

## The Last Ottoman Generation and the Making of the Modern Middle East

The modern Middle East emerged out of the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, when Britain and France partitioned the Ottoman Arab lands into several new colonial states. The following period was a charged and transformative time of unrest. Insurgent leaders, trained in Ottoman military tactics and with everything to lose from the fall of the empire, challenged the mandatory powers in a number of armed revolts. This is a study of this crucial period in Middle Eastern history, tracing the period through popular political movements and the experience of colonial rule. In doing so, Provence emphasizes the continuity between the late Ottoman and Colonial era, explaining how national identities emerged, and how the seeds were sown for many of the conflicts which have defined the Middle East in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. This is a valuable read for students of Middle Eastern history and politics.

**Michael Provence** teaches Middle East history at the Department of History at the University of California, San Diego. He is the author of *The Great Syrian Revolt and the Rise of Arab Nationalism* (2005).

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 Michael Provence  
 Frontmatter  
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Advance praise for *The Last Ottoman Generation and the Making of the Modern Middle East*

“A brilliant new history that captures the Ottoman foundations of the modern Middle East in the decades between the First and Second World Wars. The hopes and disappointments of the interwar years shaped the Arab world down to the present day. Engagingly written, Michael Provence brings this era to life for readers today.”

Eugene Rogan,  
 Professor of Modern Middle Eastern History,  
 St. Antony’s College, University of Oxford

“This is a wonderfully original book, a merciless reconstruction of the British and French mandates in the Middle East as local contemporaries would have experienced them. The end of Ottoman rule in the eastern Arab world did not mark the end of ‘the oppression of alien rulers’. Instead, the imposition of British and French rule in the 1920s introduced an almost permanent state of counterinsurgency, surveillance by agents of the state, and long periods of martial law. Particularly in Syria and Palestine, the new arrangements aroused deep resentment and outbreaks of passionate hostility.

Provence describes the manifestations of colonial rule through the eyes of the ‘last Ottoman generation’, whose early lives had in no way prepared them for the rigours of colonialism. He exposes the sham of the Permanent Mandates Commission, and the ways in which its structure completely excluded colonial subjects. It was a far cry from the days when the subjects would petition the sultan and often gain redress for their requests. This is a masterly evocation of a lost world, and of a much harsher new world, and of the lives that were bisected by the end of the Ottoman Empire.”

Peter Sluglett,  
 Visiting Research Professor,  
 Middle East Institute,  
 National University of Singapore

“This remarkable work examines how the peoples of the Middle East perceived their present and future before the cataclysm of World War I, famine and death, Ottoman collapse, and foreign occupation completely reshaped their region. Instead of looking at the main features that we think of when we look back on the twentieth century in the Middle East, *The Last Ottoman Generation and the Making of the Modern Middle East* rather starts with the hopes and expectations of an elite, in what became the separate Arab states and Turkey, that in many respects shared a common background, expectations, and outlook. This is an original and illuminating interpretation of events in a region that is still deeply affected by the transformations that Michael Provence illustrates so perceptively.”

Rashid Khalidi,  
 Edward Said Professor of Modern Arab Studies,  
 Columbia University

“Michael Provence’s book is a revelation. Casting aside the old pieties of state nationalism, Provence sets the story of the Arab Middle East in the first half of the twentieth century squarely in the context of the late-Ottoman scene, bringing to life the world of soldiers, politicians and intellectuals struggling to cope with the loss of the Ottoman system, which they believed was a fairer dispensation than the colonial nation states imposed on the Middle East in the wake of World War I. Deeply researched and written in clear, compelling prose, this book is essential reading for anyone who wants a deeper understanding of the history of the modern Middle East.”

