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## **Westphalian Sovereignty Comes to the Arab World**

Westphalian sovereignty emerged in the contemporary Arab world in a gradual, yet discontinuous, fashion. Some nationalist leaderships championed the strategic interests of their respective countries immediately after the First World War, whereas others remained committed to the goal of establishing an amalgamated political entity into the early 1950s. In some cases, the shift to a foreign policy predicated on the existence of self-interested, territorially bounded states took place even before the country concerned gained formal independence, and well before it won effective autonomy from its imperial overlords. Other nationalist leaders continued to pursue strategic and diplomatic programs oriented toward setting up an integrated regional polity long after their countries became independent not only *de jure* but also *de facto*. Consequently, the turn to Westphalian sovereignty in the Middle East is connected only tangentially to the winning of national independence.

Egypt and Tunisia represent important cases in which the leadership of the local nationalist movement adopted crucial components of Westphalian

sovereignty comparatively early on. Even before they had gained de jure independence from Britain and France, respectively, