in Palestine, not as Israelis living in an Israeli state, but as a community among the other communities, in conformity with what was seen as the Lebanese model. Third, it obviously included in the Palestinian peoplehood all Palestinians, whether living in Israel, the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, or exile.

This program was still ambiguous; for instance, it did not state whether the envisioned democratic state would have an 'Arab' character or a mixed one or whether it would be 'secular' or not. From the point of view of the balance of power with Israel, the program was overly ambitious, if not unrealistic. Even in terms of unifying all the Palestinians as a people under its umbrella, the PLO was still competing with Jordan over the loyalty of West Bank notables and had not yet made real inroads among Palestinians living in Israel, where it faced a strong Israeli political and security apparatus, apart from a diffuse sympathetic feeling and the loyalty of a (probably very limited) number of cells. Territorially, the democratic state program implicitly contradicted the idea of a unified two-bank Jordan, as existed before 1967, leaving unresolved the contradiction posed by two future overlapping states. Finally, especially insofar as it acknowledged the presence of Israel's Jews as a community in mandate Palestine, the program was not really popularized at the grass-roots level. But it did reflect the way a significant sector of Palestinians in that period constructed their self-legitimacy and the legitimacy of their struggle, in particular the struggle of the refugees to return to their homeland. It also recognized that it was no longer possible to defend the idea, found in the original PLO charter, that only Jews who had remained in Palestine from before the period of Jewish immigration could be considered Palestinians.¹¹

In many ways, though, the immediate challenge faced by Fatah and the PLO in 1968–69 lay in tensions internal to the organizations. On the one hand, Fatah's leaders, who had been disappointed with Arabism since the late 1950s and were impregnated with a strong feeling of Palestinian identity, held a 'restrictive' sense of Arabism characterized by: the Arabness of the Palestinian people; the duty of Arab states, groups, and individuals to assist the Palestinians and to struggle against Israel; the lack of a program of sociopolitical change in the Arab world (let alone a program of social change for the Palestinian people); and the rejection of Arab interference, under the cover of Arab unity, in Palestinian affairs. But the movement was also part of an umbrella PLO that comprised organizations with different ideological outlooks, primarily Marxist and Arabist, and different allegiances. Within Fatah itself, as a loose and broad-based organization, ideologies ranging from Maoism to political Islamism coexisted. Although the 1967 defeat had brought strong support in the form of Arab public opinion, as well as volunteers from all over the Arab world, discipline and coordination were not the main features of the organizations'

conduct. In sum, there existed between Fatah and the other components of the resistance, and even within Fatah itself, a certain ambiguity and incoherence of *Weltanschauungen*, programs, and conduct.

Whereas discipline and coordination in conduct must be dealt with constantly and consistently, ambiguous and incoherent formulations or compromises are often useful in bringing diverse political forces into a unified front. They can also prepare the ground for a shift from a previous position to a new one by mixing elements from both, or allow the settling of different visions of the future within a front to be postponed until they become practically relevant. In the Palestinian case, however, all the issues discussed above, even those concerning visions and programs, were immediately relevant in 1968–69. In Jordan (and soon after in Lebanon), the resistance organizations' freedom of movement and action, their control of the camps, their military operations against Israel and Israel's reprisals all urgently threatened the regime. Further, the hundreds of Arab volunteers who joined the resistance did so not only as an expression of support, but also because they considered the resistance the avant-garde of Arab revolution and its success a step toward sociopolitical change in their own countries. Under the justification (or on pretext) of Arab solidarity, some states sponsored and funded organizations that reported back to them and were not interested particularly in coordinating their actions within the PLO. These factors increased some Arab states' distrust of the PLO, and certainly increased the fears of Jordan and Lebanon, eventually leading to Jordan's attempt to restore law and order in its territory by driving out the PLO.

Instead of dealing seriously with these issues, the Palestinian leadership was driven along by the revolutionary atmosphere, and the tremendous mobilization of Arab support, rather than driving it. It welcomed these assets, but its behavior seemed not to anticipate their consequences or costs. Given the great price it paid, including the loss of its presence in Jordan, the Palestinian leadership would seem to have been better served by facing whatever ambiguities and incoherencies existed, taking the initiative, and choosing clearly one of two strategies: a restrictive Palestinian identity strategy or an extended Palestinian/Arab revolutionary strategy. Each strategy would have had certain implications, not only for the mobilizing ideology but also for the Palestinian resistance's alliances, its power bases and control, and its modes of organization.

A restrictive Palestinian identity strategy would not have been devoid of danger. In explicitly confining its mobilizing ideology to the limited Fatah Arabism, it probably would have seen less Arab mobilization in its favor, perhaps exposing Fatah and the PLO to accusations of isolationism from the Arab world. It also possibly would have faced a certain lack of sympathy or comprehension at the Palestinian grass-roots level. Its advantage would have been in the simple affirmation that the Palestinian resistance, while deeply Arab and requiring Arab support, was not the avant-garde of all Arabs and that sociopolitical change in Arab countries is a matter to be tackled by those countries' citizens. Egypt would have to have been privileged with respect to regional alliances, in view of its strategic importance, its diplomatic openness (even under Nasser), and the fact that it was not geographically contiguous with the Palestinians' ground of operation. In Jordan (and Lebanon), the restrictive strategy would have limited PLO and Fatah control to the refugee camps, but it also would have assured the kingdom of noninterference in its affairs and that the resistance would not overflow beyond the camps. This would have meant adopting the extremely difficult measures necessary to impose the most rigorous discipline on the organizations' rank and file, to coordinate daily with the law enforcement bodies of host countries, and to distance the Palestinian resistance from organizations dependent on other states. Even idealistically assuming that such discipline were possible, one should not pretend that such a restrictive strategy would have succeeded. It would have involved in any case an infringement of Jordanian sovereignty, and the escalating spiral of guerilla military reinforcement and Israeli reprisals posed an unavoidable counterlogic to any plan to respect the sovereignty of the host country. That said, however, the Fatah leadership did not follow the minimal requirements of a restrictive strategy.

An extended Palestinian/Arab revolutionary strategy, more in tune with the mobilizing spirit of the time, would obviously have been more dangerous. Putting aside the instinctive and simplistic characterization of this strategy as adventurous and unrealistic, let us suppose instead that it would have been thoughtful, built on a cautious step-by-step approach, and based on the (not unrealistic) observations that the status quo and stability in the Arab states were in any case impossible, that Arab regimes care only about staying in power, that the Palestinians cannot struggle against Israel without transgressing the frontiers of Arab states and their sovereignty, and that consequently even a restrictive Palestinian strategy

was condemned to failure. At the mobilizing ideology level, an extended Palestinian/Arab revolutionary strategy would have adopted the themes of Palestine as an Arab cause and, in broad and cautious terms, the need for sociopolitical change in the Arab world. It would thus have benefited from the support of Arab public opinion, but at the price of narrowing the Palestinians' alliances and accruing a measure of Arab governments' distrust. From an organizational point of view, it would have strengthened those who wanted to neutralize the outbidding of Arab-sponsored organizations. But the extended strategy would have differed from the narrow one most strikingly in choosing to steer Palestinian and Arab mobilization inside and outside the refugee camps in Jordan toward overthrowing the Hashemite kingdom. Such a move could be explained by the geographic proximity of the West Bank and the East Bank and by the fact that the majority of the people living in the East Bank were of Palestinian origin and had ties of kinship with those living on the other bank. In revolutionary terms, such a move would have put an end to U.S. hegemony over Amman and established an 'Arab Hanoi' in the country, providing a safe rear base for the struggle inside Palestine. Such a Palestinian strategy may seem shocking today, but it was in fact part of Palestinian internal discussions in 1968–69. The chances of such a strategy's success, or whether the establishment of a "republic of resistance" in Jordan would have had a sobering effect on the Palestinian leadership or provoked a major Israeli intervention, are obviously impossible to judge. But my argument is that an overthrow of the monarchy was the *sine qua non* condition for the pursuance of an extended Palestinian/Arab revolutionary strategy.

The Palestinian resistance, or rather the Fatah leadership, did not choose either of these two strategies, but more or less implicitly borrowed from each. This eclecticism is not necessarily bad. A cool-headed analysis would indicate, for example, that a combination of an extensive strategy with restrictive rhetoric would be more successful, and therefore wiser, than the opposite. Fatah's problem was to have implicitly selected the wrong combination, consequently maximizing the dangers. By nurturing a strong sense of a specifically Palestinian identity while at the same time being reluctant to seize power in Amman, Fatah did not, or could not, funnel the strong mobilization from below in this narrow direction, in part because many of its members felt at home in Jordan and as Jordanian citizens had a legitimate say in the country's political developments. Nor did Fatah check other resistance organizations'

efforts to outbid Fatah (with acts such as spectacular plane hijackings) or enforce discipline among other resistance organizations or even within its own ranks. As for its alliances in the Arab world, though Fatah relied on its alliance with Egypt, for example, it nevertheless campaigned against the latter's acceptance of the Rogers Plan in 1970. Finally, after reaching the point of open conflict with Jordan, Fatah's incoherence and indecision allowed a successful Jordanian restoration of the status quo in spite of Syrian intervention (quickly deterred by Israel).

The most obvious result of the Palestinian resistance's eviction from Jordan in 1970–71 was the loss of a territory that had given the Palestinians both a potential front along the cease-fire lines of 10 June 1967 and a visible popular and leadership presence in Jordan. Another result was the increased difficulty of building a strong military and political resistance structure inside the West Bank, because Jordan would from then on constitute a buffer separating the interior from the outside resistance. Militarily, Gaza exemplified the importance of a rear base (though by no means sufficient in and of itself) for building a resistance structure. Despite the relatively high initial mobilization in Gaza (as compared to the West Bank) and the population density of its refugee camps, when Israeli occupation of the Sinai and control of the Suez Canal separated Gaza from Egypt, Gaza was unable to build a sustainable underground network able to withstand the harsh Israeli instruments of control.¹² Politically, Jordan attempted to regain the initiative through a multifaceted policy of maintaining open (though tightly controlled) borders with the West Bank for commercial ties and circulation of people;¹³ financing some public services, municipalities, and schools; issuing official documents for the West Bank Palestinians (mainly passports for travel abroad); and (in March 1972) announcing the establishment of a Jordanian–Palestinian federation (dubbed the United Arab Kingdom) upon Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank. Expelled from Jordan, stripped of much of its revolutionary aura, deprived of instruments for developing a lasting guerilla base in the interior, and seeming to lack irreversible support in the West Bank, the Palestinian movement, its very survival unsure, appeared condemned for the foreseeable future to remain essentially a diaspora movement. Although many cadres had lived in the West Bank and Gaza before the 1967 occupation, thus blurring somewhat the outside–inside distinction, in the early 1970s the Palestinian movement's leadership's decisionmaking and its conduct on the ground would be influenced more by Palestinians from 'the outside' than by those from

'the inside.' In any case, as before 1967, the return of the refugees' and deep frustration over the world's inherent unfairness remained cornerstones of the Palestinian outlook.

The question remains, however, as to whether the Jordanian debacle cast into doubt not only the Palestinian movement's status inside Palestine, but also its very survival as an actor capable of keeping its remaining institutional assets, that is, a free and autonomous political and administrative apparatus, a visible center of decisions on behalf of the Palestinians, and an armed body conducting military and guerilla operations against Israel. It is safe to say that the movement retained much of these intrinsic assets and, additionally, was able to maintain its legitimacy in the official Arab system, bolstered by the fact that Egypt and Syria were involved in an anti-Israel struggle aiming at the recuperation of their land occupied in 1967 and were thus interested in keeping a tool of pressure on Israel, together with burgeoning support from the Soviet Union and the Soviet Bloc. Nevertheless, the series of Palestinian meetings, declarations, and political moves during the 1970-73 period show a clear sense of a movement on the defensive and of facing a threatening future, but also a readiness on Palestinians' part to take any and all measures to prevent the liquidation of the resistance. An illustration of this is the belated call by the broad Palestinian movement, including Fatah, for the overthrow of the Hashemite regime and its replacement by a patriotic regime that would support the national rights of the Palestinians in Jordan and the right of the Palestinian resistance to carry on its struggle from Jordan. To show the world the dangers of a Palestinian impasse, Fatah secretly sponsored international operations conducted by the Black September organization, including the spectacular hostage-taking of Israeli athletes during the 1972 Olympic Games in Munich.

Within the Mashriq, the movement was logistically now more dependent on Syria and feared the renewal of confrontation with Lebanon, despite the Cairo agreement of late 1969, which set out the principles under which the Palestinian resistance would be allowed to operate in Lebanon. To counter any threat to its survival in Lebanon, the resistance viewed the political support of large sectors of the Lebanese population and of Lebanese political forces as insufficient, and chose in addition to intensify its militarization inside and outside the refugee camps and to welcome within its ranks or as its allies hundreds of Lebanese combatants and militants. Palestinian fears did not materialize until the late spring of 1973, when the Lebanese army attempted to

reassert its control, and were it not for the outbreak of war on 6 October 1973, it is quite possible that a major Lebanese–Palestinian confrontation would have taken place that fall.

1973–75: Diplomacy for the Sake of a State

After the October 1973 war, whatever the objective evaluation of its results, Egypt, Syria, and the Gulf states felt that it had been a victory for the Arabs, or at least made public declarations to their public and the world to this effect. There was also a feeling among Palestinians that the survival of the PLO as an actor was no longer an issue and that new opportunities were on the horizon. The United States, through Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, seemed keen to make serious efforts to defuse the Arab–Israeli conflict. Egypt and Syria, as well as Jordan, which did not participate in the war, affirmed their readiness to enter into multiparty negotiations that would lead to peace in exchange for Israeli withdrawal from the territories occupied in 1967 and a “just solution” to the Palestinian problem. This new environment presented a major challenge to the Palestinian leadership. On the one hand, there was international awareness that the Palestinian problem was more than a refugee problem, that it was also political. However, not only did this awareness not translate into a specific framework for a future settlement, but also the power holding the key to any settlement, the United States, was not ready to talk to the Palestinian actor, the PLO. On the other hand, there was the possibility of an Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank. But here also, both Washington and Amman were firmly of the position that if such a withdrawal were an outcome of negotiations, this should be to the advantage of the Hashemite kingdom rather than the PLO.¹⁴ Arab states, for their part, adopted a general wait-and-see stance, wavering between the tendency to express diplomatic solidarity with the Palestinians and a concern about adopting positions that would appear unrealistic and unfeasible.

In this environment, the PLO’s democratic state program offered little direction or course of action. Whatever its legitimacy, the democratic state program, and to an even greater degree the liberation of Palestine slogan, now appeared irrelevant. Declaring a willingness to participate in the upcoming negotiations on the basis of the democratic state program when Israel refused to sit at the same table as the PLO and while the three front-line states were prepared, under certain conditions, to participate in

a negotiation framework that preserved Israel's sovereignty over its pre-1967 territory was unrealistic, to say the least. And boycotting the negotiations under the banner of the democratic state program and the purity of the cause risked isolating the Palestinian leadership from the Arab governments, increasing the dangers of military and political confrontation in Lebanon, and opening the door to Jordan negotiating the return of its rule over the West Bank. For the Fatah leadership, and for the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), one thing was clear: it was not possible to claim to represent the Palestinian people and then let Jordan negotiate on behalf of the Palestinians. And if there was a possibility of an Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank, then the PLO had to be in charge of that territory. These considerations, along with the natural drive for survival, became the compass that would direct the Palestinian leadership's behavior more than anything else in the decades that followed.

Given the U.S.–Israeli position and the attitude of the front-line states, the price of an admission ticket to the negotiation table—prior to any achievement in the West Bank (or Gaza)—was forfeiting the democratic state program. For the Fatah leadership, this option was rife with intra-Palestinian risks. The perception that Fatah was selling out the Palestinian cause would distance it from the Palestinian diaspora, especially in Lebanon and Kuwait, which now constituted the main base of the PLO. Fatah also faced the possibility of recrimination from several organizations (except for the DFLP, which had even before the war, in September 1973, prepared the ground for the idea of Palestinian control over the West Bank and Gaza only), which could dispute Fatah's legitimacy and split from the common front. Thus, the Fatah leadership, under the stewardship of Yasser Arafat, faced in 1973–74, as well as later, a seemingly never-ending cost-benefit calculus—involving a complex exercise of shifting tactics and alliances, circumvolute maneuvering, steps forward and backward, consensus building or go-it-alone decisions—the goal of which was to do whatever it took to reach the road leading to Palestinian control of the West Bank and Gaza.

Internally, the best account of the new Palestinian positioning was the Ten Point Program adopted by the PNC at its June 1974 Cairo session. The program acknowledged the new international situation created by the October 1973 war, including the convening of an international conference under the sponsorship of the United States and the Soviet Union. It rejected the right of “any Arab state or leader to negotiate on

behalf of the Palestinian people or its sole authentic representative, the PLO." It called for the establishment of a People's Independent National Authority over any liberated part of Palestinian land. While it asserted its rejection of Security Council Resolution 242, this was not based on the fact that the resolution acknowledged the sovereignty of all states (including Israel) in the region, but on the grounds that the resolution considered the Palestinian question one of refugees and not of national rights. At the same time, the program paid lip service to the objective of establishing "the democratic Palestinian state" and claimed that "once it is established, the Palestinian national authority will strive to achieve a union of the front-line states, with the aim of completing the liberation of all Palestinian territory, and as a step along the road to comprehensive Arab unity." Like the 1968 amended charter, this text constituted a compromise between differing views as well as a preparation to transition from a previous position to a new one. Although Israel discounted the program as a staged approach to its elimination, the PFLP and other organizations viewed it as a historic betrayal, withdrawing from the PLO executive committee three months later in order to disassociate themselves from the program. Most Israelis at the time failed to see that, ideologically, this step toward restricting statehood to the West Bank and Gaza had only been made possible by the democratic state program, for while the latter proposed a vertical power sharing between Israelis and Palestinians, the former reconciled itself to horizontal (that is, partitioning of the land) power sharing.

The Arab states understood the unfolding Palestinian developments as evidence of a readiness for compromise. Although Egypt, for example, would have preferred a more explicit Palestinian position in favor of a state in the West Bank and Gaza alongside Israel, it was at the same time limited by its own rhetoric. Egypt could not claim a strategic victory in the October 1973 war and at the same time ask the PLO to go beyond the signals it was sending and play all its cards before the negotiations had even begun. After all, the PLO, involved in intensive diplomatic activity with the Arab states, was not demanding support for the liberation of all of Palestine or for the democratic state formula. Nor even did the PLO demand that the Arab states refrain from negotiating withdrawal from the Sinai or the Golan on the basis of Resolution 242. Its sole demand was that it be recognized as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. In other words, the Arab states were asked to decide whether the PLO or Jordan would negotiate the future of the West Bank.

Although a decision in favor of the PLO would make it more difficult to open Arab–Israeli negotiations, the very fact of its negotiating the future of the West Bank was an indicator of its evolving pragmatism. The PLO, in contrast to its indecisiveness toward Jordan in 1970, exhibited a clear-cut, proactive position that it could defend in the Arab official arena as well as in the third world and the Islamic world. At the Arab summit meeting in Rabat in October 1974, the claims of the PLO were supported over those of Jordan, and its right to establish a national authority over any liberated Palestinian land was affirmed, with the understanding that the PLO would not diplomatically represent Palestinians living in Jordan (the East Bank) because these were Jordanian citizens.

The Rabat summit confirmed a ‘law’ in Palestinian–Arab relations that continued at least until the late 1980s: while Arab states may individually seek to weaken the PLO, and may collectively and passively witness this weakening, they cannot on an inter-Arab institutional level undertake a concerted action to this end. There may be, for example, a Palestinian–Syrian or Palestinian–Jordanian conflict that results in a serious weakening of the PLO’s status, but the Arab League or the Arab summit cannot take advantage of such a conflict in order to weaken it further or to strike the coup de grace. They can, depending on the situation, amplify PLO victories, but not its failures, at the very most acknowledging or endorsing a new status quo. This is the result of the PLO’s success in symbolizing the Palestinian cause, which is a consensual Arab cause. This does not prevent, obviously, individual Arab states from withdrawing from the consensus, nor does it mean that the consensus is immutable. But the Arab collective cannot accept the possibility that an individual Arab state, by liquidating or appropriating the PLO, appropriates the cause. This explains why the Palestinian leadership, since September 1970, has regularly sought to convene Arab summits and conferences (making sure that the gap between its position and the Arab consensus is not unbridgeable), even when at the same time it has tried to exploit inter-Arab divisions for its own benefit: remaining under the broad Arab umbrella has been more comfortable than the tight embrace of a close ally.

Not unexpectedly, the reorientation of the Palestinian strategy, reinforced by Arab and international support, imprinted its effects on other aspects of the Palestinian scene. In particular, the reduction of sought-after territory transformed the operational, though not the ideological, components of ‘peoplehood.’ In the West Bank, there was now a strong,

open, and visible identification with the PLO. The real debut of the PLO's political constituency in the West Bank, meaning allegiance to the PLO leadership as well as influence on it, can probably be traced to 1973–74. Among the Palestinians in Israel, the opposite was true. Whatever joy they felt at the consolidation of Palestinian identity, the PLO program's shift toward a Palestinian state in only the West Bank and Gaza did not encourage their identification with the PLO as their representative (if ever the temptation existed within existing political forces inside Israel). As for the Palestinians in Jordan, the PLO reorientation could be seen as downgrading their role as Palestinians and reinforcing their political estrangement from both the PLO and the monarchy. Unable to act because of the strong control of the Jordanian security services, they took refuge in a kind of depoliticization (and efforts to achieve economic prosperity), blaming both the accommodating PLO and the kingdom for forfeiting the liberation of mandate Palestine.

Turning to the PLO's modes of action, the question of the relationship between armed struggle and diplomacy arose in 1973–74. Although the PLO's official ideology had held, and continued to hold, that the aim of armed struggle was liberation, its *de facto* function having been the entanglement of the Arab front-line states (1965–67) in the struggle and the mobilization of Palestinian identity (1965–73), the *de facto* function now became the application of pressure for the achievement of tactical political objectives. Instead of liberating the land (*tabrir*), the balance of power with Israel permitted no more than a stirring of the situation (*tabrik*).

In diplomatic terms, the balance sheet for the PLO appeared to be positive. Building immediately on the atmosphere created by the October 1973 war, it scored significant points within the Eastern Bloc, the Non-aligned Movement, and the Islamic Conference. The recognition it gained from the latter served to bolster its position at the Rabat summit, the resolutions of which became a stepping stone to it being granted observer status at the UN General Assembly and quasidiplomatic status in several European countries. Thus, PLO diplomacy became state diplomacy without a state. For years it had more influence in the UN than many fullfledged members. But the apparent successes of the PLO at the end of 1974 did not open the door to negotiations toward a comprehensive settlement and may even have had the opposite results in Washington. By erecting barriers to an international conference where all parties, including the PLO, would be represented, Washington succeeded in coaxing Sadat's Egypt to engage in a separate process.

1975–82: A Quasi-state in Lebanon for the Sake of a State in Palestine

In the first quarter of 1975, with the start of the Sinai II talks, it became clear that negotiations on the Palestinian issue were no longer on the American agenda. This had almost immediate repercussions in Lebanon. From November 1973, after the October war, to January 1975, there had been a convergence of all Lebanese state and political institutions in support of the PLO. In particular, the Lebanese presidency and the Phalangist Party had hoped that a bolstered Palestinian position would permit the start of substantive negotiations conducive to a comprehensive settlement involving, among other things, the end of the Palestinian armed presence in Lebanon and a resolution of the refugee problem. This support had resulted in Lebanese President Sulayman Franjieh accompanying Yasser Arafat to the UN General Assembly in November 1974. As the hopes for negotiations faded in early 1975, however, the fears and confrontational attitudes that had been building up before the October 1973 war returned to the fore. My purpose here is not to recount the causes and developments of the Lebanese civil war and the Palestinian involvement in it from 1975 until 1982, but to relate only that which is relevant to understanding the evolution of Palestinian strategy.¹⁵

Suffice it to say that because of the precariousness of the Lebanese political system, a situation had quickly developed whereby, to simplify in the extreme, part of the population identified with an army that should confront the PLO, and the other part considered armed resistance its own army, one that should be not only protected, but also constitute an ally in effecting much-needed changes in the Lebanese political system. The confrontation, which developed into a civil war, led the PLO, less than four years after the Jordanian trauma of 1970–71, to prioritize militarization above other methods that would have simultaneously aimed at ensuring its survival and Lebanon's political stability, though in contrast to the Jordanian situation, it did not face an immediate military danger of liquidation. Quite the contrary, the confrontation unveiled the PLO's military strength and saw a relatively quick paralysis of Lebanese state institutions. The PLO now faced a dilemma with regard to its Lebanese allies. On the one hand, if it were to support their political programs, there existed the possibility of creating an institutional void in Lebanon with unforeseen internal and regional consequences, and possibly grave risks to the PLO's survival. On the other hand, if it were to curb its allies and prevent them from threatening the fragile Lebanese equilibrium, the

PLO ran the risk of alienating them and losing its political base in Lebanon. As in Jordan, the PLO's conduct in Lebanon seemed characterized less by decisionmaking than by a lack thereof. Between April 1975 and May 1976, the PLO often seemed to be dragged into actions or decisions rather than to choose them. And when in February 1976 the Lebanese army disintegrated, the PLO yielded to the temptation of supporting its Lebanese allies in their endeavor to change the rules governing the state system.

The "Hanoi temptation" (this time not in Amman but in Jounieh) was quickly checked by Syria's intervention in Lebanon in support of a formal status quo in the system (including support for Bashir Gemayel's Forces Libanaises), also setting in place the state's greater dependency upon Damascus for years to come. In terms of Syrian-Palestinian relations, the political and military confrontation that ensued did not end in the PLO's total submission for several reasons. First, Damascus's presence in Lebanon was conditioned by an understanding with Tel Aviv, arranged through Washington, that involved, among other things, a commitment not to cross the Litani "red line," thus leaving the PLO's military forces unchecked south of the river. Second, Arab (mainly Egyptian and Saudi) intervention in October 1976 favored a Syrian-Palestinian *modus vivendi* in Lebanon (thus confirming the 'law' of inter-Arab relations over the PLO explained above). Third, Syria's regional ambitions required a relatively autonomous PLO, as Egypt moved to defect from the conflict with Israel, and Damascus desired to build an "eastern front," bringing together Jordan, Lebanon, and the PLO under its broad leadership. The need for a Syrian-Palestinian understanding in Lebanon and in the region proved itself in November 1977 when Anwar Sadat, by visiting Jerusalem, opened the way for a separate Egyptian peace treaty with Israel. Almost immediately afterward, and probably triggered by the visit, armed conflict erupted between the two former allies, the Forces Libanaises and the Syrian army in Lebanon.

Paradoxically, the Lebanese scene with all its intricacies was not simply a quagmire that diverted attention from Palestine; it also provided the ground for a strategy centered on Palestine. This strategy consisted in building what I will call a quasi-state in Lebanon for the sake of a state in the West Bank and Gaza. From the start and especially since 1969, the Palestinian movement had worked toward the establishment of a bureaucracy alongside its political and military institutions. First in Jordan, then in Lebanon, it created a kind of public administration that

dealt with or supervised activities in different fields—economics, welfare, health, education, policing—of Palestinian refugees' lives. The PLO quickly became the principal interlocutor of the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) over the latter's programs. As Lebanese state institutions became progressively weaker, the PLO had to ensure that essential services (food, water, electricity, telephone service) continued to be provided to the Lebanese population in the regions within its sphere of influence. The Palestinian leadership constituted a power center effectively dealing with both high politics and everyday burdens, whereas the Lebanese National Movement, by comparison, was a coalition of organizations and political parties that, in many cases, were themselves dependent on Fatah and other PLO-affiliated organizations for their funding and armament. Eventually, the ties of Lebanon's Palestinians (and part of the Lebanese population) to the PLO came to be not only ideological but, thanks to material support for the PLO from the Gulf states, also more practical in nature.¹⁶

It is important here to describe the nature of the PLO's territoriality in Lebanon in that period. From 1977 on, the different front lines resulting from the fighting in Lebanon had practically been set. Territorially, part of Lebanon was under the control of the Forces Libanaises (and the Israel-backed South Lebanon Army), which maintained some sort of order. In the other part, in fact the larger part of Lebanon, a lack of order prevailed. There, the PLO coexisted with the remaining institutions of the Lebanese state, the different components of the Lebanese National Movement, and Syrian forces (except in the south). The PLO's main interests were freedom of movement and external security (that is, keeping opposing forces such as the Forces Libanaises from encroaching on the part of Lebanon where the PLO was based). In this regard, its space in Lebanon fell into three categories: a perimeter or front line, sections of which it controlled, leaving the other sections to Syrian army control; anchorage points, consisting of the refugee camps and military bases; zones between the perimeter and the anchorage points, where the PLO enjoyed freedom of movement *but intervened in unequal degrees*, according to circumstances and local conditions. In these zones, neither the PLO nor Syria had the capacity or the will to directly impose order and internal security, mainly because they lacked the legitimacy to do so. The justification for the PLO's armed presence in Lebanon was the struggle against Israel and, during the civil war, the mutual defense with the

National Movement against the “isolationist” Lebanese forces. Maintenance of internal security, except in the refugee camps, did not fall under these two justifiable aims. Indeed, the PLO was criticized for doing too much (intervening in Lebanese affairs) and at the same time not doing enough (letting internal security deteriorate) and it would eventually pay a dear price for its oscillating policy.

However, between 1977 and 1982, it is possible to speak of a Palestinian quasi-state structure in Lebanon. The PLO was not a true state structure because it lacked legitimacy, was not in charge of public order, and did not have a program of creating a new political order in Lebanon. But, in its externally directed actions, it was almost a state. It occupied a space where it could act and move freely and was immune from any Arab attempt to control or liquidate it. Beirut became, often with tactless, arrogant disregard for Lebanese sensitivities, a favored center where the PLO received foreign visitors and diplomats, appointed and briefed its representatives abroad, and followed up with the social and political institutions in the West Bank and Gaza. Steps were taken even to give the Palestinian armed forces the appearance of classical military units. The Palestinian space in Lebanon provided between 1975 and 1982 a military front where standard military tactics and actions, short of a major war, were applied vis-à-vis Israel: operations, reprisals, skirmishes, cease-fires, UN forces, and so on.

Whatever the disorder inside its Lebanese space, the ups and downs of Lebanese popular support, and the Palestinians’ real strength and determination in South Lebanon, the PLO now enjoyed three characteristics—freedom of movement within a geographic space, loose Arab sponsorship devoid of exclusive control from a particular Arab state, and a military front with the enemy—that granted it a new Arab and international dimension. Thanks to the Lebanese space, the PLO became a regime among other Arab regimes, benefiting, despite its defects, from the centrality of the Palestine cause and its significant control over the Palestinian communities in Lebanon, the West Bank, Gaza, and the Gulf, and thus becoming a meaningful factor in the inter-Arab balance. In this context, the PLO enjoyed privileged relations with Saudi Arabia, which tried to facilitate Palestinian–American contacts and understandings. And in many foreign policymaking spheres, especially in Europe, a deepening convicction emerged in the impossibility of resolving the Lebanese imbroglio without at the same time finding a political solution to the Palestine question.

It appears that the construction of the Palestinian quasi-state in Lebanon between 1978 and 1982 was the main PLO strategy, whether by design or because of the dynamics of the Lebanese conflict, or both. It seems probable that the logic of the conflict, coupled with threats to its survival, imposed itself on the PLO at first, and later, when presented with the possibilities offered by the evolving situation and with its survival no longer in jeopardy, the quasi-state strategy was deliberately developed. Whatever the case, the PLO strategy on the eve of the Israeli invasion in June 1982 clearly appeared twofold: enter negotiations for an independent Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza from a position of strength, with diplomatic, political, and territorial cards in hand, and, after an agreed Israeli withdrawal, transfer (literally) the state institutions built in Lebanon (political leadership, public administration, and security forces) to the West Bank and Gaza.

It is noteworthy that the resolutions adopted by the PNC during the same period (in March 1977, January 1979, and April 1981) represented further steps in favor of realistic negotiations, expressly referring to the objective of establishing an independent Palestinian state, whereas the resolutions of June 1974 had only affirmed the principle of establishing a national authority over any liberated part of Palestine. Although the 1979 session, whose main purpose was to express principled and ideological protest against the Camp David accords and the expected Egyptian–Israeli treaty, did reaffirm the principle of the democratic state in all of mandate Palestine, both the 1977 and 1981 sessions refrained from doing so. As articulated in Walid Khalidi's 1978 article "Thinking the Unthinkable," in *Foreign Affairs*,¹⁷ the Palestinian readiness to compromise, together with the strategic, political, and ideological conditions in the Arab world, made the circumstances ripe for the establishment of a Palestinian sovereign state in the West Bank and Gaza in a stabilized Middle East. The Fatah leadership, however, was severely constrained by the need to reach a sufficient level of consensus among the PLO-affiliated organizations, and within Fatah itself, and not to completely alienate Syria.

Israel, for its part, did everything during this period to discourage Palestinian or other overtures toward the "two-state solution." It did so by obstructing U.S. initiatives during the Carter presidency (as when it opposed the American–Soviet communiqué of 1 October 1977, which, among other things, called for the respect of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people and the reconvening of the Geneva conference with participation of representatives from the Palestinian people) and by

igniting the front in South Lebanon at delicate junctures in the indirect dialogue between Washington and the PLO. In April 1982, when the Israeli withdrawal from the Sinai in conformity with the Egyptian–Israeli peace treaty was completed, a rare (and probably brief) opportunity arose for then Defense Minister Ariel Sharon, with Alexander Haig’s “green light” to destroy once and for all the Palestinian quasi-state in Lebanon. Israel’s purpose was precisely to exclude the PLO from any negotiation and to impose a West Bank solution “according to Israeli rules.”¹⁸

For three full months in the summer of 1982, the Israeli army conducted an implacable war against the PLO forces and their Lebanese allies. The Arab state system proved to be incapable of preventing the forcible implementation of the Israeli–American objective. The PLO’s subsequent withdrawal from Lebanon put a definitive end to the free movement of Palestinian military forces in the front-line states and consequently to Israeli–Palestinian military encounters across the borders. It was also the definitive end of the PLO’s direct and structured control over the Palestinian communities in the diaspora (except to a certain degree within some refugee camps in Lebanon). As discussed earlier, the PLO continued to enjoy the loyalty of the majority of diaspora Palestinians, but the latter would be less extensively or actively organized within unions, political parties, and networks. In Tunis, Damascus, and elsewhere, PLO-affiliated organizations witnessed a certain sclerosis, and the cadres and political activists of yesteryear became “professionals of politics,” for the most part cut off from the grass roots. The diaspora Palestinians continued to consider the PLO their sole legitimate representative, a ‘tabou’ to be preserved against all odds, but their interactions with the leadership lacked any structured mechanism. Later, and increasingly, the PLO leadership in Tunis’s primary interactions were with West Bank and Gaza networks, which would have been an unlikely development had the PLO continued to enjoy the spoils of the Lebanese quagmire.