Laila Parsons, Associate Professor,  
 Department of History and Classical Studies,  
 McGill University

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Michael Provence

*University of California, San Diego*



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## Contents

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<i>List of Figures</i>	page viii
<i>List of Maps</i>	ix
<i>List of Tables</i>	x
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xi
<i>Notes on Transliteration</i>	xiii
<i>List of Abbreviations</i>	xiv
<i>Maps</i>	xv
<i>Political and Military Figures of the Last Ottoman Generation</i>	xix
Introduction	1
Saladin's Pilgrims and the War to End Wars	1
Modernity, Militarism, and Colonialism in the Making of the Middle East	5
Legacies	6
1 Ottoman Modernity in the Long Nineteenth Century:	
Training State Servants and Making Citizens	9
Modern Education and a Late Ottoman Childhood	10
Modernizing the State	11
Conscription	15
State Military Education and Elite Civil Education	18
Military Culture and Late Ottoman Society	26
The Military Academy and Staff College	28
Modern Infrastructure	29
Ottoman Sons Become Saviors of the Nation	32
Civilian Politicians and Civil-School Graduates	46
Conclusions	48
2 The Theory and Practice of Colonialism in the Post-Ottoman Middle East	56
Wartime Arrangements and Proclamations	60
The Paris Peace Conference and Post-War Negotiations	68
	v

vi	Contents	
	The San Remo Conference and the Treaty of Sèvres	71
	The League of Nations and Anglo-French Colonialism in the Middle East	73
	Mandate Governance in Practice	84
	The Mandate in Palestine	87
	The Mandate in Syria and Lebanon	89
	The Mandate in Iraq and Transjordan	92
	Conclusions	95
3	Losing the War and Fighting the Settlement: The Post-Ottoman Middle East Takes Shape, 1918–1922	101
	The Battle of Nablus and the End of the Ottoman Empire	102
	Allenby and Faysal in Damascus	104
	Popular Struggle after the Armistice	108
	The Anatolian Model and Hope for Salvation, 1920	112
	San Remo and the Nabi Musa Demonstrations in Jerusalem	115
	Iraq in Revolt	117
	Anatolia and Cilicia	118
	Syria and Maysalun	120
	Churchill Salvages the Settlement	123
	Palestine May Day Riots 1921	125
	Ibrahim Hananu Puts the Settlement on Trial	130
	Events in Anatolia	135
	Yasin Paşa Returns to Iraq	137
	The Last Sultan	140
	Conclusions	141
4	League of Nations Hopes and Disappointments: the Return of Armed Struggle in the Post-Ottoman Era, 1923–1927	147
	The Lausanne Conference	149
	The League of Nations Picks up the Pieces	151
	The End of the Caliphate	154
	Military Confrontation Eclipsed	155
	Civilian Politicians in Damascus and Jerusalem	156
	Shakib Arslan in Exile	159
	The Rise of Yasin al-Hashimi and the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty	161
	Armed Insurgency in the French Mandates	163
	France Salvages its Mandate	168
	William Rappard, the League of Nations, and France	171
	The End of the Syrian Revolt	177
	Damage Control at Geneva, 1926	178

Contents	vii
Aftermath of the Syrian Revolt	181
Conclusions: Colonial Anxieties and Imperial Rivalries	183
5 Colonial Constitutions and Treaties: Post-Ottoman Militarism, 1927–1936	190
Constitutions and Colonial Treaties: Iraq	191
Syria and Lebanon	193
Transjordan	195
Palestine: 1928 and 1929	196
Nuri al-Saʿid Delivers: The Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of 1930	202
Syrian Elections and Martial Law	203
Independent Iraq	206
Iraqi Independence and its Discontents	207
Ibrahim Hananu and a False Start for the Franco-Syrian Treaty	211
Desperation in Palestine and the Death of Musa Kazim al-Husayni	212
Yasin al-Hashimi Retires and then Returns	214
Fawzi al-Qawuqji in Baghdad	218
Ibrahim Hananu Exits the Scene	219
Conclusions	222
6 The Final Days of the Last Ottoman Generation, 1936–1938	227
General Strikes in Syria and Palestine	228
The Palestine Revolt	231
The Franco-Syrian Treaty and Syrian “Independence”	239
The Fall of Yasin Paşa al-Hashimi	241
Yasin Paşa in Exile among the Syrians	247
The Death and Funeral of Yasin al-Hashimi	251
Conclusions	254
7 Epilogue and Conclusions	261
Saladin’s Companions and the Beginning of the End for Anglo-French Colonialism in the Middle East	262
The Alexandretta Crisis	263
The Peel Commission and the End of the Palestine Mandate	265
General Amnesty in Syria	266
The End of the League of Nations Mandates	267
The Mandate Inheritance in the Arab East	270
<i>Select Bibliography</i>	275
<i>Index</i>	285

