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*British Crisis in the Middle East
and the Growth of Arab
Nationalism*

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Thanks and Dedications

First, I thank God for his help and Guidance.

*Special Thanks to My Teacher Supervisor Mrs. ATMANI Insaaf Who Helped
And Advised Me a Lot, Without Forgetting The Headmaster Of The
Department Of English As Well As All My Teachers.*

I Dedicate This Humble Work to:

*My Parents Tassadit and Si Ali, My Brothers and Sisters, Without
Forgetting Bislam & Sarah as well as their Mother*

Special Dedication to My Friends.

The present work is a humble examination of some of the events that shaped the political life of the Middle East during the 19th and 20th Centuries. During these periods, two different but inter-related factors had forged the history of the Middle East, thus, led, in part, to decolonization and independence from Great Britain, namely: Nationalist endeavors, and imperialists demands. This work also examines Britain's imperial 'cat and mouse' policy with Arab nationalists, who sought to free their lands from the Western domination, mainly the British one. The present study, in addition, explores British counter policies to preserve and secure its imperial presence in the area, and endeavours to answer the following question:

How far successful or unsuccessful were Britain's policies to safeguard its imperial interests in the Middle East, under the massive growth of Arab Nationalism during the first half of the 20th Century?

Le travail que nous avons réalisé porte sur les événements politiques qui ont secoué le Moyen-Orient pendant les 19^{ème} et 20^{ème} siècles sous la colonisation britannique. Nous avons donc essayé d'examiner les différents phénomènes qui ont forgé l'histoire de la région étant permis la décolonisation du monde arabe. Deux faits historiques ont animé la scène pendant ces périodes, ces deux faits sont *l'impérialisme britannique* et *le nationalisme arabe* qui étaient en conflit d'intérêts. Le premier voulait préserver ses intérêts coloniaux dans la région du Moyen-Orient, alors que le second voulait se défaire de la domination occidentale, surtout la domination britannique. Enfin, la présente étude a pour but d'apporter les éléments de réponse pour la question suivante :

A quel point la politique britannique a-t-elle réussi à sauvegarder son empire au Moyen-Orient face à la poussée massive du nationalisme arabe ?

الدراسة التي بين أيدينا تسلط الضوء على بعض الأحداث المهمة التي شكلت الحياة السياسية في الشرق الأوسط خلال القرنين 19 و20م. تضع هذه الدراسة محور موضوعها ظاهرة انتشرت في الشرق الأوسط، والتي يعود لها الفضل في تحرير الأراضي العربية من الاستغلال البريطاني الذي دام لسنوات طوال. تتمثل هذه الظاهرة في بروز القومية والوعي العربيين، عاقدا العزم على استرداد ما هو أصلا من حقهم من أيادي الإمبرياليين البريطانيين. وفي هذا السياق، وفي ثنايا هذا العمل البسيط يتجلى لنا جواب الإشكال التالي:

إلى أي مدى نجحت الحكومة البريطانية في الحفاظ على ما يسمى بالإمبراطورية

البريطانية في الشرق الأوسط في ظل تنامي القومية العربية؟

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The British Empire was the largest empire that the world had ever known. Great Britain, two pieces of land in the North Atlantic Ocean, managed to build a huge imperial entity which was described as “the empire on which the sun never sets”. Studying the history and civilization of that great empire is as broad and elaborate a task as this empire itself, especially, with regard to the fact that it had a colossal impact in all small and big matters of the world, peculiarly during the 20th Century.

The present study examines one of the crises faced by the British Empire, and which stood as an obstacle to securing Britain’s imperial interests in the Arab World during the first half of the 20th Century. The study, more exactly, is about the crisis of the British Empire in the Middle East after the massive growth of anti-Western sentiments amongst the Arabs. It examines early Arab national consciousness on one hand, and Britain’s attempts to contain it, by all means, on another hand.

Clearly, the work is about Britain’s imperial connections and politics with the Arab World as well as the Arab politics and the relation of the Arab states among one another and towards their colonizers, particularly Britain. Through this humble work, I want to shed the light on these Middle East political events that forged the domestic and foreign relations of the Arab world, with a view to make the reader understand the old strings of the complexities that shape today’s Middle Eastern world.

My choice of this particular field of study stemmed from the desire to probe the origins of today’s Middle Eastern conflicts. Here is an attempt to provide the reader with full and clear idea on Arab nationalism and its first attempts to unify Arab efforts against colonialism, as well as understand the complexities that led to the fall of the greatest empire that had ever existed. To reach this purpose, the work endeavours to answer the following question:

How far successful or unsuccessful were Britain's policies to safeguard its imperial interests in the Middle East under the massive growth of Arab Nationalism during the first half of the 20th Century?

The work is an analytical study which relies on several bibliographical references, archives and academic publications. Here than, I used some books such as Arab Nationalism in the 20th Century and articles such as "Theories on the Rise of Arab Nationalism" to reach a clear answer to the problematic. This work is divided into three interrelated chapters exposing the events in a chronological order from the appearance of the British (19th Century) in the area, into the rise of independent Arab states and the retreat of the British from that area.

The first chapter is devoted to exposing the different historical circumstances under which the British set foot in the Arabian Peninsula, and shows the Great Powers' struggles for more privileges and zones of influence in The Ottoman Empire. This struggle is known as "The Eastern Question". It sums up the European Imperial Powers' scramble for Ottoman possessions.

The second chapter contains two parts. The first part defines Nationalism and its origins relating it to some remarkable events that helped national consciousness to flourish among the Arabs. The second part exposes the Britain's hand in the creation of this Arab feeling and, thus, the digging of Britain's own grave.

Chapter three probes Britain's awareness of the threats represented by Arab nationalism and its attempts to contain it so as to maintain its domination over the Middle East. Along this chapter, we will see that, in part, Britain had succeeded in maintaining its interests at the age of 'collaborators' before the Second World War. After the war, however, the British Crown would face another ordeal: the Arabs' determination to rule themselves.

With this important development, we come to the general conclusion, which sums up the work and gives a direct answer to the problematic asked at the beginning.

From the second half of the 16th century, the Ottoman Empire occupied most of the regions of the Middle East. The area is of a great geographical importance as it is a vital zone of air communications and the fantastic meeting place of the three continents: Africa, Asia, and Europe. The Ottomans had, thus, the opportunity to stretch through the Red Sea to reach the Mediterranean Sea and North Africa were ruling Algeria and Tunisia as well as parts of Europe. The Middle East strategic site played a vital role even for the European Great Powers –Russia, Germany, Italy, Austria Hungary, France and especially Britain- as a linking point with its possessions in the Indian Subcontinent. This, in turn, made the Ottoman Empire a target for these Powers, which recklessly vied to gain imperial interests and privileges. At the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th Centuries, the Ottomans experienced a series of imperial crises that weakened their position and threatened their empire. Thus, in 1800, the scramble of the Great Powers over Ottoman possessions began and would, thereafter, shape and define the major policies and decisions regarding the entire region until the First World War.

In its broadest meaning, Imperialism is a vast system of conquest, control and exploitation. It has not been invented by the British, nor the Europeans or even the Americans. Historians have long proved that it was first from Africa, then spread out into the rest of the world in the 35th millennium BC. From then, people settled amongst, occupied, dominated, ruled, rubbed, exploited, and enslaved other peoples under the name of *Empire*, which is a word derived from imperial and imperialism. Several empires existed since then such as the Assyrian, the Chinese, the Roman, the Spanish, the Ottoman, the British, and several others (Porter 02).

The events that centered around the Ottomans during and after the 1800s are known as “The Eastern Question”. The question that occupied the minds of the Great Powers, then, was “What should become of the Ottoman Empire, then in decline ...” (Macfie 01). The imperial

powers fears focused over their imperial future and the balance of the world's power resulting from the fall of the Ottoman Empire. All these questions had risen because these Great Powers' strived to put a hand on the Ottoman's possessions to remain powerful and mighty.

Broadly speaking, the political events that occurred in the Ottoman Empire during 1800s were of two different types: National Conflicts, such as the Balkan Revolt (1821), and International Threats, caused by the Great Powers' competitions over the Ottomans' possessions, such as the Crimean war, 1853 (Itzkowitz). At that time, the Great Powers were exhaustedly competing behind imperial interests considered in much times to secure their trade. As a result, fears spread amongst the powers. These fears were about which one of the powers would acquire more privileges in both possessions and straits' usage from the Ottoman Empire. Moreover, at that time, other fears spread about the probability of a possible Arab unification, in a new rising anti-Western empire following the Egyptian Crisis of 1831(Macfie 84-5).

The Western Powers were mostly concerned about the problems that the fall of the Ottoman Empire would cause because of the impact on the political relations West-West and West-East. However, each European Power also was concerned about imperial interests such as trade and security. The British Prime Minister, Arthur Wellesley the Duke of Wellington (1828-1830), argued: "the Turkish Empire was gone now, and with it the tranquility of the world" (qtd. In Macfie 18). Macfie argues in his book The Eastern Question 1774-1923, that according to the events of the 19th century, each European Power was running blindly behind securing its own interests using whatever means found. This conduct resulted in the growth of hostility between the Great Powers in which tried to snatch and grab as much as they could from the weakened Turks (18).

According to the treaty of Kutchuk Kainardji (1774), Russia became the most dangerous and privileged Western Power. Russia, indeed, was granted for the first time the annexation of Crimea*. In the 19th Century, the Russians repeatedly provoked the Turks and used these provocations as pretexts to get more benefits. In January 1804, the Russian Deputy of Foreign Affairs Prince Czartorysky, declared their wishes to work for the preservation of the weak Ottoman Empire:

There is no doubt that the Ottoman Empire threatens to collapse and [that] its future fate touches on the most essential interests of Russia ... our objective ... cannot be other than that of preserving the Ottoman Empire in its present state and hindering its partition. (qtd. in Macfie 86)

This is what was said in his declaration, but the reality at that time was that the Russians urged people under the ottoman rule, to rise in revolt when their benefits and interests were at stake such as in the Greek revolt of 1821, which was amongst the most important events that marked the Eastern Question.

I. The Great Powers and the Ottoman Crises 1800s

A. The Balkan Crisis 1821

Beginning from 1821, Greece in the Balkan Peninsula had risen in revolt against Ottoman rule. The leader of this revolution was Alexander Ypsilantis, who urged his compatriots to "Fight for faith and motherland" (Ibid 88-9). The two words 'Fight' and 'Motherland', raised ideas of *patriotism* and *nationalism* which were behind the revolt. According to Macfie, these ideas were derived from the Serb revolt of 1804 and the South Albania Revolt of 1820, and much earlier from the French Revolution that yielded the first nationalist ideas in Europe (14). Russia's hand and role in the revolt was hinted to by

* Article III of the treaty used by the Russians even in their disputes with the ottomans over the possession of Crimea before the Crimean war (1853-56).