But what of the PLO’s “state transferal” strategy that crystallized in the early 1980s on the eve of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon? Was the blow struck to it by the destruction of the Palestinian quasi-state a fatal one? Insofar as the PLO bureaucracy and military units were concerned, the PLO leadership under Arafat was mindful not to disband them in the aftermath of the withdrawal from Beirut. The bureaucracy, though smaller, was for the most part moved to Tunis. The military units were resettled in camps in several Arab countries and a decade later constituted

the backbone of the security services that were deployed in the West Bank and Gaza as a result of the Oslo accords. In retrospect, it appears that safeguarding these forces had been a constant policy of the Fatah leadership. This would explain the limited Palestinian military strategy since the Jordanian debacle and the way the military and guerilla forces fought in South Lebanon in March 1978 and the summer of 1982. But the central component of the “state transferal” strategy—holding a position of strength at the negotiation table—was devastated in the summer of 1982. Indeed, the PLO would not be admitted to the negotiation table until it reached the lowest point in its history, in 1992–93, when it had lost much of its Arab diplomatic and financial support after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. Furthermore, the bureaucracy and military units that were transferred to the West Bank and Gaza in the framework of the Oslo agreements failed to serve the purpose for which they had been preserved by the Palestinian leadership, namely constituting the apparatus of the state in the making (though they also failed to acquiesce in Israel’s aim of a Palestinian self-government more concerned with protecting the security of Israel and Israelis than with liberating Palestinians from occupation).

Conclusion

What are the lessons and conclusions that one can draw from the birth and evolution of Palestinian strategy from the 1950s to the early 1980s that are relevant today? First, any military (or even political) struggle conducted independently from within a neighboring country can, without a doctrine that appears profoundly legitimate (and not only instrumental) in the eyes of both the Palestinians and the majority of the host country, only be transient. The absence (or perhaps the impossibility) of such a Palestinian doctrine in Jordan and Lebanon greatly explains its eventual failure in both countries. In contrast, such a doctrine (in this case, Ba’thist Arabism) did exist in Syria from the early 1960s, but its price has been a dependent Palestinian institutional presence—a lesson that Hamas, as it develops its strategy for Palestine from the competitive position it has acquired in Palestinian politics, would be well served to keep in mind, at a time when it develops its institutional presence in capitals such as Damascus or Tehran.

Second, a strategy as a free choice must take into account the prevailing balance of power. This does not mean submitting to the balance of

power as it exists, but it does mean assessing the dimensions of a situation and deciding (and prioritizing) what to reject and strive to change, what to acknowledge without legitimizing, and what to try to consolidate. The failure to devise a strategy that acknowledges the realities of a balance of power is more likely to be conducive to achieving results opposite to the strategy's aim.

Third, any strategy must ensure the survival of the Palestinians as an actor, even if there is a price to be paid in terms of lowering objectives and potential achievements. There is no strategy without an actor. Despite the Palestinian dispersal in numerous host countries, the Palestinians have succeeded in establishing and keeping a Palestinian polity, allowing them to weather the failures and defeats they have faced since 1968. Today, together with their dispersal, their legal-physical fractionalization in mandate Palestine (Israel, Jerusalem, the Gaza Strip, and the West Bank, and even within the West Bank itself) constitutes a renewed threat to their survival as an actor that has an effective center of decisions, making it all the more necessary to cling to the PLO and the Palestinian Authority as legitimate frameworks for international diplomacy, political activity, law making, and public administration.

Fourth, while the Palestinians as a collective actor may face the possibility of paralysis, since 1948, history has shown that external efforts to suppress their yearning for Palestine and the Palestinian identity are doomed to fail. This must instill historical confidence among the Palestinians that they will continue to exist as a people despite the threats that they currently and will surely continue to face.

Finally, in view of the fact that Palestinian statehood has not been achieved in the West Bank and Gaza more than fifteen years after the signature of the Oslo agreements and more than thirty-five years after a strategic decision was made toward this objective, one cannot but question the advisability of the shift from the democratic state objective over all of mandate Palestine to the "statelet" program. This shift by the Palestinian leadership not only involved making an unfair and substantial territorial concession, but also set the stage for the political marginalization of the Palestinian communities in Israel and the diaspora. However, I do not think that the failure to establish a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza at this point condemns *a posteriori* the major strategic shift made by the Palestinian leadership in 1974. The Palestinian leadership indeed made many tactical errors as it tried to walk the fine line between suicidal adventurism and submission to hard

realities. But it remains that, in view of the annexation of a broadened East Jerusalem and the unrelenting building of settlements in the West Bank, a major responsibility for the Palestinian–Israeli impasse lies in Israeli policies and U.S. permissiveness toward them. If this trend continues, the unraveling of the Palestinian statehood strategy would be of Israel’s own making.

Notes

1. I use the expression “mandate Palestine” here in the geographic sense, referring to the territory that includes Israel, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip.
2. Avi Shlaim, “The Rise and Fall of the All-Palestine Government in Gaza,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 20, no. 1 (Autumn 1990), p. 48.
3. Helga Baumgarten, “The Three Faces/Phases of Palestinian Nationalism,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 34, no. 4 (Summer 2005), p. 28.
4. For the pre-1948 roots of Palestinian identity, see Rashid Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity: The Construction of Modern National Consciousness* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997).
5. “Resolutions of the Council of League of Arab States at the Ministerial Level,” 31st Session, Cairo, 2–4 August 1959, online at <http://www.arableagueonline.org> (accessed 15 August 2006).
6. *Filastinuna* 8 (June 1960), p. 5. (*Filastinuna* was the underground journal of Fatah.) See also Yezid Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for State: The Palestinian National Movement, 1949–1993* (Washington, D.C., and Oxford: Institute for Palestine Studies and Clarendon Press, 1997), p. 89; Baumgarten, “Three Faces/Phases,” p. 33.
7. Article 24 of the Palestinian Charter, adopted in the founding session of the Palestinian National Council in May 1964, affirms that the PLO will not exercise territorial sovereignty over the West Bank and Gaza.
8. It is to be noted that frameworks for studies and research on Palestine were created in the same period: the Institute for Palestine Studies, through the initiative of Constantine Zureik and Walid Khalidi, was established in 1963, followed by the PLO Research Center a little more than one year later.
9. The significance of the Palestinian “quasi-statehood” in Lebanon between 1975 and 1982 will be dealt with below.
10. While the title of the 1964 PLO charter included the term *qawmi* ([Arab] national), the amended 1968 charter replaced *qawmi* with *watani* ([Palestinian] national).

11. See also Rashid Khalidi, *The Iron Cage: The Story of the Palestinian Struggle for Statehood* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2006), pp. 191–93.
12. Such as then general Ariel Sharon's counterinsurgency measures in Gaza, 1971–72.
13. By comparison, there was a very limited possibility for Gaza Palestinians to cross the cease-fire lines with Egypt, while Lebanon's and Syria's lines with Israel were almost completely closed.
14. Contrary to the West Bank, for the Palestinian leadership, there was no immediate stake related to the Gaza Strip because Egypt did not have the pretense of sovereignty over it.
15. See also my "La stratégie de l'OLP et le monde arabe," *Revue d'études palestiniennes*, no. 14 (Winter 1985), pp. 55–80; "La dimension palestinienne," *Cahiers du GREMAMO* [Groupe de recherches sur le Maghreb et le Moyen-Orient], no. 6 (1989), special issue on "Etat et conflits sociaux dans les sociétés à solidarités plurielles: le cas du Liban."
16. For the PLO as a neopatrimonial rentier regime, see Sayigh, *Armed Struggle*, pp. 454–63.
17. Walid Khalidi, "Thinking the Unthinkable: A Sovereign Palestinian State," *Foreign Affairs* (July 1978).
18. Zeev Schiff and Ehud Ya'ari, *Israel's Lebanon War* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1984), p. 43.

11

Palestinian Elites Waiting for an Elusive Statehood

Jamil Hilal

The study of the elite in any society is, in a sense, a study of power relations and thus a study of the constituents and dynamics of the political system and its relations with the social, economic, and cultural structures of that society. Because elites are designated as such by the kind of positions they hold and the resulting influence they wield, they are more clearly identifiable in the political than in the economic or social fields. In fact, occupying top positions in institutions and organizations is what distinguishes the elite from other members of society. This essay is concerned with Palestinian elites, but in order to understand the mechanisms and the assets used in their formation, continuity, and renewal, a few general comments are in order.¹

Monitoring change in the formation of political elites requires an examination of the transformations and tensions taking place in the national political field under study and its interactions with regional and international forces. Needless to say, the formation of a political elite does not require the existence of political democracy (that is, a political elite need not emerge through direct democratic and fair elections). Even assuming this to be the case, political elites can (and generally do) parlay the influence accompanying democratically acquired positions into perpetuating their status. Mechanisms used toward this end might include the establishment and widening of patron–client relations, the allocation of rents, and other forms of corruption. Elites may also resort to the use of military or paramilitary numerical strength, control of the mass media, the manipulation of

religious discourse and officials, as well as kinship and regional affiliations. The multiplicity of elites in the political field, as in civil society and the economic sphere, may entail interelite conflict. The resolution of such conflict—democratically or otherwise—is the most common mechanism for effecting political change. For these reasons it is prudent to observe the diversity and multiplicity of elites, both the socioeconomic elites and those whose influence derives from their connections to various sources of power (for example, political, economic, military, and family-based). The nondemocratic ramifications of an absence of elite diversity (and thus multiple power centers) on the political system and the character of the state are also important to note.

The most common view of elites focuses on their proximity to decisionmaking and their ability to influence the field of activity (political, economic, cultural, social, intellectual, literary) in which they are engaged. Thus, they include those holding top positions, not only in government or ruling political institutions (or in the political opposition) but also in civil society. They can be big businessmen and investors, leaders of religious or cultural institutions, media figures (newspaper chief editors and directors of private radio and television stations), leaders of social movements or popular and professional associations, prominent writers, academics, researchers, artists, and so on. How they acquire their elite positions (whether through election, by appointment, or by virtue of other considerations) is a function of the prevailing political and socioeconomic system. Hence, elites can be seen as leaders and representatives of social classes and social groups, but not necessarily of the groups or classes that they claim to represent. Although there are conceptual and methodological problems in examining the relationship of elites to social classes, status groups, and minorities, these topics are beyond the scope of issues addressed here.²

The Palestinian case illustrates that the absence of a sovereign state does not mean the absence of a national political elite. Political elites are formed in tandem with the emergence of a national political field, which can be through the initiation of a national liberation struggle as well as through the creation of a nation-state. In other words, a political elite is formed as a result of its participation in the construction of an arena within which political institutions are constructed, rules of the political game laid down (or changed), and historical and identity narratives formulated and reformulated.

The physical dispersion of Palestinians after the 1948 *nakba* inevitably complicates any study of Palestinian 'national' elites. After a brief look at the Palestinian elite before the *nakba*, I will confine the post-1948 discussion to the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, including during the Jordanian and Egyptian periods. I have used available data to trace the impact of the Israeli occupation on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip in 1967 and the impact of the creation of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in the late 1960s on the formation of Palestinian elites. The analysis pays special attention to the transformation in the composition of elites following the establishment of the Palestinian Authority (PA) in 1994. For the latter purpose, I used in-depth and semidirected interviews with a sample of political, economic, and civil society elites, including figures with direct experience of decisive shifts in Palestinian political life.³

The Palestinian Political Elite before the *Nakba*

Prior to the *nakba*, Palestinian political elites were defined by their roles in the national movement that became engaged as of the early decades of the twentieth century in a bitter conflict with the Zionist settler colonialist movement, which sought to establish a Jewish state in Palestine. The Palestinian political elite reflected the political structure of the society at the time, which was characterized by contention for hegemony among traditionally influential families, particularly in Jerusalem. These "notable" families struggled to maintain the privileges they had acquired over generations and that were now being threatened by the Zionist colonial project. They dominated the Palestinian national political field, controlling most (but not all) of the political formations—political parties, the Higher Arab Committee, Muslim-Christian societies, and so on—that were active at the time.

Not unlike elite behavior elsewhere, a prominent feature of the Palestinian political elite, especially the top echelon, during the mandate period was the endeavor to maximize its political and social following. This included attempts by some members of the political elite to acquire more than one 'asset' (or 'capital') in order to stabilize or maintain its position in competition with other members of the political elite. For example, in addition to wealth (in land ownership or commerce), the pre-1948 elite possessed, or sought to possess, social and religious status (social and symbolic 'capital') as well as higher education (cultural capital). Those with a large family base had leverage by maintaining wide

social networks (social capital). Also, some in the elite further enhanced their status through the possession of administrative or professional positions.⁴

Another feature of the Palestinian political elite before 1948 was the internal rivalry that seemed to be family-based, but which in fact reflected divergent political strategies with regard to British rule. Mainly, it was a rivalry among an urban-centered leadership virtually blind to the changes that were in the process of reshaping rural–urban relations, not to mention changes in the urban centers themselves as a result of large-scale rural–urban migration, particularly to the coastal cities. In effect, the leadership of the Palestinian national movement remained delinked from societal changes by virtue of its rather rigid class and status outlook. This explains in part its failure to construct effective national institutions or to devise strategies to deal with the challenges and dangers facing the country. This, no doubt, contributed to the rapid disintegration and dispersion of the elite under the double impact of British colonial rule and the Zionist settler onslaught, as well as its failure to cope with the imposition of official conservative Arab tutelage on the Palestinian national movement.

Up to 1948, the Palestinian political elite remained more or less limited to the class of landlords, property owners, and merchants residing in the urban centers. The pre-1948 Palestinian elite was also characterized by a disproportionate representation of Christians, whose presence outweighed their relative size in the population. This aspect tended to highlight the secular nature of the Palestinian national project, which the elite sought to emphasize in contrast to the exclusively sectarian nature of the Zionist project. The possession of a higher education—a common feature of the mandate-era elites—became even more important for the post-*nakba* political, social, and economic elites.⁵

From the *Nakba* to the Creation of the Palestinian Authority

It would be inaccurate to speak of a Palestinian political elite between the *nakba* and Israel's June 1967 occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. During this period, there was no clearly demarcated Palestinian national political field defined by an all-embracing national institution seeking an independent Palestinian state. What existed were local Palestinian elites (formal and informal) in the various Palestinian

communities that came into being following the *nakba*. Thus, the territorial-state national field under whose influence and rule each Palestinian community fell (for example, Jordan, Israel, Lebanon, Syria, and Egypt) played a vital role in shaping these elites.

In the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, where Jordanian and Egyptian rule was a determining influence in defining Palestinian local elites, the two main mechanisms for elite recruitment were the appointment of Palestinians to positions within the government bureaucracy and the easing of economic operations for Palestinian businessmen. Local elites in the West Bank and Gaza initially remained largely confined to the traditional "notable" families, reflecting the prevailing sociopolitical system at the time. During this interim period before the 1967 war, the local elites in these territories relied on their positions in government and on their role as intermediaries between the Palestinian community and the central government.⁶

Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza in June 1967 and the subsequent rise of the PLO precipitated the decline of the notable class and altered the mechanisms of Palestinian elite formation. In Jerusalem, the influence of the hitherto politically dominant notable families, already weakened after 1948 by the integration of Jerusalem's religious establishment into Jordanian institutions,⁷ was further eroded by Israel's annexation of the Old City, despite the survival of the Supreme Muslim Council.⁸ The 1976 municipal elections in the West Bank (excluding East Jerusalem) further diminished the influence of notable families because victory went, in most municipalities, to personalities supporting the PLO, toward which the majority of influential families were noncommittal.

Indeed, it was the PLO that became the overriding factor in Palestinian elite formation both in the diaspora, where it was centered, and in the communities "inside." From 1969, when it was taken over by the Palestinian resistance movement (the PLO had been created under the tutelage of Egyptian President Gamal Abd al-Nasser) and up to the creation of the PA in 1994, the PLO constituted the incubator of the national political elite. This was institutionalized in mechanisms for filling leadership positions within the PLO and in mechanisms for recruiting and cultivating leaders within the political factions that made up the PLO. In fact, very few changes took place in these mechanisms from the beginning of the 1970s to the establishment of the PA. For the top echelon (members of the central committee of the Fatah movement

and members of the political bureaus of the other major factions), no serious changes were implemented to challenge their position. Some changes had taken place with regard to second-tier leaders (members of the Revolutionary Council in Fatah and of the central committees in other political organizations), but these were mostly replacements resulting from death, with some additions to reflect the balance of forces within the leadership of the political organizations and within the movement as a whole.

In addition to shaping the Palestinian *national* elite, the PLO, by virtue of its diverse organizational structures (which included mass, professional, and trade union structures) and as the carrier of the Palestinian national project, had a significant influence on the formation of *local* Palestinian political elites. In the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, this was effected through the grass-roots and political organizations the PLO had established in these areas even before the entry into Palestine of its leadership under the Oslo peace process in the 1990s. With regard to the Palestinian minority in Israel, the evolution of the political elite was dictated by other factors: the community's political organization was already in place by the time the PLO emerged, and it had to operate within the constraints of the Israeli political field and its heavy emphasis on the Jewish character of the state. But even there, the gradual forging of relations between the political groupings of the Palestinian community in Israel and the PLO leadership and factions helped strengthen the standing and influence of the local elites. In Jordan, the mechanisms for shaping the Palestinian political elite assumed dynamics engendered by the Jordanian political field and by the presence of a large Palestinian population. The presence of political organizations in Jordan, which until the end of the 1980s were essentially extensions of Palestinian political organizations, constituted an important factor in elite formation there.

After the outbreak of the first intifada in the West Bank and Gaza at the end of 1987, the center of Palestinian political activity began to shift from the diaspora to the Occupied Territories. This shift became decisive with the establishment of the PA, when the exile leadership relocated there. Following this move, the leadership composition of the main Palestinian political organizations was altered to reflect a better balance with local leaders from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip (this reflected itself in a tension between "inside" and "outside" leadership). The composition of Fatah's Revolutionary Council made this clear. The shifting inside-outside equation became especially evident with the emergence of leaders from

the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) in the late 1980s and early 1990s as an alternative leadership to that of the PLO.

Elite Formation under the Palestinian Authority

The establishment of the PA initiated new processes that left their imprint on elite composition. The Oslo accords entailed mutual recognition between Israel and the PLO, the establishment of a central authority over most Palestinian inhabitants of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and the holding of general and presidential elections. While there was no reference in the accords to statehood *per se*, as far the national movement was concerned the transitional period delineated in the agreement meant transition toward independent statehood. This required a major change in the movement's declared strategy. Hitherto, the PLO political field had been dominated by the vision of a liberation movement, but the PA political field under the requirements of Oslo involved the official abandonment of armed resistance in favor of negotiations as a strategy for settling the Israeli–Palestinian conflict.

In brief, during the Oslo years the Palestinian political field was transformed from one based on a coalition of political forces and consensus into one that requires an alignment of forces into a government (or a central authority) and an opposition. As the PA was established, a discourse of state building dominated the 1990s, including a discourse espousing democracy, citizens' rights, development, civil society, the separation of powers, gender equality, and human rights. The change in discourse encompassed the PA itself, as well as the secular opposition, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), other civil society institutions, and, to some degree, the emerging Islamist opposition. This period, extending from 1994 to late 2000, witnessed a shift in the functions and self-perception of civil society, particularly concerning the role of political parties, trade unions, professional associations, and the role of the various NGOs. The shift expressed itself in an undue concern with state building, institutional reform, and economic development.

These processes continued despite the collapse of the Oslo process, symbolized in the failure of the Camp David summit, indicating a clear Israeli rejection of the Palestinian national project (a Palestinian state on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip with East Jerusalem as its capital and a just solution to the refugee problem based on United Nations Resolution 194). They continued after the outbreak of the second intifada in late

September 2000. Indeed, it was well into the second intifada that the leadership of the PA began to have doubts about its identity, realizing that it could no longer assume that it was acting as a transitional central authority in the process of transforming itself from a self-rule authority with limited powers into a fullfledged independent state. The turning point for the PA was Israel's reoccupation of most of the West Bank in the spring of 2002 and its systematic campaign to weaken the capacity of PA institutions and resources and to marginalize the PA's authority. The PA reacted by initiating changes that affected the nature of power relations within the national political field. The Israeli-created facts on the ground led to the reactivation of resistance to the Israeli occupation and a resurgence of a strategy of resistance that had dominated the Palestinian national movement since the late 1960s. Before discussing the results of the reoccupation, however, we shall examine the elite formation processes during the Oslo years.

An Emerging Economic Elite

Businessmen in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, as well as expatriate businessmen, saw in the establishment of the PA new economic opportunities and the need to organize themselves to address such opportunities. The most obvious sign of this awareness was the rise of business representative bodies, such as the Food Industries Union, the Textile Industries Union, and commerce associations. The fact that these associations became active not only in the West Bank but also in the Gaza Strip created a national field for economic activity corresponding to that of the PA. Integrating the West Bank and Gaza enterprises into one private sector was the main purpose of Paltrade (Palestine Trade Center), founded in 1995. Comprising some 250 companies by June 2000, Paltrade also sought to promote exports, help members overcome obstacles facing entry to markets and arrange agreements with foreign countries, and articulate the interests of private resident capital sufficiently to influence the economic policies of the PA. Indeed, in the two years prior to the outbreak of the second intifada, the PA had clearly begun to take the views of local and expatriate capital seriously. Thus, businessmen started attempts to influence economic legislation; in 2000, Paltrade joined with the Federation of Chambers of Commerce, the Federation of Industries, and the Businessmen Association to create a coordination council of private sector institutions for resident capital.

Meanwhile, Palestinian expatriate businessmen had begun to invest in the territories following the advent of the PA, resulting in a marked gap between resident and expatriate capital. The local business elite resented what it saw as the hegemony imposed by expatriate Palestinian capital over big companies and corporations, not to mention the direct relationship that had developed between the expatriate business elite and the top PA leadership through business partnerships offered by the expatriate groups in exchange for monopolistic or semimonopolistic privileges.⁹ Local capital accused most expatriate Palestinian investors of indifference to democratic values and of obstructing the development of relations between the private sector and the PA on mutually advantageous bases. Furthermore, a large portion of the local business class felt that it had borne the brunt of policies during the Israeli occupation, having suffered from Israeli restrictions on investment in industry, banking, and so on, and from Israel's control of imports and exports. Local business interests also represented themselves as being part of the national movement in that they supported the first and second intifadas. In their view, this long history should have given them precedence over expatriate capital, which had not been burdened by such conditions.

Conversely, expatriate investors perceived local businessmen as insufficiently qualified to play a leading role in the Palestinian economy owing to their limited capital and knowledge of the regional and global economy. Some expatriates felt that local Palestinian businessmen lacked the skills for modern decisionmaking despite attempts to unify their ranks, update their organizations, hire technocrats, and introduce modern administrative techniques.

The overwhelming majority of the technocrats employed by local enterprises were themselves local (that is, residents of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip), while the leading figures of the economic elite, whether working in public sector institutions or investing expatriate capital, relied mainly on the expertise and talents of Palestinians who returned following the Oslo accords. The latter benefited unquestionably from their wide regional and international connections. This does not mean, however, that incoming expatriate Palestinian capital ever reached a high level of investment in the Palestinian economy. Despite the incentives offered (such as the Investment Law and PA participation in joint ventures), expatriate Palestinian capital remained restricted by the limited powers of the PA and the inadequate legal framework

governing economic activity in PA-controlled areas. Moreover, above and beyond the increasingly difficult relations between the PA and Israel (even before the outbreak of second intifada and later, as the intifada progressed, also between the PA and the American administration), there were the limitations imposed by the small market in the West Bank and Gaza and the absence of any real integration of the two areas because of Israeli-imposed closures.

Despite the privileged position of the expatriate businessmen, local businessmen did begin to play a collective role in influencing the economic legislative process through two main mechanisms: first, direct contact between their representative bodies and the leading bodies of the PA, and, second, contact with the legislative council to influence the drafting of laws, particularly those related to business activity. Some businessmen stated that they had expected, as resident capital, to nominate their own representatives in any forthcoming general elections in a bid to enhance their weight in the decisionmaking process.¹⁰ The formation in late 2000 of a coordinating council for the private sector was represented as a step in this direction.¹¹

During the presidency of Yasser Arafat, economic policies were decided at the top of the PA's political pyramid (that is, by the president and his economic advisers). The second level included ministries and agencies directly concerned with economic affairs (including the group that steers the public sector and public investments, conducts official economic relations, and signs trade agreements). A third level was represented by the executives and technical organs in the PA institutions that formulated and implemented policy suggestions, which were usually thoroughly debated before being submitted as recommendations to the top political leadership. The influence of technocrats in the formulation of projects and proposals increased in both the public and the private sector before the second intifada erupted. For example, PA ministries began to employ economic and development experts to formulate plans and proposals addressed to donors and international organizations. In the private sector, the growing importance of technocrats was especially evident in the field of telecommunication and in the NGOs, which had to become professional to survive. It is noteworthy that labor unions, professional associations, and popular federations had no tangible success in steering economic policy because of their weakness after the first intifada and because most of their leaders had been coopted by the PA.

What emerged clearly from interviews with local businessmen occupying high positions in the representative business bodies was their keen awareness of the urgent need for self-organization if they were to have any impact on economic policies. Between the years 1998 and 2000 much progress was made on this track. Mahir al-Masri, then minister of economy and trade, stated in August 2000 that expatriate capital's aloofness from political activity was due as much to lack of interest in this sphere as to keenness for the success of investments. Masri also believed that local businessmen continued to be concerned primarily with the small Palestinian market.¹² It remains to be seen whether the private sector's political involvement will increase in the future. Only a very small minority of businessmen became involved in direct political activity after the takeover of the PLO by the resistance organizations in the late 1960s, and such direct activity was undertaken with the knowledge and instructions of the top leadership of the PLO (or, more specifically, the Fatah leadership). To a large extent, the ruling political elite continued to be a closed one.

Changes in the Political Elite

Before the eruption of the second intifada at the end of September 2000, political parties and organizations readily admitted their ineffectiveness in shaping the PA's economic and social policies. A number of interrelated factors were responsible for this ineffectiveness: the relative decline in active membership of political parties and organizations (this changed during the second intifada, to the benefit of the Islamist movement and, to a lesser degree, Fatah), the high degree of power centralization at the top of the political pyramid, the unsettling role of numerous security apparatuses (much weakened by Israeli action during the second intifada), one-party rule formalized following the general elections of 1996, the complete marginalization under Arafat of the institutions of the PLO, and the limited effectiveness of the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) as an elected body in relation to the executive authority (again under Arafat's presidency). Significantly, even the leading organs of Fatah (the ruling party until Hamas won the legislative elections of January 2006) complained of their marginalization by Arafat (who, in addition to being the PA president, was also head of Fatah up to his death in November 2004), stating that they were rarely consulted on important political and other issues.

In analyzing the causes for the relative decline in their memberships, most organizations comprising the PLO emphasized the looseness that had come to characterize their internal structures and the inadequacy of their programs in light of the changes that had an impact on the Palestinian, regional, and international arenas during the 1990s, when the Oslo accords were signed and the PA was established. During the Oslo years, their awareness of significant problems (such as the difficulty of reconciling liberation from Israeli colonial military occupation with the requirements of state building) spawned a multitude of symposia, seminars, studies, and public debates about the challenges facing the Palestinian political system, the role of political parties and of the opposition and the low evaluation by the public of their performance, and the failure of left-wing parties to form a unified platform despite repeated attempts.

One of the consequences of the second intifada was the further weakening of the PLO and its constituent factions, particularly Fatah, as it became increasingly clear that the strategy of negotiations had completely failed. Thus, during the second intifada—in contrast with the first intifada—none of the political parties or organizations increased in popular support except Hamas. Even Fatah, which like Hamas played a significant fighting role during the second intifada, did not make significant gains: a year into the intifada, public opinion polls showed support for Fatah and Hamas to be equal, at about 25 percent each.¹³ The declining support for Fatah in particular was a function of the diminished role of the PA under the impact of the Israeli policies of siege and closure, culminating in the reoccupation of the areas under direct PA control. Above and beyond the systematic destruction of the PA's physical infrastructure and the symbols of the sovereignty it sought (airport, port, broadcasting station, and so on), including the humiliation of its leader, Arafat, besieged and virtually imprisoned in his headquarters, the reoccupation had a devastating impact on the Palestinian economy. The squeeze on the PA's financial revenues and the decline in its resources weakened its ability to address people's needs. And in a situation characterized by high unemployment and rising poverty rates, Hamas expanded its relief programs.

Just as the political elite was further fragmented and weakened during the second intifada, the severe economic repercussions of this period weakened the influence of the economic elite, diminishing their ability to effect political change. Indeed, the relationship between political and

economic elites, and the movement from one to the other, is a function of the political economy, which since the year 2000 has come under even tighter control from both Israel's colonial occupation and international donors. The restrictions on the movement of goods and people, and the high political insecurity facing the PA, ended investment in the economy by expatriate and other capital and led to the closure of many industrial plants.¹⁴ Hamas's electoral victory in the January 2006 legislative elections compounded the crisis, as the international community imposed even more draconian financial and political sanctions against the Hamas-led government, leading to a rise in unemployment and poverty rates in the population of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Meanwhile, as the PA and Palestinian NGOs became more dependent on external financial assistance, the political influence of international and regional donors, which are not without political agenda, grew accordingly.

A feature of Palestinian elites ever since the establishment of the PA has been the simultaneous holding of political party membership, governmental positions, and civil or military posts. The use of high political and party office to gain economic rent has been another feature, as documented by the first PLC in the late 1990s, when it was entirely dominated by the ruling party (Fatah). It is noteworthy that the 1996 elections that brought the first PLC to office were held according to an electoral law based on a system of local constituencies based on a majority vote. The results of that election encouraged the intentional use of kinship-based and local-based affiliations to gain votes, that is, as a source of social capital. The system was modified prior to the 2006 legislative elections to combine territory-wide proportional representation for half the parliamentary seats and the majority system at the district level for the other half. The power of the kinship/local-based vote was well demonstrated by the significant difference in the results between the two systems.¹⁵

Some Features of the Palestinian Political Elite

For all the many changes in the Palestinian political elite in the past decades, certain features of that elite have persisted from the outset. The most obvious of these relates probably to higher education. This is not surprising, as higher education is the cultural capital that generally provides the modern middle classes—from which the political, intellectual, social, and economic elites are drawn—with their distinguishing

mark. In Palestine, too, education has historically been valued as a necessary asset in elite recruitment and formation. Even during the mandate period, the great majority of top political leaders, as well as those in other realms, had a university education. Higher education in Arab countries became more accessible to Palestinians in Arab universities as of the late 1950s, widening during the 1970s to include universities in socialist countries. Since the 1980s and into the first decade of the twenty-first century, Palestinian universities have been granting degrees. The result has been that the overwhelming majority of the Palestinian political elite within the ranks of the PLO and the PA has been university educated. Hamas's political leaders are no different: a study of the movement's leadership and those elected to the PLC in January 2006 showed that a majority holds university degrees (a significant share with degrees in Islamic studies, as well as a number of graduates in engineering and medicine).¹⁶ Needless to say, possession of university degrees also applies to the leadership in the modern sector of the Palestinian economy (banking, insurance, national holding companies, and so on) and in mass and trade unions, professional organizations, and the NGO sector.

Education, or cultural capital, is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for acquiring a leading position in the political, economic, legislative, representational, or cultural field, especially as the significant increase in university education in the past several decades has greatly intensified competition. The other kinds of conditions required for such positions are determined by the character of the sociopolitical and economic system prevailing at any one time. In the Palestinian case, membership in a large political organization is one significant factor, with sponsorship or backing from the founders of the movement (for example, Arafat in the case of Fatah or Shaykh Ahmad Yasin in the case of Hamas) carrying particular, even decisive, weight. In the Occupied Territories, a history of imprisonment by Israel, deportation, or exile augments the political capital that can be invested in attaining an elite position. The size of one's social capital, as represented by family-based or local-based support, is also a factor, as is support engendered by a patron-client-type relationship or a solid reputation in one's community. Intellectual status, in the sense of possessing high culture, can also facilitate the attainment of leading positions in national organizations. The return of old family solidarities (both as social and propertied capital) following the establishment of the PA has featured as a factor in the making and remaking of national and local elites.

Women are virtually absent from the political and economic elites. The general explanation lies undoubtedly in gender relations, themselves expressions of power relations that are more often than not concealed by religion, traditions, and other factors. The absence of women—notwithstanding the substantial role played by the Palestinian women's movement—reflects some of the challenges faced by this movement as well as the limited attention paid by political parties to gender issues and women's rights. For the most part, leadership positions for women are restricted to women's organizations linked to various political parties or NGOs. The expansion of women's participation in higher education and the modern economic sector may be expected to lead to pressures for changing the conservative outlook that excludes the active participation of women from the public sphere.

As is the case with women, representatives of unskilled and semi-skilled workers—the largest class in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip—are absent in the executive and legislative bodies of the PA. Yet, it is this class that has been most affected by the economic fluctuations and political shifts associated with the first and second intifadas, as well as by the Israeli policies of closure, sieges, and severe labor market restrictions. The root cause of the continuing weakness of the political representation of the working class is to be found in the weakness of the trade union movement, its leadership composition, and its lack of organizational, financial, and programmatic autonomy from government and party control. Consequently, its influence on economic policies is negligible. Despite its numerical size,¹⁷ then, the working class does not have political weight with which to counterbalance that of businessmen or other middle-class groups organized through professional associations and NGOs.