## Figures

---

1.1	Ottoman-Arab School Kids, <i>c.</i> 1900 (collection of Dr. Wolf-Dieter Lemke)	page 20
1.2	Beirut Rüşdiyye, <i>c.</i> 1895 (Library of Congress, Abdul-Hamid Photo Collection)	22
1.3	Rüşdiyye Students, <i>c.</i> 1895 (Library of Congress, Abdul-Hamid Photo Collection)	23
1.4	al-Maktab al-San'i <sup>c</sup> Inauguration, Beirut (Lemke Collection)	32
1.5	Hamidian Clock Tower, Jaffa (Lemke Collection)	37
1.6a	Two Views of the Ottoman Constitutional Restoration, 1908–9 (Lemke Collection)	41
1.6b	Two Views of the Ottoman Constitutional Restoration, 1908–9 (Lemke Collection)	42
2.1	Balkan War Cartoon, 1912 (Lemke Collection)	61
2.2	Yasin al-Hashimi and Kaiser Wilhelm, at Galician Front, July 1917 (IWM, w/permission)	64
2.3	Mandates Section Staff. William Rappard at right, <i>c.</i> 1922 (League of Nations Archive, w/permission)	75
2.4	Mandates Commission, <i>c.</i> 1922 (League of Nations Archive, w/permission)	76
2.5	Syrian–Palestinian Congress, August 1921, Arslan at right (League of Nations Archive, w/permission)	80
3.1	Dr. Shahbandar Prison Postcard, 1922 (Lemke Collection)	133
3.2	Yasin al-Hashimi, Civilian Politician, <i>c.</i> 1920s (Courtesy al-Daftari Family)	138
7.1	Demonstration in Iskandarun, 1936, reads, “A demonstration of the Arab Muslims, Christians, Alawites, Jews, and Armenians acclaiming the Syrian Arab flag in the town of Iskandarun.” From <i>al-Mussawar</i> , November 6, 1936 (author’s collection)	264



## Maps

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1 Ottoman Empire in 1908	<i>page xv</i>
2 Ottoman Empire in 1914	xvi
3 Wartime Partition Plans	xvii
4 Post-Ottoman Middle East, 1921–3	xviii

## Tables

---

1 Military Officers	<i>page</i> xx
2 Civilians	xxi
3 Non-Ottoman Figures	xxiii

## Acknowledgements

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This book got its start during a year spent in Beirut in 2005–6 supported by the Fulbright Program and AUB. The year ended with a war that caused me, my travel and life companion Lor Wood, and our then two-year-old son, August, to flee for Damascus. That July 2006, we briefly joined, in far better circumstances than most, thousands of Lebanese refugees moving east toward Damascus, where there were already a million Iraqi refugees from the invasion and occupation of Iraq. On the streets of Damascus, our old friend Adel Samara shouted a greeting, jumped out of a taxi, ran across six lanes of traffic, swept us up, and restored our faith in humanity and the endlessly restorative properties of Syrian cooking. We traveled on to Aleppo, Adana, and Istanbul, generously helped by everyone we met along the way. Many old and new friends had embraced us warmly in that year. Abdul-Rahim Abu Husayn, Stefan Weber, John Meloy, Clare Leader, Helen Sadr, Samir Seikaly, Jamal Wakim, Martha Mundy, Max Weiss, Mary Wilson, Cyrus Schayegh, Karim Makdisi, and Hala Dimechkie, Kirstin Scheid, Tariq Tell, Jocelyn De Jong, Nadia Maria el Cheikh, and Amelie Beyhum all helped make Beirut, like Damascus before it, the home I always want to return to. I was lucky to enjoy memorable lunches with the late Kamal Salibi.