Ypsilantis when saying: "Move, O friends, and you will see a *Mighty Empire* defend our rights" (Macfie 89). Moreover, Russia was behind their (Greeks) uprising of 1770 because of the land desire. Here then, it appeared, for the first time, the Great Powers' hand in urging people to revolt against their rulers, and, thus, use them as a means to satisfy their own imperial interests.

France and Britain, pursuing non-interventionist policies, were soon convinced that the Russian hand in the revolt simply translated "Russian Expansionism" to the Near East and later on Middle East. This expansion, consequently, threatened their interests in the region. Accordingly, they moved to restrict and hinder Russian imperial expansion using the Ottomans. The Great Powers, who had decided to pursue a non-interventionist policy *vis-à-vis* the Ottomans' affairs, did not grant them help. The latter called for the help of the Governor Muhamet Ali of Egypt (Macfie 16). The son of Muhamet Ali, Ibrahim Pasha, landed with a powerful force by 1825 aiming to end the Greek Revolt once and forever. After some two years from Ibrahim's landing (1827), the European Great Powers in an allied fleet destined to enforce the Ottomans into an armistice under a treaty named The Treaty of London on July 06, 1827. That treaty proclaimed the establishment of an autonomous Greek state under the Ottoman Empire but protected by a naval fleet designed by the Great Powers (Ibid 17).

The Ottomans did not recognize the armistice, so they clashed with the Allies' fleet in Navarino on 20 October 1827 which led to their defeat (G.W.I. Encarta). In the months following this defeat, France and Britain agreed to form a *strong* autonomous Greek state so as not to fall under the Russian influence. Later, February 1830, they persuaded Russia to recognize and, thus, respect Greece's full independence according to the London Protocol (Ibid 18-9). France and Britain, therefore, reduced the risks that may come from Russian's threats to their position and interests.

B. Crises in Egypt and War in Crimea

In the 1830s, the years represented one of the most dangerous periods on the Eastern Question colouring the relations East-East and East-West by extreme fears. Britain previously dominated by the fears of a Russian expansionism, faced now a possibility of the establishment of an Arab Empire under the Egyptian Viceroy, Muhamet Ali. The latter increased Britain's anxiety by his strong willingness to put hand over large and sensitive parts through the Middle Eastern regions.

The Great Powers and the Ottomans had not really settled the problem of the Greek rebels, than yet another more threatening crisis started. After securing Hedjaz (1813) and Yemen (1818) as well as other places later on known as the Egyptian Sudan in 1822, Muhamet Ali, the appointee of the Ottoman King over Egypt from 1805, established an army and went in a war with the Ottomans to secure the provinces of Syria*. On October 27, 1832, Ibrahim Pasha defeated the Ottomans under a total ignorance from the European Great Powers apart from Russia and thus established an Egyptian empire from Sudan to Syria (Macfie 20).

In the Russian declaration of 1804 (cited in page 06), an Ottoman collapse was not at all desired. Consequently, in January 1833, five months before the Hunkiar Iskelisi treaty of alliance with the ottomans, Russia stationed an army at some fifty Kilometers from Constantinople. This army was destined to protect the Ottomans from the Egyptians after a failed negotiations with them (Ibid). Muhamet Ali's army remained strong; however, so much so that Ottomans' King Mahmud concluded the Convention of Kutahia, which gave Egypt full rights upon Syria and Adana for life¹.

* Traditionally dependent to Egypt.

¹ "Muhammad Ali (Viceroy)." Microsoft® Encarta® 2009 [DVD]. Redmond, WA: Microsoft Corporation, 2008.

But a month later, the Turkish King signed the treaty of Hunkiar Iskelisi with the Russians to reward them for their help during the crisis. The treaty was a mutual defense of an eight years commitment between the two empires. In a secret separate article, the treaty forbade foreign war vessels to enter the "Straits of the Dardanelles" (Macfie, 93), the thing which was not to the liking of the other European Powers.

Britain's neutrality did not last long. After the treaty of 1833, the Russian's seizure of the Straits appeared clearly as a threat to British interests, especially in India, which was at the heart of its concerns (L. H. M. 01). Indeed, whether the straits fell in the hands of Egypt or Russia, Britain would be equally isolated from its sub-Indian empire. This raised the risk of India being taken away by a closer Power. For these reasons, Britain took the opportunity during the Second Muhamet Ali Crisis in 1839 to involve herself deeper in Ottoman Affaires, while having prior to 1832 refused to come and give help to the Ottoman King Mahmud II, 1808-39 (Macfie 21).

In 1839, Britain and France became fully aware of the danger that Russia might establish a protectorate over the Ottomans. They worked, consequently, in establishing powerful ambassadors in Constantinople with a view to change the course of events yielded by the first Egyptian crisis (Ibid 42-3). The opportunity long sought came in the surprising act of King Mahmud who sent an army, led by Hafiz Pasha, to restore the Ottoman sovereignty over Syria; this was known as the second Egyptian crisis of 1839.

This second crisis of 1839 was an opportunity for intervention to both Britain and France, but with a second opportunity the intervention seemed to be very clear. King Mahmud Pasha died and his inexperienced son of 16, Abdul Madjid, was crowned. After heavy consultations with their ambassadors, the Great Powers seemed to be determined to sign for the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. To do so, they persuaded the Ottomans not to take any

action without prior consultation with the European Powers (Ibid 24), to make sure that those actions taken would be compatible with the Powers' interests.

To contain Muhamet Ali, the Allies concluded the London Convention (1839) which restricted Muhamet Ali's territories to those Egypt boasted before the crisis. But, Egypt's Governor rejected the convention and insisted on acquiring more territories. As a result, the Great Powers imposed a blockade on Syria, in 1839, and bombarded it the following months. Also, with the help of the Lebanese rebels, Britain and Turkey defeated the Egyptians in the area. Finally, with the appearance of the British army in Alexandria, Muhamet Ali was forced to retreat to Egypt. Muhamet Ali had been granted the hereditary possession of Egypt (Palmer 195-6). On the other hand, the Great Powers now sought to preserve the Ottoman Empire and agreed to the Ottomans' reestablishment of their sovereignty in Syria, while France established its domination over Lebanon in 1863, after a long struggle which began in July 1861 (Macfie 25-6).

Clearly, the Great Powers considered the affairs of the Ottoman Empire as their own, and exploited all events to advance their imperial interests using either treaties or intervention by setting appropriate pretexts. In a letter sent to Viscount Beauvale, a British Ambassador to Vienna, on July 28, 1839, Palmerston* justified the interference of the Great Powers, on the ground that:

The Great Powers are justified in interfering in these matters, which are, in fact, a contest between a sovereign and his subject. Because this contest threatens to produce great and imminent danger to the deepest interests of other powers and to the general peace of Europe. (qtd. in Macfie 94-5)

* Henry John Temple, 3rd Viscount Palmerston, he was Foreign secretary under three Whig governments, two governments from 1830 to 1841, and the third was from 1846 to 1851.

As a conclusion, we may say that the Great Powers sought an Ottoman collapse, yet, they also worked to maintain it, albeit as a puppet in their hands, so as to preserve the Nineteenth Century general *status quo*.

The increasing weakness of the Ottoman Empire allowed the European Powers to further their presence and interests in the Middle East through sever confrontations with the Turks. In the beginnings of 1850s, Russia took the dispute over the control in the Holly Places in Palestine* as a pretext to advance its imperial interests. In a discussion of the Russian Emperor, Tsar Nicolas I (1825-55), with the British ambassador to Russia at that time Sir George Hamilton Seymour (1851-54), the former spoke about the possibility of a “temporary” Russian occupation of Constantinople and the Straits as a pressure on Turkey to guarantee the rights of the Orthodox in the Holly Places. The ambassador of Britain in Constantinople, and Britain as whole, arranged for “an amicable settlement of the Holly Places Question” (H. Scott), but urged Turkey to reject other Russian demands mainly the partition of the Balkan, and the claim for the possession of Crimea. As a result, Russia occupied Moldavia and Walachia**. This pushed the Ottomans to declare war on Russia in September 1853. The Ottoman fleet was destroyed at Sinop, (Turkey’s Black Sea shore), in November and a war between Britain and France and Russian settlement followed in March 1854. After an administrative and military chaos on both sides, peace could be established following the Congress of Paris February 1856 (Palmer 88-9).

II. The Ottoman Empire and British Imperialism

Previously, we have seen the Great Powers’ ruthless struggle against the Ottomans for securing their own imperial interests, which are all stemmed from the same need: putting their hands on mere zones of influence to strengthen their respective empires and maintain the

* Between Roman Catholics supported by the French and Orthodox Christians supported by the Russians.

** Located in Southeast Europe.

West-West balance of power. Amongst those powers, Britain was soon to single herself out by getting the lion's share from the remains of the, then, weakened Ottoman Empire.

Since the 18th century, Britain acquired several interests in the region principally based upon economic and strategic as well as military reasons. This is why Britain in particular was determined to secure two things: the route to India, and the maintenance of the Ottoman Empire in a weak status but out of the Russian and French influence to preserve these powers from controlling the Turkish straits.

According to *Richard W. Buliet*², imperialism took three forms from the Middle Ages to nowadays: diplomatic pressures, colonization or direct occupation, and signing treaties with the local rulers (02). Applying this on the British Empire, we can notice that the English intermingled the three strategies from the beginning. Thus, before 1878 (Cyprus occupation), the British relied in their policies on the use of diplomatic pressures on the Ottomans but also made treaties with them. We take the example of the Crimean war; Britain used it to limit the Russians, but also as a pressure on the Ottomans to further the security of her shipping line linking it with India. Later, by the occupation of Cyprus, a new strategy was pursued which would end by the 1920s.

A. British occupation of Cyprus (1878) and Egypt (1882)

The late 1870s marked a stronger scramble of the Great Powers over the Ottoman possessions. While an Anglo-French competition in Egypt came near to explosion, another crisis in the North had led Russia to declare war on the Ottomans (1877). This war ended with a peace treaty at San Stefano*, which created the large state of Bulgaria (Palmer, 255-6). Britain which felt its interests in the Eastern Mediterranean squeezed by Russia and France led the cabinet of the Prime Minister Disraeli to warn the Russians that “any treaty between

² In his article, “imperialism in the Middle East and north Africa”. <www.foreignpolicy.cable.com.html>

* “It gave Russia considerable gains in the Caucasus; enlarged Serbia and Montenegro; confirmed the independence of Serbia; Montenegro and Rumania; and provided by payment by Turkey a large indemnity” (palmer 255-6).

Russia and Turkey affecting the Treaty of Paris [March] (1856), or the London Convention (1871) must be a European treaty” (Macfie 43). The British also warned that they would never accept a treaty that threatened their interests along the Straits and around their spheres of influence in the Middle East.