The above discussion has sought to highlight the (occasionally tortuous) relationship between Palestinian political, economic, and social elites as well as the diversity of elite production and reproduction mechanisms, specifically the function played by economic capital (property and wealth), cultural capital (education), and leading membership in political parties, popular and professional associations, and civil institutions. It should be noted that the relationship between class and elite status is rather complex. Class, as a concept, belongs to a different paradigm for analyzing society than does the concept of an elite. Class position is determined by an individual's position in the production and distribution process of commodities, services, and culture, whereas an

elite position is determined by where one is situated within state-like and political institutions and organizations, as well as in economic, civil, and cultural institutions. In other words, social class refers to an individual's position in the labor market (wage laborer, employer, and so on), while the term 'elite' refers to those members of a society who hold top positions in institutions and organizations (that is, those who have decisionmaking powers).

Palestinian political elites were formed within the context of the Palestinian national movement in 1920s, and were re-formed in the 1960s with the reconstitution of that movement. It bears emphasis that all attempts to create credible political elites outside, or in opposition to, the Palestinian national movement have failed. The Muslim Brotherhood, with its branches in the West Bank and Gaza, was unable to produce political elites until it entered the Palestinian national field by joining the resistance against the Israeli occupation in 1980s, and ultimately by competing to enter national institutions during the second intifada (such as the National and Islamic Higher Committee for the Follow-up of the Intifada) and participating in the 2006 legislative elections.

The role of the present political elite in the democratization of the political system deserves an in-depth study. At present, there exists a high diversity of opinion within the political elite with regard to crucial political, ideological, and societal issues. Since the 2006 legislative elections resulted in a Hamas-led government, this diversity has turned into an intense political conflict that has polarized political society, at times exploding into armed conflict. Israeli occupation demands a unified Palestinian political leadership that can formulate a coherent and united political strategy in confronting the Israeli occupation, and to safeguard against self-destructive infighting. But such a unified political strategy should not be used by any faction of the political elite to undermine democratic values, particularly those of equality, freedom, and social justice.

Notes

1. This paper is based on my book, *Takwin al-nukhbba al-filastiniya* (Amman and Ramallah: Jordan Research Center and Muwatin, 2002). This chapter makes comments that take into account changes that have followed Hamas's electoral win and its formation of a government in March 2006.
2. Political party leaders may be regarded as enjoying elite status by virtue of chairing their parties or movements, although they are not necessarily associated

with class interests. In contrast, big businessmen and leaders of labor unions derive their positions from the class they represent. With respect to liberation movements such as the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), status is linked to the representation of the collective interests of a particular people, even if each group within the PLO also represents current or future class interests.

3. Five field researchers conducted interviews with over fifty political, economic, and social personalities during the summer of 2000, just before the outbreak of the second intifada in September 2000.
4. For example, 46 percent of the elite had religious status, 59 percent were wealthy, 41 percent had family property, 39 percent claimed descent from the Prophet Muhammad (the sharif tribes), and 36 percent belonged to large families. See further Bayan Nuwayhid al-Hout, *al-ʿIyadat wa al-muʿassasat al-siyasiya fi Filastin, 1917–1948*, 3rd ed. (Beirut: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1986), pp. 682–84.
5. Elite education comprised the following specializations: law, shariʿa (Muslim canon law), religion, medicine, social sciences, engineering, literature, and history. See Hout, *ʿIyadat*, pp. 671–73.
6. See, for example, Joel S. Migdal et al., *Palestinian Society and Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980).
7. See Ibrahim al-Daqqaq, “al-Ahwal al-ijtimaʿiya fi-l-Quds al-ʿarabiya,” in Camille Mansour, ed. *al-Shaʿb al-filastini fi-l-dakhil* (Beirut: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1990), p. 222.
8. Following Israel’s annexation of Jerusalem on 28 June 1967, the Higher Muslim Committee was set up (July 1967) and played a prominent steering part until 1970. It included about twenty of Jerusalem’s public and religious figures. See Bassam al-Salihi, *al-Zaʿama al-siyasiya wa-l-diniya fi-l-Ard al-Muhtalla, 1967–1991* (Jerusalem: Dar al-Quds li-l-Nashr wa-l-Tawziʿ, 1993), pp. 43–46.
9. See Mohamed M. Nasr, “Monopolies and the PA,” in Mushtaq Husain Khan, with George Giacaman and Inge Amundsen, eds., *State Formation in Palestine: Viability and Governance during Social Transformation* (New York: Routledge-Curzon, 2004).
10. See Hilal, *Takwin al-nukhbba al-filastiniya*, pp. 88–97.
11. This council includes delegates of five representative institutions: the Federation of Chambers of Commerce, the Federation of Palestine Industries, the Palestinian Trade Center (Paltrade), the Palestinian Businessmen Association, and the Palestinian Information Technology Association (PITA).
12. Interview with the minister of economy and trade, Mahir al-Masri, in Nablus, August 2000, by Ziad ʿUthman, a member of the research team organized by

the author. For the range of other interviews conducted, see Hilal, *Takwin al-nukhba al-filastiniya*, p. 98.

13. On the evolution in public support for Fatah and Hamas during the course of the intifada, see Jamil Hilal, "Hamas's Rise as Charted in the Polls, 1994–2005," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 35, no. 3 (Spring 2006), pp. 6–19.
14. The deputy of the Palestinian Federation of Industries reported that 2006 witnessed the closing down of over two hundred industrial enterprises, while owners of twenty factories have moved these factories to other countries. See the report by Hamid Jad in *al-Ayyam*, 24 December 2006.
15. The electoral law that governed the 2006 legislative elections was a mixed system, with half the members of the PLC elected according to proportional representation (the West Bank and the Gaza Strip forming one constituency) and the other half by a majority system where the West Bank and the Gaza Strip were divided into sixteen constituencies, each electing a specific number of PLC members (according to the size of the electorates) by a majority system (those with the largest number of votes win). Hamas fared much better in the majority system. See Hilal, "Hamas's Rise."
16. See Washington Institute for Near East Policy (WINEP), *The Palestinian Legislative Council: A Handbook* (Washington: WINEP, 2006).
17. The general population census of Palestinians in the West Bank and the Gaza that was carried out in December 1997 classified 40.5 percent of the active labor force in these areas as skilled and unskilled manual workers. The new middle class formed 19 percent, those employed in services and trade 16.5 percent, and those in crafts 23 percent. See Jamil Hilal, *al-Tabaqa al-wusta al-filastiniya* (Beirut and Ramallah: Institute for Palestine Studies and Muwatin, 2006), p. 299 (Tables 1–4).

12

State, Citizenship, and Diaspora A Comparative Study

Laurie A. Brand

In July 1995, Hisham bin Abdallah al-'Alaoui, the nephew of King Hassan II of Morocco, published an article entitled "Etre citoyen dans le monde arabe."¹ In it, the Moroccan prince discussed several factors that he regarded as having played key roles in thwarting the emergence of full citizenship in the region. Among them was the failure or lack of will on the part of the modern Middle Eastern state to displace or erase previous forms of authority and loyalty, such as tribal, ethnic, and religious ties, and the evolution of a form of state centralization intertwined with these existing authority structures. It was a stinging indictment of the state's failure to provide full participation or inclusion—citizenship—in the Arab world.

Most writings on citizenship in the Arab context analyze elements of domestic politics, such as varying rights and responsibilities owing to gender, ethnicity, religion, and the like. This internal focus is natural, since most people reside in the country of their citizenship, and most of the rights and duties of citizenship are practiced or exercised there. Yet, as the burgeoning literature on migration demonstrates, an increasing number of people now live and work long term outside their home countries. While the role of remittances has been a common theme of academic and policy studies of migration, the growing numbers of people living for extended periods outside their home countries also raises important questions about the political relationship between the emigrant and the sending state. Writings on the Middle East itself have certainly examined refugees—their status and possibilities for

incorporation or enfranchisement—but the relationship to their country of citizenship of hundreds of thousands of Arab state nationals, men and women who have migrated largely for economic or less dramatic political reasons, has been largely ignored.

Against this background, this paper seeks to examine two cases of state behavior toward expatriates (and their descendants) as a means of more fully understanding the parameters of citizenship and, by extension, key aspects of state formation. Are there any significant differences between citizenship at home and citizenship abroad? How may an examination of a state's relationship with its nationals abroad help to explain the evolution of the practice of citizenship? May the study of sending-state–emigrant relationships shed light on the broader processes of political development in the region?

To begin to answer these questions, this chapter examines the cases of Jordan and Lebanon. While there are important elements that distinguish the experiences of these states with their nationals abroad, the two are worth comparing for several reasons. First, both have large communities of nationals living abroad that have maintained their ties with the home state. Second, in both cases emigration has been intertwined with highly sensitive identity issues related to citizenship. Finally, identity issues have played central roles in domestic political development and regime (in)stability.

This chapter briefly examines the origins and the composition of each state's emigrant communities. It then discusses key policy and institutional initiatives aimed at these communities in order to identify elements related to the evolution of citizenship that the initiatives may imply. It concludes with a discussion of the implications of the findings for the concept of citizenship and the process of state formation.

Jordan: A Diaspora Not of Its Own

The dismemberment of Palestine in 1948–49 coincided with the launching in earnest of the oil industry in the Persian Gulf states. With small and generally low-skill populations, these states lacked the labor power to expand their infrastructures using newfound oil wealth. The desperate need of the poor and unemployed of the Arab east, especially the recently displaced Palestinians, thus dovetailed with a growing demand for workers in the Gulf. Skilled labor, Palestinian and otherwise, played a key role in building the bureaucracies of the emerging

Gulf states, while the semiskilled and unskilled contributed to other forms of building and development.

As a result of the 1948 war, some 70,000 Palestinians were driven or fled to Jordan, which at that time comprised only what is known today as the East Bank. By 1950, the territory that has come to be known as the West Bank, with a total population of about 720,000 (some 440,000 original inhabitants, together with some 280,000 refugees from parts of Palestine that became the State of Israel), was annexed to the Hashemite kingdom through a series of legal and administrative measures.

As part of the annexation process, the word 'Palestine' disappeared from official Jordanian documents. If King Abdallah's project were to be successful, these people had to be Jordanian, not Palestinian. Hence, with the 1954 Nationality Law, Jordan became the only Arab state to enfranchise its Palestinian residents—refugees and original West Bank inhabitants—en masse. Nevertheless, for a number of key reasons, few of these Jordanian Palestinians identified politically with Jordan. There had been no consensus with regard to the process that led to the West Bank's annexation by Jordan. Some Palestinian notables had been supportive, having been either pro-Hashemite from the beginning or believing, after the disaster of 1948, that the only hope for the future lay in throwing in their lot with Abdallah. But in the eyes of most Palestinians, the Hashemite role in the Palestine war had been at best murky and at worst treacherous. Stories of the Arab Legion (the British-commanded Jordanian military) fighting Palestinian irregulars rather than the new Israel Defense Forces were commonplace. Rumors of deals struck between King Abdallah and the Zionist leadership over the partition of Palestine—rumors that later proved to be largely true²—alienated many of the kingdom's new Palestinian subjects. Thus, from the very beginning, there was a question of a difference of identity between the West Bank (Palestine) and the East Bank (Transjordan), based not only in historical experience but also in differential relations with the regime in Amman.³ This difference, while not triggering migration, nonetheless played a key role in migration's evolution and in the state's interaction with it.

Spurred by both economic and political factors, migration out of the West Bank began in the aftermath of the 1948 war. The sons (and rarely the daughters) of the Palestinian elite found places easily in the Jordanian bureaucracy, in the upper echelons of the army, and in commerce, leading them to relocate to Amman. As the Jordanian state began to develop, some less privileged West Bankers with little attachment to the

new regime also moved to the East Bank, where the regime concentrated its investments. In other cases, however, people moved directly to one of the oil-producing Gulf states.

While economic factors pushed migration, domestic political developments shaped it as well. For example, the turmoil of the mid-1950s, which culminated in a coup attempt in 1957 in Jordan, led to the imposition of martial law. With the development of a Jordanian opposition abroad to the regime, use of the exit permit became an important instrument of government control. Thus, "any suspicion about an applicant's political affiliation or activity was sufficient to deny him or her the travel permit and this essentially would mean the loss of a much needed job. Many people lost their jobs or contracts under this security system."⁴

Despite these constraints, migration continued apace, although the numbers were not large in the early years. The term long used by the state to refer to Jordanians abroad was simply *al-mughtaribun al-urduniyun*. The closest equivalent in English would be "Jordanian expatriates," but the English does not carry the full potential meaning of the Arabic, since the root of the word in Arabic (*ghrb*) has the meaning of 'to go away or depart' but can also mean 'strange.' Hence, *mughtarib* can imply the sense of being both away and out of place. Nor does the term indicate the nature of the expatriates' presence abroad. North African states, for example, referred to their expatriates during this period as *workers* abroad.

While an analysis of the terminology may be insufficient to draw conclusions about the state's approach to migration, some elements of policy may be discerned from successive development programs or plans. During the prime ministership of Wasfi al-Tall (1962–63 and 1965–67), the focus was on expanding the indigenous productive base, including increasing domestic job creation, in order to reduce excessive dependence on foreign aid. In the 1962–67 Five Year Program for Economic Development, the only mention of workers abroad concerned the importance of their remittances in providing income to their families in Jordan.⁵ The lack of attention given to them in the program was probably related to their small numbers: the 1961 census placed the total number of expatriates at only 63,000. On the other hand, in 1962, Tall also abolished the exit permit requirement, which opened the way for easier movement by Jordanian citizens between the kingdom and host states.⁶

What was a continuous but relatively small stream of emigration continued until the 1967 war. The resulting occupation of the West Bank by Israel triggered a larger, sustained migration out of the West Bank, as many men who had originally gone to the Gulf alone increasingly decided to take family members out of the Occupied Territories to join them. Hence, a process of family reunification was already underway, even before the oil boom of the early 1970s had begun to provide the Gulf states with even greater resources with which to recruit from abroad.

In the meantime, the unhappy events of 1970–71 further shaped the relationship of the Jordanian state to its citizens of Palestinian origin. The twelve days of bloody battles between the Jordanian army and Palestinian resistance factions in 1970 that later came to be known as Black September, and its aftermath, which saw the expulsion of the remnants of the fedayeen from Jordan in July 1971, left deep scars. As a result, an ‘East Banker first’ period was initiated, during which subsidies to the West Bank (which Jordan had continued to pay even after Israel’s occupation began) were cut, the tradition of including a percentage of Jordanians of Palestinian origin in the cabinet was dropped, and some Palestinian government personnel were replaced by Transjordanians. Despite the fact that the Palestinian soldiers in the army had not defected during the civil war, the army was also largely Transjordanized. These changes reinforced the feeling among many Palestinian Jordanians that the state was neither of nor for them. Indeed, as the Palestinian resistance organizations increasingly attracted Palestinians (wherever they resided), the Jordanian regime used its internal security apparatus to monitor and harass those involved in political activities. This surveillance extended beyond the borders of the kingdom to the communities abroad.

Even before Israel’s occupation of the West Bank, Jordan was simply not considered home to its Palestinian citizens in the same way that Lebanon or Morocco, say, were regarded as homes for their citizens abroad (including, in the case of Morocco, regime opponents). While for its own sovereignty and stability the Jordanian state needed these Palestinians to be Jordanians, few thought of themselves as part of a ‘Jordanian diaspora,’ a term which, to the best of my knowledge, has never been used.⁷ To the contrary, they considered themselves to be part of another people, the Palestinians, who had been uprooted and dispersed by the 1948 war and in many cases again by the 1967 war. Not only did many feel little affection for the Hashemite regime, they also identified with another people, some of whom also had Jordanian citizenship

but many of whom were stateless residents of Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, or Egypt. For all of these reasons, the dynamics and stakes of the relationship between the Jordanian state and the expatriates go to the heart of regime/state security and the kingdom's territorial integrity.

In the realm of Jordanian domestic development, the 1967 war ended Tall's efforts to curb elements of economic rentierism implicit in the 1962–67 five-year plan,⁸ undermining whatever energy or commitment remained to institutionalize a more domestic-driven (rather than external-driven) form of economic development. After 1967, the Arab oil states stepped in to provide aid to Jordan to deal with the immediate military and refugee impact of the war. The effects, only a few years later, of skyrocketing oil prices, combined with a renewed focus on military spending, meant that the basic rentier nature of the state was reinforced rather than supplanted by domestic productive forces. As oil states found themselves with unexpectedly large budgetary resources, they increased their importation of labor, a large part of which came from Jordan, dramatically. In this way, expatriate workers' remittances became a vital additional form of rent for Jordan.

Not surprisingly, then, the 1973–75 development plan was the first to mention workers abroad in any detail, referring to them as “not a small part” (*juz' ghayr qalil*) of the Jordanian labor force and classifying their financial remittances to Jordan as among the important sources of foreign currency support for the budget. This was also the first planning document to note that the government needed to look after the interests of expatriate workers and to protect their rights. Indeed, to ensure that the workers would benefit as much as possible from the advantages of host country labor laws, the plan proposed that the Jordanian government conclude bilateral labor accords with those countries and charge the relevant Jordanian diplomatic missions with following up on workers' concerns.⁹ Yet, as is often the case with such documents, this call went largely unheeded and many Jordanian workers in the Gulf carefully avoided their embassies there because of political alienation and the poor treatment noted above.

The 1973–75 plan also noted that developing the kingdom's human resources was one of the most important ways to produce and increase hard currency income.¹⁰ While the relationship between human resources and foreign exchange may also be understood to mean that a well-trained labor force attracts foreign investment into the kingdom, the more likely explanation was that education and vocational training

for export were becoming an integral part of the kingdom's economy. Rather than undertake the structural reforms that might have reduced the need for citizens to seek employment abroad, the state largely abdicated its role of employment creation. Again, the overwhelming majority of this 'export commodity' was Jordanians of Palestinian origin.

Although the kingdom briefly experienced domestic skill shortages in the late 1970s,¹¹ the government maintained its overall commitment to a largely open-door emigration policy for a number of reasons. First and probably most important was the level of remittances and their role in the Jordanian economy, as remittances soon exceeded foreign aid. Second, placing restrictions on labor outflows might have had negative effects on the level of external support from the oil states, as the close relationship between aid receipts from these states and the supply of labor to them was noted in several official reports. Third, domestic labor market expansion alone could not continue to absorb the growing labor force given the paucity of resources, the high birth rate, as well as the degree of state investment and economic restructuring this would have required. Finally, a restrictive emigration policy would have been difficult to police without increasing levels of repression.¹²

In recognition of the importance of the role played by the labor force in economic and social development, a separate ministry of labor was established in February 1976. Concern with expatriate labor was clearly part of the ministry's mission; in 1978, it signed bilateral labor agreements with both Pakistan and Libya and began appointing labor attachés to key embassies, starting with Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates.¹³ These attachés were appointed to help solve problems of individual Jordanians in their jobs, such as dismissal or failure to receive compensation, as well as to report on conditions and trends in the labor markets in these countries.¹⁴ By the early 1980s, however, the Iran–Iraq war, the regional economic downturn, and the resultant dwindling of aid to the kingdom from the oil-producing states transformed the domestic employment situation once again from shortage to surplus.¹⁵ The Gulf states' economic retrenchment meant that fewer foreign workers were sought, regardless of the efforts of Jordanian ministries. Increasing numbers of Jordanian expatriates failed to secure the renewal of their contracts and were forced to return home.

What is striking in any review of Jordan's policy toward emigration is the minimal institutionalized interest in the *mughtaribin* as Jordanian citizens, as opposed to the instrumental concern with them as sources of

remittances or alleviators of unemployment. Even those government ministries assigned expatriate-related tasks, such as the ministry of labor, did little beyond offering secondments or assisting with job placement. Had the number of Jordanians abroad remained insignificant, the lack of more active state interest would be easier to understand. Yet, as noted above, the levels of remittances over time became critical to the balance of payments and at the high point in the early and mid-1980s, about a third of the labor force was employed abroad.

One explanation for this underwhelming state response could be that the vast majority of Jordanian expatriates—in contrast, for example, to the North African expatriates who worked in Europe—lived in *Arab* countries. Thus, they had no problem in maintaining their language, religion, or culture, and consequently there was no need for the home state to provide services or institutions to reinforce these ties. The different cultural atmosphere and political and economic possibilities in the receiving states (Europe versus the Gulf) may also explain Jordan's apparent complacency regarding attracting remittances. In Europe, political integration in the form of the acquisition of various rights, including, ultimately, citizenship, was possible for North Africans, whereas in the Gulf states, apart from a few honorary citizenships awarded in the late 1950s and early 1960s, there was no possibility of such political assimilation or integration. Moreover, in the Gulf, non-nationals were not permitted to own immovable property, and even starting a business required at least 51 percent coownership by a national.

Finally, with the exception of Kuwait, which for a number of years allowed sociopolitical organizing among Palestinians,¹⁶ the Gulf states did not permit expatriates to organize or engage in political activity. Indeed, security cooperation between the Jordanian state and the security services of the Gulf states was well-known and widespread. The Gulf states could not make their Palestinian Jordanian workers feel more Jordanian, but they certainly could, and did, attempt to prevent them from acting in any formal way that could undermine their status as Jordanian citizens or the security of the regime. As a result, while King Hussein did make some gestures to court these communities, in general it must have been understood that even if Palestinian Jordanians were not particularly loyal to the kingdom, the Jordanian state faced no serious *state* competition for their loyalty.¹⁷ Jordan could invest minimal efforts and still expect its expatriates to continue sending remittances, whatever their sense of political alienation.

Much has been written of the king's competition with the PLO's Yasser Arafat for the loyalty of Jordan's Palestinians,¹⁸ but for years Jordan offered them very few citizenship-related carrots. In the mid-1980s, however, a change of attitude was signaled by the convening of the first of a series of expatriate conferences. Initiated at a time when Gulf state aid to Jordan was declining, and at the beginning of a rapprochement between Hussein and Arafat (which had already cooled by the second conference held in July 1986), the meetings were intended both to give expatriate Jordanians the opportunity to visit Jordan and discuss their problems with government representatives and to stimulate their interest in investing in the kingdom. The ultimate aim appeared to be to enable the government in effect to assert greater "sovereignty" over the large Palestinian Jordanian community in the Gulf, particularly in Kuwait.¹⁹

The conferences, which began in 1985, were titled simply *al-mu'tamarat li-l-mughtaribin al-urduniyin* (conferences for Jordanian expatriates). Despite political ups and downs between the PLO and the Jordanian state, the title remained unchanged until the 1989 conference, which turned out to be the last. During his address to this conference, Crown Prince Hassan suggested that the word *mughtarib* in the title be changed to *'amil fi-l-kharij* (worker abroad). It is possible that there was a political motivation here: shortly after the previous conference, at the end of July 1988, King Hussein had announced Jordan's administrative and legal disengagement from the West Bank, thereby stripping of Jordanian citizenship all those (and they were all Palestinians) whose normal place of residence was that territory—the largest single mass disenfranchisement anywhere in the world since the Second World War. Ironically, the logo used on the cover of the summary of the proceedings of this post-disengagement conference continued to show the West Bank as a part of the kingdom. Perhaps in such a context, the term *mughtarib*, with its implicit relationship to place and exile, could have conjured up feelings of political disenfranchisement or alienation, whereas *'amil fi al-kharij* was devoid of such emotional content. Given that this was the last conference, there is no way of knowing how subsequent logos would have portrayed the relationship of the East and West Banks. It is the case, however, that the name of the office in the ministry of labor dealing with expatriates, which was established in 1987, underwent a name change as well, from the Da'irat Shu'un al-Mughtaribin (Bureau of Expatriate Affairs) to the Da'irat al-Urduniyin al-'Amilin fi-l-Kharij (Directorate of Jordanians Working Abroad), in keeping with Prince Hassan's request.

Beyond its work to secure compensation for the *ʿaʿidun* (returnees)²⁰—those Jordanian citizens who had fled or been forced from the Gulf states in the wake of the August 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait—it was not until 1998 that the state manifested a new institutional interest in the communities abroad. This time, however, it was in conjunction with the private sector and the initiative was to revive the series of expatriate conferences for businessmen only. (The meetings in the 1980s had been open to any expatriate and many of those who attended were educators or employees in government offices, not a group likely to have a lot of capital to invest.) By then, Jordan was struggling with a series of economic shocks: debt rescheduling in 1989; the devastating impact of the 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and the subsequent 1991 war; the impact of sanctions on Iraq, Jordan's most important pre-1990 trading partner; and, by the late 1990s, the failure of the peace process to bear economic fruit. Clearly, the revival of expatriate conferences was prompted by the state's desire to increase investment at a time of continuing economic difficulties.

Jordan's expatriate communities today include a proportionally larger percentage of Transjordanians (although with increasing intermarriage, the distinction is not always easy to make) than they did in the past. This is attributable both to the decreasing ability of the Jordanian state to absorb Transjordanians into its employment ranks and to the massive return to the kingdom of the overwhelmingly Palestinian communities in the Gulf as a result of the 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. Moreover, the retreat of the worst excesses of the *mukhabarat* state that had characterized earlier periods and from which Jordanians of Palestinian origin suffered disproportionately, combined with King Hussein's July 1988 relinquishment of claims to the West Bank, altered the views of many Jordanian Palestinians about the kingdom and their relationship to it. Nevertheless, state policy still falls short of embodying Hussein's famous line "*al-insan aghla ma namluk*" (the human being is the most precious thing we have), unless precious is translated into dinars or dollars.

Lebanon: A Bird with Two Wings

While Jordan and Lebanon have both looked to their nationals abroad for potential contributions, the emigration experiences of the two countries diverge in significant ways. Unlike Jordan, for which significant population out-movement is a post-1948 phenomenon, Lebanon's modern history of emigration dates to the 1860s—well before the

demarcation of the modern state—beginning with waves of emigrants headed principally toward the Americas that continued well into the twentieth century. Although perhaps a third of those who left for the Americas ultimately returned home, the sheer distance between Lebanon and this section of the *mahjar* (community in exile) was so great as to render the subsequent relationship between emigrants and home country quite different from that between Jordan and those of its citizens who migrated to the much nearer Gulf states.²¹ Communities of Lebanese subsequently developed elsewhere around the globe, owing to the pull of the oil states or the deadly push of civil war. In the older communities, many of the original emigrants (and hence their children) acquired the nationality of their adopted countries, often allowing their Lebanese citizenship to lapse. Indeed, depending upon how one counts or defines ‘Lebanese,’ today a majority of Lebanese abroad and their descendants are no longer citizens, speak little or no Arabic, and have never been to Lebanon. In contrast, Jordanian expatriates remain heavily concentrated in the Arab world, where, in but for a handful of cases, they have been unable to acquire citizenship. Thus, both distance and the possibility of obtaining citizenship in the host country scripted an experience for many Lebanese emigrants that was quite different from that of Jordanians.

In another clear difference between the two cases, whatever their confessional affiliation, Lebanese emigrants had a town or village as their primary point of reference ‘back home,’ as well as a clear sense of their attachment to Lebanon (even if what that Lebanon was differed significantly from one sectarian community to another). This sense of belonging among the emigrants as well as the claim on them among those resident in Lebanon are clear in the descriptions one often finds in writings about the diaspora. There is the image of Lebanon as “a bird with two wings, resident and expatriate” (*ta’ira bi-jinabayn, al-muqim wa-l-mughtarib*); of “the Lebanese imperium” (*al-imbaraturiyya al-lubnaniyya*); of “the Lebanese world” (*al-‘alam al-lubnani*); of “the Lebanese presence in the world” (*al-hudur al-lubnani fi-l-‘alam*); and so on. The difference between this reality and that of the Palestinians with Jordanian citizenship is striking. For, while it is true that West Bank natives hailed from towns that had become part of Jordan, the annexation was so recent that they had no more than a formal identification with the kingdom as a political entity. Moreover, for those Palestinians who were refugees from the part of Palestine that had become the State of Israel, none of Jordan’s

territory was home, so neither land nor political regime offered a source of identification.

Finally, although the ethnic/confessional composition of the diaspora communities has been a sensitive issue for both countries, and in the Jordanian case, emigration has been largely absent from the national narrative, the diaspora is a central theme in Lebanese political, economic, and cultural life. Writers, publishers, and politicians in the *mahjar* have had a continuing impact on Lebanese affairs, Lebanese political and religious leaders often visit the diaspora, and representatives from communities of Lebanese origin frequently travel to Lebanon.

The special salience of Lebanese emigrant communities to the home polity has derived from their confessional composition. Through the first half of the twentieth century, emigrants were overwhelmingly Christian. Whereas Maronite Christians formed a majority in the small Mount Lebanon area, the establishment in 1920 of a Greater Lebanon, including more territory, but also more Muslims, meant that the Christian majority in the larger entity became tenuous at best. The 1932 census registered 254,987 emigrants and 793,396 resident citizens,²² among whom a slight majority was Christian.²³ The large Christian presence in the diaspora was used as an argument for a six-five Christian-Muslim formula for determining the subsequent allotment of seats in the national parliament. This same formula carried over into the post-independence period. In this way, the confessional balance upon which the country came to rest required the inclusion of the emigrant population in the total head count.

Following independence, according to a law promulgated at the end of 1946, anyone of Lebanese origin living abroad who had not yet chosen Lebanese citizenship had the right to claim it upon his or her definitive return to Lebanon. Nonetheless, whether because of the degree of integration into the host society, the weakness of Lebanese consular representation abroad, or the lack of initiative in making emigrants aware of the benefits of Lebanese citizenship, few emigrants exercised this option.²⁴ There are numerous examples of memoranda and published articles calling for the extension of the deadline that had been established by treaty for applying for citizenship and for better facilities abroad so that Lebanese emigrants could take advantage of the possibility of acquiring or maintaining their nationality.²⁵ This continuing emphasis on maintaining or restoring Lebanese citizenship to emigrants, therefore, had everything to do with the confessional and political balance.

Because of the political importance of the émigrés, concern with them shaped the establishment of government institutions even before independence. For example, in the late mandate period, the government of December 1941 through July 1942 included a ministry of foreign affairs and interests of the Lebanese abroad. At this stage, interest in expatriates was most consistently expressed by two prominent political parties. The Syrian Social Nationalist Party (SSNP) of Antun Sa'ada (who himself had spent eleven years in the Americas), which while ideologically non-sectarian was largely Christian in makeup, had repeatedly expressed its concern over the loss to the homeland of those who went abroad.²⁶ However, it was the almost exclusively Christian Kata'ib or Phalange Party of Pierre Gemayel (who had also lived outside of Lebanon, in Egypt) that called in September 1945 for a conference to discuss how Lebanon's relations "*avec ses absents*" should be structured.²⁷ The fifteen resolutions of the Phalange's September 1945 Émigré Congress in Zahleh included the following: creating an émigré ministry; giving Lebanese nationality to every émigré who sought it; facilitating émigrés' participation in national politics; providing all possible aid to repatriate émigrés; taking all measures necessary to stop the continuation of emigration; adopting measures to encourage émigré investment; and holding periodic émigré conferences.²⁸

In a meeting only a few days later, on 6 October 1945, the Lebanese cabinet adopted the following resolutions regarding the émigré question: to create a special section in the ministry of foreign affairs (MFA) to address questions regarding émigrés; to restore Lebanese nationality to any émigré returning definitively to the country and to secure other accords to safeguard Lebanese nationality among the communities abroad; to extend consular representation; to conclude international agreements to protect émigré rights; and to provide financial assistance to repatriate émigrés. Clearly, however, this governmental response fell short of the Phalange call for the establishment of a separate ministry; only an authority/division (*maslaha*) of expatriate affairs was established as part of the MFA.²⁹

Financial constraints alone may explain the decision to simply add an émigré directorate to the MFA and change the name to the ministry of foreign affairs and expatriates (MFAE) rather than establish a separate ministry. However, in discussing this issue at the time, several writers also mentioned the need to overcome sectarianism (*al-ta'ifiya*) or other narrow partisan intrigues if émigré institutions and policy were to succeed.³⁰ This

was a veiled way of expressing concern that the vast majority of Lebanese expatriates were Christians (hence the Phalange and the SSNP preoccupation with the issue) and that the establishment of a separate ministry to deal with them would raise Muslim concerns in the context of a Lebanese political system sensitive to challenges to the careful (precarious) confessional balance. They called for solving the problem *‘ala al-tariqa al-lubnaniya* (in the Lebanese way): the solution had to involve compromise and hence fall short of the establishment of a separate ministry.

The sensitivity related not just to the fact that such a ministry would have been seen as the preserve of a particular confessional group, but also to the demands that such a ministry was likely to encounter. One of the recurrent themes, and one that featured prominently in the Phalange's recommendations, was that Lebanese abroad were unjustly excluded from participation in the political system at home. In other words, the expatriates deserved the right to vote in Lebanon³¹—demand that would have upset the balance established by the 1943 National Pact.

Successive post-independence governments took steps that suggested concern with, if not a fullfledged policy toward, expatriate communities. For example, during the presidency of Camille Cham'un (1952–58), the government worked to extend the post-First World War Lebanese–Turkish agreement to give more Lebanese a chance to opt for Lebanese citizenship.³² It further organized an “emigrant summer” in 1954 in recognition of the passage of one hundred years since the departure of the first Lebanese emigrant for the New World. Cham'un also visited Brazil, the first visit by a president of an independent Lebanon to a country with such a large Lebanese immigrant community.³³

The presidency of General Fuad Chehab (1958–64) saw the 1960 convening of the first world conference of Lebanese émigrés in Beirut. The outcome of this meeting was the establishment of the World Lebanese Union (WLU, al-Jami'a al-Lubnaniya fi-l-'Alam). In his address to this meeting, Chehab called upon the participants to set ambitious goals, in order to achieve plans for economic, cultural, and social development from which both the mother country and the country of residence would benefit and to strengthen the ties of friendship between Lebanon and the host countries.