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xii Acknowledgements

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## Notes on Transliteration

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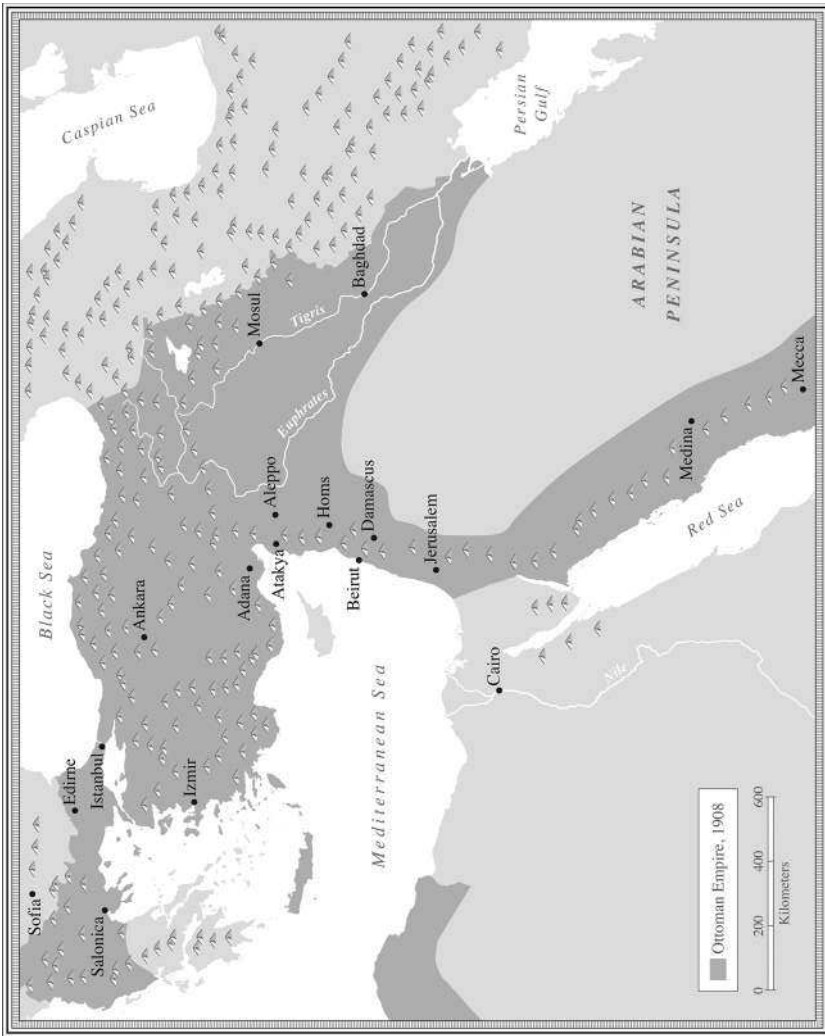
Transliteration of words, names, and places is a vexing problem in a work such as this, dealing as it does, with Arabic, Ottoman, and modern Turkish, and a variety of states and institutions, many of which imposed, and changed, their own names, spellings, and even alphabets. Names, titles, and places I have rendered in the fashion most common to English speakers. Villages and towns not widely known outside the region, I have rendered in Modern Turkish or a simplified Arabic transliteration according to post-WWII borders. Names of individuals I have rendered into modern Turkish or Arabic transliteration based mostly upon the place they ended up after 1918, which is to say the Turkish Republic or various Arab countries. The names of Ottoman schools, institutions, ranks, and titles I have rendered in modern Turkish wherever they happened to be. I have also made some possibly quixotic choices that may seem logical only to me. A case in point is Yasin Paşa al-Hashimi, in which I give the Arabic transliteration of his name, and the modern Turkish rendering of his Ottoman-bestowed title. I have followed my ear in using Arabic given and family names: usually complete (Fawzi al-Qawuqji), sometimes with the definite article (al-Qawuqji) and occasionally without (Qawuqji), or with the given name only (Fawzi).