During this crisis, Britain was planning to remove France from the Eastern Mediterranean region, too, to safeguard its interests from Russia. For this, the British supported the Ottomans in Asia, in return for the right to occupy Cyprus. Thus, the British fleet acquired the strategic base in the region of Cyprus. In March 1878, to calm down the hot atmosphere in Europe, the congress of Berlin revised the San Stefano terms based on a secret agreement. The Congress recognized the British occupation of Cyprus and promised new territories to Bulgaria. France excluded from this Congress was angry about the British occupation of Cyprus and consequently, Britain agreed to France's occupation of Ottoman Tunisia to avoid a European crisis (Webb 355).

Once in Cyprus, Britain worked to add more Ottoman provinces to her Empire. Britain, once more, sought to reach and occupy Egypt, as it was of great importance because of the Suez Canal. The disputes over the British circumstances that paved her way to occupy Egypt astonished many historians. Those historians give their simple answer which is: it was the “economic demands [of the Empire that] conditioned political responses” (Buchanan 01). According to the previous statement, Egypt had heavy indebts that the European Financial Institutions owe her when opening the Suez Canal. Moreover, the Egyptian Khedive Ismail had spent huge sums, as an attempt from him to develop Egypt, but unfortunately, an Egyptian bankruptcy was provoked. Ismail, who attempted to pay, at least the interests of Egypt's huge debts, sold to Britain all the Suez Canal Company shares that Egypt owned, with lower prices (Porter 98).

Britain, therefore, became the most important shareholder in the Egyptian Suez Canal Company with France. To secure their interests, both powers imposed on Egypt “The Dual Control” in which the French and British institutions were the responsible for the collection of money from the Egyptian peasants as well as the Canal’s users. In 1879, Khedive Ismail attempted to reduce the interest rates of his debts led the Ottoman Sultan, under pressure from the Europeans, to depose him. His son Tewfik took over him, but his weak personality made him a puppet in the hands of the British (Buchanan 06).

Clearly, Egypt at that time was under the shadow of the conflicting European interests, with a weak governor and an economic crisis made tougher by the Dual Control. According to Porter, all this chaos was without any doubt a British plan to create a crisis in the country and use it as a pretext for her intervention. These catastrophic conditions had led to a revolt under Arabi Pasha against the Anglo-French control of the Suez Canal and interference in the Egyptian affairs (97).

Under pressure from Arabi Pasha and his followers, Khedive Tewfik included some nationalists in his government (Butt 37). This, in turn, led Britain to send an army to Alexandria to protect her interests in Egypt. Arabi Pasha via a *coup d'état*, became the head of the government which led Britain to start a war with Arabi’s army. In September 1882, Arabi was defeated in the battle of Tal Al Kebir. This marked the beginning of the British military occupation of Egypt far from France’s consciousness (Porter 98).

The occupation of Egypt occurred during Gladstone’s government. That Prime Minister was an anti-imperialist personality; yet he led his imperialist action in Egypt, and thus showed how the national interests were compelling. In his speech in the Concert of Europe, the Prime Minister Gladstone explained the question of occupying Egypt as follows: “it is an action taken less for national than international reasons” (qtd. in Porter 98). He added

that he did not want Egypt's occupation, but he could not do otherwise, because of the great threats that Arabi and his anti-British government represented for British properties* in Egypt (Porter 99). Moreover, Gladstone was convinced that at such a level of chaos, Egypt could not be ruled by a direct system of power imposed by a Western Power. For this reason, Egypt's occupation would be temporary while a popular, liberal and a pro-Western government would be in the making (Buchanan 101).

These two acquisitions marked the beginning of the British direct intervention in the Middle East. Later on, Britain annexed the Egyptian Sudan in 1899 in an attempt to better secure its interests.

B. Britain's Early 20th Century Arab Spheres of Influence

At The beginning of the Twentieth Century, a new agreement between France and Great Britain occurred, and which had to clarify the relations of the two countries *vis-à-vis* their spheres of influence in the Arab World and North Africa. The agreement this time was called the *Entente-Cordiale*. This name was used for the first time in English in 1844 to refer to the common interests between the two governments. Historians use the term today as a direct connotation to the Second *Entente-Cordiale*, which was a written and secret agreement, signed by the two mentioned governments on April 8, 1904. The *Entente-Cordiale*, according to historians, was not a treaty of alliance, however; it was a simple convention framing the general policy shared by the two different governments of Great Britain and France.

The *Entente-Cordiale* included three documents speaking about different directions in a mutual respect of the properties signed on. The convention, however, was based upon the first document that concerned the Arab World. According to the first document, France was granted the right to occupy Morocco and further her possessions in North Africa with

* The huge sums of money that Great Britain had in Egypt.

Britain's support, in return for Britain's right to occupy Egypt. Furthermore, the convention in its first and second articles emphasized the right of France to get her free passage through Suez, but with respect and defense of the Great Britain's rights in Morocco including "the right of coasting trade between the ports of Morocco, enjoyed by the British vessels since 1901" (Pearcy 2-3).

After some years of this convention, another agreement occurred between the same countries in addition to Russia. The agreement signed, was a secret agreement, too, to define these powers spheres of influence after the expected downfall of the Ottoman Empire after the First World War. It was named after the two French and British diplomats Francois George-Picot and Sir Mark Sikes, respectively, who proposed it. The League of Nations Mandates System further emphasized the partitions agreed by that agreement, in 1920. According to the convention, the partition of the Arab World between the two powers gave them the rights to decide and to act according to their own interests, however in its second article the convention emphasized that: "... France, and ... Britain, shall be allowed to establish such direct or indirect administration or control as they desire" (WWI Document Archive) in the Middle Eastern areas.

This agreement was destined to further the Great Powers' areas of influence in North Africa and the Middle East particularly, to the Great Powers. By this agreement, the Middle East was then divided into two areas -A- and -B- for Britain and France respectively. The -A- referred to today's Jordan, South Iraq and a small area in Haifa to get access to the Mediterranean. However, the -B- referred to South Eastern Turkey, Northern Iraq, Syria and Lebanon with the right for each one of these two powers to divide its areas as it wished. In 1921, Britain divided its regions into two: East of the Jordan River, which became the Emirate of Transjordan under King Abdullah, and West of the Jordan River became the Palestine

Mandate shared between the Arabs and Jews after the Balfour Declaration of 1917 (Beinin 04).

During most of the 19th Century, the Arab World was under the ottoman rule, but also fought over by the different European Powers. The First World War came at the right moment to give Britain a chance to settle herself in the lands of the Middle East, but not in the minds of its peoples. The settlement was secured by the Sykes-Picot agreement, which marked the beginning of the British occupation of the area, but also the darkest chapters in the life of its empire. The agreement, however, had risen the tide of pity amongst Arabs, and fed them with nationalist and anti-Western ideas. Here, it aroused Arab nationalism, resentment, and suspicion *vis-à-vis* the British presence in the region.

So; what are the origins of this 'Arab Nationalism and Resentment', what developments would it witness during the First World War? And what significance would it bear for Britain's presence in the area? The answer to these questions is to be dealt with in Chapter II.

In the previous chapter, we have seen the Great Powers' competition over Ottoman possessions, which, at times led them to sever confrontations showing how national interests are significant. By the end of the First World War, after the collapsed of the Ottoman Empire and other significant powers, these possessions were distributed amongst the remaining powers according to their treaties and agreements, mainly secret treaties. The French and the British, having eliminated their enemy powers, they were busy dividing the Arab World. However, the Arab anti-Western sentiments against the newly forming Franco-British Middle Eastern Empire hindered France and Britain's plans and put them both in a critical situation. Britain, in particular, had suffered in securing her portions, which were larger than other Great Power's portions.

Nationalism, in general, is defined as the loyalty and devotion that someone has towards his nation or country. It is a collective state of mind or consciousness in which people believe their main responsibility and loyalty is merely to the "nation-state". According to historians, Nationalism was probably born with the French Revolution during the 18th Century. In his article, "The Need for National Belonging", Michael Ignatieff* distinguished between *Nationalism* and *Patriotism*. According to him, *Patriotism* is a strong love for one's country that "he can call his own", however, *Nationalism* is one's love of a country that is not yet his own. Therefore, *Patriotism* is the strong love you have towards your free country and *Nationalism* is the desire to get your country free from foreign domination. The latter, thus, is described by historians as a very "dangerous emotion" because it contains the claims for territories, equality and self-determination, which gives opportunity to disagreements and quarrels to appear. Sharabi Hisham, a professor of history and government at Georgetown University, had further explained the two concepts by saying that *Patriotism* is applicable

* A Canadian writer who has written extensively on nationalism, most notably in *Blood and Belonging: Journeys Into the New Nationalism* and *The Warrior's Honour: Ethnic War and the Modern Conscience* are instances of his writings (Encarta 2009).

within a given state's boundaries; however, *nationalism* may contain several states under a *Nation* (95).

In his book Arab Nationalism in the 20th Century, Adee Dawisha, a Professor of Political Science at Miami University, Ohio, had devoted the whole of the first chapter to defining Arab Nationalism. According to him, Arab Nationalism is a combination between the two entities of "Arabism" and "the strong desire for unity" (13). Arabism is the application of the Nation's definition, which is "a human solidarity, whose members believe* that they form a coherent cultural whole and who manifest a strong desire for political separateness and sovereignty" (Ibid), on the Arab World. Thus, Arabism is that linguistic, religious, spiritual, historical and emotional ties between the Arabic-Speaking people.

The second entity (unity) had unfortunately come late. In fact, according to Gomaa, a professor on Middle Eastern studies, Oxford, unity had never been the concern of the Arabs until the Sykes-Picot Agreement had disillusioned them, and confirmed that there would be no Arab independence, unless the Arabs unite. The first Arab who spoke about unity as an indispensable element for the Arab World was Amir Feisal Ibn Hussein in his memorandum submitted to the Paris Peace Conference in January 1919 (04). Then, there came what Dawisha has called as the "Common Enemy" that once more was a necessity that pushed the Arabs to think about unity as a necessity for getting independence from the western domination, in particular the British domination (150).

It was until then (1919) that Unity became the subject of several speeches and articles by the founders of modern Arab Nationalism (kings and thinkers of the Arab states). Leaders, ethnologists and thinkers such as Hasan Al-Banna** and Michel Aflaq*** who were always

* It is only a belief because according to the French thinker Earnest Renan: "the essential element of a nation is that all its individuals must have many things in common, but *they must also have forgotten many things*" sited in S. Nye, Jr., Joseph p. 186.

** The founder and the "Supreme Guide" of The Muslim Brotherhood founded in 1928.

*** The founder of the *Baath Party* (The Resurrection Party), in Syria, officially founded in April 1947.

speaking about Arab unity. Michel Aflaq, in his speech “Militant Arab Nationalism 1946”, had associated the struggle for freedom with Arab Unity and says: “The battle for unity cannot ... be separated from the battle for freedom and liberation” (Sharabi 111-2), and thus to him, Arab Unity is a necessity to revive the Arabs’ days of glory. The same thing appears in Ahmed Ben Bella’s* speech “Algeria in the Battle of Reconstruction” (1963), in which he says: “all there is to say is that we believe in the necessity of getting closer in brotherhood ... the desire to unite the countries of North Africa ... shall not obstruct the larger unity” (Ibid 115). The president meant by that the unity of the entire Arab World.

I. Arab Nationalism

A. Origins

Arab Nationalism or Arab aspiration for unity and self-government is a phenomenon that developed during the second half of the Nineteenth Century and the early part of the 20th Century. It was first a simple reaction against Ottoman tyranny then, against the policies of centralization led by *The Committee of Union and Progress (CUP)*, the political organization established by the Young Turks in 1906 (Gomaa 03). This sentiment would change by the end of the Arab Revolt of 1916, which granted Arabs freedom from the Ottoman’s domination. And then, it would be directed against the Western Powers’, specifically against Britain who was aiming to establishing a tyrannical political system in the Arab World, seizing the opportunity of the collapse of the Ottoman’s rule over these regions.

Deniz Togar, a professor at the University of Chicago, in his article “Theories on the Rise of Arab Nationalism”, had examined George Antonius’ book The Arab Awakening (1939) and distinguished three stages through which Arab nationalism had developed.

According to Deniz Togar, the first stage is the stage of the initial formation. In this stage, he referred to the places and environment where Arab Nationalism was to develop and

* The Algerian first president after the independence, July 1962.

grow. Accordingly, the area from which Arab Nationalism first developed was the Eastern part of the Arab World. The area was divided into two portions: the Northern one or the “Fertile Crescent” was close to the Ottoman Administration, and the Southern portion “The Hejaz” which was far from the central administration of the Ottomans, and therefore less important economically and politically (02). The regions also differed in their ethnic compositions. While the Fertile Crescent contained different sects of Muslims, Christians and Jews, the Hejaz was 100% Muslim. These two regions, despite their differences, were the first places where Arab Nationalism was born and flourished until it exploded in the 1916 Great Arab Revolt (Townsend 01).

The Arab Revolt, as George Antonius called it, was not a simple act of betrayal or treachery against the Ottomans. It was an act which occurred as a result of the combination of several different factors, as well as efforts from plenty of thinkers and intellectuals. According to Dawisha, the seeds of Twentieth Century Arab Nationalism “should be traced to the ideas and endeavors of the Nineteenth Century thinkers and activists” (08). These thinkers, Muslims or Christians, had a focus on the contemporary conditions under domination, and the future hopes of the Arabic-speaking peoples who were under the Turkish-speaking Ottoman rulers.

Thinkers such as Jamal Al-Din Al-Afghani (1839-1897) and his pupil Muhamed Abdu (1849-1905) who feared the cultural threat of the Christian West at this early stage of development, the commissioners and Christian schools established by the British. Hence, they called for Islamic reform, resurgence and unity to avert that threat and thus build a nation based upon Islamic *Sharia**. These thinkers had derived their modernist thinking from the expansion of mainly Islamic education, and from the growing nationalist movements spread in the Balkan lands without forgetting the impact of Muhamet Ali’s campaigns. These early

* Islamic laws brought by Islam religion since the 6th Century.

thinkers had focused in their works on their “ethnic and linguistic” differences which separated them, as ruled people, from their rulers who were the Turks (Dawisha 19).

Adeed Dawisha argued that, these thinkers differed from one another in their determinations, mainly because of their religious differences. He argued that the Christians’ effort and message in the frame of Arab Nationalism had, unfortunately, fallen “on deaf ears among the intellectual elite of Arab Muslims” (26). In a simple little comparison between a Christian and a Muslim Arab nationalist, we may find that a Muslim Arab nationalist thinker usually speaks and acts religiously because he thinks that all Arabs are Muslims and thus pushes him to act religiously. Moreover, in Islam, people should never denounce their allegiance from their rulers. For this reason, the Muslim group wanted only improvement not independence from their Turkish Muslim leaders. However, a Christian Arab nationalist had in mind that most of Arabs are not Christians, which pushes him to act not religiously, because Christians were a minority in the Arab World. For instance Al-Afghani blamed the Muslims not a given ethnic group for their backwardness (Dawisha 19), and asked Muslims (rulers, ruled, Arabs and non-Arabs) to come back to the true Islamic principles if they wanted really to develop. But, Negib Azoury* blamed the Ottomans as a different race from the Arabs even if they are Muslims. He said: “the Ottomans have ruined the Arabs, without them, the Arabs would have been among the most civilized nations in the world” (qtd. in Dawisha 25). Nagib Azuri and his followers wanted total independence from the Ottomans.

The second stage of this development in Deniz Togar’s words was “The Standstill” stage. This period extended from the last part of the 19th Century to the First World War. Its events had coloured Arab Nationalism with a new colour, which, in general, led to the Arab Great Revolt of 1916. In a time where the Arabs were helped by the British to rise against the Ottomans, these Arabs, mainly Muslims, began to develop an anti-Western drive. This

* A Syrian Christian Arab Nationalist died in 1916.

sentiment began as a reaction after the expulsion of Abdulaziz, the Ottoman King (1861-76), and the establishment of an Open Door to Christian education under the Western Missionary Schools agreed by the Ottomans ruled at that time by Murad V for some months (06). It was also as a reaction to the Tanzimat* system led by the Ottoman sultans from 1839.

The years following Murad V deposal had known Abdul Hamid II as King on the Ottoman Empire. Abdul Hamid, immediately, began his powerful famous reform system and restored the Tanzimat system. In order to appeal to Arab Muslim as citizens, Abdul Hamid focused on his role as Caliph and developed his program of Pan-Islamism. He focussed on the teachings of Al-Afghani, and “he picked and chose from the ideas [of Al-Afghani] that appealed to him” (Togar 07). Furthermore, Abdul Hamid II had pursued a policy of oppression upon each nationalist attempt against the Ottoman supremacy; however, after one year from his reign in 1876, his army slaughtered 30,000 men in the Bulgarian revolution.

The reign of Abdul Hamid II provoked the emergence of two different things that in a way or another pushed to the consolidation of Arab Nationalism. As the Christian Arabs were against Al-Afghani’s ideas of a true Islamic nation, they were, thus, in opposition to Abdul Hamid’s Pan-Islamism (Ibid). This group involved itself in the Arab Secret Societies. The second thing is the emergence of the Young Turks and Kamal Atatürk in the Turkish revolution of 1908, which had a direct relation to the Great Arab Revolt of 1916, and therefore a direct relation to its emerging Arab Nationalism.

B. Arab Secret Societies and the Young Turks Revolution of 1908

Also called the Arab Literary Societies, they were political clubs with other organizations for the support of “racial interests” formed between 1909 and 1914. They were situated in Constantinople and have several branches in the Arab Capitals such as Cairo,

* Arabic term for the English “Reorganizations”.

Bayreuth, Damascus, Baghdad and Basra. The members of these societies who were a mixture of Muslims, Druze and Christians while carrying on patriotic activities openly; also pledged never to reveal the existence of the organization, which directing their activities (Temperley).

These secret societies helped Arab Nationalism to flourish as their members called for British protection and support to throw out the Ottomans especially after the massacres of 1860. According to Temperley, Syrian Muslim notables visited Lord Kitchener, the British Consul General in Egypt from 1911, and asked him “to annex Syria to Egypt and give her an independent administration”³. According to the same writer, it was unforgivable mistake from Kitchener if he did not accept the nationalists’ suggestion. Thus, the suggestion was of a great importance to realize most of the Britain’s imperial interests in the area. Here then, the strings of the British connection to the Great Arab Nationalist Revolt (1916) had lain.

Speaking about the Young Turks Revolution, this group that led the revolution had acquired a western education; they derived their basic ideas from their brothers exiled in Paris and London in the 1860s. Those first exiled Young Turks acquired a sentiment of Nationalism at an early stage. In a journal published by those young Ottomans called “Freedom”, they argued, “love of one’s country” is “part of the faith” (qtd. in Macfie, 36). The new Young Turks of the 20th Century had called for changes in the government and Pan-Islamism based on Arabization led by Abdul Hamid. As they did not get any answer for their requests, they created a new constitution, and forced Abdul Hamid from the throne and exiled him in 1909. Later on, they formed a party called The Committee of Union and Progress, *the CUP* (Togar 08).

³ “The last years of peace” (British documents on the origins of the war).

Most historians called the alliance between the Arabs and the Turks to expel Abdul Hamid, as the *Honeymoon* of the Arab-Turkish alliance. The Young Turks made their CUP policies based on a non-religious multi-national cooperation, liberty, equality and unity to safeguard the empire from an external threat, mainly British one. But unfortunately, this policy promised by the CUP disappeared and the Young Turks began to look for groups to separate from the empire. In fact, they began a policy of Pan-Turanism that called for a national regeneration on pure Turkish lines to bring together all the Turkish-speaking people within and outside the empire (Ibid 08-9). This system discriminated the Arabs and their culture and language and imposed the Turkish language as the “only language permitted in courts and government offices in the Arab provinces” (Townsend 02).

In his book Arabs and Young Turks (1997), Kayali Hasan demonstrates that the CUP instituted a program of “Turkification”, which put focus on Turkish as the only official language, the promotion of Turkish culture and even went so far as to institute harsh measures of control and cultural suppression. The Arabs’ reaction to this system of Turkification was explained by Kayali, too. The Arabs were outraged by the actions of the CUP government, and thus began a kind of civil disobedience, refusing to implement various aspects of this program. According to Sharabi:

The striving for total independence did not take place until after the Young Turks Revolution of 1908 had frustrated all hopes for an autonomous Arab existence under a decentralized form of administration free from the new government’s policy of Ottomanization. (Sharabi 09)

The Arabs, henceforth, worked to get a legitimate situation and even a support from the Westerners for their independence. Their claims for independence were heard openly just

after the Arab Conference of June 1913 in Paris*. In addition to the Syrians and the French, the Young Turks attended the conference. These Young Turks convinced the Arabs to settle under their demands of “a multi-national constitutional monarchy” created under a cultural and linguistic autonomy. The problem now was that the Young Turks had reneged and waved a series of arrests and executions on the Arab nationalist leaders (Togar 10).

These events, certainly, had paved the way to Arab attempts to wage a revolt against the CPU. But they did equally pave the way for a British interference that would end up in dishonored promises, which in return paved the way for a strong Anti-British sentiment in the Arab World, after the First World War (1914-18).