Some argue that once the WLU was established, the MFAE lowered its profile in expatriate affairs. In fact, the MFAE's role was never formally changed, but in practice its interventions and initiatives,

undertaken by the administration of some of the diplomatic missions, apparently owed more to the efforts of individuals than to centrally planned policy. The MFAE did continue to take care of official administrative matters related to personal status and paperwork/documentation through the expatriate authority's two bureaus: (a) expatriates and emigration and (b) property and registry/documentation. Yet, even there, problems in the area of property and documentation led some emigrants to lose their property in Lebanon to fraudulent agencies. What really hurt expatriates was the situation of personal status documentation and registry. In his detailed study of the MFAE, Jihad al-'Aql insists that the source of this problem was the politicization of the registry process itself, given the demographic and confessional balance at stake.³⁴

The Lebanese government did not produce successive economic or development plans through which one might trace or piece together a coherent state policy toward expatriates. Nevertheless, in his study of Lebanese migration policy, Kamal Hamdan asserts that successive governments did realize the importance of the role of the emigrants, both in Lebanon and abroad. His evidence includes several of the elements mentioned above—the establishment of the special directorate for expatriates in the MFA, the expansion of the country's diplomatic and consular networks—as well as the role of the ministry of tourism in increasing ties with the expatriates and in providing them services. Nevertheless, after surveying these efforts he concludes that they were superficial and uncoordinated. Successive governments devoted scant attention to learning the specifics of the communities or to the forms of their integration into host state labor markets with an eye to organizing the labor exodus or signing agreements regarding work conditions with receiving countries.³⁵

As for the WLU, according to its constitution, it was to be a non-governmental, apolitical, nonconfessional, and nonlabor organization. It drew for its membership upon existing Lebanese clubs and associations in the diaspora, but it also triggered or encouraged the creation of new organizations, among both recently and long expatriated Lebanese. The goals were to strengthen the ties of loyalty and respect between its members and the people of the countries in which they were resident and to participate in the development of these countries; to reinforce the bonds between its members and Lebanese living in Lebanon; to build relationships between its members on the national and international level; to

encourage the participation of its members in economic, social, cultural, and touristic activity in Lebanon; to strengthen cultural, economic, and financial ties between the host countries and Lebanon; and to spread Lebanese culture and heritage throughout the world.³⁶ Although the WLU's (subsequently renamed the WLCU [World Lebanese Cultural Union]) establishment was greeted with a great deal of enthusiasm and fanfare,³⁷ four years passed between its founding and its second meeting, an early indication of a certain malaise.

Unfortunately, but not surprisingly, the outbreak of civil war in Lebanon in 1975 had a serious and continuing impact on the organization. Several years passed before the problems manifested themselves institutionally, but when they did the WLCU found itself in a situation of increasing internal contestation and, as a byproduct, paralysis with regard to its primary functions. As an already weakened state that had not previously paid sustained, effective attention to its emigrants, Lebanon was hardly in a better position to implement a coherent policy during a period when it was paralyzed, riven by factionalism, or controlled by one of the country's militias. Although neither the impact of the war nor the response to it was uniform, some of the political and social forces that began to tear Lebanon apart were gradually reflected in relations both within and between diaspora communities. Not surprisingly, then, as a body encompassing representatives of these communities, the WLCU was also severely affected.

Prior to the emergence of Amal, the Shi'a militia movement of Imam Musa Sadr and later Nabih Berri,³⁸ there had been little challenge to the dominance of the Maronite community in the WLCU, despite large numbers of Shi'a in the diaspora. The battles over leadership had been largely personal, not political or sectarian, affairs. However, with the continuing civil war and the emergence of Amal, political and organizational quarrels affected the union, in addition to whatever personal interest-related ones existed. Despite numerous attempts by the state at effecting reconciliation within the WLCU, the fractures, which became serious by 1985, were never repaired. Subsequently, the union effectively split into two groups, with most of whatever energy remained among the members generally devoted by each side to an insistence on its own legitimacy. Although personal interests and turf wars played a role, the basic and continuing source of conflict was the Syrian presence and its role in Lebanon, which represented part of the larger issue of who would ultimately rule the country.

Following the end of the civil war, the Lebanese state faced the terrible toll—in terms of destruction, loss of human life, and population displacement—of fifteen years of fighting. To rebuild itself, the country needed all the human and financial resources it could muster. Lebanon's strategic reserves—so critical during such a period—lay with its expatriate communities. In order to organize clear and targeted relations between the two wings of Lebanon (resident and expatriate), a separate ministry of expatriates was established.³⁹

This ministry, an authority that would take on the task of marshaling diaspora contributions, was one of a number of new ministries that were the product of the 1989 Ta'if accords, which served to lay the basis for a post-civil war political system. Those in government circles argued that the new ministries were being created to respond to a set of tangible societal needs. However, others argued that the real impetus came from the desire to create sufficient spoils to satisfy all the political and confessional groups who were party to the Ta'if accords. In other words, the implicit charge was that new ministries were part of a postwar settlement that had to divide the existing political pie in new ways. Once again the expatriates were used in absentia by the Lebanese political elite for ends that had little if anything to do with more meaningful citizenship.

According to the law of 2 April 1993 (which was followed by the ministerial decree of 10 May 1994), responsibility for expatriates was removed from the MFA and turned over to the newly created ministry of expatriates. Opposition arose immediately within the MFA and from the already largely paralyzed WLCU. While MFA opposition derived largely from a desire to maintain control over a range of expatriate-related activities, the resistance from within one faction of the splintered WLCU had confessional/political bases. It had been the Christians who had long called for a ministry of expatriates, but in the event, the minister and director-general chosen for the new ministry were Shi'a, thus alienating many Christians. In such circumstances, this constituency preferred that responsibility for the diaspora be returned to the MFA.⁴⁰ By early 1995, the dispute over the new ministry had largely crippled it. Although a change in ministers somewhat alleviated the problem, the battles over the ministry continued until 7 August 2000, when, along with all its employees and property, it was formally reintegrated into the MFA.

Conclusion

What can these brief examinations of state–expatriate–community relationships tell us about the status or evolution of citizenship in the Arab world? On the political side of the ledger, the departure from full citizenship in both cases is quite glaring. In the case of Lebanon, a combination of bureaucratic inefficiency and at times political malevolence meant that many Lebanese lost their citizenship or their property while abroad. Many of the earliest emigrants had opted for citizenship in their new host states according to a rational cost–benefit analysis, but others were in fact deprived of their rights and property. Worse, these communities became an integral, if at times unmentioned, part of the long-standing competition between confessional elites over power in the republic. The large number of Christians abroad was used in the period leading up to independence as an argument for giving Christians in Lebanon proper a greater share of the political pie. Hence, a system emerged in which large numbers of former or potential citizens had no political or other rights but were nonetheless in effect used to help maintain the power position of their coreligionists in Lebanon, as the threat of renewing their citizenship or offering them the right to vote was periodically raised to prevent a serious reassessment of the confessional balance in the country. Thus we have an inclusion of “*les absents*” in a way that in theory assigns them political power but that allows this power to be appropriated by elites in the country.

The case of Jordan on this count is completely different, although contradictions between inclusion and exclusion may be observed as well. The majority of Jordan’s expatriates were of Palestinian origin but held Jordanian citizenship—a political benefit that many of their compatriots in the diaspora did not enjoy. Nevertheless, because of their historical relationship to the regime and the evolution of Palestinian politics, Jordanians of Palestinian origin were forcibly included in a “passport citizenship,”⁴¹ a step that was key to Abdallah’s territorial ambitions, but most endured a distinctly second-class citizenship when it came to political and economic rights. Of course, the *mukhabarat* nature of the Jordanian state—as attested to by, among other things, the exit permit required during the late 1950s and early 1960s—rendered full citizenship for any Jordanian, regardless of origin, highly circumscribed. During periods of Hashemite–PLO confrontation or feuding, political involvement by Jordanians of Palestinian origin was at best carefully monitored and at worst punished. Denied full citizenship in Jordan, Jordanian

Palestinians were also blocked in their attempts to contribute to self-determination as Palestinians.

Turning to economic concerns, it is clear that both Jordan and Lebanon viewed their populations abroad as exploitable resources—either as workers who sent back remittances or as potential investors—rather than as citizens entitled, for example, to state efforts aimed at job creation at home. In the case of Jordan, aside from the brief periods of Wasfi al-Tall's prime ministership, there was no emphasis on developing indigenous productive forces so that more of Jordan's population could achieve economic/social citizenship at home through absorption into the domestic labor market.⁴² Indeed, the Jordanian government played a role in arranging the secondment of its employees to Arab Gulf state governments and established a separate ministry of labor, one of whose functions was to promote the export of labor. In the case of Lebanon, official noises were made periodically about the importance of attracting expatriate investment, but the state itself did little, apparently satisfied with the fact that monies were coming in, even if they went overwhelmingly to more parochial projects. The state did open numerous diplomatic missions for reasons related to the presence of sizeable expatriate communities, rather than the significance of political bilateral relations, and several of these missions did intervene when the expatriate communities were in danger—as happened several times in African countries. However, such missions did not generally maintain continuous and direct involvement with the communities and hence could not provide the state with the information needed for constructing a fully developed policy toward the diaspora.

Neither of these economic approaches suggests exclusion. The Lebanese approach suggests a hands-off stance, whereas the Jordanian one seems to proceed from what has been characterized as the "milk cow" understanding of expatriates. Neither was based on a concern by the state for the rights of emigrants as citizens. Not until aid from the Gulf states began to drop in the early 1980s and expatriate contributions took on an even greater importance did the Jordanian state initiate its first serious attempt to listen to the concerns of its communities abroad (though, again, with an eye to furthering economic benefit and not really toward addressing the communities' concerns as part of the state-citizen relationship).

This brief comparison demonstrates that the Arab state's projection into its communities abroad resembles closely its practices at home. A *laissez-faire* Lebanese state interacts with its communities abroad along

largely laissez-faire lines, while a security state like Jordan has through most of its history employed much the same methods abroad as it does in the kingdom. Only crises of the state—the growing deficits in Jordan in the 1980s and the need to rebuild in Lebanon after the civil war—seem to have provided openings for changes in approach to the expatriates. Nonetheless, it would be a mistake to conclude that a consideration of these communities adds little to our analysis. The very structure of the Lebanese system can in part be traced to the presence of the large diaspora communities. In the case of Jordan, it is difficult to imagine that the state would have remained stable without the departure of large numbers of Jordanians and without their remittances. Without the emergence of these two diasporas, the political and economic evolution of these two countries would have been markedly different, and this chapter has been able to indicate only a few of the most obvious areas of institutional impact. Much as feminists have argued for the need to examine the role of women as the excluded ‘other’ who nonetheless play a major part in the explanation of so many social phenomena, so expatriate communities, distant but not blocked from view, must be fully incorporated if our analyses of the evolution of Arab state citizenship and political development are to be complete.

Notes

1. *Le Monde diplomatique*, July 1995.
2. See Avi Shlaim, *Collusion across the Jordan: King Abdullah, the Zionist Movement, and the Partition of Palestine* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988).
3. For a discussion of the identity issue, see Laurie A. Brand, “Palestinians and Jordanians: A Crisis of Identity,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 24, no. 4 (Summer 1995), pp. 46–61.
4. Adnan Abu-Odeh, *Jordanians, Palestinians, and the Hashemite Kingdom in the Middle East Peace Process* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute for Peace, 1999), pp. 83–84.
5. al-Mamlaka al-urduniya al-hashimiya, majlis al-i’mar al-urduni, *Barnamij al-sanawat al-khams li-l-tanmiya al-iqtisadiya, 1962–67* (n.p., n.d.), p. 37.
6. Paul Kingston, “Rationalizing Patrimonialism: Wasfi al-Tall and Economic Reform in Jordan, 1962–67,” in Tariq Tell, ed., *The Resilience of the Hashemite Rule: Politics and the State in Jordan, 1946–67*, Les Cahiers du Cermoc, no. 25 (Amman: Centre d’études et de recherches sur le Moyen-Orient contemporain, 2001), pp. 120–21.

7. In the first place, the numbers of Jordanians of Transjordanian origin abroad was quite small. Second, the word used for the Palestinian diaspora in Arabic is *al-shatat*, which implies a scattering not of the subjects' doing. In the Lebanese case, in contrast, the word most often used today is *al-intishar* (which has gradually replaced *al-ighdirab*, or expatriateness), which implies a broad expansion or spreading out and does not imply forced movement.
8. Rentierism refers to a situation in which (in this case) a state is heavily reliant on income sources that require little or no productive activity by nationals of the country. In the case of Jordan, it was the levels of various forms of foreign aid, including military aid, that led to such a situation and classification.
9. al-Mamlaka al-urduniya al-hashimiya, al-majlis al-qawmi lil-takhtit, *Khattat al-tanmiya al-thulathiya*, 1973–75 (n.p., n.d.), p. 271.
10. *Khattat al-tanmiya al-thulathiya*, 1973–75, p. 223.
11. Ian J. Seccombe, "Labour Emigration Policies and Economic Development in Jordan: From Unemployment to Labour Shortage," in Bichara Khader and Adnan Badran, eds., *The Economic Development of Jordan* (London: Croom Helm, 1987), p. 122.
12. Seccombe, "Labour Emigration Policies," pp. 123–24.
13. Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, National Planning Council, *Five Year Plan for Economic and Social Development, 1981–1985* (Amman: Royal Scientific Society Press, n.d.), p. 295.
14. Author interview with Taysir 'Abd al-Jabir, former minister of labor and commissioner of the Jordan Securities Commission, Amman, 12 July 1999.
15. Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, Ministry of Planning, *Five Year Plan for Economic and Social Development, 1986–1990* (Amman: National Press, n.d.), p. 165.
16. See Laurie A. Brand, *Palestinians in the Arab World: Institution-building and the Search for State* (New York: Columbia University, 1988), chapters 6–8.
17. Whereas Palestinians felt an attachment to Palestine, and many identified with (although were not necessarily members of) one of the constituent factions of the PLO, this sort of political identification was not really an alternative to Jordanian citizenship, because the PLO could not offer a sovereign state's services or protection.
18. See, for example, Arthur Day, *East Bank/West Bank: Jordan and the Prospects for Peace* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1986); Brand, *Palestinians in the Arab World*, pp. 168–85.
19. Brand, *Palestinians in the Arab World*, pp. 175–76.
20. A famous slogan associated with the Palestinian revolution also uses the word *'a'id*: *innana 'a'idun*, meaning "we [the refugees from Palestine] are returning."

It seems unlikely that the echoes of this phrase were intended by those who coined the term for the 1990 returnees.

21. This is a particularly Lebanese term and it refers to the place to which one migrates. It became the common word used to refer particularly to the diaspora communities in the western hemisphere.
22. Rania Maktabi, "State Formation and Citizenship in Lebanon: The Politics of Membership and Exclusion in a Sectarian State," in Nils A. Butenschon, Uri Davis, and Manuel Hassassian, eds., *Citizenship and the State in the Middle East: Approaches and Applications* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2000), p. 161.
23. The number of Lebanese abroad remains a highly political issue. As with the domestic population, there are few reliable statistics on the communities abroad today. Instead, one finds widely (or wildly) varying numbers. These range from three million to fourteen million (including descendants), although most serious analysts lean toward the lower figure. Questions over numbers and who to count are in fact highly political issues. As Boutros Labaki has written: "Like everything which concerns demography in Lebanon, these numbers are instruments in a multifaceted political competition" (author's translation). Boutros Labaki, "L'émigration depuis la fin des guerres à l'intérieur du Liban (1990–1998)," *Travaux et jours*, no. 61 (Spring 1998), p. 83.
24. Jihad Nasri al-Aql, *al-Hijra al-baditha min Lubnan wa ta'ati al-mu'assasa al-rasmiya wa-l-abliya ma'aba, 1860–2000* (Beirut: Dar wa Maktabat al-Turath al-Adabi, 2002), p. 158.
25. See note 32 below. See, for example, Pierre Gemayel, "Libanais de l'étranger: le congrès des émigrés," *Cahiers de l'Est*, no. 2 (1945), pp. 171–73; Georges Moannack, "Libanais de l'étranger: point de vue d'un émigré," *Cahiers de l'Est*, no. 4 (1946), pp. 176–86.
26. See *Zad al-Mubajir* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr li-l-Abhath wa-l-Nashr, 2002), a collection of articles written by Antun Sa'ada.
27. Gemayel, "Libanais de l'étranger," pp. 171–73.
28. "Résolutions du congrès des émigrés organisé par les phalanges libanaises," *Cahiers de l'Est*, no. 3 (1945), pp. 149–50.
29. "Résolutions adoptées par le gouvernement libanais en Conseil des Ministres le 6 Octobre 1945," *Cahiers de l'Est*, no. 3 (1945), p. 150.
30. See Moannack, "Libanais de l'étranger," p. 177.
31. Moannack argues that considerations other than those of democracy and fairness had led to opposition to this point. These considerations had nothing to do with the general interest or with equity—a government of national union

- should be able to move beyond/above the opposition and take the decisions that are warranted. While not disagreeing with the Phalange recommendations regarding the state's facilitating émigré investments, Moannack argues that one of the best means of attracting the émigrés was to reform existing political practices. Moannack, "Libanais de l'étranger," p. 184–85.
32. This agreement proceeded from the Treaty of Lausanne following the First World War. It entrusted the successor states of the Ottoman Empire with the responsibility of conferring citizenship upon their residents. In the Lebanese case this meant that those who had migrated could opt for Lebanese citizenship or to retain Turkish/Ottoman citizenship.
 33. 'Aql, *al-Hijra al-baditha*, p. 227. The community in Brazil is estimated to be the largest among those of the diaspora.
 34. 'Aql, *al-Hijra al-baditha*, pp. 241–42, 247–48.
 35. Kamal Hamdan, "Lubnan: siyasat al-hijra wa tayyaratuha wa andhimatuha," paper presented at the ILO/UNDP Seminar on Migration Policies in the Arab Labor-sending Countries, Cairo, 2–4 May 1992, pp. 14–15.
 36. 'Aql, *al-Hijra al-baditha*, p. 351.
 37. The name of the WLU was changed to add the word 'cultural' (*thaqafiya*) in the late 1960s.
 38. See Augustus Richard Norton, *Amal and the Shi'a: Struggle for the Soul of Lebanon* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1987).
 39. 'Aql, *al-Hijra al-baditha*, p. 270.
 40. 'Aql, *al-Hijra al-baditha*, p. 292.
 41. See Uri Davis, *Citizenship and the State: A Comparative Study of Citizenship Legislation in Israel, Jordan, Palestine, Syria and Lebanon* (Reading, UK: Ithaca Press, 1997), p. xiii.
 42. The classic theorist of citizenship T.H. Marshall introduced the idea of different aspects of full citizenship: civil citizenship (individual rights, or liberty, freedom of speech, equality before the law, and the right to own property), political citizenship (rights of suffrage), and social citizenship (rights to welfare, security, and education). See T.H. Marshall, *Citizenship and Social Class and Other Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1950), p. 72.

13

Palestine and the Consequences of the Suez Crisis, 1957–67

Wm. Roger Louis

“We must divest ourselves of any feeling of moral guilt for the creation of Israel.”¹ This statement in 1967 sums up a major strain in British thought. But it was ironic in the sense that, try as they might, whenever the British seriously debated Palestine, the discussion inevitably led back to the Balfour Declaration of 1917 and the promise to help create a Jewish home. The moral commitment made by the British five decades earlier continued to plague them. Sir Evelyn Shuckburgh, who played a large part in attempting to find a solution to the Arab–Israeli problem in the early 1950s, wrote later of the Balfour Declaration as “the chain hanging round our neck which...has been steadily drowning us ever since.”² Another authority on the Middle East, Sir Michael Wright, commented from Baghdad on the way in which the Suez crisis had revived the Palestine issue:

Before Suez, especially over minor matters, we could afford to be impartial about Palestine in the United Nations, even if this meant appearing pro-Israeli in Arab eyes. But the shock of Suez was very serious. A pro-Western Iraq Government cannot now afford to have its friends appearing to favour the Arabs' enemy.³

As if to prove the point, this part of the discussion came to a close with the Iraqi revolution of July 1958. The fateful alliance of Britain, France, and Israel in 1956 had now played itself out, so many believed at the time, by contributing to the overthrow of the pro-British Iraqi government.

The question of Palestine now lay fallow until 1967, though the British continued to assess the nature of the Jewish state and the possibility of Israeli expansionism, as well as trends in Palestine. In the war of 1967 Israel emerged with territorial gains extending over all of former British Palestine. The consequences of the Balfour Declaration, especially to the British, continued to be painfully evident.

My purpose in this essay is to trace the Palestine issue in the post-Suez decade, 1957–67, to demonstrate how British aims remained constant and how the Palestine issue has a significance not only as one of the closing chapters in British imperialism but also in the history of the Arab–Israeli conflict.⁴ Some of the underlying British goals were exactly the same as during the Suez crisis: the use of the canal and access to the oil resources of Iraq and the Gulf, whatever the fate of Gamal Abd al-Nasser. In late 1956 it appeared certain that Palestine would continue to be a major source of instability. If any initiative were now taken, however, it would not be by the British. In November 1956, the British believed that “the Americans should take the lead.”⁵

The outcome of the Suez crisis redefined the Palestine problem. Israel gained confidence in military superiority and a new status as a regional power. Britain’s military, and especially economic, influence now seemed to be in decline. In the contemporary view, a faltering economy and a failure of political will demonstrated to the world at large that the United States was on its way to replacing Britain as the dominant power in the Middle East. Contemporary judgments, however, can be misleading. It was the revolution in Iraq, not the Suez crisis, that catastrophically diminished British power, though assessments in 1958 were accurate in establishing the connection between the two landmark events. In Arab eyes, the British had revealed once and forever more clearly their true colors by allying themselves with “the Jews” in 1956. Yet once again the British rallied. Without Iraq, they no longer depended on a major client in the region and could deal with the Arab–Israeli problem on its own merits. Had they thus freed themselves from what they regarded as the incubus of the Balfour Declaration?⁶ Whatever the answer, British influence in the eastern Mediterranean continued to be felt even as the center of gravity of Britain’s informal empire in the Middle East shifted to the Gulf.

It is instructive to trace briefly the lessons of the Balfour Declaration decade by decade as read from the pro-Arab view that prevailed in British official circles. Although the Suez crisis provided the context for

the post-1956 decade, the official mind of British imperialism—meaning here the institutional memory of the British government—would have embraced Elizabeth Monroe’s judgment that the Balfour Declaration itself had unleashed the most disastrous chain of events in British imperial history since the loss of the American colonies. Beginning in 1917, every ten years seemed to mark a new stage in the British involvement in Palestine that could be examined in such a way as to hold out the hope that the British could maintain or recapture Arab friendship. In 1917 the other side of the promise affirmed that the Jewish home would not be encouraged if it jeopardized the interests of the indigenous inhabitants. In 1927 Jewish immigration appeared to be waning. The year 1937 saw the recommendation of the Peel Commission in favor of partition, but against the background of the Arab revolt leading to the White Paper two years later. The White Paper attempted to limit Jewish immigration, keeping the overall demographic balance at no more than one-third Jewish to two-thirds Arab. (The one-third level, in British judgment, was the limit of Arab tolerance.) In the view of Albert Hourani, one of the eminent historians of the Middle East, the famous—or infamous, depending on one’s point of view—White Paper came as close as the British government could bring itself to issuing an apology for the Balfour Declaration. In 1947 the British abstained in the vote on partition at the United Nations that led to the creation of the Jewish state. In 1957 a pro-Arab explanation became more difficult. Despite widespread suspicion on the part of the public of collusion with Israel, the British government stuck to the line that “we intervened to prevent the fighting spreading and to bring it to an end as soon as possible.”⁷ In the wake of the Suez expedition, the British had little left to declare other than good intentions. Harold Macmillan, who became prime minister in January 1957, summed it up when he wrote in his diary that “our honour and our interest are in conflict.”⁸

In the aftermath of crises in the empire, the British had a habit of drawing up balance sheets. The ordeal of Suez generated a certain spirit of optimism. According to Michael Rose, the Foreign Office official directly responsible for the Palestine question, the confrontation on the canal had proved to the world “the dangers of the Palestine problem not only as the point of Soviet entry into the Middle East but also as a possible spark for a new world war.” Consequently there would be pressure on both the Arabs and the Israelis, and on the United States, for a final resolution of the Palestine issue. The United States, it now appeared,

"will no longer be afraid to sponsor a settlement unfavourable to Israel." Another positive point concerned the United Nations, which "has been put on its mettle and given a few teeth." Israeli ships would now be free to pass through the canal. The Arab defeat, according to Rose, could be transformed into "a general settlement."⁹ Hope thus sprang eternal. Nor was it restricted to the Arab side. Perhaps there might now be good relations between Britain and Israel despite traditional British pro-Arab sentiment. The ambassador in Israel in the late 1950s, Sir Francis Rundall, wrote of Israeli "admiration for things British and for the British way of life."¹⁰ His successor even mentioned the possibility that Israel might become a member of the British Commonwealth.¹¹

The negative side of the balance sheet probably more accurately revealed the reality, which could be summed up in Rose's observation that the Suez crisis had caused the Arabs and Israelis to be "more irreconcilable than ever."¹² The rout of the Egyptian army and the Israeli victory in Sinai produced unquenchable Arab bitterness. Nor were the Israelis themselves inclined to compromise. Even assuming that Israel might withdraw from the Gaza Strip and the islands at the Strait of Tiran on the tip of the Sinai Peninsula—which could probably be accomplished only by American pressure—was there any reason to believe that a settlement could be achieved in post-Suez circumstances when it had failed previously? The grand design in the early 1950s had been called "Project Alpha." This complicated, and in some ways inspired, idea had been worked out in secret negotiations between the British and the Americans in the hope that the Egyptians and the Israelis would find it in their mutual interest to create a land frontier between Egypt and Jordan—a tiny intersection of two triangular strips connecting the Arab world at the southern tip of Israel. It would involve the cession of Israeli territory in the Negev, but Israel would receive compensation and, above all, Egypt would recognize the existence of the Jewish state. The scheme had a fatal flaw. It held implicitly that it could be imposed on Egypt and Israel by the United States and Britain. In the post-Suez era, those who hoped for a Palestine settlement now recognized that any solution with a realistic chance of success would have to originate from both parties, with the United States perhaps nudging them along, but with the principal motivation coming from within rather than without.¹³

The most farsighted of the various plans in the immediate post-Suez period was put forward by Sir John Nicholls, the British ambassador to Israel in 1956. Writing in December, he anticipated that "as soon as the

dust has settled," some attempt would have to be made to ease Israeli-Arab relations. But he held out no hope for a general settlement.¹⁴ He dismissed the earlier plan for a land bridge between Egypt and the Arab states, in part because Israel "opposed it bitterly at the time" but also because it had an ideological dimension to it that no longer bore any resemblance to the post-Suez reality. Relations were now so embittered that none of the Arab countries would grant Israel even the possibility "to build up [as] a viable state with a reasonable expectation of life."¹⁵ The most that could be hoped for would be frontier adjustments and some concession on the part of the Israelis on the issue of Palestinian refugees. Nicholls believed that Israel might accommodate 100,000 refugees if the United Nations would assist financially in the resettlement. But even if progress with the refugees might be possible, which was doubtful, to work toward a general settlement would be "to run our heads against a brick wall." Only by addressing themselves to specific issues could any progress be made. Nicholls meant in particular that the United Nations might deploy a frontier force. At least the edge might be taken off Arab-Israeli hostility by trying to stop border incidents. These were modest but specific proposals that pointed toward a settlement, if in the distant future, by piecemeal agreement.

The Post-Suez Problem of Palestine

The immediate problem was the Israeli occupation of key points in the Sinai Peninsula and the Gaza Strip (the coastal district of former British Palestine adjoining Sinai). Here the British played only a minor part. The secretary-general of the United Nations, Dag Hammarskjöld, summed up one of the main reasons why Britain had to remain unobtrusive in the post-Suez era: "It was imperative not to give the impression to the world at large that the United States was 'on the British horse.'"¹⁶ If there were to be any progress, it would have to be at the behest of the U.S. government, working within the framework of the United Nations. However, U.S. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles took a bleak view of attempting a general settlement, as "the root of the problem could not be eradicated." Dulles had been reading the Old Testament and was convinced that even divine guidance could not solve the Arab-Israeli problem. His principal preoccupation, in his own words, was "to keep Communism out of the area."¹⁷ According to Dulles (as he explained the problem to a group of U.S. senators), "If we could not get the Israelis out

of Egypt, the Russians would get them out and in the process we would lose the whole of the Middle East.”¹⁸ Dulles was emphatic on the peril of the Soviet Union in the background:

If Israel should not withdraw there would be increased guerilla warfare, stoppage of oil supplies, and growth of Russian influence. In short, he believed there would occur all those disasters that the United States has been trying to fend off since the creation of the State of Israel.¹⁹

Dulles, like Sir Evelyn Shuckburgh, referred to Israel as “this millstone round our necks.” Dulles made that statement after the revolutionary events of 1958, but it is significant for having invited a British tribute—not a frequent occurrence—to the secretary of state and his “brutal frankness” in explaining his views to the Israelis, as well as to his commendable valor “in resisting domestic pressure.”²⁰

In early 1957 there was a British reappraisal of Dulles and more generally of the Eisenhower Administration’s response to the crisis in the Middle East. The emotions of the Suez crisis died hard. There persisted the belief that Dulles had betrayed the British by spinning out the negotiations rather than supporting them in the confrontation with Egypt. However, the British began to acknowledge that the president as well as the secretary of state had worked firmly and consistently toward Israeli evacuation from Sinai and Gaza within the framework of the United Nations. The British response can be traced in relation to the principal points of the chronology. On 5 January 1957, Eisenhower made a speech to Congress, which became known as the Eisenhower Doctrine: the United States would offer economic and military assistance to countries of the Middle East resisting “international communism.” One of the shrewdest of observers in the British camp, Nuri al-Said in Baghdad, believed that the British could harness the American initiative to reconsolidate the British position in the Middle East. In his judgment, the British should encourage the United States to take the lead in insisting on Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip, which would be the test case.²¹

A similar response to the curious readjustment in the post-Suez relationship can be seen in the diary of Harold Macmillan shortly after he became prime minister. Macmillan’s initial entries on the Palestine issue contain the rather typical comment that the Americans “are behaving very weakly over this, with legalism and pedantry.”²² But his attitude

changed as he followed the way in which Dulles managed to shape U.S. policy in relation to the growing insistence at the United Nations that Israel retreat. When Eisenhower on 20 February 1957 spoke on television to the American public about the serious consequences that would flow from continued Israeli occupation—he implied that there might be economic sanctions—not only the prime minister but also virtually all those on the British side who had followed the Palestine issue admired Eisenhower's public courage in resisting congressional and public pressure in favor of Israel. On 1 March, Israel, "sweetened with American support of Israel's claim to free passage through the Gulf of Aqaba," announced withdrawal plans in the UN General Assembly.²³

The British believed that the goal should be to "detach" the Gaza Strip from Egypt, thereby eliminating or at least reducing Egyptian raids.²⁴ The creation of the United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF) promoted that purpose. Israel now entered a year of relatively peaceful conditions on the Egyptian border. The chances of a general settlement, however, seemed more distant than ever. Before the Suez crisis, all plans for a resolution of the frontier and other issues, such as the refugees, depended on concessions from both parties and in Israel's case the yielding of land within Israeli borders of the armistice of 1949. With an enhanced military position after Suez, Israel now had no inclination, in the British view, to yield any territory whatsoever. According to David Ben Gurion, the Israeli prime minister, in a conversation in early 1957 with British Ambassador Sir John Nicholls, Israel needed "every inch of her territory." Nicholls cautioned the Foreign Office to take a hard-headed view of the Israelis and warned that the British themselves should not lose their "grip on reality" by thinking that there was much chance of Israeli concessions or even flexibility.²⁵ On the specific issues of frontiers and refugees, Israel would not sacrifice "an inch of her soil or contemplate the return of a single refugee." Such rhetoric might appear exaggerated, but the British were convinced that Israel now supported the post-Suez status quo. The Israelis "are at their most intransigent...[and] their suspicions of us even deeper than before."²⁶ The spirit of cooperation at the time of Suez, to the extent that it ever existed, had vanished. According to Nicholls's successor, Sir Francis Rundall, "It was inevitable that the first flush of enthusiasm for us engendered by the opening of the Suez Campaign should diminish as the true facts of our position became apparent." At least the British were not alone: "In Israeli eyes, Soviet hostility is compounded by American stupidity and

British treachery.”²⁷ He might have added for good measure the contempt felt by many Israelis for the United Nations.

The attitude of Israel toward the United Nations, as measured by the British, was one of unadulterated mistrust. According to Rundall, “She is still profoundly cynical about the organization and expects neither justice nor progress to come out of it.”²⁸ Nevertheless, there appeared to be certain lessons that the Israelis had learned as a result of UN pressure for withdrawal from Sinai and Gaza. The British detected, if not a change of heart, at least a change in tactics: “The rulers, if not the people, of Israel have learned the hard way that a small, weak and virtually friendless state cannot defy world opinion and go unscathed.”²⁹ Part of the change or nuance in attitude could be traced directly to David Ben Gurion, who was, in British eyes, a realist *par excellence*. In the year following the withdrawal, there were no major border incidents. The UNEF, even from the Israeli perspective, had met with unexpected success. The Israelis now had the opportunity “to rehabilitate themselves in world opinion.” They had won, in the view of the Foreign Office, “a breathing space” in which they could afford to be “conciliatory without risking giving the impression of weakness.”³⁰ A generous attitude, however, did not extend to the United Nations. “Israel has conceded nothing,” wrote the British ambassador in Tel Aviv, and had “resisted all proposals” to increase the authority of the UNEF.³¹

On the Egyptian side, Nasser, as the guardian of Egypt’s sovereign rights, had negotiated the UN presence point by point. He dealt with the legal provisions of the UNEF to ensure that it would not be mistaken as a proxy for Britain or France (thus the minor rather than prominent presence of the Canadian contingent), and he made it clear that, in respecting Egyptian sovereignty, UNEF must leave at Egypt’s request (as it did a decade later, thereby helping to precipitate the 1967 war).³²

The dynamics of the Suez crisis continued to shape perceptions of mistrust and suspicion. Nasser possessed a retentive and detailed memory. He carefully followed newspaper reports as well as intelligence sources revealing the British postmortem on Suez. Later in the decade Sir Harold Beeley wrote from Cairo that Nasser always demonstrated “a vindictive refusal to let bygones be bygones.”³³ Almost obsessively, Nasser focused on conversations reported in the press and in private, for example, that the Americans, including Dulles, wished that the British had persevered to bring the Suez expedition to a successful conclusion. Nasser’s animosity regenerated each time he heard British speculation on how the Suez crisis might have ended differently. “It is undeniable

that the impact of Suez is still making itself felt in Egypt," a Foreign Office official wrote in 1964.