## List of Abbreviations

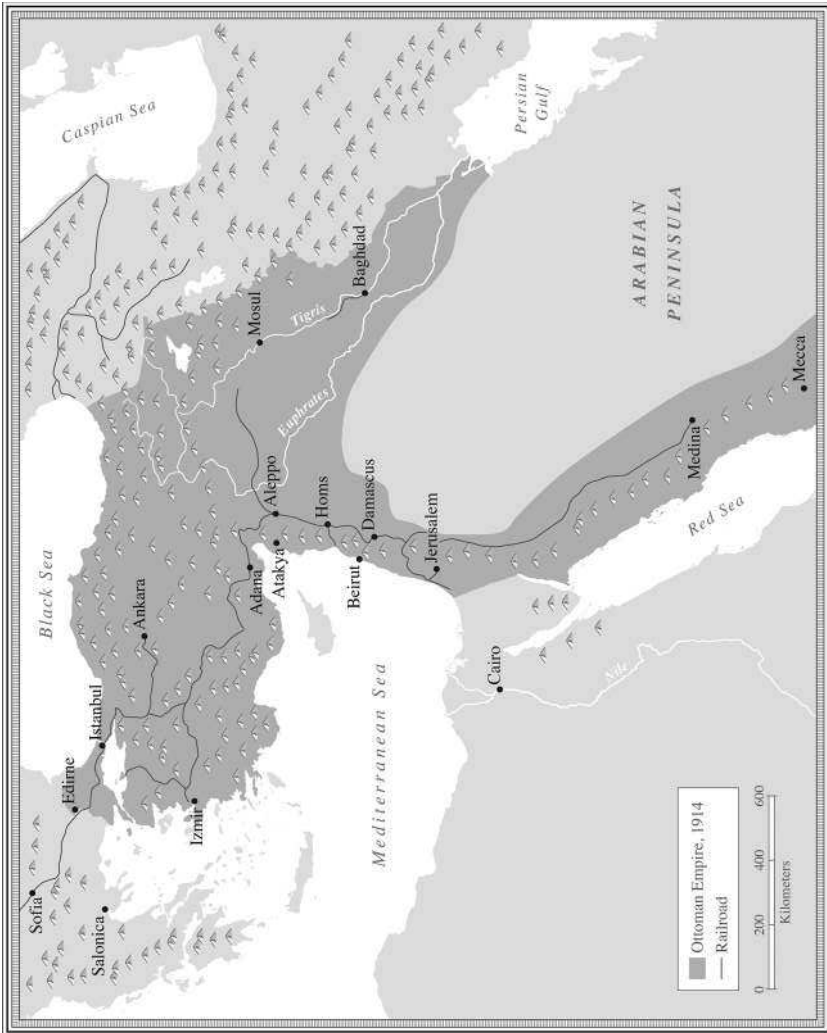
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AUB	American University of Beirut
BNA	British National Archives
CO	British Colonial Office
FO	British Foreign Office
IFEAD	Institut Française d'Études Arabes de Damas
<i>IJMES</i>	<i>International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies</i>
MAE	French Ministère des Affaires Etrangères
MWT	Markaz al-Watha'iq al-Tarikhiyya (Syrian National Archives)
SHAT	Service Historique de l'Armée Terre
LN	League of Nations Archives
IU	Istanbul University Archival Collection