II. Britain’s Hand in the Great Arab Revolt (1916)

Britain’s struggle for securing its imperial interests in the Middle East and India were paramount. With the Ottomans’ involvement in the First World War besides the Axis, British interests (Suez, Turkish Straits and the Persian Oil Pipeline) were much more threatened. Hence, in 1914, Britain declared Egypt officially a British protectorate after 30 years of unstable rule. Britain dared the Ottomans to prove otherwise concerning this Egyptian affaire (porter 235). But unfortunately for the British, securing Egypt did not end the threats that the Ottomans and their Axis allies represented to Britain were not neutralized. Moreover, France also threatened these interests in the violation of the terms of the *Entente-Cordiale***.

In the absence of a real and effective solution, Britain established her own borders in the Arab World, by sending military troops first to Iraq pushing northeast from the Persian Gulf and then to Palestine pushing there from Egypt. Furthermore, Churchill, in an attempt to map the Middle East once for all, attacked the Ottoman Gallipoli in the Turkish Straits in

* According to the resolutions voted in by the congress, there was no claim from the Arabs for a total independence. However, they emphasized only their claim for linguistic and cultural autonomy, and the right of the Arabs to exercise and make their participation effective in the political administration of the Ottoman Empire. i.e.: they were against the Turkish policy of the linguistic, cultural and political marginalization exercised against the Arabs under the CUP government (F.O. 29037/29037/13/44. No. 339).

** For additional information on the Entente, see Chapter I. p. 14.

1915, but failed because of the Britain's shortage of military troops fully engaged in the European front of war (Ibid).

Aware that there were some Arab troops preparing a revolt against the Ottomans (since 1914) and who had once demanded British help, Churchill decided to aid the Arabs. In a series of letters exchanged between Sheriff Hussein Ibn Ali of Mecca and Sir Henry McMahon* known as the Hussein-McMahon correspondences (July 1915 and January 1916), Britain made promises that "Britain would recognize and support the independence of the Arabs" (Ibid 236) in return for an Arab uprising against their rulers, the Ottomans. The McMahon promises were then endorsed by Lord Kitchener, the Governor-General of Sudan, who promised, in his turn, Hussein's son Abdullah about Britain's determination to keep his father as Sheriff of Mecca (Khan 07)**.

With this Arab Revolt, the British had one side free from the pressure of the war (in the Arab World), and, thus, free herself from the Ottomans to defend other interests in her struggle against the Germans. Clearly, the British were much better with the Arab Revolt than without it. Indeed, the British troops that were originally destined to lead the war against the Ottomans changed direction to support their Allies against the Germans. This is in part what made the Arab Revolt so significant to the British. By the words of T. E. Lawrence, "Arab help was necessary to our cheap and speedy victory in the East and that better we win and break our word than lose" (qtd. in Ladikoff 09).

The Arab Great Revolt took place in June 1916 after Britain had successfully paved its way. The revolt was led by the Sheriff Hussein, whose two sons had been executed by the Turks. With his son Feisal, Hussein fought the Ottomans with some 70.000 men, captured *Akaba* on the Red Sea in 1917, and cut the Hedjaz Railway, a vital and strategic link through

* The British commissioner in Egypt.

** Abdullah corresponded with Lord Kitchener talking to him about his fears of a coming Ottoman decision to exclude the Arab Caliph. Kitchener replied to him that Britain would recognize an Arab caliph on all the Arab regions if they help them in the war standing against the Ottomans.

the Arab Peninsula. We cannot speak about the Arab uprising without mentioning the most prominent British hero of the First World War Thomas Edward Lawrence. T. E. Lawrence known as “Lawrence of Arabia” born in 1888; he developed a passion for the Arab World at the Oxford University and became fluent in Arabic. His contact with the Arabs began with his work in Cairo as a member of the Military Intelligence Unit. Working in this unit, his “aims were to encourage the Arab tribes to rise up against their Turkish masters” (Carnevali 91). Emphasizing upon these aims he involved himself in several attacks and “guerrilla raids”.

When they decided to fight the Turks, the Arabs believed Britain would stick to her promises and thus they were fighting for their independence. After a series of British actions, the Arabs acknowledged that they had cheated on them. A very strong blow on the Arabs was that Britain’s betrayal resulted now put the Arabs under the domination of a Christian colonizer. For this reason, the Arabs were outraged by the British policies while Arab Nationalism entered its third stage of action, ie; giving way to anti-Western feelings and resentment against Britain.

III. Britain’s False Promises: Consequences

Britain promises to help the establishment of independent Arab states or an Arab Confederation in return for an Arab revolt against the Ottomans, and an Arab support for Britain in World War I were never honored. After some months from the beginning of the Arab Great Revolt, Britain, France and Russia agreed on a special partition plan. In a secret agreement called the Sykes-Picot agreement*. The Arab World was partitioned between these powers to aggrandize their respective empires. Yet in 1917, the Russians disclosed the agreement when their claims in the Ottoman Empire were denied, following the Bolshevik Revolution 1917 (Gomaa 04)**. Many saw this secret agreement as the major turning point in Arab-Western political relations after WWI, and as the first outraging element which pushed

* For additional information see chapter I, p.15.

** The information is mentioned in the footnote of his book The Foundation of the League of Arab States (1977).

the Arabs to rise their attitudes towards the westerners, in particular against Great Britain regarding its promises of 1916, as well as its special place it had in the Arab lands.

The Arab populations believed the civilized Western World would recognize their effort to reach freedom and help them. These realities were crashed by the bitter reality. The British betrayal, thus, gave a new touch to Arab nationalism in that nationalists from all over the Arab World now opposed French and British mandatory systems over their provinces. The Arabs at that time felt that they were less dominated once under the Ottoman rule or at least they were under a Muslim domination. Consequently, they were all mobilized to find out a solution to expel France and Britain from their lands (Beinin 04).

Arab hopes regarding a Western pledge to honor its promises completely faded away when the British announced their Balfour Plan in 1917. The plan showed that the British government was already involved in similar promises with the Jews for “the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people” (Balfour)⁴. This second blow to the Arabs convinced them once for all that the British had forgotten all about their promises. In effects, the Westerners, at that time, were very concerned about keeping on their promise to the Jews but not the Arabs one (Lehrer 02). The Balfour Declaration helped raise the tide of Jewish immigration since then, but equally raised Arab anger towards the Western World in general, and British Jewish policies in particular.

After the armistice of World War I, the Allies organized the Occupation Enemy Territory Administration. It was to provide a temporary government for Palestine, Syria and Iraq waiting for a final settlement. Just after this organization, an Arab reaction followed. In July 1919, the Syrians settled “The General Syrian Congress” in Damascus. The congress called the Allies to recognize Syrian independence along with Palestine under the reign of King Feisal. That view was previously expressed by King Feisal basing on an Arab Unity in

⁴ Balfour, James Arthur. “The Balfour Declaration”, WWI Document Archive, Official Papers. November 2nd, 1917.

his memorandum submitted successfully in the Paris Peace Conference, January 1919 (Gomaa 04).

When Feisal got no answer to his claims, his Congress unilaterally proclaimed Syria independent under Feisal's reign in March 1920. Iraqi representatives who were present similarly announced their country's independence under Feisal's brother Prince Abdullah (Palestine Facts 02). Britain and France for their part worked to convince the League of Nations, which later on rejected both Syrian and Iraqi pronouncements, and in April 1920, the San Remo conference had enforced the Allies Mandates in the Middle East under the League of Nations. According to this decision, the Allies divided the Arabs' regions into three parts according to their "stage of economic and political development and their location" (Ibid), and therefore officially replaced the Ottoman administration by their new colonial administrations of Britain and France.

News of the San Remo Conference's decision led to political and military events of the 1920s in the Middle East. Several popular revolts began just after the Western betrayals especially the British regarding its promises. In 1919, a popular revolt exploded in Egypt after the Great Powers refused the claims of Saad Zaghloul* to expose the case of Egypt to the Versailles Conference. The Egyptians ultimately achieved a partial independence in 1922, arranged by Britain. A similar revolt took place in Iraq in 1920, which resulted in a British change in their system of power used to rule in the Mesopotamia. Other small riots had occurred such as The Eastern Sunday (April 1920) and Jaffa (May 1920) (Khalidi), for which Britain put blame on the Arabs, and forgot about her hand and the Jews in the affair.

The previous revolutions were isolated from one another and based on unilateral work. Thus, the 1920s in the Middle East had known governments that were seeking their personal interests, in almost a total absence of an ideal Arab Unity or a common objective. In his book

* The president of the Egyptian Wafd Party, the major voice for Egyptian nationalism and democracy.

The Foundation of the League of Arab States (1977), Gomaa argues that the 1920s Arab nationalism “was... in its formative stage with no solid ideological basis and no clear vision of the future” (05).

Dawisha, on the other hand, explains this disunity, in his article “Requiem for Arab Nationalism” (Winter 2003), by the fact that “the Arabs were divided into sub-states identities such as tribe, religion and sect” (30). These subdivisions created an atmosphere of competition destined against the greater objective of “Arab Nationalism”. A very clear example of this competition was the invasion of Ibn Saud to the Hejaz, which was under the Hashemite Sharif Hussein in 1925. Historians considered this conquest as the strongest blow to the Arabs’ aspirations for Unity. The conquest caused a Saudi-Hashemite quarrel and competition over position and Muslim sovereignty, which led to a dishonoring *status-quo* in “inter-Arab politics”. Because of this, “no common action, based on mutual trust, even on general Arab issues, became possible for a long time” (Gomaa 05).

The 1930s marked a new kind of collective thinking in Arab relations which the Islamic Congress of December 1931* further strengthened. The Arabs, indeed, began to have an ideology of Arab Union to put future plans that might help them get rid of French colonialism and the stronger British Imperialism. The most significant of these events was the Arab Palestine Revolt of 1936. This revolt was the most serious expression of Arab discontent ever made, and the most serious expression for an Arab Unity, too. The Palestinian Question was behind this Arab aspiration, causing their anxiety about the growing number of the Jewish immigrants**. Indeed, in 1931, the Jewish population numbered 175.000 immigrants had doubled in 1936 to more than 350.000, and to 467.000 by 1940 (Dawisha, Arab

* In this congress the Syrian and Palestinian brothers seizing the chance of being in Jerusalem, they discussed the Arab questions and their current preoccupations.

** In February 1931, British Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald yielded to Zionist protests and in a public letter to Chaim Weizmann, the Zionist leader, stated that the British government had no intention of tightening controls on Jewish immigration or prohibiting land sales to the Jews (Encarta, 2009).

Nationalism in the 20th Century 81). Jewish immigration brought along Zionism* which directly clashed with Arab nationalism.