When therefore Nasser reads that the Prime Minister [Sir Alec Douglas-Home] has suggested that it was a pity that the Americans did not leave us a free hand, or when the Commonwealth Secretary [Duncan Sandys] suggests that Nasser is seeking to extend his rule to Aden, he concludes that members of H.M.G. do not trust him and are still as desirous of his downfall as they were in the past.³⁴

It is quite true that British attitudes continued to radiate ill will, especially at the beginning of the decade. President Eisenhower was so struck by the comments of the foreign secretary, Selwyn Lloyd, at the Bermuda Conference in March 1957 that he made an entry in his diary:

Mr. Lloyd delivered a tirade against Nasser, saying that he was not only an evil, unpredictable and untrustworthy man, but was ambitious to become a second Mussolini. He thought also that in pursuing his ambitions he would probably, just as Mussolini became the stooge of Hitler, become the stooge of the Kremlin.³⁵

The collective British estimate was far more nuanced but nevertheless held as an axiom that Nasser's hostility toward Britain was unrelenting. Still, British imperialism was only one of Nasser's preoccupations, and it is in the context of his broader ambitions that the Palestine issue must be studied.

Nasser held three general aims. His first ambition reflected his view of himself first and foremost as an Egyptian patriot. He jealously guarded Egyptian sovereign rights and independence (as in the case of the UNEF) and was unrelenting in the goal of establishing Egypt as the leader of the Arab national movement. His second aim was to dominate the Arab world, though this was a commonly misunderstood ambition. Nasser did not necessarily want to rule directly over an empire of subordinate states. He had hesitated in becoming head of the Egyptian-Syrian union (the United Arab Republic) in early 1958, and his doubts were to prove him right when the union disintegrated in 1961. But this is not to say that he did not want to control other Arab countries. He worked toward a loose grouping or association of Middle Eastern states—the British pitched it rather high by using the word 'satellites'—in which he

would stand as the acknowledged leader of the Arabs.³⁶ To extend his influence, he used subversion as one of his principal methods, not only against enemies such as the British in Aden but also against royalist regimes in Iraq and Libya.

His third goal was to play a leading part in the neutralist bloc of nations emerging in the 1950s and 1960s. This bloc refused to declare allegiance to either the United States or the Soviet Union. Nasser hoped to guide the newly independent nations of Africa as well as to capture the loyalty of the Arabs by appealing directly to ordinary people, if necessary over the heads of their leaders. This was the age of the transistor radio. The radio station in Cairo—the Voice of the Arabs—carried Nasser's charismatic and melodious message of pan-Arab nationalism to all parts of the Middle East and beyond. He had emerged from the Suez crisis as the hero of the hour (though with indispensable indirect American assistance in stopping the British and French invasion and later insisting on Israeli withdrawal). Nasser in short held very considerable ambitions, in which Palestine occupied a significant but by no means dominant place.

In the judgment of the Foreign Office, Nasser wanted to leave the problem of Palestine in abeyance. For the time being, the UNEF served as a buffer against Israel while the refugee issue could be used to Egyptian advantage. According to Adam Watson, the head of the African Department:

Our general impression of Nasser's past tactics on this question is that he does not wish to see the problem of the Palestinian refugees mitigated, for the reason which impels us to try and solve it: namely that it is a valuable instrument of discontent on which he can play a tune which appeals to all Arabs, and because the refugees are also a valuable source of Egyptian influence, especially in Jordan.

We think that Nasser is no more anxious than before to see the refugee problem solved.³⁷

But even though Nasser might be pursuing his aims in Palestine with subtlety and restraint, it was an explosive situation. When the crisis in Lebanon and Jordan developed in 1957–58, the tide of Arab nationalism rose to its peak. One Foreign Office official reflected the British mood: "If the Lebanon should be swallowed up by Nasser the temptation to forestall him on the West Bank of the Jordan would undoubtedly increase."³⁸

Nasser's principal rival was Nuri al-Said, or, as the British always called him, Nuri Pasha. Nuri was now in his fourth decade of Iraqi politics, indisputably the master of all aspects of Iraqi life. But he had an uneven hand. Intellectually, he agreed that economic development and the improvement of social conditions throughout the country would be the only way to avert revolution, but he never committed himself to social change with the same passion as he did to issues of high policy. He was a latter-day Talleyrand or—in one of the favorite British comparisons—an Iraqi Disraeli. Nuri dominated the shifting coalition of the landed aristocracy, the professional classes, and the military, but it was a fragile control. The British calculated—or hoped—that he could continue to hold down social discontent until the effects of economic development could be felt in all parts of Iraqi society. If Nuri had been as interested in land reform and water pumps as he was in the manipulation of Kuwait, for example, Iraqi history might have taken a different turn. In any event Nuri, was Nasser's enemy and a pillar of British strength. British support of Nuri reinforced his dominant position while Nuri himself used the network of British economic and political influence in the region to further his own aims. In the context of Arab nationalism, he saw that Nasser was the hero of the masses. Nuri held, more insistently than did the British, that Palestine was the critical issue in the Middle East.

In the wake of the Suez crisis, Nuri believed that revolution in Iraq had been averted only narrowly. Britain's combined action with France and, it appeared, Israel had released a new, unprecedented wave of popular Arab nationalism. He now urged on the British an imaginative—yet in retrospect fantastic—proposal to defuse the sense of Arab injustice and resentment by building a coalition that would include the United States, Turkey, and India, among others, to exert pressure on Israel to make concessions on boundaries and refugees. Nuri wanted to “redefine” the Palestine problem in such a way as to diminish the danger of communism (thus appealing to the United States) and to weaken the power of “Arab extremists” (therefore appealing to the rulers in the Arabian Peninsula who had their own reasons to fear Nasser's influence).³⁹ He pleaded for a public declaration. The last time the British had made a statement that came even reasonably close to endorsing the Arab side of the Palestine controversy had been in November 1955. At that time Anthony Eden, in what became known as the Guildhall speech, had called on the Israelis and Arabs to bridge “the wide gap” on the question of frontiers. The discussion between the British and Nuri in 1957 was leaked to the Israelis and a new word

invented to describe their reaction: "Guildhallitis." It meant that Israel would not agree to any cession of territory, "either large or small."⁴⁰ Nuri's effort to resolve the Palestine issue was stillborn. Its only tangible effect was to leave the Israelis with the impression that the British were once again contemplating "selling out Israel in order to please the Arabs."⁴¹

In response to the creation of the United Arab Republic headed by Nasser in early 1958, Nuri forged the short-lived Jordan–Iraq union. Nuri's aim, virtually identical with long-standing British tactics, was to shore up pro-western Arab regimes to fend off revolutionary and hostile successors, thereby preserving to mutual benefit Britain's informal empire in the Middle East. As in 1956, the challenge came from Nasser. In the spring and summer of 1958 it appeared that Lebanon and Jordan might fall to radical Arab nationalism, but in retrospect it is clear that Nasser himself responded cautiously, not wishing to unleash forces beyond his control. The United States took the lead in intervening in Lebanon, with the British following in Jordan. Lebanon and Jordan as a consequence remained in the western camp, though Jordan precariously so, thus preserving the status quo on the Palestine issue.

The revolutionary change came in Iraq. On 14 July 1958, the Hashemite regime was swept away. Nuri was murdered along with members of the royal family. The sources of the revolution flowed as much from internal tension within Iraq as they did from confrontation with Egypt, though the issue of Palestine and the consequences of the Suez crisis must be taken into account in any assessment of the causes. The revolution had unexpected results, not least in producing a regime as bitterly anti-Nasser as Nuri's had been in the past.

'Abd al-Karim Qasim, the premier of the new Iraqi republic, was an erratic and brutal Iraqi patriot, as well as an Arab nationalist, who guarded Iraq's sovereign initiatives as zealously as Nasser defended those of Egypt. Qasim declared himself in favor of an independent Palestinian state. Polarization over the Palestine issue intensified. Qasim denounced the Zionists and the British not only for the partition of Palestine but also for the continuation of imperialist control through Israel, Egypt, and Jordan. In supporting the cause of an independent state, he championed the idea of Palestine for the Palestinians. The British, though, had ferociously opposed the plan for a Palestinian state since the time of the creation of Israel in 1948. One British assessment of the earlier era is significant because it explains in powerful language the reasons for British opposition then and forever after:

It would be a hotbed of ineffectual Arab fanaticism and after causing maximum disturbance to our relations with the Arabs would very likely fall in the end under Jewish influence and be finally absorbed in the Jewish state, thereby increasing the area of possible Russian influence.⁴²

By 1958 the British were willing to grant that the odds for survival of the Jewish state were much greater than a decade earlier, but they continued fiercely to resist any proposal for a Palestinian state. With Nuri's death the pressure for any British incentive evaporated. The date of the revolution acquired a symbolic importance in the Palestine issue. In Michael Hadow's words, "14 July 1958 really saw the end of this period"; the British found they had few options on Palestine other than "to sit very still indeed."⁴³

The End of the Legacy of British Palestine

In the post-Suez era in the Middle East until 1967, the British position on Palestine remained essentially static. To test possible initiatives, however, the Foreign Office made wide-ranging assessments of the problem in relation to Israel and Egypt in historical perspective. At the time of the creation of the Jewish state in 1948, the British had hoped to salvage as much of Palestine as possible by encouraging King Abdallah of Jordan to occupy the West Bank—referred to at the time as a "rump Palestine." In the war of 1948, Egypt occupied the Gaza Strip. The 1967 war brought an end to the Jordanian and Egyptian occupation, with all of former British Palestine now under Israeli control. The connection with the earlier period of British administration is important because of what was referred to in the Foreign Office as the "Palestinian character"—meaning the nature of Palestinian nationalism—which had been molded in the era of the mandate. The historical legacy of Palestine also played a large part in explaining the dilemmas facing the British in the aftermath of the Iraqi revolution. The Arabs and others in the Middle East, notably the Iranians, attributed more power to the British than they now possessed, with the consequent assumption that the British still had the ability to determine or at least influence in a major way the outcome of the Palestine question: "The 'traditional British role' is in short a state of mind in Middle Eastern countries which does not easily evaporate."

Whatever the realities of military and economic power, British statecraft had reached a point of paralysis. According to a gloomy Foreign Office prognostication on Palestine:

Whatever "plan" is put forward, our interests will be affected. All the old wounds will be re-opened simultaneously. Israel will suspect a Western plot against her. The Arabs will suspect a Western plot against them. I think our thoughts should go, not towards the possibility of a move towards a Palestine settlement but towards minimizing the damage.⁴⁴

In any case, things worked out far worse than most pessimists could have imagined. In the early 1960s, no one could have anticipated the extent to which the 1967 war would represent a watershed in the Middle East. It took place at about the same time that the British economy began to spiral into one of the most severe crises in the twentieth century, forcing the decision to devalue the pound sterling and to withdraw all troops east of Suez. Yet another concurrent catastrophe was the climax of the civil war in Aden, which compelled the British to abandon plans for the South Arabian Federation and to evacuate under circumstances reminiscent of the disastrous departure from Palestine two decades earlier. In the history of the British Empire, the year 1967 was an *annus horribilis*.

Although it is obviously useful to bear in mind the problem of Palestine in its regional setting, it is also important to contemplate the still broader context. The 1960s were the era of Vietnam. Just as the United States became increasingly involved in Southeast Asia, so also did Britain become engaged on a lesser but still daunting scale in the confrontation between Malaysia and Indonesia. Vietnam to some extent deflected attention from the Palestine issue, while Nasser found himself faced with his own Vietnam in Yemen, where he committed some 70,000 troops to a civil war on the Arabian Peninsula. Palestine was hardly a British priority, yet it was "the factor conditioning our own relationship with Israel."⁴⁵ It poisoned the atmosphere with the Arab states. According to the Foreign Office at the time, "The Arabs continue to hold us primarily responsible for the establishment of Israel."⁴⁶ Above all, the Suez episode loomed evermore over the British like a black cloud. "We are [still] in a post-Suez situation so far as the Arabs are concerned," one official wrote in a comment that summed up the decade.⁴⁷ The best the

British could do was to try to avoid trouble with Nasser and to remain vigilant, especially over events and trends in Palestine itself.

One of the more far-reaching assessments of the state of affairs on the West Bank was written by the British consul in Jerusalem, Martin Young, in October 1959. This estimate is of considerable interest not only because it gauges the level of frustration of Palestinian Arabs but also because it reflects classic British assumptions on the way colonial subjects ought to evolve under proper tutelage. In the case of the Palestinian Arabs, the period of colonial rule had been cut short because of the abrupt end of the mandate. The Arabs on the West Bank of the Jordan River now found themselves regarded, in their own view, as second class, even though many of them were better educated and more qualified for professional positions than those of the East Bank (the inhabitants of Jordan proper). Not only had Palestine been partitioned, but the Palestinians also had suffered a grievous blow to their own sense of identity and self-esteem:

They have lost to Jordan . . . what identity they ever possessed as a unit, recent and artificial though it may have been. They have lost to the Jews what prosperity this unit enjoyed. And they have also lost whatever self-esteem they acquired under the Mandate, as one of the most educated of the Arab peoples, by failing dismally to use their talents to avert or minimize disaster.⁴⁸

Young argued that it was the British Mandate that had helped to shape the sense of identity of the Palestinian:

Thirty years of British Mandatory administration have moulded his character to some extent. A conception of loyalty to Government and authority has been grafted on to an older tradition of loyalty to a tribe or an individual. He has seen the benefits of impartial justice and good administration. To a certain extent he shares the British Civil Service feeling that whatever the job is, it should be done properly.⁴⁹

Young expressed principles of British trusteeship that would have been immediately recognizable to historians in the 1950s, such as Thomas Hodgkin and W.K. Hancock, or, for that matter, in a much earlier time, to the philosopher of British colonial rule himself, Frederick

Lugard.⁵⁰ The spirit of the British district officer lived on.⁵¹ In the case of British Palestine, however, there were two calamities: the 1948 war that curtailed the period of British tutelage, and the Suez expedition that left, in the view of Elizabeth Monroe, such an indelible stain on the British record.⁵² What is remarkable is the extent to which the archival records reveal British awareness of “the surviving traces of our mandatory responsibilities.”⁵³

The intractable nature of the problem of Palestine ranked with that of Ireland. In both cases the trouble arose from immigration. In Palestine the Arabs regarded the influx of Jews in the same way that the Africans of Kenya viewed the invasion of white settlers. In Northern Ireland, in the judgment of an Irish member of the Foreign Office, Donal McCarthy, there were “the effects, and persistent effects, of the settlement following conquest of Protestant Scots in the four north-eastern counties.”⁵⁴ As in Ireland, in Palestine it probably would have to be left to a new generation to find a solution that would not necessarily be within the boundaries of the former mandate. Over time and in a broader geographical perspective, the Palestinian diaspora would certainly have a determining influence, if only because of the entrepreneurial skills of the emigrants in the Gulf and elsewhere.

The luckier of the Palestinians might find a future in the oil-producing regions of the Middle East. According to Sir Robin Hooper, the ambassador to Tunisia, whose experience included Iraq at the time of Suez and who later became ambassador to Yemen and still later to Greece:

As regards the Palestine problem, in the long run, I can see only one solution, for the centres of economic advancement in the Middle East—e.g., Abu Dhabi, Libya, Kuwait, to draw off the younger and educated refugees, and provide them with work and a new homeland. The elderly and incapable, I assume, have little to expect or look forward to except to die off eventually within the refugee camps, maintained to the last by remittances from their progeny if they are lucky, or by the diminishing scale of international generosity if they are not.⁵⁵

Hooper took a broad historical view of the Palestinians, comparing their plight to that of the Armenians earlier in the century and holding out little hope that the situation in the refugee camps would improve:

Whether we like it or not, refugee camps will be with us for generations to come, much as the Armenian bidonville outside Beirut has remained a tangible and grim reminder of the Turkish massacres of the early 20th century. On this analysis, I suppose the best we can do over the coming years is to try to isolate the question in our dealings with the Arabs and work round the edges of the problem, damping down the controversy and working to localize causes of active conflict.

But it is not an encouraging situation, and Palestine will continue to impair our relations with the all Arabs, traditionalists as well as revolutionaries.⁵⁶

In this somber but relatively benign view of the future, the British themselves could do little other than "to survive and wait for better days."⁵⁷

A much bleaker view of the future took into account the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), founded in 1964 and by 1966 possessing offices or representatives in Beirut, Baghdad, Khartoum, Belgrade, Kuwait, Jerusalem, Gaza, Cairo, Damascus, Lahore, Tripoli, Qatar, Geneva, Washington, New York, Chile, and Peking.⁵⁸ In 1966, in an estimate of the PLO's secret military arm as well as its overt political body, the Foreign Office judged the organization still to be moderate, at least in comparison with such militant groups as Fatah, at this time aloof from the PLO and pursuing a course of "irresponsible violence." The PLO held that the liberation of Palestine would be consistent with the UN Charter and the principle of self-determination. Nevertheless, it condemned the UN's partition of Palestine in 1947 along with the Balfour Declaration as "null and void." The PLO already appeared to be a complex organization struggling not only for the soul of the Palestinian people but also for a definition of its own aims. It was obvious that large issues were at stake. The PLO claimed that "the fate of the Arab nations" (and indeed the existence of the Arab people) depended on the success of Palestinian resistance. But the future of the organization was by no means clear. Part of the reason for the PLO's prudence could be traced to its military weakness, which in turn reflected the inability of the Arab states, in the British judgment, successfully to wage war on Israel.⁵⁹

Much of the PLO's future would depend on the situation in Jordan. Could Palestinians living in the West Bank or in Jordan itself be conscripted into the PLO? What of the aim of the government of Jordan to

assimilate or "Jordanize" the ex-Palestinians, thus diminishing the sense of Palestinian patriotism? What of the possibility of the Palestinians rebelling against the Hashemite dynasty? The answer to such questions would go to the heart of the issue of Palestinian identity:

The consciousness of being a separate people is of great psychological importance to the West Bank, both in the immediate present and in building future dreams of a Palestine Arab Government destined to take over from a defeated Israel.

No true Palestinian can discount such a contingency, however improbable it may seem, without sounding like a traitor, and the nub of the Jordanian Government's present problem is to convince Palestinians that any practical solution of the Palestine problem lies in solid co-operation among themselves.⁶⁰

The Foreign Office assessment left as unanswerable the basic, underlying question of the extent to which the PLO represented "the Palestinians themselves." What did seem certain was that the PLO had not yet succeeded in instilling "a feeling of nationalism into a widely scattered Palestine population."⁶¹

On the eve of the 1967 war, Nasser continued to command the popular loyalty of the Palestinians as well as Arabs throughout the region. According to the British ambassador in Kuwait, the consequences of the Suez crisis persisted, to Egypt's advantage: "Nasser still has immense personal prestige, principally as the leader who restored Arab self-respect by standing up to and, in their eyes, defeating ourselves."⁶² The British archival records reveal some of the miscalculations that led Nasser into the June war, namely the reinforcement of Egyptian garrisons in Sinai, the closing of the Straits of Tiran in the Gulf of Aqaba to Israeli shipping, and the requesting of the UNEF's withdrawal from Gaza.⁶³ Of these three proximate causes of war, it is Nasser's insistence on the termination of the UNEF that has most puzzled historians. The following explanation of Egypt's support at the United Nations seemed plausible to those knowledgeable in the Foreign Office. It helps us to understand the intellectual climate of the time:

All small countries are extremely jealous of their own sovereignty and sovereignty of other small countries. They were afraid that if they did not insist on absolute national sovereignty they themselves might

one day find themselves having to accept the stationing of troops on their territory against their will.⁶⁴

If Nasser's motives in insisting on the winding up of UNEF remained obscure to the British, still more perplexing was his failure to recognize that the Israelis would regard the blocking of the Straits of Tiran as a step that could only lead to war. The straits controlled access to Israel's southern port of Eilat.

With respect to the West Bank of Jordan, however, the British were certain as early as 1964 about its fate in the event of war:

A take-over of the West Bank would present few military problems to the Israelis. They could carry out such an operation without prejudicing the ability of their troops and aircraft to hold the Arabs, or indeed to drive them back along the rest of the border not only with Jordan but with all the other Arab states. The operation would probably be complete except for the mopping up of pockets of resistance within 24 to 48 hours.⁶⁵

In a series of lightning strikes, the Israelis captured not only the West Bank but also the Gaza Strip, the Sinai Peninsula, and the Golan Heights, and shortly thereafter annexed East Jerusalem. As if in a flicker of an eye, the fate of former British Palestine was now sealed for more than three decades. In the words of the British ambassador in Jordan, "the balance of power in the Middle East" had been irrevocably altered.⁶⁶

The British now paid the ultimate price for Suez in what became known as the "Big Lie." The speed and devastating force of the Israeli attacks, according to the Egyptians—in an interpretation quickly accepted in Jordan and throughout the Middle East—could not have been possible without British and American assistance. The logic of collusion seemed as compelling as it had been in 1956. How else could the cataclysm be explained? Air attacks destroyed virtually all the Egyptian air force while it was still on the ground. In Sinai the Egyptian army suffered a total and humiliating defeat. The armed forces of Jordan and Syria hardly fared better. Anti-British demonstrations and rioting erupted throughout the Middle East. As if the ghost of the British Empire continued to haunt world affairs, Egypt and Algeria had already broken off relations with Britain on the issue of Rhodesia. Iraq, the Sudan, and Syria now joined them in June 1967. Even as it became

clear that neither the British nor the Americans had participated in the war to support Israel, state-controlled radio in Arab countries continued to broadcast news of an "imperialist plot" in which the western countries used Israel for their own purposes. To the Foreign Office it seemed obvious that the only news program conveying reliable information was the BBC Arabic service. But by reporting accurate descriptions of Arab propaganda denouncing British and American participation in the war, the BBC merely confirmed to Arab listeners the seeming truth of the propaganda.⁶⁷

The most immediate effect of the war was the banning of the export of oil from Arab countries and the closure of the Suez Canal. Rearmament became Nasser's preeminent aim. The fate of the Palestinians was a problem of a lesser magnitude. In any event Nasser held ambivalent views about the Palestinian movement. He could not risk further intervention without the prospect of further defeat; but, if the Palestinians themselves independently demonstrated effective resistance, his own reputation as the champion of the Palestinian cause might suffer. For Nasser the problem of Palestine was now in abeyance. By doing nothing, according to Harold Beeley, he "seems to be unaffected by the consideration that delay gives time for the Israelis to consolidate their hold on the occupied territory."⁶⁸

Nasser, though shaken, lost none of his messianic confidence as the leader of the Arabs. In taking command of the Gulf of Aqaba shortly before the outbreak of the war, he had risen to the high point of his ascendancy in the Arab world. But had he been led by his own charisma to step over the line from the rational into the irrational? To that question the British had no firm answer, but he did seem still to possess a consistent vision: "Nasser may not be certifiable, but he evidently believes in the greatness of his destiny."⁶⁹ It was certain, however, that he had suffered a dramatic setback. Charisma could be a wasting asset, which in any event had to bear some semblance to reality. According to one British official, "Nasser is no doubt aware that for the moment at least he cannot subject his magic to quite the same strains as he could safely impose upon it from 1956 to 1967."⁷⁰

The British perspective from Jordan established most clearly the extensive nature of the Arab defeat in relation to Britain's position in the region. Philip Adams, the British ambassador, stated that the results of the war had "more seriously damaged our interests throughout the Middle East than any other event in the past 19 years," in other words, since

the creation of the State of Israel in 1948. The outcome of the war for Jordan itself was catastrophic. In Adams's words, the country had "lost much of her army, the whole of her air force and half her territory. Her part in the war . . . was brief, ineffective and inglorious."⁷¹ Until the defeat of 1967, the Jordanians no less than the Egyptians had believed in the propaganda of the Voice of the Arabs, the unreality of which now became obvious in the devastating consequences of the war. Adams wrote, "The King, like his Government and people, just could not believe that their 'Walter Mitty world' of an Arab triumph had turned into the nightmare of defeat." He noted that the "East Bankers . . . talk in terms of reforming a tightly knit Transjordan" and—in an accurate prophecy of the future—continued to relate how the East Bankers now spoke "of being quit of the Palestine problem and its legacy of disloyal and undisciplined Palestinians."⁷²

For the British, one of the disagreeable yet historic morals of the story seemed to be that "the suspicions of 1956 linger on." To the Arabs, "the very magnitude of the Arab defeat lends itself to the conclusion that Israel alone could not have achieved it."⁷³ The legacy of the Suez adventure of 1956 thus continued to be deplorably obvious. For the Palestinians, their plight had become more desperate than ever before. They were now truly a people not only without a state but also with a homeland entirely occupied by the enemy. The *Economist*, always an acute observer of Middle Eastern affairs, perhaps summed it up in the statement that their fate "is becoming more distant as time goes on."⁷⁴

Notes

1. Michael Hadow (British ambassador to Israel) to Foreign Office (hereinafter FO), Confidential, 17 April 1967, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (hereinafter FCO) 17/9. Hadow is quoting Sir Derek Riches, who had previously served as head of the Eastern Department of the Foreign Office and as ambassador to Libya.
2. Minute by Shuckburgh, 28 July 1958, FO 371/134285. See Evelyn Shuckburgh, *Descent to Suez: Diaries 1951–65* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1986).
3. Wright to Michael Rose, Secret, 8 February 1957, FO 371/128134.
4. For more on the 1957–67 decade, see Frank Brenchley, *Britain, the Six Day War and Its Aftermath* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2005). For context and for the development of the problem to the early 1960s, see Peter L. Hahn, *Caught in the Middle East: U.S. Policy toward the Arab–Israeli Conflict, 1945–61* (Chapel Hill,

- NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2004). See also Avi Shlaim, *The Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab World* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2000); Douglas Little, *American Orientalism: The United States and the Middle East since 1945* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); David Schoenbaum, *The United States and the State of Israel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); Charles D. Smith, *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, 3rd ed. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996); Geoffrey Aronson, *Israel, Palestinians, and the Intifada* (London: Kegan Paul International, 1987); Malcolm H. Kerr, *The Arab Cold War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971).
5. Minute by P.H. Laurence, 9 November 1956, FO 371/121711.
 6. See the minutes in FO 371/134285, which debate the extent to which the Iraqi revolution changed the landscape in the Middle East and the wisdom of drawing closer to Israel or remaining aloof.
 7. FO to British Delegation at the United Nations, Confidential 10 January 1957, FO 371/128126.
 8. Macmillan MS Diary (Bodleian Library, Oxford University), 21 February 1957.
 9. Minute by Michael Rose, 21 November 1956, FO 371/121712. Sir Harold Beeley, the preeminent authority on the Middle East, noted caustically, "I remain skeptical."
 10. Sir Francis Rundall to FO, Confidential, 4 June 1959, FO 371/142273.
 11. P.F. Hancock to FO, Confidential, 12 January 1960, FO 371/151164. Hancock was reporting the views of "some of Israel's surviving 'founding Fathers,'" who asked themselves the following question: "Is Israel to become the land of the Zionist dream, free, peaceful and rich in culture or to degenerate into a petty, violently nationalistic state, isolated from the world and from the Jews beyond her borders?" In Hancock's own view, the proposal for Israel to become a member of the Commonwealth might be "impracticable" but should not be dismissed "as mere visionary nonsense."
 12. Memorandum by Rose, 27 December 1956, FO 371/128114.
 13. The idea of imposing a settlement, however, continued to be debated, not least because of the belief that Arabs and Israelis themselves were incapable of coming together. For example, the British ambassador to Israel in 1965, Sir John Beith, wrote: "It looks as if an Arab/Israel agreement could only be achieved by a friendly Power, or group of Powers, undertaking an 'arms length' negotiation between the parties." Beith to FO, Confidential, 27 October 1965, FO 371/180847.
 14. Nicholls to Ross, Secret, 6 December 1956, FO 371/121712.
 15. Nicholls believed that 100,000 Palestinian refugees would be the most Israel could absorb: "She will be hard put to find work, water and accommodation

- for the Jewish refugees from Egypt and immigrants from Poland, on top of the current inflow from North Africa; and no Government could give precedence to the resettlement of Arabs." Nicholls to Ross, Secret, 6 December 1956, FO 371/121712.
16. Hammarskjöld's comment to Henry Cabot Lodge, the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, 15 January 1957. See John P. Glennon and Nina J. Noring, eds., *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1955-1957*, vol. 17 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1990), p. 41, note 2. The Canadian ambassador in Washington, A.D.P. Heeney, was a perceptive observer of the relations between Dulles and the British ambassador, Sir Harold Caccia, noting that Dulles insisted "it would be wise if Caccia and he were not to be 'seen together' too much. . . . It was important in the interest of effective co-operation not to give colour to any suspicion of collusion." Heeney to Pearson, Personal and Confidential, 27 December 1956, Pearson Papers (National Archives of Canada), 2 16, N1, vol. 39.
 17. Memorandum dated 12 January 1957, in Glennon and Noring, *Foreign Relations*, p. 29.
 18. Record of a telephone conversation between Dulles and Senator William F. Knowland, 16 February 1957, in Glennon and Noring, *Foreign Relations*, p. 187.
 19. Legislative meeting at the White House, 20 February 1957, in Glennon and Noring, *Foreign Relations*, p. 216.
 20. Quoted in Lord Hood to Sir William Hayter, Top Secret, 9 September 1958, FO 371/134279.
 21. See, for example, Wright to FO, Secret, 22 February 1957, FO 371/128135.
 22. Macmillan MS Diary, 9 February 1957.
 23. The quoted phrase is Sir Francis Rundall's in reflecting on the events of 1957 in a dispatch to the Foreign Office, Confidential, 6 February 1958, FO 371/134268. In the view of his predecessor, Sir John Nicholls, the Israelis were able to retreat from Sinai because they were "primarily interested in freedom of passage, and not in the retention of Tiran or their foothold on the Sinai coast of the Gulf." Nicholls to Rose, Secret, 10 January 1957, FO 371/128114.
 24. For example: "It is from Gaza that most of the Egyptian raiders have operated, and without it they would not benefit from the facilities of any inhabited area between the Suez Canal and the Israeli frontier." Minute by Beeley, 20 December 1956, FO 371/128126.
 25. Nicholls to Rose, Secret, 10 January 1957, FO 371/128114.
 26. Rundall to Rose, 23 December 1957, FO 371/128118.
 27. Rundall to Rose, Confidential, 6 January 1958, FO 371/134268.
 28. Rundall to FO, Secret, 27 January 1958, FO 371/134291.

29. Rundall to FO, Secret, 27 January 1958, FO 371/134291.
30. Minute by R.M. Tesh, 10 February 1958, FO 371/134291.
31. Rundall to FO, Secret, 24 June 1958, FO 371/134292.
32. See Brian Urquhart, *A Life in Peace and War* (New York: HarperCollins, 1987), pp. 209–12.
33. Beeley to FO, Confidential, 19 August 1964, FO 371/178580.
34. Minute by Geoffrey Harrison, 5 March 1964, FO 371/178594.
35. Eisenhower Diary, 21 March 1957, in Glennon and Noring, *Foreign Relations*, pp. 461–62.
36. See Beeley to FO, Confidential, 19 August 1964, FO 371/178580.
37. Minute by Watson, 11 July 1957, FO 371/128115.
38. Rundall to FO, Secret, 24 June 1958, FO 371/134292. Rundall continued on the Israeli side of the equation: “Fundamentally, Israel would far prefer a stable peace settlement to further warfare, but there is a combination of military confidence, a faith in Israel’s destiny, and a feeling that the odds could move heavily against her almost overnight which have led the man-in-the-street, and seemingly the Government, to the conclusion that conciliation is unprofitable and perhaps even dangerous.”
39. Nuri developed various versions of the same plan, but for its full-blown dimension see, for example, Wright to FO, Secret, 2 November 1957, FO 371/128116 and the assessments in FO 371/128117 and FO 371/128118.
40. Rundall to FO, Secret, 23 December 1957, FO 371/128118.
41. FO to Tel Aviv, Confidential, 10 December 1957, FO 371/128107.
42. Minute by Bernard Burrows, 17 August 1948, FO 371/68822, quoted in W.R. Louis, *The British Empire in the Middle East* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), p. 377.
43. Michael Hadow’s reflections on the Palestine issue and the Iraqi revolution in Hadow to Paul Gore-Booth, Confidential, 17 April 1967, FCO 17/9.
44. Memorandum by Robert Tesh, 27 January 1960, FO 371/151195.
45. Rundall to FO, Top Secret and Guard, 26 November 1958, FO 371/134298.
46. FO to Tel Aviv, “British Policy towards the Arab–Israel Dispute,” Secret, 29 March 1966, FO 371/186426.
47. Minute by Willie Morris, “The Arab/Israel Problem and Our Middle East Policy,” 12 June 1967, FCO 17/34.
48. Memorandum by M.F. Young, Confidential, 13 October 1959, FO 371/142104.
49. Memorandum by M.F. Young, Confidential, 13 October 1959, FO 371/142104.
50. Thomas Hodgkin, *Nationalism in Colonial Africa* (London: Frederick Muller, 1956); W.K. Hancock, *Survey of British Commonwealth Affairs*, 3 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1937–42); Sir Frederick D. Lugard, *The Dual Mandate*

- in Tropical Africa* (Edinburgh: William Blackwell, 1922). Hodgkin had served in Palestine in the colonial administration, 1933–36. Hancock anticipated much later scholarship; for example, “there are in Palestine two communities, both of which are predominantly nationalistic in their self-awareness” (*Survey of British Commonwealth Affairs*, vol. 1, p. 464). For Lugard, as a point of departure in the study of British colonial administration and the relevance of mandated territories such as Palestine to the principle of British (as opposed to international) trusteeship, see Kenneth Robinson, *The Dilemmas of Trusteeship* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965).
51. For an extraordinary restatement of the principles of the district officer in the circumstances of the Gulf states of the 1960s, see A.M.J. Craig, “Impressions of a Dubai Post,” 27 September 1964, in S.R. Ashton and W.R. Louis, eds., *British Documents on the End of Empire: East of Suez and the Commonwealth, 1964–1971*, 3 vols. (London: Her Majesty’s Stationery Office, 2005).
 52. See Monroe’s disillusioned last chapter in the 1981 edition of her *Britain’s Moment in the Middle East* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981): “Esteem for British honesty disappeared altogether when Anthony Eden made his fatal misjudgement of Arab nationalism in the Suez crisis” (p. 219).
 53. Or, to put it more negatively, “the historical albatross” of the mandate period. FO to Tel Aviv, “British Policy towards the Arab–Israel Dispute,” Secret, 29 March 1966, FO 371/186426.
 54. Minute by McCarthy, 16 July 1970, FCO 49/295.
 55. Hooper to Gore-Booth, Confidential, 3 April 1967, FO 17/9.
 56. Hooper to Gore-Booth, Confidential, 3 April 1967, FO 17/9.
 57. These were the words of Gilbert Holliday, ambassador in Morocco, paraphrasing the Abbé Sieyès, in a letter to Gore-Booth, Confidential, 4 July 1967, FCO 17/9.
 58. For the PLO, see especially Helena Cobban, *The Palestinian Liberation Organisation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984); Yezid Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for State* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).
 59. Research Department, “The Palestine Liberation Organisation,” Secret, 15 November 1966, FCO 17/5.
 60. Research Department, “The Palestine Liberation Organisation.”
 61. Research Department, “The Palestine Liberation Organisation.”
 62. Noel Jackson to Gore-Booth, Confidential, 28 March 1967, FCO 17/9.
 63. See the excellent analysis by Frank Brenchley, “Nasser’s Miscalculations,” chapter 2 in *Britain, the Six Day War and Its Aftermath*. For an appraisal of British knowledge of the developing crisis at the time, and the debate within

the Cabinet on the possibility of British naval action to keep open the Straits of Tiran, see FCO 17/1008.