Maps

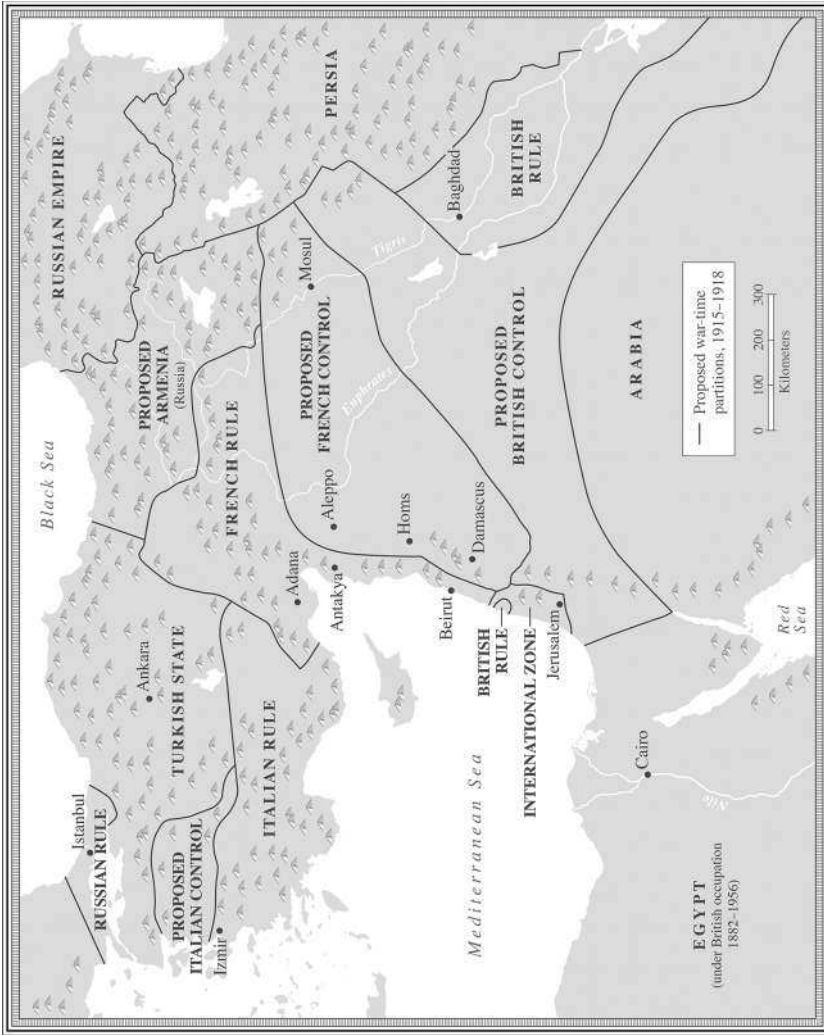


Map 1. Ottoman Empire in 1908

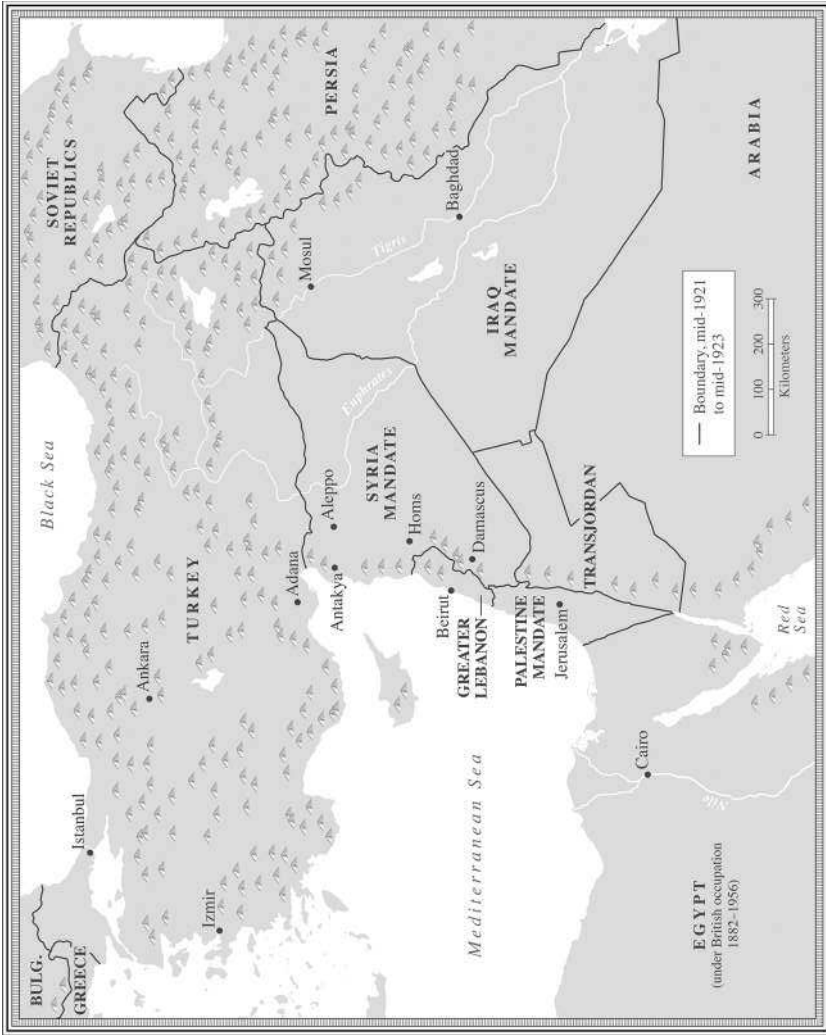


Map 2. Ottoman Empire in 1914





Map 3. Wartime Partition Plans



Map 4. Post-Ottoman Middle East, 1921-3

## Political and Military Figures of the Last Ottoman Generation

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Ottoman State education was divided between civil and military systems. At the pinnacle of the military system was the staff college (Erkân-i Harbiyye Askeriyye), which accepted no more than 10 percent of military-academy (Mekteb-i Ulûm-i Harbiyye) graduates, most of whom had received ten or more years of intensive state schooling. The Mülkiye (Mekteb-i Mülkiye-i Şahane) was similarly the pinnacle of the civil system, though less selective than the staff college. Both were intended to train high civil and military functionaries. Some Mülkiye graduates continued to the law college (Mekteb-i Hukuk-i Şahane), and some transferred from one system to the other.

Table 1. *Military Officers*

Name	Place and birth date	Education	Position, Nov. 1918	Post-war vocation	Death
Sa'ïd al-As	Hama, 1889	Staff College, Istanbul	Jailed middle-rank Ottoman staff officer	Insurgent leader, policeman	In battle, Palestine, 1936
Yusuf al-'Azma	Damascus, 1883	Staff College, Istanbul; Kriegsakademie, Berlin	Senior Ottoman staff officer	Politician	In battle, Syria, 1920