Arabs put great hopes of unity and independence on the King Feisal who was the father of the idea of Arab Unity. Feisal's position was further strengthened when first granted the Anglo-Iraqi treaty of 1930. Here, then, he got rid of the pledges that he made to Great Britain in 1921. Henceforth, Feisal devoted all his political activities towards establishing an Arab unity against the British enemy (Gomaa 07). In Dawisha's words: "To many Arab nationalists in the 1920s and 1930s, Iraq seemed best equipped to fill the heroic role played by Prussia in uniting the German-speaking people into one unified German nation-state" (Dawisha 75). By 1933, Faisal died and the Arabs were attracted by Ibn Saud's personality and position that he granted far from the help of the British or even all the Westerners. Ibn Saud concluded the treaty of Islamic Friendship and Brotherhood with Iraq in 1936, and joined by Yemen in 1937. These actions strengthened the Arab relations and thus worked for "more comprehensive collective security arrangements and for closer co-operation in all fields" (Gomaa 07).

Many other Arab governments supported the aspirations of an Arab political unity for the single goal of total independence of the Arab World. The Young Nationalists in Syria had founded the League of National Action in 1933. The League had two main goals: a total Arab sovereignty, and "a comprehensive Arab unity". These goals had a great role in spreading the Arab nationalist ideas upon which the Baath party under its founder Michel Aflaq was founded. Egypt, for its part, gave its support to this common cause. Several associations had been formed in the 1930s such as the Association of Arab Unity (AAU). It was followed by the General Arab Federation (GAA) of 1933 (Dawisha 82). Despite the fact that these

* Jewish Nationalism.

organizations did not last beyond 1935, they translated the Arab nation's commitment to unity and militancy.

These early 1930s organizations and associations sowed nationalist ideas within the Arab populations and urged them to rise on the model of the Arab Palestinian Revolt of 1936. Moreover, in 1935 the Arab Higher Committee called for a strike because of the impact of 1929 Depression. The strike soon involved to an armed conflict (July 1936). The revolutionaries had sabotaged the Oil Pipeline in Iraq, the roads and bombed the police stations and several British institutions beginning from July 1936. Britain in an attempt to end the uprisings launched attacks with planes and killed some 1.000 Arabs in 1937. Zionist terrorist organizations emerged, too, such as 'Yishuv' and 'Irgun' which led counter attacks against Arabs. This added anarchy to a critical situation (Khalidi). Britain killed several civilians and exiled the revolutionaries such as the Mufti Haj Amin Al-Housseini* who would become the tongue of the Nazi propaganda aimed for Arabs.

Nationalism, in general, was a Western product of the 19th Century (French Revolution and Balkan wars), and a merely British one with respect to the McMahon promises (urging the Arabs against the ottomans in 1915). Arab nationalism and resentment after the First World War bore a true Arab colour, however, pushing the British to seek solutions to secure the regions and uphold their imperial position and interests in the Middle East. A renewed Arab nationalism would also serve as a strong basis for Anti-Colonial and Anti-British sentiments after the Second World War, and lead to Arab-states' independence. Chapter III discusses these two consequences and the attempts of Britain to secure the region via imperial maneuvers and policies. So, what were the British attitudes towards the growing demands of the Arab nationalists? What were her plans to contain it? And what was the result of this Arab resentment? These questions will be answered in the following chapter.

* commander for the Jerusalem district in the Great Rebellion of 1936 to 1939.

As seen in the second chapter Arab nationalism yielded disturbances for the Western presence in the Arab regions in general, and for the British in particular. The present chapter is directly related to the Arab awakening. It will explain how Britain reacted to this awakening which threatened her vital interests in the area. The chapter focuses on two different periods in the twentieth century. The first one lies between the two World Wars, and deals with Britain's efforts to maintain the Middle East in its empire. These efforts persisted even until after the Second World War. The second period deals with the Second World War factor and the independence of Arab countries. Before actually dealing with both periods, it is most important to examine some crucial events that paved the way to Arab emancipation from the yoke of British domination. Here then we will show Britain's plans to calm down the resented Arabs to maintain her supremacy on her Arab regions.

I. Taming Arab Nationalism: 1922-1936

Until the beginning of the 20th Century, Britain had always wandered about in the Arab World acting in favour of its own interests and against the native peoples' ones putting pressure on them. Such policies were a result of British racial arrogance and the idea that it was "the white man's burden" to civilize and humanize the "backward" peoples seen as dehumanized creatures.

This British racial arrogance was fully exposed and openly expressed during "the Dinshawi Incident", a small village in Northern Egypt. In 1906, a fight broke out between the villagers of Dinshawi and a group of British officers. The course of events during the incident showed that, while the British officers were enjoying their time shooting pigeons, the wife of the *Imam* of the village was shot and wounded. When the villagers ran to enquire about what happened, the officers panicked and opened fire on them. Then the British authorities arrested fifty-two peasants and judged them in a special court. Four of those peasants were sentenced

to death, many to imprisonment at hard labour and others to public whipping. Britain executed the sentences rapidly, openly and brutally (US Library)⁵.

This infamous injustice had its greater impact on the relations between the two countries. Indeed, a sharp nationalism nourished anti-British sentiments had grown amongst the Egyptians, from both the peasants and the elite. A year after the Dinshawi incident (1907), some educated Egyptians organized themselves into two political parties: The National Party under the leadership of Kamil Mustafa, and the People's Party under Mahmud Sulayman Pasha. The two political entities ought the expulsion of the British from Egyptian lands and government. Kamil Mustafa was a lawyer secretly aided by the Ottomans and the French to oust Britain from Egypt (Goldschmidt). As to Mahmud Sulayman Pasha, he was an ally of Colonel Arabi. He shred his ideology and the Islamic reformer Muhamed Abdu which was for Islamic reforms. The thinkers also feared the western cultural threat (US Library).

These events strengthened Egyptian nationalism and rendered it, according to one British officer in Egypt, "very active and intensely virulent" (qtd. in Porter 210). Britain reacted to Egyptian nationalism by using all necessary means against the nationalists to oppress them so as to prevent any harm to its imperial interests in Egypt and in the Middle East as whole regarding Egypt's position among the Middle Easter regions.

For the British, the system of power lying behind direct control of the colonies (French colonial system) represented a real threat to the colonial administration and to the foreign presence in a given country. Indirect control (British colonial system) was her favourite system that preserved "the old patriarchal and tribal structures of authority and organization" (Sharabi 35), and was, thus, more effective. Under such a system, the British influence on the country's decisions and affaires was hidden. The spread of Western education since the adoption of an Open Door policy had allowed Christian Missionary Schools which greatly

⁵ U.S. Library of Congress. <<http://www.countrystudies.us/egypt/27.htm>>

helped this system. These Missionary Schools aimed also at colonizing the minds of the Arabs in particular, who became supporters and collaborators with British administration and often asked for her help*. This, in turn, made it easy for Britain to prolong her domination upon her different colonies, in Africa and Asia.

Relying on this system of domination, Britain adopted two different measures to put the Arab nationalist movement under control. First, British colonial authorities attempted to gain the general views of the Egyptian people, they asked the heads of the political movements to form a party to win legitimate participation in the local government and make it effective (Porter 210). The British, in fact, sought to use Egyptians to fight other Egyptians, because as Lord Cromer put it: the party “might be a set-off against the extremists” (Ibid), who were the nationalists asking for Britain’s expulsion and seeking an Egyptian self-rule. British strategists looked forward to produce pro-British who would hold office in local government, and also they sought to strengthen the position of Khedive** Abbas of Egypt and win him by their side (Goldschmidt).

These measures did not seem to earn the British what they really expected. But, in contrary, they strengthened the nationalists and made them work harder against British intentions. This pushed Britain to adopt the second measure. Sir John Eldon Gorst, the successor of Lord Cromer and the British Consul-General in Egypt (1907-1911), was in charge of enforcing this second measure. Porter explained that: “Gorst was forced to adopt more drastic measures: a press censorship act, and a ‘Relegation Law’ to imprison criminals [nationalists] without trial, which went beyond anything Cromer had ever found necessary” (210). These measures only served to consolidate the nationalists’ action and pushed them to adopt more anti-British attitudes. By 1913, the British government, under Herbert Asquith,

* the instance of the Arab Secret Societies mentioned in Chapter II.

** The title of the Turkish Viceroys who governed Egypt from 1867 to 1914 while it was under Turkish rule.

was forced to recognize the rising nationalism in Egypt and reluctantly granted the Egyptians a constitution, and an indirectly elected parliament.

A. British Diplomacy or Duplicity?

Whereas Britain adopted Egyptian nationalism before the First World War and helped in the downfall of the Ottomans' Arab Empire after the war, it deployed every diplomatic effort to mollify Arab resentment. To attain such a goal, the British Crown used different strategies. These ranged from treaty making to renewed indirect rule, to the granting of partial independence. The Iraqi Revolt, which occurred about the same time as the Egyptian Revolt, also principally sprang from Arab resentment after the Britain's mandatory system was revealed together with the betrayal felt at the disclosure of the Sykes-Picot agreement. These revolutions, thus, were hostile to Britain, and worked for jeopardizing its colonial plans in the region and spoiling its imperial interests related to the entire area. Aware of Arab's enmity, Britain quickly opted for indirect rule in Mesopotamia. The British top administrator there, Sir Percy Cox known as 'Coccus' (1920-1923), drew a plan in the frame of "the Palace System of Power"* . This top administrator advised that Iraq should be a kingdom, with a government directed by a council of Arab ministers under the supervision of a British High Commissioner. Accordingly, they invited Prince Faisal the son of King Hussein, who was expelled by France from Syria, to govern. In return, Prince Faisal promised not to support any kind of anti-British activity (Gomaa 05). This action was in favour of establishing an Iraqi government in which British influence was less visible. In 1922, Britain signed a 20-year treaty with Iraq, which required that "the King heed British advice on all matters affecting British interests and [that] British officials [should] serve in specific Iraqi government posts" (Cole).

* "The term Palace means here the institution of monarchy, the group or groups that represent and serve it, and the person of the king. ... the powers actually exercised by the palace always exceed those granted under the constitution" (Sharabi 48).

During the same period, Britain, also, secretly moved to discourage the King Faisal regarding his ideas of Arab Unity. British officials never openly expressed their opposition to Arab Unity. Yet, they stressed that the Arabs were too, divided over too many problems and no government could support them. In addition, they cared to put all the blame on France and its hostility towards an Arab alliance. In reality by the 1920s, the British feared a French influence on Iraq if any unity among Arabs would occur (Gomaa 26).

In Egypt, the British strategy settled for partial independence, but secured four areas of interests; namely: the security of her communications in Egypt, the defense of Egypt against all foreign aggressors, in addition to the protection of her foreign interests in Egypt and the protection of minorities and the Sudan (US Library of Congress).

Moreover, worried about Arab anti-British hostility and anger, British officials, now, moved to secure Arab rights in Palestine to contain their rage. Britain's policies in the Middle East managed to secure the control of Mesopotamia and Egypt by far the most important areas of her Middle Eastern Empire. This would remain also until 1932. During this period Britain, also, signed with France the Red Line Agreement (RLA), which in short "described the sharing of the oil wealth of former Ottoman territories by the British and French governments"⁶.