64. Minute by Colonel H.J. Sweeney, 7 July 1967, recording the views of General Indarjit Rikhye, the commanding officer of UNEF, FCO 17/123.
65. Minute by C. McLean, 27 September 1964, FO 371/180653.
66. Philip Adams to FO, Confidential, 29 June 1967, FCO 17/218.
67. The most important contemporary assessment is "The Impact of the Six Day War on British Interests in the Middle East," Secret-Guard, 12 September 1968, FCO 51/44.
68. Beeley to FO, Confidential, 5 April 1968, FCO 39/237.
69. Minute by P.L.V. Mallet, 30 June 1967, FCO 39/235.
70. Minute by D.J. Spears, 22 January 1968, FCO 39/245.
71. Philip Adams to FO, Confidential, 29 June 1967, FCO 17/218.
72. Philip Adams to FO, Confidential, 29 June 1967, FCO 17/218.
73. "The Impact of the Six-Day War on British Interests in the Middle East."
74. *Economist*, 11 May 1968.

14

Palestine and the Middle East From Vienna to Washington, 1815–2008

Rashid Khalidi

Those concerned with Palestine often assume that it is not only the primary issue of the Middle East but also the central spot in the universe. This obsession is of recent vintage and is unrelated to the ancient Jewish, Christian, and Muslim mystical belief that Jerusalem is the center of the world. Those afflicted with this modern obsession tend to see everything in terms of Palestine and to view everything through that lens. Hence the old joke about the lecture entitled “The Elephant and the Palestine Question.” The joke is that for some, absolutely everything, even the elephant, is connected in some fashion to Palestine. Ironically, there is an older joke, on which this one is probably based, about “The Elephant and the Jewish Question,” which shows that some obsessions are shared, whatever their dissimilarities.

The point here is that those obsessed with one aspect of the Middle East, in particular Palestine, may miss larger patterns that may in fact determine or explain outcomes regarding it. This essay examines one of these larger patterns, specifically how the Middle East as a whole has fitted into the larger international system as it has evolved over nearly two centuries, particularly as it has shifted from being primarily a European system to being an increasingly international one.

Until the twentieth century, the Middle East was an important arena for the operation of the traditional European state system, but Middle Eastern states were not accepted as part of that system, although one of them—the Ottoman Empire—for centuries controlled large areas of Europe and the Black Sea littorals. In this respect, the Middle East

resembled South Asia and North America in the eighteenth century and Africa and China in the nineteenth century: all were theaters of intense European rivalry, but states in these areas were not considered legitimate parts of the European system.

In the twentieth century there was a nominal change in the position of the Middle East as a result of the post-First World War and post-Second World War expansion of the European state system into an international order, the inclusion in it of the United States and Japan, and its partial restructuring into something more closely resembling an international community through the establishment of generally accepted norms codified in the Covenant of the League of Nations, the United Nations Charter, and other international conventions and treaties. After the two world wars, certain Middle Eastern peoples obtained independent states and joined this “community of nations”—largely at the discretion of the victors of the world wars—whereas others, like the Armenians, the Kurds, and the Palestinians, did not.

Despite these restructurings and transformations in the interwar and cold war periods, the Middle East remained a major arena for the ambitions and rivalries of the great powers. These powers continued to dominate the region, although which of them was dominant changed over time. In this respect, little had changed from the old days of the Concert of Europe, the Eastern Question, and the Sick Man of Europe, when states in the Middle East were essentially objects, not subjects, of international relations.

Finally, in the interwar and cold war periods, and in the decade and a half since the end of the cold war and the rise of a unipolar world system dominated by the United States, the international system, rather than restraining the dominant power or powers from expanding their dominion in the Middle East, often facilitated this dominion. This should make us think carefully about the degree to which anything that today can truly be called an “international community,” regulated by international law and conventions, exists independent of the influence of the dominant powers in the international system.

The Middle East in the Politics of Traditional European State Systems

For well over two centuries after the formation of the Westphalian state system, the Middle East (a term that is itself Eurocentric and

nongeographical) was generally outside of this system.¹ It was nevertheless a crucial arena of European wars and diplomacy in the late eighteenth century, and well into the nineteenth, mainly involving Russia and Austro-Hungary. The Ottoman Empire was drawn into the Napoleonic wars by Napoleon himself through his invasion of Egypt in 1798. In consequence, the region briefly served as a diplomatic arena and as a battlefield in the quarter-century-long European conflict that began with the French Revolution. However, the Ottoman Empire was not a party to the Peace of Paris or the Congress of Vienna, where those wars were ended, and where a new European system, one with pretensions to being an international order, was put into place.

Interestingly, one of the architects of that new system, the British foreign secretary, Lord Castlereagh, while at Vienna in 1815, originally intended that the Ottoman Empire be subject to the “general accord and guarantee” that he envisaged would be directed against any power that disturbed the peace of the European continent. This was one of many precursors to the ideas that were later embodied in the Covenant of the League of Nations and the UN Charter.² Nothing came of the proposal for such a guarantee, which aroused the suspicions of a British parliament wary of involving Britain in a broader system that might restrain its freedom of action and limit parliamentary prerogatives.³ In consequence, the Ottoman Empire and the rest of the Middle East remained on the margins of the European state system. Nevertheless, we find here the beginnings of a pattern wherein the Middle East is an arena for actors in the international system but not part of that system, and wherein Middle Eastern states are not treated as full partners in an international order that in time encompasses them.

There were other mileposts along this path, including the Treaty of London of 1840, to which the Ottoman Empire was a party, but which was crafted by the European powers; the 1878 Congress of Berlin, where Europe imposed onerous terms on the Ottoman Empire; the London Ambassadors’ conference of 1913 to resolve issues resulting from the Balkan wars, which laid down the outlines of the post-First World War great-power partition of the Ottoman Empire;⁴ and the Sykes–Picot accords and the Balfour Declaration, whereby European powers arrogated to themselves the right to dispose of the Ottoman Arab provinces as they saw fit, with little or no attention to the interests and wishes of the peoples affected. All of these measures, and many others, could be seen as examples of the bad old European secret diplomacy that the fresh wind of

Wilsonian idealism was supposed to sweep away. This did not happen, and nowhere was this more apparent than in the Middle East. There, the traditional *realpolitik* of the great powers prevailed, notwithstanding the influence of President Woodrow Wilson on the new structure of the Middle East that was fashioned at the Paris Peace Conference.

Wilsonian Rhetoric and *Realpolitik*

The League of Nations mandate system in the Middle East was one of the most egregious examples of outcomes in the Middle East being determined by the cold calculus of power politics rather than by Wilsonian ideals. There, and particularly in Palestine, great power interests rather than the principle of self-determination or the wishes of the peoples concerned dictated the nature of the form of governance that was imposed by the League of Nations. British Foreign Secretary Arthur James Balfour, one of the primary architects both of the league and its mandate system, and author of the famous declaration that bears his name, was brutally frank in a confidential 1919 memorandum explaining the hypocrisy of Britain and the other great powers in ignoring the commitments regarding Syria and Palestine embodied in the Covenant of the League of Nations and earlier Allied pledges:

The contradiction between the letter of the Covenant and the policy of the Allies is even more flagrant in the case of the “independent nation” of Palestine than in that of the “independent nation” of Syria. For in Palestine, we do not propose even to go through the form of consulting the wishes of the present inhabitants of the country, though the American [King–Crane] Commission has been going through the form of asking what they are. . . . The four Great Powers are committed to Zionism. And Zionism, be it right or wrong, good or bad, is rooted in age-long traditions, in present needs, in future hopes, of far greater import than the desires and prejudices of the 700,000 Arabs who now inhabit that ancient land. In my opinion that is right. What I have never been able to understand is how it can be harmonized with the [Balfour] declaration, the Covenant, or the instructions to the Commission of Enquiry.⁵

In fact, as Margaret Macmillan, among others, has argued, Wilson’s Fourteen Points, and in particular those relating to national self-determination,

were far more ambiguous and equivocal than many took them to be, especially when it came to the Middle East.⁶ Wilson seems to have intended his concept of self-determination to apply primarily to European peoples and only secondarily to those of the Ottoman Empire, and he seems not to have meant for them to apply at all to peoples under colonial rule. Whatever Wilson's intentions, and however his words were interpreted by colonized peoples the world over, the leaders of the great colonial powers allied with the United States, notably Great Britain and France, did everything possible to prevent these principles from being applied to their colonies and semicolonies.

Nevertheless, in certain fundamental ways, it was intended by the victorious Allied powers that constructed the new international order symbolized by the Fourteen Points, the Versailles Peace Conference, and the League of Nations that this new order would deal differently with the Middle East than had the old European state system. The Middle East was adjudged by the victors of the Great War to be deficient, among other things, in not comprising states organized along the national principle. The victors proposed to remedy this deficiency by creating new nation-states there, as they had done in Central and Eastern Europe, regions judged to be similarly deficient. They did not do so, of course, in accordance with the wishes of the peoples concerned. Had they done so, the Middle East might have been quite different in the twentieth century. The region might conceivably have witnessed less conflict (although perhaps not, since the development of many Middle Eastern national identities at this time was still in an embryonic stage), and there would very likely have been fewer nation-states in the Arab *Mashriq*, as well as possibly an Armenian state and a Kurdish one. Nonetheless, many of the states that exist today in the Middle East—notably Iraq, Israel, Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan—are direct products of this process. It is open to question whether all of these existing states were constructed out of already existing 'nations,' or whether new nations grew up inside some of these states that were conceived by the Allied powers in Paris in 1919 and put into place by the mandate system that these powers thereafter erected. In any case, all remain independent nation-states today.

Equally important, at the same time as several entirely new states were being conceived at the Paris conference, other potential states did not see the light of day, notably Kurdistan, Armenia, and Palestine. Their disposition was left to an uncertain future, although both Armenia and Kurdistan were promised independence by the victorious Allied powers

in the Treaty of Sèvres after the First World War, and the Palestinians were promised a state decades later by the UN General Assembly. Armenia is today an independent country, albeit on a fraction of the ancestral homeland of the Armenians, but for the Kurds and the Palestinians, the disposition of their countries, and their future as peoples, is still very much in question.⁷

Given the biases of the victorious great powers that dominated the Paris Peace Conference, yet another category of states was effectively denied representation in the new international community they created: the existing colonies and protectorates of the participating European powers. The people of Egypt, for example, understandably believed that they were entitled to send representatives to the Paris conference, and for that purpose their leaders prepared a delegation (in Arabic *wafd*, for which the dominant political party in Egypt for the next three decades was named). Like subject peoples in the Middle East and other parts of the colonized world, the Egyptians were denied that right by the British, who summarily exiled the members of the delegation to Malta, provoking a popular uprising known in Egyptian historiography as the revolution of 1919. A similar sense of disappointment at the frustration of expectations raised by the Fourteen Points and the convening of the Paris Peace Conference led to popular anti-colonial uprisings in the spring of 1919 in India, Korea, China, and elsewhere.⁸

The only Middle Eastern state allowed a place at the table at the Paris Peace Conference was the isolated and backward Hijaz, which was adjudged to be one of the Allied and Associated powers because of the wartime support given by the Hijazi leader, Sharif Husayn of Mecca, and his sons to the British against the Ottomans. This aroused the fury of the Egyptians, who saw themselves as heirs to a great civilization and currently possessing all the modern prerequisites for independence, but who were barred by the British from sending representatives to Paris. Faisal ibn Husayn represented Hijaz as the plenipotentiary of his father, but he also sought to participate in the proceedings as the king of Syria, a post to which he had just been elected by the Syrian parliament. This latter attempt was summarily rejected. This was emblematic of the way the new international community dealt with the Middle East: in an arbitrary manner little different from that of the old European state system. The League of Nations mandate formula that was thereafter applied to several parts of the Middle East combined many of the worst features of the old European colonialism with the amateurishness and high-minded

ignorance that characterized so much of Wilson's diplomacy. As Wilson himself said about the concept of self-determination at the Paris Peace Conference, "When I gave utterance to those words, I said them without the knowledge that nationalities existed, which are coming to us day after day."⁹

Beyond creating states within borders that have been continuing sources of conflict over more than eighty-five years, the post-First World War settlement in the Middle East exacerbated regional problems in various other ways, many of them lasting until the present day. It also did nothing to rein in the competition of the great powers in the region. Britain and France, allies during the First World War, for decades thereafter maintained in the Middle East the attitude of mutual if generally cordial loathing that had been such a striking feature of their relations for so many centuries and is still prominent today, particularly among the British. Thus, Britain in 1926 gave refuge to Syrian rebels against the French, who repaid the favor after 1936 by sheltering Palestinian rebels against the British. Later in the interwar period, other great powers entered the fray, as Italy and Germany challenged Anglo-French hegemony in the Middle East. The region thereafter became one of the major battlefields of the Second World War, as it had been of the First World War, and was again reorganized as a result of the postwar restructuring of the world order.

The Middle East and Superpower Politics

The UN, which was the primary fruit of the postwar restructuring, grew out of the alliance of victorious powers in the Second World War. Indeed, this wartime alliance of the United States, the Soviet Union, Britain, and other powers called itself the United Nations well before the creation of the organization of that name. The new UN organization included several newly independent Middle Eastern states, some of which achieved their independence with the help of the victors in the war. But again, as after the First World War, other Middle Eastern peoples—including the Palestinians, the Kurds, and the peoples of French-controlled North Africa and the British-controlled peripheries of the Arabian Peninsula—did not obtain the benefit of statehood or independence and remained under occupation or colonial tutelage or dispersed among existing states. The colonial status of many Middle Eastern states was not long-lasting, however, as the influence of the two new post-Second World War

superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union, helped to erode old-style colonial domination. The result was the independence of more states in the Middle East and their joining the international system, as symbolized by their membership in the UN.

What was new about the Middle East in the wake of the Second World War was the region's growing centrality to the two new superpowers as their rivalry developed into the cold war. East and Southeast Asia were hotter arenas of open conflict between them through their proxies, as evidenced by the Korean and Vietnam wars, while Europe was in many ways the central arena of the cold war. Nevertheless, the Middle East was also an important cold war battleground, and one of the earliest: the Second World War had scarcely ended when crises erupted involving the Soviet Union and Turkey over Kars, Ardahan, and the Turkish Straits and over the Soviet-supported Kurdish Mahabad Republic in northern Iran. The Middle East was the focus of the Truman Doctrine of 1947 (specifically its northern tier of Turkey and Iran, which was essential to the U.S. strategy of containment of the Soviet Union) and of the Eisenhower Doctrine of 1957, and it was one of the foci of the Nixon Doctrine of 1974. It was the scene of repeated international crises over the Arab–Israeli conflict that produced superpower confrontations, including in 1956, 1967, 1969–70, 1973, and 1982 (the 1973 war resulting in an American nuclear alert). Early in the cold war, bases in the Middle East became crucial to the strategies of both superpowers because of its proximity to the southern frontiers of the Soviet Union. In consequence, intermediate-range ballistic missiles and bombers, and then submarine-launched ballistic missiles, were stationed in and around the region by the United States, and the Soviet Union established naval and air bases there to counter this strategic threat and to expand its local influence.

Another new characteristic of the region was that it became a major concern of the new UN, which took upon itself the disposition of Italy's former colony of Libya and of Britain's former League of Nations mandate of Palestine, and played a role in the decolonization of several other Middle Eastern states. Beyond this, 25 percent of the resolutions passed by the UN Security Council over more than a quarter of a century after 1948 were devoted to one Middle Eastern issue, the Palestine question and its various ramifications, as compared to all other issues and all other regions of the world combined.¹⁰ Clearly, the UN and the international community it purported to represent were deeply involved in Middle Eastern affairs.

What is striking about all the attention paid to the Middle East by the UN, and the League of Nations before it, is how closely the involvement of what was nominally an international community reflected the policies and outlook of the era's dominant power (or powers). Thus, the mandate for Palestine promulgated by the League of Nations in 1922 to provide guidance for Britain in its governance of this territory incorporated verbatim the terms of the Balfour Declaration, issued unilaterally by the British cabinet five years earlier. Indeed, the mandate consisted essentially of an extrapolation and amplification of the terms of the Balfour Declaration relating to "the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people." In neither the Balfour Declaration nor the mandate for Palestine did the words 'Arab' or 'Palestinian' appear, nor was there any reference to the overwhelming 90 percent majority of the population of the territory who were Arab, except in describing them negatively and in a back-handed fashion as the "existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine." This 90 percent Arab majority was described in the mandate as having neither national nor political rights, only "civil and religious" ones. In all of this, the League of Nations perfectly reflected the utter obliviousness of the British to Arab national claims in Palestine, at least during the first two decades of their control over Palestine, until the 1936–39 Palestinian national revolt forced them to take grudging account of these claims.

As Susan Pedersen has shown, the Permanent Mandates Commission of the League of Nations occasionally had different ideas than the British Colonial Office as to how Palestine should be governed.¹¹ In most cases these ideas were even more sympathetic to the Zionists than those of the British, although on occasion some members of the commission expressed disquiet about the situation of the Palestinian Arabs. Nevertheless, it cannot be said that the league measurably changed or hindered the course of British policy in Palestine during the two decades when it was nominally responsible for supervising Britain's execution of its mandatory responsibilities there. British concerns and interests largely determined the behavior of the league toward Britain's Middle Eastern mandates, as did those of France regarding its mandates in the region.

The way in which the UN dealt with the Middle East differed considerably from the approach of the League of Nations. This was a result of the much-changed international situation and of the structure of the UN, which differed from the league in important respects. Nevertheless, the UN, like the League of Nations, reflected the interests of the dominant

powers in the international system, which in the post-Second World War era were increasingly the United States and the Soviet Union. Because of the veto power of the permanent members on the UN Security Council, that body could take action, in the Middle East or elsewhere, only when all of them were in concurrence. In practice this meant that the council was able to act with relative frequency during the first decade or so after the Second World War and somewhat less frequently thereafter.

There was relatively limited friction between the United States and the Soviet Union over the Middle East at the very outset of the cold war, except for the abovementioned tensions concerning the northern tier of Turkey and Iran. At this early stage, both superpowers often seemed more concerned with eliminating the residual—albeit still considerable—British imperial presence in the region than with dealing with each another. It is often forgotten that during 1947–49, the United States and the Soviet Union were on the same side with regard to the conflict over Palestine: both opposed Britain and supported the partition of Palestine and the establishment of Israel. Soviet military support, through the Czech arms deal, was essential to Israel's resounding victory during the first Arab–Israeli war of 1948–49. The position of the superpowers was similar in 1956, when, in spite of the high tension stemming from the Soviet invasion of Hungary, both the United States and the Soviet Union opposed the British–French–Israeli attack on Egypt. Indeed, it was not until after the 1967 war that the superpowers became fully and rigidly aligned on opposite sides of the Arab–Israeli conflict. Meanwhile, the cold war became even more entrenched in the Middle East, and its impact came to be reflected at the UN.

The Middle East in a Unipolar World

Over time, however, largely because of the growth of the power of the nonaligned bloc at the UN, the increasingly hegemonic United States was either obliged to find means to subordinate the UN to its policies or had no choice but to bypass it entirely. Subordination notably took the form of the United States repeatedly using its veto power in support of Israel to paralyze the world body. Sometimes, the United States achieved the same end more subtly, as on the last day of the June 1967 war, when U.S. Ambassador Arthur Goldberg suddenly asked for a recess in the urgent Security Council meeting called to vote on an already agreed-upon draft cease-fire resolution. The nominal purpose of this recess was

for Goldberg to “consult with his government,” but in fact it was meant to stall the Security Council and to give Israel more precious time to continue its advance toward Damascus.¹² We have more recently seen another egregious example of these stalling tactics, once again subordinating the UN to American purposes, in the delay imposed by the United States on Security Council consideration of a cease-fire in Lebanon during the summer of 2006. This constituted yet another transparent effort to enable Israel to continue a military offensive and achieve more of its strategic objectives.

In terms of the tactic of bypassing the UN, the Rogers Plan of 1968–70, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger’s shuttle diplomacy of 1973–76, and the Camp David accords of 1978 were all part of an essentially unilateral U.S. approach to Arab–Israeli negotiations that ignored the UN and indeed any multilateral forum. This was the case although Kissinger agreed to convene a purely symbolic single session of the Geneva conference on Middle East peace, including the Soviet Union and the UN, in December 1973. Thereafter, he returned immediately to the unilateral shuttle diplomacy that produced two Egyptian–Israeli disengagement accords and one Syrian–Israeli disengagement agreement between 1973 and 1976. This shuttle diplomacy was meant primarily to establish the paramount position of the United States in the Middle East rather than to resolve fully the Arab–Israeli conflict, although in both cases these accords solidified and made more permanent UN-established cease-fires.

These two contrasting American approaches to the UN and the international community—subordination and bypassing—could be seen at work during the Gulf wars of 1991, to expel Iraqi forces from Kuwait, and of 2003, which led to the American occupation of Iraq. In the first case, the United States took an essentially unilateral decision as to what action to take and then took advantage of the imminent dissolution of the Soviet Union and of the hostility that the odious regime of Saddam Hussein engendered in virtually all its neighbors and the rest of the world to fashion a UN-sanctioned coalition to drive Iraqi troops out of occupied Kuwait. Although the UN was involved, it was in a strictly subordinate capacity. By contrast, in its 2003 invasion and occupation of Iraq, the United States was obliged to bypass a recalcitrant Security Council, where it would have faced perhaps three vetoes, and went to war without any formal international endorsement. The United States thereby acted in violation of the UN Charter and international law, but otherwise without

the slightest practical hindrance. Since then, the United States has obtained much of what it wanted from a bullied and compliant UN in the way of Security Council resolution blessings and legalization of some of its unilateral (and illegal) actions *ex post facto*. This includes one such resolution (UN Security Council Resolution 1546) stating that the U.S. occupation of Iraq is not an occupation and that a nonsovereign Iraqi government that has virtually no control over the most important decisions made in its country (such decisions being made in Washington and by the U.S. embassy in Baghdad) is supposedly sovereign.

Following the events of 11 September 2001, the Bush Administration launched a period of vigorous unilateral action in the Middle East and its peripheries, such as Afghanistan, acting together with *ad hoc* coalitions of allies put together for each particular case. A few years later, however, it appeared to some American observers as if Washington were following a more multilateral approach in the Middle East. Certainly, other powers like France, Germany, Russia, and China, which were vigorously opposed to the war in Iraq, were much more careful to avoid overtly opposing the United States in the Middle East after that bitter and divisive episode, and there has even been a degree of multilateral cooperation in some areas of the Middle East.¹³ Those who felt that the United States was acting in a more multilateral fashion may have been correct, but this seems to have been little more than a cosmetic change in the strong ideologically grounded drive of the Bush Administration to free its actions abroad of any limitations, whether legal, congressional, or international. Indeed, in July and August 2006, the isolation and unilateralism of the United States in its support of the Israeli offensive against Lebanon and in rejecting an immediate cease-fire seemed as great as any time in the past, and the Bush Administration's stubborn go-it-alone tendency was rarely more in evidence.

Even if those observers who perceived a somewhat greater willingness to coordinate American policy with that of other states were correct, however, the Bush Administration's grudging and sporadic acquiescence to multilateralism in its waning years did not by any means amount to its acceptance of the idea that an international community truly exists, let alone its willingness to allow American actions to be constrained in any way by such a community or by international legal norms. We can see this in the stubborn resistance of the top ranks of the administration (but not the U.S. military) to the U.S. Supreme Court decision that it must apply the norms laid down by the Geneva Conventions and by relevant U.S.

laws to detainees held at Guantanamo and elsewhere. Indeed, the Bush Administration's approach conformed perfectly to the words of Henry Cabot Lodge, speaking in the Senate against the League of Nations treaty in 1921, as quoted by Alan Brinkley: "I would keep America as she has been—not isolated, not prevent her from joining other nations for . . . great purposes—but I wish her to be master of her own fate."¹⁴ This is a unilateral vision of the international order, not a communal one. It was one deeply congenial to President George W. Bush and those who were closest to him during his presidency, notably Vice President Richard Cheney, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice.

The Bush Administration's abhorrence of the symbol of the international community, the UN, was shown by the individual chosen by the president to serve as ambassador to that body, John Bolton. Bolton expressed his utter contempt for the UN in saying that it would not matter a bit if its headquarters lost several stories. (Imagine the outcry if someone were to say the same thing about the Pentagon or any U.S. government building.) In this respect, Bolton perfectly and brutally reflected the real attitude of his masters in Washington. It was to the credit of the Senate, in an exceedingly rare assertion of its prerogatives in the face of the Bush Administration's expansive interpretation of presidential powers, that it refused to confirm Bolton when he first came before that body, although he eventually took up this post for the duration of a congressional session under the terms of a presidential "recess appointment."

Whether in regard to Iraq, Lebanon, or what is still quaintly called the Middle East "peace process" (although no negotiating process of any sort took place for the first six years of the Bush Administration, and there seems little immediate chance of lasting peace between Palestinians and Israelis in spite of the effort made by the administration in its last year to secure at least a framework agreement between them), most of the real decisions for the past few years have been made in Washington or in Israel, not at the UN nor by the so-called "quartet" of the United States, the European Union, Russia, and the UN. Insofar as the UN has played any role in these and other Middle Eastern matters, the role appears to have been one of pathetic eagerness to win the approval of the United States by hastening to do its bidding, as in Iraq after the American occupation was a *fait accompli*, or waiting until the United States comes around to accepting an international consensus, as with regard to the imposition of a cease-fire during the July–August 2006 conflict in Lebanon.

The Middle East has been and remains a crucial testing ground for theories about the organization of an international community, about the nature of the international system, about the role of international law and norms in interstate relations, and about the place in the world of what is currently, and will probably for a considerable time remain, its dominant actor, the United States. Are we in a new imperial era, and if so, what kind of empire is being erected?¹⁵ Did the vision of the world of George W. Bush and those who advised him differ from those of previous administrations, and will it be carried over into the next one?¹⁶ Is this a period of growing or declining hegemony for the United States?¹⁷ Is there more or less likelihood of other powers coalescing to hinder the sole hegemon, and are new powers rising to challenge it? All of these questions are posed particularly acutely in the Middle East, which is still a crucial arena for the demonstration of power and for the waning rivalries of the past, as well as for the nascent ones of the future.

The statements and writings of key figures in and around the Bush Administration indicate that in their actions in Iraq, in Palestine/Israel and Lebanon, and in Afghanistan, U.S. policymakers were fixated on the international system of the future rather than that of the present. They appeared to believe that because of the strategic position and energy reserves of the Middle East and Central Asia, in the twenty-first century both will be vital arenas in view of the potential revival of Russia and the emergence of new powers in Asia, most notably China and India. These leaders clearly intended to avoid as much as possible any inhibitions or limitations on America's freedom of action in these regions. At the same time, at their behest, and pending a decision by their successors to change course, the United States appears to be digging in for the long haul in both the Middle East and Central Asia. Numerous "enduring bases" (the term is the Pentagon's description of the four gigantic military bases, together with many smaller ones, that it has established in Iraq) have sprung up there, whether in Iraq and the Gulf or in the Caspian and Transcaucasian regions. Simultaneously, the United States has involved itself more deeply in the affairs of states of this area in a variety of new and radical ways, whether under the pretext of support for "democratization" or on the basis of old-fashioned realpolitik engagement with pliant and useful local despots.

It remains to be seen how long it will take for reality to catch up with such boundless ambitions, both in Iraq and elsewhere in these vast and complex regions, many of whose countries, from Afghanistan to Iraq, are

characterized by a history of fierce resistance to external domination. However great the raw power of the United States, we can assume that these and other historically determined regional verities will eventually have an impact. What seems clear, however, is that after many decades of efforts to foster an international community and to establish legal norms for the behavior of states, the evidence from the Middle East at least is not terribly encouraging in this regard. The Bush Administration's activist and unilateral policy, relying largely on force and driven by a blend of old-style balance-of-power politics and an even larger dose of old-style ideological messianism, was entirely at odds with any approach based on the idea of an international community, or of an international order grounded in law, which amounts to much the same thing. Unless and until the legacy of George W. Bush is decisively repudiated by the American people and by his successors, this approach will continue to prevail in the Middle East, perhaps even more than elsewhere in the world.

Notes

1. For more on the definition of the Middle East and related topics, see Rashid Khalidi, "The 'Middle East' as a Framework for Analysis: Re-mapping a Region in the Era of Globalization," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 18, no. 2 (1998), pp. 1–8. For the purposes of this paper, the term 'Middle East' refers to the area of North Africa and West Asia bounded by the Atlantic, the Caucasus, Afghanistan, and Pakistan.
2. C.J. Bartlett, *Castlereagh* (New York: Scribners, 1966), pp. 157–58.
3. This prefigured later cases when the U.S. Congress resisted similar restraints on American actions, such as at the end of the First World War, when the Senate refused to ratify the Versailles Treaty, thereby rejecting U.S. membership in the League of Nations.
4. For details, see Rashid Khalidi, *British Policy in Syria and Palestine, 1906–1914* (Oxford: St. Antony's Middle East Monographs, 1980).
5. Balfour went on: "I do not think that Zionism will hurt the Arabs; but they will never say they want it. Whatever be the future of Palestine it is not now an 'independent nation,' nor is it yet on the way to become one. Whatever deference should be paid to the views of those who live there, the Powers in their selection of a mandatory do not propose, as I understand the matter, to consult them. In short, so far as Palestine is concerned, the Powers have made no statement of fact which is not admittedly wrong, and no declaration of policy which, at least in the letter, they have not always intended to violate." Text in

- J.C. Hurewitz, ed., *The Middle East and North Africa in World Politics: A Documentary Record*, vol. 2 (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1979), pp. 188–89.
6. See, in particular, Richard Holbrooke's introduction to Margaret Macmillan, *Paris 1919: Six Months that Changed the World* (New York: Random House, 2002), and pp. 11ff.
7. Regarding the Palestinians, and some of the parallels between their case and those of the Kurds and Armenians, see Rashid Khalidi, *The Iron Cage: The Story of the Palestinian Struggle for Statehood* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2006).
8. For more details, see Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-determination and the International Origins of Anti-colonial Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).
9. Macmillan, *Paris 1919*, p. viii.
10. A total of 81 of 321 Security Council resolutions passed between March 1948 and November 1974 dealt with the Arab–Israeli conflict alone. During the thirteen years that my father, Ismail Raghīb Khalidi, worked in the UN Secretariat's Political and Security Council Division (1955–68) dealing with the Middle East, it was his estimate that nearly half of the council's time was taken up by question related to the conflict. Private communication, I.R. Khalidi, June 1968.
11. "Settler Colonialism at the Bar of the League of Nations," in Susan Pedersen and Caroline Elkins, eds., *Settler Colonialism in the Twentieth Century: Projects, Practices and Legacies* (New York: Taylor and Francis, 2005).
12. I was in the Security Council visitors' gallery during this session and witnessed the apparently inexplicable delay, the ulterior motives for which were thereafter explained to me.
13. On the degree to which French Middle East policy has aligned itself with American positions, whether over Iran, Lebanon, or Palestine, see Alain Gresh, "De l'Iran à la Palestine: la voix brouillée de la France," *Le Monde diplomatique*, no. 627 (June 2006), pp. 1, 10–11.
14. William Widenor, *Henry Cabot Lodge and the Search for an American Foreign Policy* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1983), pp. 71, 75, cited in Alan Brinkely, "The Idea of an American Century," paper presented at the conference entitled "Whose International Community? Universalism and Legacies of Empire," Columbia University, New York, 29–30 April 2005.
15. See, among others, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000); Charles S. Maier, *Among Empires: American Ascendancy and Its Predecessors* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press,

- 2006); Craig Calhoun, Frederick Cooper, and Kevin W. Moore, eds., *Lessons of Empire: Imperial Histories and American Power* (New York: New Press, 2006).
16. For reflections on this subject, see Lloyd Gardiner and Marilyn B. Young, eds., *The New American Empire: A 21st-century Teach-in on U.S. Foreign Policy* (New York: Free Press, 2005).
17. For an analysis that argues that the latter is the case, see Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Decline of American Power: The U.S. in a Chaotic World* (New York: New Press, 2003).

15

America's “Palestine Fatigue”

Michael C. Hudson

Considering that the Palestine conflict has been grinding along for over a century with no end in sight, it is hardly surprising that nearly everyone associated with it is fatigued. First, and above all, the Palestinians themselves are exhausted. Decades of popular struggle, diplomatic efforts (mostly sterile), and attempts to cope with a suffocating occupation have taken their toll on ordinary people as well as on the leadership. Israelis, though far less burdened than their Palestinian subjects, also display a fatalistic resignation that is reflected in various ways: denial, an unrealistic reliance on force, and an equally unrealistic retreat into isolationism, as if a wall (like the Berlin wall or the Maginot line) could rid them of their looming insecurity and moral quagmire. In the Arab and Muslim worlds, to be sure, Palestine remains a burning issue in public opinion, as regularly measured by polls and overwhelming anecdotal evidence, and the new satellite and internet media have if anything accentuated its salience. Yet, it is no secret that in most of the ruling circles the issue is seen as more of an albatross than a cause—a condition that erodes their legitimacy and diverts human and material resources from other worthy goals like development and domestic reforms. The broader international community, and Europe in particular, remains morally and legally concerned, but there is also a perception (which may be exaggerated) that it is essentially a bystander to this fight. The wealthy industrialized countries (with one obvious exception) believe they lack the political leverage and find it difficult to adopt a common actionable strategy. They are capable of articulating

broad and balanced policy positions and offering significant economic development assistance to the beleaguered Palestinians, but are remarkably timid in venturing into political involvement. Perhaps their passivity is born of fatigue.