Bakr Sidqi	Kirkuk, 1890	Staff College, Istanbul; Britain, India	Middle-rank Ottoman staff officer	Senior officer, politician	Assassinated, Mosul, 1937
Ja'far al-Askari	1885, Mosul	Military academy, Istanbul; Kriegsakademie, Berlin	Captured middle-rank Ottoman officer	Politician	Assassinated, Baghdad, 1936
Yasin al-Hashimi	Baghdad, 1884	Staff College, Istanbul	Senior Ottoman staff officer	Politician	Alleged heart attack, 1937
Taha al-Hashimi	Baghdad, 1888	Staff College, Istanbul	Senior Ottoman staff officer	Senior officer, politician	London, 1961
Ramadan Shallash	Zur province, 1879	Tribal School; military academy, Istanbul	Middle-rank Ottoman officer	Insurgent leader	Alive in 1950
Mustafa Kemal	Salonika, 1881	Staff College, Istanbul	Senior Ottoman staff officer	Politician	Istanbul, 1938
Mustafa İsmet (İnönü)	Izmir/Malatya, 1888	Staff College, Istanbul	Middle-rank Ottoman staff officer	Politician	Ankara, 1973
Fawzi al-Qawuqji	Tripoli, 1890	Military academy, Istanbul; St Cyr, France	Middle-rank Ottoman officer	Insurgent	Beirut, 1977
Nuri al-Sa'ïd	Baghdad, 1888	Military academy, Istanbul	Captured middle-rank Ottoman officer	Politician	Assassinated, Baghdad, 1958
Mahmud Şevket Paşa,	Baghdad, 1856	Staff college, Istanbul; Kriegsakademie, Berlin	Assassinated as Grand Vizir Istanbul 1913	Dead in 1913	Assassinated, Istanbul, 1913