The year 1932 came to change the course of events for Britain in both Egypt and Iraq. Iraq under King Feisal requested the British for an Iraqi admission to the League of Nations in 1927. As a condition, on the other hand, the British forced Iraq into an alliance treaty, in 1930. The British effectively declared Iraq free and independent and a member of the League of Nations, which would begin after two years of the treaty, in 1932 (Cole). King Feisal and his administration were now free from the pledges they made with getting the throne in August 1921. Accordingly, King Feisal without hesitation came back to honor his ideas of an

⁶ <http://india_resource.tripool.com/ Understanding the Complexities and Contradictions of the Middle East: *Oil Wealth, Colonial and Neo-Colonial Intervention, and Cheap South Asian Labor*>, April 04th, 2010. P. 01.

Arab Unity. After his death in 1933, his son Al Ghazi, a strong anti-British advocate, replaced him, and thus created further troubles for the British in Iraq.

Egypt wooed the Palestine Question became to achieve a global Arab World unity and freedom. Mustapha Nahas Pasha the Wafd Party leader expressed this idea when he declared in 1943:

Do not forget that the peoples of the Arab East and of the whole Moslem East look to Egypt for guidance in their search for free and dignified existence, and they all draw inspiration from the renaissance of modern Egypt... the Egyptian nation is dear. (Egypt 1943)*

Egypt's Arab pan-activities began much earlier than the 1936 Arab Revolt. The Wafd Party and the Palace Party began to play important roles in accordance with the Egyptian press, which was the strongest in the area and had a great influence in shaping the Arabs' minds (Gomaa 52). In an attempt to appease Egyptian nationalism, Britain concluded a treaty of alliance in 1936. But the tides of Arab nationalism were now unbleached and found renewed resentment in the Palestine Question. Britain seemed lost.

B. Britain and the Arab Revolt over Palestine (1936)

Arab nationalism approached dangerously British interests in the Middle East during the revolt that the Arabs led. In fact, these threatening revolts were the most difficult of the interwar events Britain had ever experienced in the region. They were even much more significant than the riots that occurred just after the First World War. Indeed, this time, the revolutions were not isolated from one another; rather there was a consensus between the Arabs to oust the foreign powers, Britain in particular, colonizing their countries.

* Archive Article from Encarta, 2009.

Britain, willing to secure her interests in the region and to get rid of the heavy costs of the revolt*, saw no solution apart from “a conciliatory move” to win the outraged Arabs. In a memorandum from Prince Abdullah to the Royal Commission in Palestine in March 1937, the Prince explained to the Commission what is the Arab Peninsula, how much the Arabs owe to this peninsula and why. The memorandum begins with an explanation including the Arab wishes to unity, and later on an explanation about Arab Peninsula’s preciousness:

All these peoples are keeping a careful and vigilant watch over the situation in Palestine owing to the unity of their feelings, their national and religious ties as well as the bond which they believe to unite their future destiny.... years could not deprive them of Palestine ... (Amir Abdullah)⁷

Without hesitation, and relying on the explanations provided in Abdullah’s memorandum, the British concluded that the solution lied in allowing the establishment of an Arab Federation under a British commandment. For that reason, many notable political leaders: British, Arabs and even Jewish, brought plans to form this Confederation. The most prominent ones were Lord Samuel’s, the first High Commissioner of Palestine, and the Nuri Pasha al Said’s, the Iraqi Prime Minister.

Lord Samuel had outlined his scheme during the debate in the House of Lords upon the report of the Royal Commission established in July 20, 1937 to discuss the problem of this revolt. In his scheme, Lord Samuel provided for the establishment of a great Arab confederation including Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Transjordan, Syria, and Palestine. It included the claim for restricting the Jewish immigration to keep the rate of the Arab population higher than the Jewish one. In addition, a Jewish agency should be formed in parallel with an Arab one to prohibit land sales. Britain would assist financially the development of the area of

* According to a letter by Weizmann, the charges of the British troops reached 1.000.000£ additional, because normally the troops would be installed at home in stead of being outside. (the letter dated, June 9th, 1937).

⁷ Memorandum from Amir Abdullah to the Royal Commission in Palestine, Mar. 1937. High Commissioner for Trans-Jordan, Jerusalem Secret, Reference No. TC/12/37

Transjordan and would be the advisor in the Central Council for Palestine. In this scheme, Palestine would be under a joint Jewish-Arab council led by Britain (Gomaa 11).

This scheme had been subject to several critics. In addition to the Colonial Office refusal to apply it, David Ben Gurion* strongly opposed the provision about Jewish immigration restrictions. Ben Gurion's reaction was that he ordered his followers to protest harshly against its application. According to Ben Gurion, the limitations were in contradiction with the Churchill White Paper of 1922, which affirmed that in the frame of fulfilling the Balfour declaration policy, "it is necessary that the Jewish community in Palestine should be able to increase its number by immigration ..."⁸. As an alternative, Ben Gurion proposed to place the Palestine and Transjordan under King Ibn Saud's authority with full sovereignty. As the Jewish would never accept any scheme that would result in restricting the Jewish immigration to Palestine, Ben Gurion put that Ibn Saud, in case he accepted the reign over Palestine, he should never discuss in favour of limitations on the Jewish immigration. The scheme did not work and was openly rejected by Ibn Saud (Gomaa 12).

The second scheme was the one of Nuri Pasha Said, Prime Minister of Iraq. It included the foundation of an Arab federation but restricted to Iraq, Palestine and Transjordan (the Fertile Crescent). In his plan, he stressed indirectly that the federation would be under a Hashemite leadership. The scheme for the establishment of a locally autonomous Jewish state contained by the federation. Nuri, too, stressed that the Jews should remain a minority. Britain showed no interest to Nuri's scheme, however (Ibid).

From then, several other schemes came and went without finding a real solution for Arabs and Jews. Britain, thus, found herself under pressure, and aware of the necessity to change its policy in Palestine; otherwise, a stronger Arab reaction would result to oppose its

* The Chief Executive of the Jewish Agency.

⁸ Historical Documents, Israel and Palestine history. "The Churchill White Paper of 1922". Introduction Copyright 2002-3 by the MidEastWeb <http://www.mideastweb.org>.

“British Zionist Policy” in the areas. Furthermore, Ibn Saud warned also that “the Arabs, if not given ‘reasonable satisfaction’ with regard to Palestine, might turn in desperation to the Axis” (Ibid 14). Britain, as a last solution was obliged to work in establishing an Arab state federation, but unfortunately, she found France opposing her, as this latter feared stronger Arab states under a federation, which would threaten her interests.

By 1939, Britain was still unable to come to any agreement. Anxious to prevent the Arabs’ probable annexation to Nazis and Fascists, British foreign policy planners worked towards bringing a solution to satisfy both Arabs and Jews.

The solution lied in the fact that the Royal Commission and other commissions of enquiry had discovered and drawn attention that there was an ambiguity in some expressions in the Balfour Declaration and the McMahon letters. In the former, the ambiguity lied behind the phrase: “the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people” (Balfour Declaration, 1917), and in the latter, Britain always said to the Arabs that Palestine had never been included in the pledges made by Sir McMahon letters. Accordingly, the commissions were convinced that to the benefit and comfort of all the people in Palestine, “a clear definition of policy and objectives is essential” (The Avalon Project 02). The statement issued was The White Paper of 1939, which contains coherent and clear obligations to the Arabs and Jews as well as explanations to the previous ambiguities.

The White Paper of 1939 was divided into three sections: *The Constitution*, *Immigration*, and *Land*. The first section had cleared the ambiguity bore by the declaration and explained that the British government will work in the course of ten years to establish an independent state of Palestine (Ibid). The second section had given more explanations to the situation and limited the Jewish immigration to 75.000 immigrants in the following five years (Khalidi). In addition, the section emphasized that Palestine would be connected to the United Kingdom by treaties to satisfy the “commercial and strategic requirements of both countries

in the future” (The Avalon Project 04). The third section is about the restriction of the transfer of the land ownership from the Arabs to Jews in some places. It pledged, too, the government commitment to work on the development of the methods of cultivation (Ibid 08).

This last solution came directly after the outbreak of the Second World War during which the Arabs and Jews entered a truce. The war brought new elements on the course of the events on the Arab Peninsula. These new elements urged the Arabs to stick more and more to their demands namely, the expulsion of foreign influence from the Arab World. Among these new elements Nazi’s influence and the decline of Britain as a Super Power were significantly exploited by Arab nationalists to advance their cause and put an end to Britain’s presence in the Middle East.

II. The Second World War and the Rise of Arab Independence

A. The Nazi-Arab Flirt

The most notable thing that emerged during the war was “The Nazi Propaganda Aimed at Arabs and Muslims”. The most famous historian produced works on the German studies is Jeffrey Herf* who devoted several books to study the history of Germans in relation with other peoples.

Accordingly, the relation between the Arabs and the newly immerging German National Socialist Party (Nazi Party) as well as the Fascist Italian Party had its origins in the 1920s during the Arab resentment. From this period on, the two parties worked hardly to increase Arabs’ outrage and helped the immerging anti-imperialist sentiments. This relation was strengthened by the outbreak of the Arab Revolt of 1936, when the Germans welcomed the Arabs who were exiled by the British during the Arab Palestine Revolt, such as Hajj Amin Al-Husseini and Rashid Al-Khilani.

* Currently a professor of history at the University of Maryland and a recognized scholar on the modern German and Jewish history.

Beginning from the outbreak of the Second World War, a new strict period in the relations that bound the Arabs to German radicals had begun. During the war, the Nazis sought to unite the Arab opinion to pledge a support for the Axis forces. The Germans were very convinced that by bringing the Arabs to their side, they would secure themselves two large areas, namely North Africa and the Middle East (North Africa and the Levant), and thus get more opportunities to win the World War. The Nazi regime, therefore, launched its “Nazi propaganda machine” to capture the sympathy of the Arabs, and, henceforth, use them as an additional element against the Allied Forces.

In its propaganda, the Nazi regime stressed its secular and anti-imperialist nature in order to win the Arabs. They, also, selected from the principles upon which their party was built, ideals of Islam to show how compatible the two ideologies were (Herf 712). They selected words and phrases from *Quran* (the Muslim’s Holy Book) and compared them with their principles on anti-Semitism that the Muslims and Nazis showed. In doing so, the exiled Arabs were their spokesmen:

Husseini was also a key figure in finding common ground between the ideology of National Socialism on the one hand, and Arab Nationalism as well as the doctrines of militant Islam on the other... along with mostly anonymous native Arabic-speaking radio announcers and writers. (Ibid 714)

With Al-Husseini and Al-Khilani, the Nazi regime launched propaganda through Arab radio diffusions as an indispensable element as the rate of illiteracy reached 85% in some places. By 1941, some 90.000 short wave radios were placed especially for the Middle East region, speaking in Arabic. “Berlin in Arabic” and “the Voice of Free Arabism” are two examples of these Radio Waves (Ibid 724). This helped Germany to get most of the Arabs to its side. Nevertheless, most important of this propaganda is that it helped the growth of the anti-imperialist sentiment amongst the people who later on came in a form of *coup d’état*

against the pro-Western regimes (collaborators), and later on got total freedom. In other words, it helped the emergence of the non-collaborator nationalists.