“Palestine fatigue,” then, may be a fairly ubiquitous global condition at the beginning of the conflict’s second century. But my purpose here is not to dwell comprehensively on its causes in all of the concerned constituencies around the world. Rather, I would like to inquire into America’s Palestine fatigue. Like it or not, the United States has emerged after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the onset of globalization as the world’s most powerful and influential country, notwithstanding the recent indications of the decline of American “empire” under the administration of President George W. Bush. Moreover, the United States has been uniquely involved with the Zionist project and the transformation of Palestine almost from their very beginnings. Every American administration since the Second World War has understood the Middle East to be a vital security concern, and the overwhelming majority of Middle East specialists both inside and outside the government have insisted that the Palestine conflict is at the heart of the tensions across the region as a whole that so worry America’s foreign policy elites. Ever since the Zionist movement shifted its focus from Britain to the U.S. in the early 1940s—a shift symbolized by the famous 1942 conference at the Biltmore Hotel in New York—Palestine (and later Israel) has been a major American foreign policy concern. Dozens of special governmental committees and congressional hearings have produced reams of text on the matter. Support for Israel became a permanent feature in American election campaigns. The “Israel lobby” emerged after the 1967 war as a remarkably potent mobilizer of pro-Israel attitudes, votes, and funds in the American political arena. It was and still is untiring in its efforts to maintain and strengthen that support. But when we look across the political landscape of the United States in the first years of the twenty-first century, we observe a certain lassitude (the Israel lobby excepted, of course) on the issue. The Palestine issue arguably is as important as it ever was—perhaps even more so—and yet the American public and much of the political establishment seems bored with it. Why is this the case? Can we expect any change in the future, and what, if anything, can be done to refocus America’s attention and to recalibrate its moral compass in order to ameliorate the Palestinian condition?

Diagnosis

The notion of American fatigue over Palestine makes sense only if we believe that the U.S. was (and is) capable of actively working to resolve this long-running conflict. It is not unreasonable to expect that the most powerful nation in the world, if it put its collective mind and muscle to the issue, might by now have been able to move affairs toward the "prominent solution" most academic and professional observers of the situation have long identified as the two-state solution. The history of this idea goes back to debates during the British Mandate era over the binational versus two-state approach. The 1947 UN partition resolution consecrated the 'victory' of the two-state solution, but only one state emerged: Israel. For well over two decades the Palestinians were effectively out of the picture. Even the landmark 1967 UN Security Council Resolution 242, calling for "land for peace," did not squarely call for the Palestinians as a nation to be in charge of the land that Israel had occupied in the Six Day War—it only referred to the rights of the "refugees." But with the reemergence of the Palestinians as a distinct political actor, starting in the late 1960s, the notion of two states—Palestine and Israel—also reemerged. Walid Khalidi's seminal article in *Foreign Affairs* in July 1978, "Thinking the Unthinkable: A Sovereign Palestinian State," was arguably instrumental in reframing the Palestine question for the American foreign policy elite. And when the PLO in 1988 finally bought into the idea of sharing historic Palestine with Israel (albeit on very unequal terms), it became even clearer what the ultimate achievable solution would be. To be sure, the ascendancy of the right wing in Israel in the late 1970s gave impetus to Ze'ev Jabotinsky's "Greater Israel" project, but the realities of the regional situation—underlined by Israel's failed wars in Lebanon—effectively marginalized the expansionists on the Zionist side. What, then, is the record of American policy in trying to bring the two-state idea to fruition?

Confronted with the idea of American fatigue on Palestine, retired American diplomats ("old Middle East hands" or "State Department Arabists") will rightly point out that the U.S. engaged in dozens of diplomatic initiatives over the period of the mid-1940s up through the final days of the Clinton Administration in 2000. Yet, only two of these initiatives bore any fruit—President Jimmy Carter's Camp David diplomacy in 1978 and President Bill Clinton's "peace process" in the 1990s—and neither ultimately succeeded in putting a Palestinian state in place alongside Israel. With the coming of the George W. Bush Administration in 2001,

the president's initial declaration that he would support a Palestinian state alongside Israel was almost immediately sidetracked and then buried under the rubble of the attacks of 11 September and the debacle of the American intervention in Iraq. For six years, Palestine was once again on the back burner. To be sure, in a belated effort to revive the "peace process," Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice launched a hastily organized and poorly prepared multinational conference in Annapolis, Maryland, in November 2007, but in the following months little was accomplished. And during the 2008 American presidential election campaign, while all the candidates expressed effusive support for Israel, the Palestine-Israel conflict did not figure among the major foreign policy issues being debated. Fatigue had indeed set in.

How might one explain this feeble and erratic performance on the part of what Secretary of State Madeleine Albright once called "the indispensable nation," which President George W. Bush later announced would transform the Middle East into an area of stable liberal democracies? There is no shortage of possible explanations. The Bush Administration gave up because: the Palestinian leadership was fractured; Yasser Arafat was a rogue and Mahmoud Abbas a weakling; the U.S. could not deal with a Hamas-led "terrorist" government; the Israeli government of Ehud Olmert was too unpopular to make concessions; Ariel Sharon was "a man of peace"; the "global war on terrorism" was consuming all of the administration's diplomatic energy; the Clinton Administration had been too "hands-on," causing it to fail, which suggested that it was better to be hands-off; putting pressure on Israel to curb settlements and harsh occupation practices would erode Jewish and pro-Israel support for the Republican Party; and the most pro-Israel voices in the administration actually preferred an Israel-dominated status quo, so there was no real need for a "solution."

There is some truth to several of these explanations, but some are quite superficial and none are in themselves wholly satisfactory because they do not get at what we might call the substructure of the issue. That substructure, I think, can be discerned by considering the following problems.

The "Intractable Realities" Problem

One of the corollaries of realist international relations theory is the proposition that some conflicts are not soluble, only "manageable." Positivist realist theory further asserts that there is an objective "reality"

whose dynamics are governed by the balance of power. In a related point, negotiation theorists have posited that conflicts can be solved only when they are "ripe" for solution, as diplomatic initiatives that are "premature" are not likely to bear fruit. All of this is to suggest that some situations are just too difficult for policymakers to address, leading to what we might call decisionmaking fatigue. Realists can make a seemingly plausible argument that the Palestine conflict is such a situation. If we take a particular point in time—say, 2007—we can anticipate the argument: how can a new "peace process" get underway if both the Israeli and Palestinian governments are weak and divided among themselves? With the rise of transnational "Islamist terrorism," how can Israel find a credible negotiating partner? How can the United States government, whose reputation is in tatters throughout the Arab and Muslim worlds, muster the legitimacy and credibility to take on the role of honest broker?

When high American officials—secretaries of state and even presidents—invest precious political resources, including huge time and effort, to "bring the parties together" and these efforts fail, little wonder that fatigue sets in. It should go without saying that American officials sometimes invoke "intractable realities" in a self-serving effort to explain the failure of their diplomatic efforts. Witness, for example, the attempt by President Clinton's chief negotiator, Dennis Ross, to blame the collapse of the "peace process" on the intractable Palestinian leader, Yasser Arafat. One should recall that the function of diplomacy is to overcome intractable realities. Let us not minimize the intrinsic difficulties of the Palestine-Israel conundrum, but at the same time let us be alert to the possibility that the depiction of these difficulties may be exaggerated by those who would prefer the status quo and encourage diplomatic fatigue.

The Capabilities Problem

The capabilities problem has two aspects: the degree of involvement of the highest U.S. officials, especially the president, and the range of policy instruments available—actually, not just theoretically—to the U.S. government. To the extent that Palestine requires the highest-level involvement, the issue is that the top leaders can only focus intensively on a few issues at a time, and other issues may take precedence. During the cold war, for example, the Arab-Israeli issue was subsumed under the larger question of U.S.–Soviet rivalry, and Israel's American supporters made effective use of the (spurious) contention that Israel was a "strategic

asset” for the U.S. in that struggle. In the post-cold war period, the argument goes that multiple other issues must take precedence, such as nuclear proliferation and other regional conflicts (Balkans, Korea, Darfur, and so on). Today, above all, America’s Iraq quagmire and the “global war on terrorism” consume the attention and energies of the president and his closest advisors. After 11 September 2001, the Bush Administration’s behavior clearly indicated that Palestine would take a back seat to these other matters. As a result, American diplomacy on Palestine languished for six years.

The other aspect of the problem is the range of capabilities available to the most powerful government in the world. In the abstract, one might think that the instruments of coercion, threat, promise, and reward would be more than sufficient to bring the antagonists into an American-brokered solution. But when abstract capabilities—be they foreign aid, military assistance, diplomatic support, intelligence activity, or various kinds of “soft power”—are effectively neutralized by political considerations, then the “Gulliver” metaphor of a “pitiful helpless giant” seems apropos. In this particular region, on a more technical level, American capacity is limited by the hostility of local opinion, restrictions imposed on diplomatic personnel, poor intelligence capabilities, and a lack of Arabic-language capabilities.

The Intellectual Problem

How issues are framed affects how policymakers choose to deal with them. When teaching graduate students about the Palestine problem, I ask them first to contemplate the epistemological and conceptual puzzles associated with it. Is it “a clash of nationalities”? Is it a state-system-centered balance-of-power struggle? Is it driven by deep social tensions or is it the work of particular personalities? Does it stand alone or is it related to a host of other issues? Is it the (perhaps anachronistic) byproduct of the age of colonialism? Is it driven by the major world powers, competing for resources and prestige, or is it characterized by “the tail wagging the dog” (as in the Israel–U.S. relationship)? Is it the product of thousands of years of religio-ethno-sectarian animosity or is it driven essentially by contemporary grievances? It is not difficult for academics, in particular, to overintellectualize the issue and come to the conclusion that it is simply insoluble through the available political, diplomatic, and military instruments. And it is easy for politicians not very familiar with

the issue to throw up their hands at dealing with alleged "age-old animosities" or to accept too quickly the myths that various sides proclaim to legitimate their cause. Ideally, the analyst or policymaker should try to steer a course between the superficiality that often characterizes "policy research" and the complexity that the scholar brings to the table. The Palestine issue, as it exists today, has not been with us "from time immemorial" as some Zionist mythmakers have contended, but too many people in the public and in the policy community believe that. Nothing could be more conducive to "Palestine fatigue" than an 'intellectual' assessment that the matter is hopeless. This is not to suggest that the problem is easy, and it is fatuous for American diplomats to blithely advise the antagonists to put history aside and get on with things. A more accurate analysis would argue that the problem is "difficult but not impossible" to solve.

Another perspective that induces fatigue is the idea that it is not really very important after all. This is the "linkage" question. One probably could assume that most academic Middle East specialists believe that the conflict far transcends geographic Palestine and feeds into other regional tension areas, including Gulf security, regime stability, and, today, transnational Islamist terrorism. The *nakba* has elicited continuing concern throughout the Arab and Muslim worlds ever since 1947, if not before. But there is another interpretation widely held by non-Middle East specialists that this is not the case. They would like to persuade American policymakers that the issue has been vastly exaggerated and therefore does not deserve high priority. Here is a question for political scientists: how "broad" is the Palestine problem? If "linkage" is minimal (and the core problem intractable anyway), then the natural tendency would be to tire of it and go on to other things. But if the linkages to other problems are robust, then fatigue is hardly a sensible analytic response.

Taking due account of the deep grievances felt by the antagonists, it makes intellectual sense to recognize who the players are, and to disaggregate the larger problem into specific issues. After 1967 it was no longer valid to conceptualize the matter as "the Palestinian refugee problem," and Presidents Jimmy Carter, George H.W. Bush, and Bill Clinton, and finally even George W. Bush deserve credit for recognizing the Palestinians as a legitimate political actor with legitimate claims. It was sensible for the first Bush Administration, led by Secretary of State James Baker, to break down the conflict into specific interim and final status issues, and to invoke both multilateral and bilateral venues to deal

with them—a modality that came to fruition in the Oslo process. Academics and policy analysts have a particular responsibility to clarify the analysis of the Palestine conflict, to avoid sweeping and gloomy characterizations and to disaggregate the situation into manageable components. Too often, unfortunately, the conflict has been presented in stark, apocalyptic terms that seem to defy solution and, consequently, induce fatigue.

The Sociology of Knowledge Problem

Conflicts like the Palestine problem are not conceptualized in a vacuum. This fact is sometimes hard for traditional political scientists to grasp, inasmuch as the prevailing structural realist paradigm posits a singular objective reality. Without succumbing to excessive constructivist enthusiasm, however, we can accept that different interpretations of international ‘realities’—balances of power, national interests, understandings of rationality, and the like—are possible. In the academy, different epistemological or paradigmatic frames lead the analyst to different understandings. In the policy world, the structures that “produce knowledge” that gets the attention of decisionmakers will decisively affect the decisions they make. So it makes sense to ask how policy-relevant knowledge about the Palestine problem is produced. The government itself has analysis bureaucracies in the State Department, the Pentagon, the intelligence community, and the congressional research service. Their mission is to produce “objective” knowledge and analysis, free of political or ideological taint. From the written records one might tentatively conclude that they do their work competently. But problems of skewing intelligence and internal pressures to produce “desired” findings do occasionally occur, as has been revealed in the intelligence relating to Iraq and global terrorism. But the Arab–Israeli problem, and Palestine–Israel in particular, are highly sensitive political issues as well. Consequently, the knowledge-producing structures of the major think tanks and lobbying groups carry considerable weight with politicians both in Congress and the executive branch.

At the risk of oversimplification, we might suggest that there are two broadly competing narratives about Palestine. One is the narrative of unjust dispossession of the Palestinian Arabs by the Zionist movement and its imperial patrons, Britain and then the United States. The other is the narrative of triumph: the rebirth of a virtuous nation against

overwhelming odds, overcoming perfidious enemies, yet always vulnerable. What we are interested in here is not the narratives themselves but rather the narrators; those social constituencies and structures that disseminate and propagate the narratives. The narrators of the dispossession story might be loosely identified as Christian missionaries and educators, mainstream liberal (mostly Protestant) church organizations, educators and academics with an investment in the language and culture of the area and often with close personal ties in the Arab world, businessmen (especially oil men) working in the Middle East, and, last but not least, the small band of so-called State Department Arabists. And, as the Arab-American and Muslim-American communities have grown and developed, they too have come to weigh in as an ethnic movement. The dispossession narrative also has come to resonate with the political left and with other ethnic minorities that have suffered loss and discrimination. These transmitters of the dispossession narrative are not insignificant, and indeed (as I shall argue) their effectiveness may be growing. But in terms of influence (especially in the political sector), they pale in comparison to the transmitters of the triumphal narrative. The popular print media has infiltrated into the public consciousness the image of a virtuous, embattled Israel, surrounded by thoroughly evil adversaries. I am not referring simply to the majority of newspapers whose editorial positions echo this narrative but perhaps even more importantly to the world of fiction (for example, Leon Uris's best-seller *Exodus*) and Hollywood, where (as Professor Jack Shaheen has demonstrated) an unending stream of prejudicial, not to say racist, depictions of Arabs and Muslims legitimates the triumphalist narrative. That the American Jewish community (for the most part) and, lately, the evangelical Christian community are predisposed to accepting and further propagating this narrative only adds to the overall saturation effect.

An important source of knowledge and understanding of Palestine-Israel is the Middle East studies scholarly community in American higher education. An alarming campaign has been under way for many years to intimidate and suppress scholars deemed by pro-Israel militants to be "anti-Israeli," if not anti-Semitic. Pressures have been brought to bear on university administrations to curb alleged pro-Palestinian and pro-terrorist professors. Blacklists have been created and campaigns have been waged against specific scholars at prestigious universities such as Columbia. A website known as Campus Watch has sought to "expose" pro-Palestinian professors. These pro-Israel ideologues, often abetted by

well-funded think tanks, have also sought to influence the U.S. Congress to restrict funding for academic Middle East studies programs.

Among the most effective instruments in this competition to construct a dominant narrative are the pro-Israel think tanks. Think tanks in general occupy positions of significance in the American foreign policymaking process. The Middle East “output” of Washington think tanks is dominated by groups and individuals acculturated into the triumphalist narrative. A tight community of one-time lobbyists, policy analysts, and once and future government officials rotate in and out of these think tanks. One organization in particular, the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, since its founding in 1985, has come to monopolize the field. An offshoot of the American–Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), it has made its presence felt on a daily basis on Capitol Hill and throughout Washington with robust activities ranging from short-term policy briefs to research monographs, conferences, seminars, and even, at election time, a policy agenda for the incoming administration. A more recent manifestation of the same phenomenon was the establishment of the Saban Center for Middle East Policy at the Brookings Institution in 2002. Embedded in one of the capital’s most prestigious think tanks, one previously known for a relatively balanced approach to the Middle East, the new center was funded by an enthusiastically Zionist Los Angeles businessman and headed by a former AIPAC lobbyist turned government official. Pro-Israel analysts are also to be found at influential conservative think tanks, such as the American Enterprise Institute, the Heritage Foundation, and the Hudson Institute. Not only do they constantly supply members of Congress and their staff with appropriate policy analysis, they also find their way into the op-ed pages of major newspapers and onto widely watched television current affairs talk shows. Such is the scope of these think tanks that they not only help consolidate the dominant narrative about Israel and Palestine but also help shape the policy community’s understanding of other players and conditions in the Middle East. They interpret Islam and Islamism (and discourse on the differences between Sunnis and Shi’as); they offer up a particularly reductive view of ethnic and sectarian differences; they explain what Saudis are “really” like; and they expose and criticize the region’s societal deficiencies. To the harried policymaker, legislator, or editorial writer, the prevailing narrative of good (if sometimes flawed) Israelis trying to cope with neighbors whose culture, religion, development levels, and political leadership are fundamentally retrograde

(notwithstanding the presence of a few good but outnumbered "moderates") is enough to induce Palestine fatigue.

The power of the narrator, then, may be more decisive in politics than the validity of the narrative. In the summer of 2000, as the Clinton Administration's flawed diplomatic efforts came crashing down at Camp David, Ariel Sharon marched onto the Haram al-Sharif (Temple Mount), and the Palestinians launched a new intifada. It is a testament to the power of the dominant interpreters of these developments that the Palestinians came to be almost universally blamed—as "terrorists" rather than as a people once again wrongly provoked. In the prevailing construction, victims were portrayed as victimizers, and few American politicians were prepared to engage in the strenuous work of reconciling competing moral claims—because only one party had morality on its side.

The Domestic Political Constraints Problem

One of the strengths of the American political system is the existence of multiple points of access. This means that many different actors can participate in the discussion of policy issues. The separation of powers and the federal structure of government have helped develop this process, as have the guarantees of civil rights and free speech. The tradition of a relatively free mass media and a multiplicity of print and electronic outlets have further protected this "free marketplace of ideas." Unfortunately, this liberal ideal is sometimes distorted in practice. Powerful lobbies, in both domestic and foreign policy, can skew and distort the discussion. In an earlier era, foreign policy debates were the province of a small, self-selected, well-educated East Coast elite, symbolized best by the Council on Foreign Relations. This elite helped shape politicians' understanding of the national interest. But the somewhat inbred nature of this elite gave rise to what social psychologist Irving Janis called "groupthink" and helped account for America's misbegotten adventure in Vietnam.

Another kind of distortion has affected Middle East policy. Unlike most other foreign policy issues, the Middle East has been a salient domestic political issue ever since the Zionist movement determined to shape American power to support its project for a Jewish state in Palestine. There is no need here to retrace the development of the "Israel lobby" in American politics, except to note that the influence of this lobby expanded exponentially after the 1967 Arab-Israeli war and continues to shape Americans' understanding of the Palestine conflict to

this very day. The idea of a morally pure, vulnerable Jewish state confronting a vastly more numerous and powerful enemy remains probably the dominant image, whereas the idea of the Palestinians as victims, or even the idea of the conflict as a complex affair with rights and wrongs on both sides, seems to be less accepted. The organizations that together comprise the Israel lobby include, at the top, AIPAC. But the lobby is underpinned by scores of political action committees at the national, state, and local levels, and by thousands of “nonpolitical” organizations like synagogues. Non-Jewish organizations also figure in the mixture, including in recent years large Christian evangelical congregations. The “Israel lobby” (often ranked by American political analysts as the most powerful lobby in Washington, along with the National Rifle Association) is not just a debating society; it can reward or punish politicians in the most tangible of ways—through campaign funding, through the mobilization of sizable voting blocs, and by promoting (or blackening) reputations through access to the mass media. The lobby not only offers highly attractive incentives to politicians (who are usually seeking reelection) if they support pro-Israel policies (even if they are one-sided), but it can also threaten to undermine politicians who might be intellectually inclined to support a more even-handed American stance. Unfortunately, there are no remotely as powerful Arab or Palestinian lobbies, and the business community (including even the oil companies) is extremely reluctant to take on the Israel lobby.

Congressmen and senators—Democrats and Republicans alike—are particularly vulnerable to this kind of pressure, as they are almost constantly running for election or reelection. Even the White House bends, because no president wants to alienate a major voting bloc that can be mobilized by this well-organized, well-funded, and militant lobby. Congress has the power of the purse—it authorizes the spending of public money and thus has serious leverage over whether or how an administration can exercise American power. This explains, then, why although the United States possesses formidable power, influence, and resources, which it could deploy in support of its diplomacy, in fact it rarely can do so owing to the political constraints imposed by the lobby. As the 2008 presidential election campaign got under way, it was noteworthy that all of the major candidates felt obliged to address AIPAC and be certified as to their pro-Israel credentials. When one of the candidates, Barack Obama, stated that, “no one is suffering more than the Palestinian people,” he was warned that he might be ceding pro-Israel votes to his main

rival, Hillary Clinton, who was unstinting in her support for Israel. Obama immediately qualified his statement by saying that Palestinian suffering was due to "the failure of the Palestinian leadership to recognize Israel, to renounce violence, and to get serious about negotiating peace and security for the region."¹

The Ideological Problem

In a general way American support for Israel has always been "ideological." From its beginnings in the mid-1940s, the Zionist project elicited support for being "an experiment in democracy," a manifestation of the Judeo-Christian tradition, and a just recompense to the Jewish people for their suffering in the Holocaust. It was harder to justify support for Israel in terms of the interests of the United States, although during the cold war, pro-Israel publicists sought to portray the Jewish state as a "strategic asset." But in the 1990s and especially after 11 September, ideology took a new turn. The genesis of the neoconservative movement in the mid-1990s occurred, interestingly, in tandem with similar tendencies on the right in Israel, exemplified by the policy report, "A Clean Break: A New Strategy for Securing the Realm," prepared for Benjamin Netanyahu by like-minded American ideologues. Israel would abandon the compromises called for under the Oslo process and attempt to assert hegemony across what was seen as an increasingly hostile and unstable Arab and Muslim world. More than just a strategic asset to the U.S., Israel would be the spearhead of—dare we say it—a crusade by the west in the inevitable clash of civilizations. With the election of George W. Bush, the neoconservatives found themselves occupying strategic positions in the executive branch, and the attacks of 11 September provided the opportunity to aggressively advance an American agenda for eradicating the terrorism threat and transforming the "broader" Middle East into a zone of democratic peacefulness. With the lines thus drawn, Israel was placed firmly in the American civilizational camp in the "global war on terror," while Palestinians—and indeed much of the Arab world—were widely seen to be on the other side.

With the Palestine question now subsumed under the larger ideological war on terrorism, the environment was no longer favorable for diplomacy. Neoconservatives brusquely dismissed the proposition that the rekindled Palestine issue was actually fueling the conditions conducive to producing terrorists. Moreover, the neoconservatives' obsession

with deposing Saddam Hussein prompted them to insist that a new democratic regime in Iraq would facilitate subsequent settlement of the Palestine issue. But as the American occupation of Iraq grew more onerous, audiences watching Al Jazeera were subjected night after night to images of occupation troops roughly treating the local population, and it was difficult to tell the difference between Israeli troops in Gaza or the West Bank and American troops in Baghdad or Falluja. To American neoconservatives, Palestine was not the key to America's larger problems, but a tiresome sideshow. Whether the gradual eclipse of the neoconservatives under the weight of their Iraq misadventure would open the way for more energetic American diplomacy on Palestine remained to be seen.

Prognosis and Recommendations

America's "Palestine fatigue" clearly is sustained by a number of powerful factors. But it would be premature, not to say defeatist, to conclude that this situation must continue indefinitely. I realize that this may seem to be a naively optimistic position, inured as we are in the pessimistic bias of 'realism.' And, as I have sought to indicate above, the structural roots of this fatigue and consequent policy inadequacy are very deep. A conscious or unconscious methodological commitment to what political scientists call 'path dependency' makes it hard to imagine alternative futures. But let us try to do so anyway. As we look to the short- and long-term future, I believe we can detect new factors and conditions that could move American policy in a more genuinely realistic and morally acceptable direction.

Midway through President George W. Bush's second term, there were some encouraging developments in the political climate surrounding the Palestine-Israel issue.

On the "intractable issues" dimension, it was at least moderately encouraging that the deep division in Palestinian politics between Fatah and Hamas was being addressed, through the mediation efforts of Saudi Arabia and Egypt. On the Israeli side, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert was challenged from within his own party for mishandling Israel's war against Hizbullah in Lebanon. His government formally maintained its commitment to an ultimate two-state solution, and despite its tough stand against "terrorist" organizations, there were reports of back-channel contacts with Hamas and Hizbullah. But Olmert was challenged by

hardliners, both within his coalition, such as Ehud Barak, and by the opposition represented by the even more hardline politician, Benjamin Netanyahu. U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice finally, albeit cautiously, turned her attention to restarting Palestinian–Israeli diplomacy. The latter development suggested that the Bush Administration might be prepared to devote greater capabilities to this task than had been the case. While the American and European freeze on assistance to alleged terrorist elements in the Palestinian government (that is, Hamas) remained, it also appeared that American assistance might be channeled through “acceptable” ministers in the new coalition government.

In terms of Palestine as an intellectual problem, former President Jimmy Carter broke new ground with his provocatively subtitled book *Palestine: Peace Not Apartheid* in 2006.² While savaged by the more hardline supporters of Israel, Carter stood his ground and arguably brought the “other side” of the Palestine question more effectively to public attention than had ever happened before. In 2008, Carter met with Hamas leaders and with Syria in hopes of facilitating the inclusion of these crucial parties in revived diplomatic negotiations. Another taboo-breaker was the critique of the Israel lobby published by two centrist international relations scholars without known pro-Palestinian sympathies, John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt in the *London Review of Books*.³ The article, later expanded into a book, *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy*,⁴ and the ensuing controversy, opened a space in the public debate on Israel and Palestine, marking a significant challenge to the conventional narrative.

In the ongoing struggle to reframe and reconstruct the Palestine question for Americans in a more objective direction, there were reasons for guarded optimism. In the world of higher education, where (as noted above) Middle East studies has been under sustained attack from Zionist and neoconservative ideologues, it appeared that the efforts of Campus Watch and others to intimidate scholars working on Palestine and Israel had perhaps peaked, and the academy rallied to protect its right to free inquiry and expression. Efforts by the attackers to reduce government funding for Middle East studies and establish political “inspectors” were meeting with considerable resistance in Congress. The current generation of Palestinian and Arab intellectuals whose writings are accessible to American audiences—including Salim Tamari, Rashid Khalidi, Joseph Massad, Muhammad Abu-Nimr, Ali Abunimah, Yezid Sayigh, Hanan Ashrawi, Ziad Abu Amr, Philip Matar, and Beshara

Doumani—builds impressively on the earlier work of outstanding scholars like Walid Khalidi, Fayez and Yusif Sayigh, Edward Said, Hisham Sharabi, Ibrahim Abu-Lughod, and Samih Farsoun, who opened the eyes of so many Americans to a fuller understanding of the Palestinian condition. Meanwhile, although a pro-Israel narrative continues to dominate the output of Washington's foreign policy think tanks, it is encouraging to note that there are some think tanks with a less politicized Middle East policy agenda, such as the International Crisis Group, the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, and the New America Foundation. From a sociology of knowledge perspective, the public discourse continues to be dominated by the triumphalist narrative, owing to the organizational and financial superiority of the right-leaning pro-Israel establishment. Nevertheless, these recent developments hold out the prospect of a more balanced public understanding in the future.

These straws in the wind might conceivably also affect the "domestic constraints" problem, but as the United States entered into the 2008 election campaign season, there seemed little grounds for a significant shift. Nevertheless, it was interesting that the Israel lobby was tarnished in 2006 by the federal indictment of two AIPAC executives for involvement, along with a Pentagon employee named Lawrence Franklin, in passing classified information to the government of Israel. And in a potentially significant challenge "from within," a new pro-Israel political action committee called the J-Street Project was announced in April 2008, whose mission was to offer a "dovish" alternative to the right-wing, neoconservative-sympathizing AIPAC (cited in *The Jewish Week*, New York, 21 April 2008). It is also interesting that the leading Arab-American advocacy group, the Arab-American Institute, attracted to its annual awards dinner several high-level politicians, including an early Democratic presidential candidate, Bill Richardson, and an influential Republican, Senator Chuck Hagel. Another important senator, Democrat Diane Feinstein of California, also addressed the organization. All earnestly pledged to work for a just solution to the Palestine issue, and Senator Hagel pointedly remarked on the power of the Israel lobby but insisted that he was an American senator first and foremost. Finally, the weakening of the neoconservative movement during Bush's second term could prove to be a very positive development were it to lead to the de-ideologization of the Palestine question and its decoupling from the global war on terrorism. Would the American public in general and the American Jewish community (which, as the

J-Street Project indicates, is far from monolithic) in particular be prepared to deal with the matter in more nuanced and less apocalyptic terms? And would American politicians be brave enough to risk adopting a more balanced approach?

In the longer term, it is likely that the Palestine conflict unsolved will continue to resonate throughout the region, exacerbating tensions and threatening stability. As long as the United States remains either blindly partisan in favor of Israel or—as we have recently seen—passive and fatigued on the matter, it will continue to erode America's reputation and position. Globalization in its broadest sense has enhanced the linkages of Palestine to the rest of the region. As economies open up, civil society expands, and international connections proliferate, the incentives to put this corrosive situation to an end will increase. Of particular importance is the information revolution, which has amplified the conflict to an unprecedented degree, as any of the millions of Al Jazeera viewers would surely testify. And if, as many analysts now believe, the United States is losing its dominance in world affairs in the face of Europe and rising powers in Asia, shifts in the global balance of power may incline future American leaders to adopt a more multilateral approach in dealing with Israel and Palestine. This could be a positive development for all parties concerned, certainly including the United States

"Palestine fatigue," then, does not have to remain a permanent condition in America's foreign policy. The structure of the global and regional situation ultimately must refocus U.S. attention and induce the political leadership to rethink, nay, reconstruct the Palestine question. Fundamental shifts in power relations, information technologies, ideological constructs, and the global economy, as we have seen, are working on balance to increase the salience of Palestine rather than decreasing it. But there is no automaticity to these trends; as the Bolsheviks argued, history needs a conscious push. For American liberals who would like to see the U.S. finally exert its unique influence to settle this matter once and for all—and a "permanent" solution must be a just solution—it is not enough simply to stand by passively and wait for the movement of history. The negligence of the Palestine-Israel conflict during the first six years of the George W. Bush Administration should be a lesson. American sympathizers with the Palestinians were demoralized; Arab-Americans were afraid; the academic experts, too "realistic" for their own good, sank into a kind of fatalism, asking who can possibly stand up to the Israel lobby. Above all, the toxic political fallout from 11 September led to the conflation of

Palestinians with global “Islamist” terrorism, deterring virtually every influential politician from handling this hot potato.

But the situation does not have to remain this way. There are concrete things that can be done. The American political process obviously does not provide a level playing field for the contending parties to the Palestine–Israel conflict, but it is not so hermetically sealed that the Israel lobby will forever have its way. When all is said and done, it is a sprawling, relatively open system, with many points of access. Public opinion does play a role, and different sectors of civil society can gain a hearing. Academics specializing on the Middle East need to raise their voices in the scholarly tradition of Walid Khalidi and other Palestinian intellectuals. They should push back against efforts such as Campus Watch to intimidate free and thorough discussion of the Palestine problem. On the political level, Arab-Americans need to strengthen their efforts to communicate with politicians, especially legislators and policymakers, and they need to build coalitions with like-minded civil society organizations and advocacy groups. The Jewish community has a particular opportunity and responsibility to understand the Palestinian situation in its entirety (just as Arab-American organizations need to understand Israeli concerns) and resist the monolithic party line handed down by the major Israel lobbying organizations. Both academics and think tank policy analysts sympathetic to the Palestinians need to be more creative in proposing workable diplomatic and political strategies. It is one thing to criticize America’s lamentable “Palestine fatigue” but something else—and better—to offer constructive new thinking, for example, a Palestinian Marshall Plan? A new Geneva or Dayton conference approach? International peacekeeping forces? Renewed “track two” diplomacy? Tedious as it may now appear, the Palestine issue remains the root of the deep tensions rolling across the entire Middle East and the Islamic world. It is too important to ignore.

Notes

1. *New York Times*, 27 April 2007.
2. Jimmy Carter, *Palestine: Peace Not Apartheid* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2006).
3. John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt, “The Israel Lobby,” *London Review of Books*, vol. 28, no. 6 (23 March 2006).
4. John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2007).

16

On Dignity and Dissent The Journey of a Child of Holocaust Survivors

Sara Roy

The loss of life on 11 September was a horror and a tragedy.¹ Official numbers place the dead at around three thousand. Unofficially, according to friends deeply involved with the rescue and recovery effort, the number of dead may have been far higher—individuals whose names we may never know. For me, 11 September echoed with the anguish of my own past: lives extinguished, futures taken, histories silenced. One of my greatest struggles as a child of Holocaust survivors is how to remember those who perished. How do we speak of their lives—how do we *celebrate* those lives—beyond the carnage and the destruction? How do we preserve and protect their identity as human beings apart from their role as victims? How shall we honor them?