Table 2. *Civilians*

Name	Place and birth date	Education	Position, Nov. 1918	Post-war vocation	Death
(Muhammad) Amin al-Husayni	Jerusalem, 1895	Al-Azhar, Cairo, Mülkiye, Istanbul	Ottoman reserve officer	Politician, Mufti	1974, Beirut
Ibrahim Hananu	Near Aleppo, 1869	Mülkiye; Mekteb-i Hukuk, Istanbul	Senior Ottoman governor and administrator. Aleppo municipal council	Politician, lawyer, insurgent	Tuberculosis, Aleppo, 1935
Musa Kazim al-Husayni	Jerusalem, 1853	Mülkiye, Istanbul	Retired Ottoman governor and administrator	Politician	Police beating/old age, Jerusalem, 1934
Shakib Arslan	Mount Lebanon, 1869	Beirut Sultani	Member of Ottoman parliament, envoy to Berlin	Journalist, activist	Beirut, 1946
Ihsan al-Jabiri	Baghdad, 1892	Mülkiye Mekteb-i Hukuk, Istanbul	Lawyer and judge, Baghdad	Politician, lawyer	Beirut, 1965
Rashid 'Ali al-Kaylani	Damascus, 1876	Idadiye Damascus (Maktab 'Anbar)	Journalist and publisher	Literary scholar, journalist	Damascus, 1953
Muhammad Kurd 'Ali	Damascus, 1894	Sorbonne, Paris	Spent war years in France	Politician	Cairo, 1960
Jamil Mardam Bey	Damascus, 1880	Syrian Protestant College (AUB)	Physician, exiled ex-Ottoman politician. Joined and left Unionist Party. Fled Damascus during World War I.	Politician, physician, exiled 1925–37	Assassinated, Damascus, 1940
(Muhammad) Rashid Rida	Tripoli (Qalamun), 1865	Tripoli and al-Azhar, Cairo with Muhammad 'Abduh	Damascus after 1908. Returned to Cairo before 1914, and returned to Damascus in 1918.	Scholar, cleric, journalist/publisher	Cairo, 1935

*(continued)*

Table 2. (*cont.*)

Name	Place and birth date	Education	Position, Nov. 1918	Post-war vocation	Death
Shukri al-Quwati	Damascus, 1891	Mülkiye, Istanbul	Prison in Damascus	Politician, prime minister	Beirut, 1967
Rustum Haydar	Baalbak, 1889	Mülkiye, Istanbul Sorbonne, Paris	Fled Ottoman Damascus to join Faysal, August 1918.	Politician, lawyer	Assassinated, Baghdad, 1940
Sa'îd Haydar	Baalbak, 1890	Mekteb-i Hukuk, Istanbul	Lawyer, professor of law, Damascus University	Lawyer, politician, exiled 1925–37	Damascus, 1957
Hashim al-Atasi	Homs, 1875	Mülkiye, Istanbul	Serving Ottoman governor and administrator	Politician, prime minister	Homs, 1960
Jamal al-Husayni	Jerusalem, 1894	Syrian Protestant College (AUB)	Ottoman reserve (conscript) officer	Activist, politician	Saudi Arabia, 1982

Table 3. *Non-Ottoman Figures*

Name	Place and birth date	Education	Position, Nov. 1918	Post-war vocation	Death
Edmund Allenby	England, 1861	Staff College, Camberley	Senior staff officer, Occupied Enemy Territory Administration (OETA)	1917–20	London, 1936
Léon Blum	France, 1872	École normale supérieure, Sorbonne, Paris	Official of the French Socialist Party	Prime Minister, 1936–7, briefly 1938	Paris, 1950
Robert de Caix	France, 1869	École Libre des Sciences Politiques, Paris	Journalist and editor, leader <i>parti colonial</i>	Mandate 1920–3. PMC 1924–39	Paris, 1970
Kinahan Cornwallis	USA, 1883	Oxford	1916–20 Director, Arab Bureau	Advisor, Iraqi Interior Ministry	Hampshire, England, 1959
David Lloyd George	England, 1863	Local church and home school	British prime minister, 1916–22	Politician, retired	Wales, 1945
Henri Gouraud	France, 1867	Military academy, St. Cyr	Senior staff officer, 4th Army	First French Mandate HC, 1920–3	Paris, 1946
Georges Clemenceau	France, 1841	Lycée, Nantes	French prime minister, 1917–20	retired	Paris, 1929
Henry de Jouvenel	France, 1876	Collège Stanislas de Paris	Journalist, reserve officer, western front	High Commissioner Syria, 1925–6	Paris, 1935
T.E. Lawrence	Wales, 1888	Oxford	Middle-rank reserve officer	Various	England, 1935
William Rappard	New York, 1883	Harvard, Vienna	Professor, University of Geneva	League of Nations PMC Director	Geneva, 1958
Maurice Sarrail	France, 1856	Military academy, St. Cyr	Senior staff officer, dismissed	Mandate HC 1924–5	Paris, 1929
Herbert Samuel	England, 1870	Oxford	Politician	First British Palestine Mandate HC 1920–5	London, 1963