In addition to German's impact in creating a strong anti colonial and anti imperialist sentiment in the Arab World, Japan emerged, too, to impose its influence on Asian territories. Under the slogan "Asia for Asians", Japan declared to challenge the Western imperialist powers, and dared mainly Britain on its Asian territories. In doing so, the Japanese helped to create and advance the nationalist movements in Indonesia, India, Burma and Thailand. For this reason, "a xenophobic nationalism" was developed with Britain with it the fear that its "effects would be felt across the whole of South East Asia ... and even [to] India" (Darwin, Britain and Decolonization 57).

The regions of the Middle East are, of course, the states of the southwestern Asia, close to the Far East. Therefore, The Arabs got their share from the Japanese determination that Asia is only for the Asians, which automatically reached the Arab regions and thus pushed them to be more determined to end the Western domination. This was what happened in combination with other factors that the Second World War yielded, the Arabs were determined to free themselves from these imperial powers aiming to reinstall themselves. Accordingly, the British knew very well that the post-war world would show, undoubtedly, challenges regarding "their authority and influence in the dominions, in the colonies and semi-colonies and in their spheres of influence" (Ibid 58). In this account, Britain was very harmed.

In his book The End of the British Empire, John Darwin distinguished between three theories of the British Empire retreat. However, along with the theory of nationalism named "*The Peripheral Theory*"*, several other thinkers had developed the two other theories. One

* According to John Darwin, the theory is that "British Empire was disrupted by the nationalism... mobilized against colonial rule *en masse* and whose position made it unworkable" (The End of the British Empire, 06).

is *the emergence of other great powers* and the other is “*The Metropolitan Theory*”^{*} (Darwin, The End of the British Empire 05-6). These theories were obviously a direct result of the war and despite the fact that *the peripheral theory* had begun much earlier, the end of the war gave it more strength and placed it as most prominent theory of decolonization.

The experience that the British acquired from the lessons of the First World War had warned them that a rapid action in the Middle East was needed to secure British interests there. This resulted in ‘pretended’ sympathy towards Arab Nationalism to secure a way to reinstall herself in the region (Ibid 64). These procedures had been successfully adopted during the 1920s, but any reproduction after 1945 seemed impossible. This was because Britain had lost her strong position because of the emerging new Great Powers, and mainly because Nationalism at that time was not in the hands of puppet leaders, but in the hands of the people who also sought to remove all pro-Western leaders. These new non-collaborating Nationalists emerged as result of British after war policy. Yet, Britain needs raw materials after the Second World War made it tighten the knot around the colonies forcing down the living standards and restricting the freedoms, which contradicted with the war promises of independence (Darwin, Britain and Decolonization 54).

By 1945, several other factors had been added to what we have seen and made the anti-colonial nationalism gain more strength. Among these factors, we find the colonial rule, which created a new culture and language (theirs) in their colonies giving the chance, reluctantly, for the rising generations to communicate and ask for their rights (Darwin, The End of the British Empire 90). Moreover, to secure the region, Britain assured representation for the local leaders, maintaining, however, that there would be “no representation without

^{*} “On this view, empire was given up either because it was felt to be too burdensome or it no longer served any economic or strategic purpose” (Darwin, The End of the British empire 05).

taxation”^{*} (Ibid 91). This shows obviously the representation that Britain gave to the Arabs was not in respect of Arab rights for representation, but because the British had benefits behind this representation.

B. Ending British Domination and Rising Arab Independence

The end of the Second World War had brought political, social and economic radical changes in the world’s order. The, colonized countries, in particular, had acquired their independence one after another and got rid of the connotation “the Colonized World” for the “Third World” one. The Arab states categorized among the Third World countries. These countries had challenged the weakened Western Powers, Britain in particular, which tried heedlessly to re-establish its pre-war status in these countries via a renewal of pre-war treaties with their leaders.

The British had mobilized most of their forces to re-define their position in the Middle East. This region was of a very significant importance to Britain as a military base and a strategic defensive point for the empire. The aftermath of the WWII brought Britain more anxiety towards securing the Middle Eastern regions, yet, “some of the same forces which helped to shatter [its]^{**} political authority in the Indian subcontinent ... were at hand in the Middle East” (Darwin, Britain and Decolonization 110).

Accordingly, several plans from the British political leaders, in addition to attempts of re-negotiating the pre-war treaties, were put to conserve the Arab World. Ernest Bevin and the Foreign Office for this purpose had drawn a plan of three different measures: first, they sought to expel French influence in the region by assuring independence for Syria and Lebanon, this would help them to win the Arabs’ hearts and minds. The second point was to bring social and economic projects to develop the region, and to gain friends among the

* The original slogan is “no taxation without representation” used during the American Revolution began in 1775.

** The author used the word “Britain’s”, and I substituted it by “its” to avoid repetition.

radicals and nationalists. And the third point was about the pre-war treaties renegotiation and renewal, and above all the reduction of the military presence in the region (Ibid 112).

Another important plan was the one of the General Bernard Montgomery*. This military man associated the British withdrawal from Egypt with all the regions of the Middle East. Montgomery brought a list of conditions to leave Egypt, demanding air bases in Lybia, land and air bases in Cyprus and Transjordan, a strong position in Sudan and full military rights in Palestine (Ibid 115). With All those policies, Britain failed to settle an appropriate plan for consolidating Arab nationalists all over Middle Eastern regions brought an inevitable decline of its empire. Consequently, the nationalists proved the legitimacy of their demands, and the great age of decolonization and independence began.

France and Britain (the two dominant powers in the Arab World) withdrew and the rapid decline of their supremacy began. France evacuated Syria and Lebanon in 1945 and then withdrew from North Africa gradually with considerable bloodshed. Britain withdrew almost without bloodshed (except in Palestine). Transjordan became an independent monarchy in 1946, Sudan in 1956 after the granting of self-determination in 1953. Iraq declared independent in 1932 became fully sovereign by 1955 after The Baghdad Pact. Egypt, in 1954, signed the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty, which is an agreement over her independence and the Canal Zone evacuation. Kuwait, too, was declared independent in 1961.

Examining the events behind this mass of independence, the war had brought a new class of nationalists known as “the non-collaborators”. This class had emerged and was the core of the population who was disillusioned by the conduct of the pre-war leaders still in power. As mentioned before, these pre-war leaders were merely pro-Western puppets acting under the authority of Great Britain. They failed to go beyond the formation of The League of Arab States (LAS), which was in reality “a Western Arab league”. Sharabi argues the

* Commander of the British Eight Army in Africa from 1942, he won the battle of Al-Alamein, Egypt, against the Nazi General, Erwin Rommel.

Westernization of the League by the fact that it kept and strengthened “the foreign-created political structures” (11). Accordingly, “the league fell far short of the hopes and aspirations of most Arab nationalists” (Ibid, 10). According to the same historian, the league lost a great amount of its prestige sharply after the Arabs defeat in Palestine in 1948, and the formation of the Zionist State in the same year.

This period was marked a great deal of violence and fierce opposition among the Arabs themselves in the Middle East. However, it was the age of *coup d'état*, on the old system and its leaders, to shape the new order. These developments, according to Sharabi, “transformed established patterns of political life in the Arab World and ushered in a wholly new phase of political action and organization” (11). In turn, it established strong opposing systems to Western influence and challenged them to get independence. These *coup d'état* had reached almost all the Arab states, Syria had known two in the same year (1949), Egypt (1952), Iraq (1958).

All the success achieved by British policies after the First World War had fallen apart by the end of the Second World War. This was because of the emergence of several factors that helped Arab nationalists in their fight over the imperialists. Britain had recklessly run behind securing its interests in the Middle East region obsessed with the idea of the Great Power status and the Empire. This is why several historians say that it invented the Commonwealth of Nations just to preserve its status and prestige as a great dominant country. By 1950s, the British Empire came to its end, and the nationalists from Arab World granted their self-ruling. Historians had long proved that Nationalism is inevitable, just as Alexis de Tocqueville, a French political writer and statesman, predicted the fall of the former Great Powers (Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Austria), and the rise of the new powers, such as the United States of America.

One of the strongest factors that led to the forced retreat of the British Empire from the Arab World was Nationalism and the strong desire of the Arabs to get independence and rule themselves by themselves. This retreat had occurred gradually because of the British determination to maintain this region under their domination because it represented the most important part of their empire.

The first chapter demonstrated the scramble of the Great Powers over the Ottoman Empire, and that Britain was the power which had most taken advantage from the disintegration of the Ottoman realm. Accordingly, Britain had secured itself the region of the Middle East which became the most sensitive part of its empire. At this stage, one gets a broad idea about the circumstances surrounding Britain's settlement in this region, its first steps as well as its early efforts and arrangements to settle in the area. The British determination to maintain the Middle East under its control, also, pushed the Foreign Office to persuade the other Great Powers such as France and Russia, and even to convince the League of Nations to grant the British Crown that right.

The second chapter shows the threats of the indigenous peoples over the position that Britain had given itself in their own regions. Here then, we understand the feeling of Nationalism amongst the Arabs, and the events behind this feeling which challenged strongly the power of Britain. Arab nationalism of 1910s, as shown in the chapter, had its stronger version during the 1920s directed to the Western Powers after having directly challenged the Ottomans during the Arab Great Revolt encouraged by the British themselves.

In the third and the last chapter, we have seen Britain trying to avert the Arab awakening by different means. Several stratagems were mounted and tried just to contain the Arab irritation and to change the course of events, which was obviously against British

interests. In addition, this chapter shows that the coming of the Second World War had a great impact on the world events and on the Nationalists by giving them the golden chance to realize their dreams of self-determination. This impact, as we have seen, was due to several factors, which, in fact, led to the emergence of the new independent Arab States.

Finally, nationalism was one of the crucial factors that challenged the presence of the European Empires, and more particularly the British Empire, in the Arab World, and changed the set of rules and principles that for so long a time dominated world affairs. Alone, it represented a real crisis that such a great imperial system as the British one could not overcome after being once its direct catalyst. That Nationalism tolled the bells of decline for the European Empires and marked the beginning of the Great Age of decolonization. Because if the British had somehow succeeded in maintaining their imperial position in the Middle East during the inter-war years, any reinstatement of that position after 1945 seemed utterly impossible.

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