My own past is tied to 11 September in another way: through the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians, which I have lived in one form or another for much of my life. There should be no doubt that the Palestinian–Israeli conflict is, and will remain, at the heart of Arab and Muslim grievance until it is resolved. This is not a new assertion.

Because of this I have found interesting, not to say misguided, the debate that has emerged in some circles since 11 September concerning the extent to which the Palestine issue was a factor in Osama Bin Laden's thinking. Some have argued that it was never important to him and that, understanding its importance to Muslim audiences, he cynically appropriated it after 11 September. (And indeed, it is true that since 11 September, Bin Laden has placed more emphasis on the Palestinians and less on Saudi subordination to the United States and that he has

amplified the issue for many in the Muslim world.) Others, including the *9/11 Commission Report* and Michael Scheuer, who under the pseudonym “Anonymous” wrote *Through Our Enemies’ Eyes* and *Imperial Hubris* (two of the most important books I have read on why we are where we are), have argued that even from a young age the loss of Palestine contributed to shaping Bin Laden’s worldview.² In fact, translated texts of Bin Laden’s letters, declarations, and statements—some a decade old—clearly demonstrate his anger over Palestine and animus toward U.S. foreign policy favoring Israel. When someone asked 11 September plotter Marwan al-Shehhi why he and Muhammad Atta never laughed, Shehhi retorted, “How can you laugh when people are dying in Palestine.”³

Since 11 September, the obvious (though not to some) connection between resolving the Palestinian–Israeli conflict and mitigating terrorism has been made with greater frequency, including by former Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf in an address to the UN General Assembly, where he stated that the Israeli–Palestinian conflict “is an open wound inflicted on the psyche of every Muslim. It generates anger and resentment across the Islamic world.”⁴ He also said that resolving the conflict by creating two states would be a “deathblow to al-Qa’ida.”

In a similar vein, the *9/11 Commission Report* stated:

America’s policy choices have consequences. Right or wrong, it is simply a fact that American policy regarding the Israeli–Palestinian conflict and American actions in Iraq are dominant staples of popular commentary across the Arab and Muslim world. . . . Neither Israel nor the new Iraq will be safer if worldwide Islamist terrorism grows stronger.⁵

Yet, despite the central, almost supernal, importance of the Palestinian–Israeli conflict to hundreds of millions of people inside and outside the region, to mitigating terrorism, and to peace, the Palestinian–Israeli conflict is an issue that—in America at least—cannot be discussed in a way that even approximates reality. The problem arguably reached its apex under the Bush Administration. Despite my many years of involvement, I am still astounded by Americans’ willfully insensate attitude toward this core problem. Since 11 September, “approximating reality”—by which I mean dissenting from the dominant narrative, which defines all Palestinians as terrorists and all Israelis as victims—has become, in effect, an act of heresy.

In this context, what does it mean today to speak one's conscience, to be free of fear in word and deed? And what does it mean to dissent?

My own thinking has been profoundly shaped by the example of my mother and father, who certainly knew fear yet who overcame it with courage and dignity. For them, being free of fear meant living and working anywhere they wanted; the right to education, protection, and privacy; and the right to practice their religion and culture without discrimination or threat of persecution. It meant the freedom to embrace the 'other.' Being free of fear also meant dissent: the right—and the need—to oppose the prevailing ideas and policies they saw as wrong. This was a profound part of who my parents were, how they defined themselves, and how they reimagined the world.

Yet dissent is often considered a form of defection and betrayal, particularly in times of conflict when the impulse to conformity is acute. This is no less true of the Jewish people than of any other. The war against dissent we are witnessing today threatens not only what we think and how we construct our thoughts, but who, in the end, we become. Whether we are talking about the war in Iraq, corporate globalization, or global terrorism, our right to oppose is being stigmatized and invalidated. Arundhati Roy, the Indian writer and social activist, states it thus:

In the great cities of Europe and America, where a few years ago these things would only have been whispered, now people are openly talking about the good side of Imperialism and the need for a strong Empire to police an unruly world. The new missionaries want order at the cost of justice. Discipline at the cost of dignity. And ascendancy at any price.⁶

Dissent, therefore, becomes equated with subversion, even treason. At a conference at the University of California at Berkeley on media coverage of the Iraq war, journalists explained that one reason for their lack of critical reporting prior to the invasion was fear of appearing unpatriotic. President Bush's now famous statement less than ten days after the 11 September attacks, "Either you are with us or you are with the terrorists,"⁷ leaves us with no alternatives and, perhaps more important, delegitimizes the dissenting views we do express. In such a polarized scenario, what recourse is there to justice? To insist on the legitimacy of criticism of unjust policies is at the heart of democracy.

The legitimacy of dissent is perhaps nowhere more challenged today than in the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians. Yet the ethic of dissent and its crucial importance in remaking a world gone wrong is a core tenet of Judaism. And freedom of dissent has rarely been more urgent than today, when the conflict is descending so tragically into a moral abyss and when, for me at least, the very essence of Judaism, of what it means to be a Jew and a child of survivors, seems to be descending with it.

For me, the Jewish tradition of dissent and its meaning within the Israeli-Palestinian conflict cannot be separated from my own personal journey as a child of survivors. The Holocaust has been the defining feature of my life. It could not have been otherwise. I lost over one hundred members of my immediate and extended family in the Nazi ghettos and death camps in Poland—grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, a sibling not yet born—people from the shtetls of Poland whom I never knew but who have always been part of my life.

Although I cannot be certain, I think my first real encounter with the Holocaust was when I first consciously noticed the number the Nazis had imprinted on my father's arm. To his oppressors, my father, Abraham, had no name, no history, and no identity other than that blue-inked number. As a small child of four or five, I remember asking my father why he had that number on his arm. He answered that he had once painted it on, but then found that it would not wash off and was left with it.

My father was one of six children, and he was the only one in his family to survive the Holocaust. His name was recognized in Holocaust circles because he was one of four known survivors of the death camp at Chelmno, Poland, where approximately 150,000 Jews were murdered, including the majority of my family on both my father's and mother's side. I was told that there is now a plaque at the entrance to what is left of the Chelmno death camp with my father's name on it. He also survived the concentration camps at Auschwitz and Buchenwald, and because of that was called to testify at the Eichmann trial in Jerusalem in 1961. I know very little about his family because he could not speak about them without breaking down. Mostly, I know only their names. It caused me such pain to see him suffer with his memories that I stopped asking him to share them.

My mother, Taube, was one of nine children. I know much more about her family, which was deeply religious and loving, from stories told to me both by her and by my aunt. Their father, Herschel, was a

rabbi and *shobet* (a ritual slaughterer). He was a learned man who had studied with some of the great rabbis of Poland. As a family they lived very modestly, but every Sabbath my grandfather would bring home a poor or homeless person who was seated at the head of the table to share the Sabbath meal.

My mother and her sister, Frania, were the only two in their family to survive the war, except for another sister, Shoshana, who had emigrated to Palestine in 1936. My mother and Frania managed never to be separated throughout the entire war—seven years in the Pabianice and Lodz ghettos, followed by the Auschwitz and Halbstadt concentration camp—except once. That was at Auschwitz. They were in a selection line, where Jews were lined up and their fate sealed by the Nazi doctor, Josef Mengele, who determined who would live and who would die. When my aunt came before him, he sent her to the right, to labor (a temporary reprieve), but my mother he sent to the left, to the group destined for the gas chamber. Miraculously, my mother managed to sneak back into the selection line, and when she came before Mengele a second time he sent her to the labor side.

Despite their extreme closeness, when my aunt Frania decided to go to Palestine/Israel after the war to join Shoshana because she believed it was the only safe place for Jews, my mother made a painful choice. She refused to go. She often spoke to me of that decision, explaining that her refusal to live in Israel was based on her belief, learned and reinforced by her experiences during the war, that tolerance, compassion, and justice cannot be practiced nor extended when one lives only among one's own. "I could not live as a Jew among Jews alone," she would tell me, "For me, it wasn't possible. I wanted to live as a Jew in a pluralist society, where my group remained important to me, but where others were important to me, too."

I grew up in a home where Judaism was defined and practiced not as a religion but as a system of ethics and culture. My first language was Yiddish, which I still speak with my family. My home was filled with joy and optimism, though punctuated at times by grief and loss. The notion of a Jewish homeland was important to my parents, but unlike many of their friends, they were not uncritical of Israel. Obedience to a state was not an ultimate Jewish value for them. Judaism provided the context for Jewish life, for values and beliefs that transcended national boundaries. For my mother and father, Judaism meant bearing witness, raging against injustice, and foregoing silence. It meant compassion, tolerance, and rescue. It meant, as Ammiel Alcalay has written, ensuring to the extent

possible that the memories of the past do not become the memories of the future.⁸ My parents cared profoundly about justice and fairness, and they cared profoundly about people—all people, not just their own. Looking back over my life, I see clearly how they never tried to save me from self-knowledge; instead, they insisted that I confront what I did not understand. Noam Chomsky speaks of the “parameters of thinkable thought.” My mother and father constantly pushed those parameters as far as they could, which was not far enough for me, but they taught me how to push them and the importance of doing so.

It was perhaps inevitable that I would follow a path that would lead me to the Arab–Israeli issue. I had visited Israel many times while growing up. As a child, I found it beautiful, romantic, and peaceful. As a teenager and young adult I began to feel certain contradictions that I could not fully explain, but which centered on what seemed to be the almost complete absence in Israeli life and discourse of Jewish life in Eastern Europe before the Holocaust and even of the Holocaust itself. I would ask my aunt why these subjects were not discussed and why Israelis did not speak Yiddish. My questions were often met with grim silence.

Most painful to me was the denigration of the Holocaust and pre-state Jewish life by many of my Israeli friends. For them, these were times of shame when Jews were weak and passive, inferior and unworthy, deserving not of our respect but of our disdain. “We will never allow ourselves to be slaughtered again or go willingly to slaughter,” they would say. There was little need to understand those millions who perished; there was even less need to honor them. Yet, at the same time, the Holocaust was used by the state as a defense against others, as a justification for political and military acts.

I could not make sense of what I was hearing. I remember feeling fear for my aunt, and also profound anger. It was around that time that I began thinking about the Palestinians and their conflict with the Jews. If so many among us could negate our own history and so pervert the truth, why not our history with the Palestinians? Was there a link of some sort between the murdered Jews of Europe and the Palestinians? I did not know it at the time, but this was where my journey—often painful, but among the most meaningful of my life—began. At my side, always, was my mother, constant in her support, although ambivalent and conflicted at times. My father died young; I do not know what he would have thought, but I have always felt his presence. My Israeli family has been steadfast in its opposition, and we do not speak about my work.

Despite many visits to Israel during my youth, the first time I visited the Occupied Territories was in the summer of 1985, two and a half years before the first Palestinian uprising. I was conducting fieldwork for my doctoral dissertation, which examined American economic assistance to the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and whether or not it was possible to promote economic development under conditions of military occupation. That summer changed my life because it was then that I came to experience the Israeli occupation. I learned how it works, its effects on the economy, and on daily life, and its grinding impact on people. I learned what it meant to have little control over one's life and, more importantly, over the lives of one's children.

As I had tried to do with the Holocaust, I tried to remember my first real encounter with the occupation. One of the earliest was a scene I witnessed standing on a street with some Palestinian friends. An elderly man was walking along leading his donkey. A small child of no more than three or four, clearly his grandson, was with him. All of a sudden some nearby Israeli soldiers approached the old man and stopped him. One of them went over to the donkey and pried open its mouth. "Old man," he asked, "why are your donkey's teeth so yellow? Don't you brush your donkey's teeth?" The old Palestinian was mortified, the little boy visibly upset. The soldier repeated his question, yelling this time, while the other soldiers laughed. The child began to cry and the old man just stood there silently, humiliated. As the scene continued a crowd gathered. The soldier then ordered the old man to stand behind the donkey and demanded that he kiss the animal's behind. At first, the old man refused but as the soldier screamed at him and his grandson became hysterical, he bent down and did it. The soldiers laughed and walked away. We all stood there in silence, ashamed to look at each other, the only sound the sobs of the little boy. The old man, demeaned and destroyed, did not move for what seemed a very long time.

I stood in stunned disbelief. I immediately thought of the stories my parents had told me of how Jews had been treated by the Nazis in the 1930s, before the ghettos and death camps, of how Jews would be forced to clean sidewalks with toothbrushes and have their beards cut off in public. What happened to the old man was equivalent in principle, intent, and impact: to humiliate and dehumanize. Throughout that summer of 1985, I saw similar incidents: young Palestinian men stopped in the streets by Israeli soldiers and forced to bark like dogs on their hands and knees or sometimes to dance.

As a child, I always wanted to be able in some way to experience what my parents endured. I listened to their stories, always wanting more. I often would ask myself, what does sheer terror feel like? What does it look like? What does it mean to lose one's whole family so horrifically or have an entire way of life extinguished so irrevocably? I would try to imagine myself in their place, but it was impossible. It was beyond my reach, unfathomable.

It was not until I lived with Palestinians under occupation that I found at least part of the answer to some of these questions. I was not searching for the answers; they were thrust upon me. I learned, for example, what terror looks like from my friend, Rabia, eighteen years old, frozen by fear and uncontrollable shaking, standing rooted to the floor in the middle of the room we shared in a refugee camp while Israeli soldiers tried to break down the door to our shelter. I myself experienced the paralysis of terror when I stood by helplessly while Israeli soldiers beat a pregnant woman in her belly because she had flashed a V-sign at them. I could more concretely understand the meaning of loss and displacement when I witnessed grown men sob as Israeli army bulldozers destroyed their homes and everything in them because the houses had been built without a permit, repeatedly denied by the authorities.

It is perhaps in the concept of home and shelter that I find the most profound link between the Jews and the Palestinians and, perhaps, the most painful illustration of the meaning of occupation. I cannot begin to describe how horrible it is to watch the deliberate destruction of a family's home while that family watches, powerless to stop it. For Jews as for Palestinians, a house represents far more than a roof over one's head; it represents life itself. Speaking about the demolition of Palestinian homes, Israeli historian and scholar Meron Benvenisti writes,

It would be hard to overstate the symbolic value of a house to an individual for whom the culture of wandering and of becoming rooted to the land is so deeply engrained in tradition, for an individual whose national mythos is based on the tragedy of being uprooted from a stolen homeland. The arrival of a firstborn son and the building of a home are the central events in such an individual's life because they symbolize continuity in time and physical space. And with the demolition of the individual's home comes the destruction of the world.⁹

For the last forty-two years, occupation has meant dislocation and dispersion; the separation of families; the denial of human, civil, legal, political, and economic rights by a system of military rule; the torture of thousands; the confiscation of tens of thousands of acres of land and the uprooting of tens of thousands of trees; the destruction of more than 18,000 Palestinian homes; the relentless expansion of illegal Israeli settlements on Palestinian lands; the undermining and then the destruction of the Palestinian economy; closure; curfew; geographic fragmentation; and demographic isolation.

Israel's occupation of the Palestinians is not the moral equivalent of the Nazi genocide of the Jews. It does not have to be. The fact that it is not in no way tempers the brutality of the repression, which has become frighteningly normal. Occupation is about the domination and dispossession of one people by another. It is about the destruction of their property and the destruction of their soul. At its core, occupation aims to deny Palestinians their humanity by denying them the right to determine their existence, to live normal lives in their own homes. And just as there is no moral equivalence or symmetry between the Holocaust and the occupation, so there is no moral equivalence or symmetry between the occupier and the occupied, no matter how much we as Jews regard ourselves as victims.

And it is from this context of deprivation and suffocation, now largely forgotten, that the horrific and despicable suicide bombings have emerged and taken the lives of more innocents. Like the settlements, razed homes, and barricades that preceded them, the suicide bombers have not always been there.

Memory in Judaism—like all memory—is dynamic, not static, embracing a multiplicity of voices and shunning the hegemony of one. But in the post-Holocaust world, Jewish memory has failed in one critical respect: it has excluded the reality of Palestinian suffering and Jewish culpability therein. As a people, we have been unable to link the creation of Israel with the displacement of the Palestinians. We have been unwilling to see, let alone remember, that finding our place meant the loss of theirs. Perhaps one reason for the ferocity of the conflict today is that Palestinians are insisting on their voice despite our continued and desperate efforts to suppress it.

Within the Jewish community it has always been considered a form of heresy to compare Israeli actions or policies with those of the Nazis, and certainly one must be very careful in doing so. Yet, however vast the difference in scope, however lacking in symmetry the experiences, the

Holocaust and the Palestinian issue in a sense *are* related. Among the many realities that frame contemporary Jewish life are the birth of Israel, remembrance of the Holocaust, and Jewish power and sovereignty. And it cannot be denied that the latter has a critical corollary: the displacement and oppression of the Palestinian people. We celebrate our strength but at its core lies a counsel of despair.¹⁰ For Jewish identity is linked, willingly or not, to Palestinian suffering, and this suffering is now an irrevocable part of our collective memory and an intimate part of our experience, together with the Holocaust and Israel. This is a linkage Marc Ellis, in my view one of the greatest and most courageous Jewish religious thinkers of our time, has pondered long and hard. How, he asks, are we to celebrate our Jewishness while others are being oppressed? Is the Jewish covenant with God present or absent in the face of Jewish oppression of Palestinians? Is the Jewish ethical tradition still available to us? Is the promise of holiness—so central to Jewish existence—now beyond our ability to reclaim?¹¹ We find ourselves living in a dissonant place; what text can be used to end the dissonance and create a new way of life?

Today, according to Ellis, renewal and injustice are silently joined, and in their joining Jews are denied a normal life, something they have never truly found in Israel. How then do Jews move forward and create meaning? For some Jews, this meaning is now found in a personal narrative that is slowly shifting from identification with a strong, militarized state to one that embraces a history of displacement and loss. Such a trend, which is documented, could signal an opening to the Palestinians, a path of seeking engagement over disengagement, inclusion over exclusion. But too often it involves closure on the self, a dwelling on one's own displacement and loss at the expense of others. In this regard, Ellis argues that to place the Holocaust only in the past uncouples Auschwitz from the future, making it directionless. Auschwitz cannot stand alone in a vacuum, as some Jewish theologians believe it should, for it did not occur in a vacuum. Continuity is essential; the past cannot be used as insulation from the present; the dead cannot be used to shield the living. We dwell in memory and use that memory not to protest and restore but to grieve and deny, as a form of separation and distance. Mourning the dead has itself become "a place of hiding rather than confrontation, a place of safety rather than of risk."¹² How can one continue to be blameless while causing suffering to others, to grieve but not to atone? How can innocence be restored while injustice continues? Are Jews thus guarding "a

history that is violated [or denied], even as it is invoked"?¹³ In a letter to Theodor Herzl written in 1899, Bernard Lazare reproached him for ignoring the impoverished condition of Eastern European Jewry in his vision of a new Zionist nation, and his words have pertinence for Jews today, however different the context: "We die from hiding our shames, from burying them in deep caves, instead of bringing them out into the pure light of day where the sun can cauterize and purify them. . . . We must educate our nation by showing it what it is."¹⁴

Concerning Auschwitz, writer Daniel Singer once said that it is both unique and comparable. Auschwitz is a warning and it is a call for comparison. As Ellis asks, do we choose to be among "those who [only] memorialize the dead in institutional and liturgical settings, or those who recognize and accompany the victims created in the shadow of the Holocaust?"¹⁵ Memorialization without justice is hollow. It is not possible to tolerate injustice in the name of peace. Only when "distance becomes proximity, and separation becomes embrace," writes Ellis, can peace prevail.¹⁶ British scholar Jacqueline Rose speaks of the "stubborn and self-defeating psychic terrain" that Jews have entered, where the

most exultant acts towards—and triumph over—an indigenous people expose them to the dangers they most fear. . . . Israel is vulnerable because it cannot see the people who—whether in refugee camps on borders (the putative Palestinian state) or inside the country (Israeli Arabs), or scattered all over the world (the Palestinian diaspora)—are in fact, psychically as well as politically, in its midst.¹⁷

It follows that one of the greatest struggles facing the Jewish people is a search for meaning in a universe that has been violated and shattered in the past, and also in the present. One way to derive such meaning is to remember those who died—not only to memorialize their deaths but to honor their lives by affirming the ordinary life of people—both Jewish and Palestinian—and to do so by protesting its denial. The history of both peoples is broken, scattered. They inhabit a shared landscape defined by dislocation and death. For repair or restitution—*tikkun*—to take shape, Ellis calls for the creation of a "new ordinary" still unresolved, which can only occur as a shared reality. Edward Said also called for this when he wrote, "We cannot coexist as two communities of detached and uncommunicatingly separate suffering."¹⁸

In a post-Holocaust world empowered by a Jewish state, how do Jews as a people emerge from atrocity and abjection, empowered and also humane? How is it possible to move “past the defences of the conscious mind,” to use Rose’s words, beyond fear and omnipotence, beyond innocence and militarism, to envision something different, even if uncertain? “How,” asks Ahad Haam, the founding father of cultural Zionism, “do you make a nation pause for thought?”¹⁹

For many Jews (and Christians), the answer lies in a strong and militarized Jewish state. For others, it is found in the very act of survival. For my parents, defeating Hitler meant living a *moral* life; if we hate, Hitler wins. They sought a world where “affirmation is possible and . . . dissent is mandatory,”²⁰ where the capacity to witness is restored and sanctioned, and where Jews as a people refuse to be overcome by the darkness. In this context, I want to share a moment I heard described over and over, and which has inspired all of my work and writing.

My mother and her sister had just been liberated from the concentration camp by the Russian army. After having captured all the Nazi officials and guards who ran the camp, the Russian soldiers told the Jewish survivors that they could do whatever they wanted to their German persecutors. Many survivors, themselves emaciated and barely alive, immediately fell on the Germans, ravaging them. My mother and my aunt, standing just yards from the terrible scene unfolding in front of them, fell into each other’s arms, weeping. My mother, who was the physically stronger of the two, embraced my aunt, holding her close, and my aunt, who had difficulty standing, grabbed my mother as if she would never let go. She said to my mother, “We cannot do this. Our father and mother would say this is wrong. Even now, even after everything we have endured, we must seek justice, not revenge. There is no other way.” My mother, still crying, kissed her sister and the two of them, still one, turned and walked away.²¹

Coming back to the fundamental question I posed at the outset about how one should remember and honor those who perished in the Holocaust, on 11 September, and in countless other acts of “wickedness and awesome cruelty” (to quote Robert Fisk),²² the words of Irena Klepfisz, a writer whose father died in the Warsaw ghetto uprising after having gotten her and her mother to safety, seem particularly fitting:

I have concluded that one way to pay tribute to those we loved who struggled, resisted and died is to hold on to their vision and their fierce outrage at the destruction of the ordinary life of their people.

It is this outrage we need to keep alive in our daily life and apply it to all situations, whether they involve Jews or non-Jews. It is this outrage we must use to fuel our actions and vision whenever we see any signs of the disruptions of common life: the hysteria of a mother grieving for the teenager who has been shot; a family stunned in front of a vandalized or demolished home; a family separated, displaced; arbitrary and unjust laws that demand the closing or opening of shops and schools; humiliation of a people whose culture is alien and deemed inferior; a people left homeless without citizenship; a people living under military rule. Because of our experience, we recognize these evils as obstacles to peace. At those moments of recognition, we remember the past, feel the outrage that inspired the Jews of the Warsaw Ghetto and allow it to guide us in present struggles.²³

For me, these words define the true meaning of Judaism and the lessons my parents sought to impart.

Notes

1. This essay draws substantially on two of my previous essays: "Living with the Holocaust: The Journey of a Child of Holocaust Survivors," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 32, no. 1 (Autumn 2002), pp. 5–12, and "Searching for the Covenant: A Response to the Work of Marc H. Ellis," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 17, no. 3 (September 2003), pp. 667–70.
2. National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States, *The 9/11 Commission Report: Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 2004); Anonymous [Michael Scheuer], *Through Our Enemies' Eyes: Osama Bin Laden, Radical Islam, and the Future of America* (Dulles, VA: Potomac Books, 2003); Anonymous [Michael Scheuer], *Imperial Hubris: Why the West Is Losing the War on Terror* (Dulles, VA: Potomac Books, 2004).
3. *9/11 Commission Report*, p. 162.
4. Quoted in M.J. Rosenberg, "To Fight Terrorism Effectively, Resolve the Palestinian Problem," *Daily Star*, 18 October 2004.
5. *9/11 Commission Report*, pp. 376–77.
6. Arundhati Roy, "The New American Century," *Nation*, 9 February 2004.
7. George W. Bush, Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People, 20 September 2001.

8. See Ammiel Alcalay, *Memories of Our Future: Selected Essays, 1982–1999* (San Francisco, CA: City Lights, 1999).
9. Meron Benvenisti, “Systematically Burying Ourselves,” *Haaretz*, 18 January 2002.
10. Jacqueline Rose, “‘Imponderables in Thin Air’: Zionism as Psychoanalysis (Critique),” second lecture (of three) of the Christian Gauss seminars on “The Question of Zion,” Princeton University, 16–23 September 2003. The three Gauss lectures were later published as *The Question of Zion* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005); see p. 63.
11. See Marc H. Ellis, “The Future of Dissent: A Reflection on *What Shall I Do With This People? Jews and the Fractious Politics of Judaism* by Milton Viorst,” *Middle East Policy* 11, no. 1 (March 2004), pp. 142–47.
12. Marc H. Ellis, *Practicing Exile: The Religious Odyssey of an American Jew* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2002), p. 124.
13. Ellis, *Practicing Exile*, p. 65.
14. Jacqueline Rose, “‘Break Their Bones’: Zionism as Politics (Violence),” third lecture (of three) of the Christian Gauss seminars on “The Question of Zion,” Princeton University, 16–23 September 2003. See Rose, *The Question of Zion*, pp. 144–45.
15. Ellis, *Practicing Exile*, p. 59.
16. Marc H. Ellis, *O Jerusalem! The Contested Future of the Jewish Covenant* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1999), p. 91.
17. Jacqueline Rose, “The Question of Zionism: Continuing the Dialogue,” Memorial for Edward Said, Paris 2004. This lecture was reprinted in *Critical Inquiry* 31, no. 2 (Winter 2005), pp. 512–18.
18. Edward Said, “Bases for Coexistence,” in the *End of the Peace Process—Oslo and After* (London: Granta, 2000), p. 208 (cited in Rose, “The Question of Zionism”).
19. Rose, “‘Imponderables in Thin Air.’”
20. Ellis, *O Jerusalem!*, p. 123.
21. Also see Sara Roy, “A Jewish Plea,” in Nubar Hovsepien, ed., *The War on Lebanon: A Reader* (Northampton, MA: Olive Branch Press, 2008), pp. 302–13.
22. Robert Fisk, “The Wickedness and Awesome Cruelty of a Crushed and Humiliated People,” *Independent*, 12 September 2001.
23. Irena Klepfisz, “Yom Hashoah, Yom Yerushalayim: A Meditation,” in *Dreams of an Insomniac: Jewish Feminist Essays, Speeches and Diatribes* (Portland, OR: Eighth Mountain Press, 1980).

Biography of Walid Khalidi

Walid Khalidi is one of the most influential Palestinian intellectuals of the second half of the twentieth century.* His impact has been felt in scholarship, institution building, and politics and diplomacy. In these areas, Khalidi has been a pioneer, an innovator, and an important voice within the Arab context.

Born in Jerusalem in 1925, Khalidi came from an old Jerusalem family that had produced jurists, scholars, political figures, and educators since before the Crusades. After earning degrees in philosophy and Islamic studies at London and Oxford universities, he was appointed as a university lecturer in Islam at Oxford in 1951. He resigned his position in November 1956 in protest over Britain's involvement in the tripartite invasion of Egypt. Returning to the Middle East, he joined the American University of Beirut (AUB), where he remained as a professor of political studies until 1982. In the meantime, he spent two years (1976–78) on leave from AUB at Harvard University as a fellow at the Center for International Affairs, and during the following three years (1979–81) spent the fall semesters at Harvard as visiting professor of government. He moved to Cambridge permanently in 1982, remaining at Harvard as senior research fellow at the Center for Middle East Studies until his retirement in 1997.

* This biography is based primarily on the long entry on Walid Khalidi written by Rashid Khalidi in Philip Mattar, ed., *The Encyclopedia of the Palestinians* (New York: Facts on File, Inc., 2000).

In terms of scholarship, Khalidi's extensive writings in English and Arabic have played an important part in defining and explaining key elements of the Palestinian national narrative for westerners, Arabs, and Palestinians alike. They include a series of articles on the 1948 war and its background, which established key points regarding the Palestinian exodus, the role of Zionist military offensives in precipitating this exodus, and the course of the war itself. His groundbreaking "Why Did the Palestinians Leave?" (1959) exposed, through Arab archival material, press reports, and Arab and Haganah radio broadcasts, the Zionist myth of the "Arab orders" as the precipitating factor in the Palestinian exodus. His "Plan Dalet: Master Plan for the Conquest of Palestine" (1961) was the first article in a western language to call attention to this 1948 Zionist military plan and to spell out its details. The insights from his pioneering research on the period were confirmed more than a quarter of a century later by the Israeli "revisionist historians" and others on the basis of newly opened archives. Other continuing subjects of his scholarly interest have been Zionism, Arab and international politics, Jerusalem, and Islam.

But Khalidi was never content to confine his considerable energies to scholarship, and from the outset was drawn into the public sphere. In terms of institution building, in 1963 he joined with several others to found the first private, independent, non-profit research institution in the Arab world, the Institute for Palestine Studies (IPS), of which he remains general secretary. The IPS has served as a model for other institutions, including the Royal Scientific Society in Amman (1966) and the Center for Arab Unity Studies in Beirut (1975), both of which he helped found. He was also a founding member of the Palestinian Welfare Association (1982) and of Georgetown University's Center for Christian and Muslim Understanding (1993), where he was vice-chair of the academic advisory committee until 2006. Another institution to which Khalidi is devoted is the Khalidi Library in Jerusalem, founded by his grandfather, Hajj Ragheb al-Khalidi, in 1900. He led efforts to save and refurbish the library after the 1967 war, and to that end established the Friends of the Khalidi Library, incorporated in Massachusetts.

In the political realm, his first direct involvement was his employment in 1945–46 at the Arab Office in Jerusalem, created by the Arab League and headed by Palestinian statesman Musa al-'Alami. Khalidi's political education was furthered through his service as an informal secretary to his uncle, former Jerusalem mayor and secretary of the Palestinian Arab

Higher Committee (AHC), Husayn Fakhri al-Khalidi, and, as of the mid-1950s, as advisor to his brother-in-law, the Nasserist Lebanese politician and several-times prime minister, Sa'ib Salam. After his move from Oxford to Beirut, at a time when the latter was a center of Arab intellectual ferment, his lectures on Arabism, the Palestine question, inter-Arab politics, and international relations, both at AUB and at other Beirut fora, had a profound influence on students and others, including the inner circle of George Habash's Movement of Arab Nationalists, whose pan-Arab- and Palestine-oriented ideology and programs he helped to shape. Indeed, Khalidi is credited with playing an important role in defining post-Second World War Arab nationalism as being centered on the Palestine question. Although never a populist and always firmly convinced of the inapplicability of the "people's war" model to the Palestinian situation, he developed ties with Yasser Arafat, Salah Khalaf (Abu Iyad), and other Fatah leaders in the wake of the 1967 war, holding regular discussions with them at his "red house" in the Zarif quarter of Beirut, and at his Shemlan mountain retreat, on matters pertaining to strategy, the balance of power, and the impact of regional and international politics on the Palestine problem. By the mid 1970s, his strong advocacy for a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza and a negotiated resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict (as argued in his 1978 *Foreign Affairs* article "Thinking the Unthinkable," which went a long way toward making the idea acceptable in the west) was highly unpopular with the more radical trends in Palestinian politics, including the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and many within Fatah, though his views gradually won mainstream support.

In the realm of diplomacy, Khalidi's public roles include advising the Iraqi delegation to the United Nations General Assembly in the wake of the 1967 war and membership of the Arab Summit delegation to the British government in 1983. In the mid-1980s, he was special advisor to the secretary general of the Arab League. More often, however, Khalidi's deep involvement in inter-Arab affairs, in the politics of a number of Arab countries, and in Palestinian politics has taken place behind the scenes. His good relations with leaders of the main Palestinian factions, leading Lebanese politicians of various parties and confessions, the Egyptian leadership, the Jordanian monarchy, and key figures in a number of Arab regimes enabled him to mediate conflicts, propose solutions, and influence outcomes in a number of situations, including continual Jordanian-Palestinian tensions, the Lebanese civil war, internal Palestinian

quarrels, and Palestinian–Egyptian and Palestinian–Syrian disputes. Khalidi was not always successful in his efforts, which were sometimes criticized. Some within the Palestinian resistance, for example, felt that his intensive mediation and overtures to the Maronite leadership in the early stages of the Lebanese civil war involved what they saw as unwarranted concessions to their foes. Khalidi's concern was always, however, to defuse inter-Arab conflicts and to keep Palestinians from becoming mired in secondary conflicts that deflected them from developing their own capacities. In the United States, Khalidi has lectured widely on campuses and at think tanks, written op-eds, appeared on television, and participated in many intensive discussions on the future of Middle East peace with American Jewish scholars as well as visiting Israeli academics and public figures. The recipient of numerous honors and awards, in 1994 he was elected a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, based in Boston, Massachusetts. He continued to play the role of behind-the-scenes mediator and facilitator even after he had moved to the United States. In 1991 he served as a member of the Jordanian–Palestinian joint delegation to the 1991 Madrid Peace Conference and the first two subsequent rounds of bilateral negotiations with Israel in Washington, D.C.

Walid Khalidi's life has been defined by a deeply felt sense of public service, sometimes to the detriment of his own work. With regard specifically to his work on Palestine, for example, there are those who have argued that his intense involvement in institution building, politics, public advocacy, and diplomacy has hindered him from completing a task for which he is more qualified than anyone: writing a comprehensive history of the 1948 war and the loss of Palestine. In this respect he resembles others of his and perhaps other generations of Palestinians torn between an abiding urge to chronicle, analyze, and explain the tragedy of their people and the impatient desire to do something in the present to alleviate it.

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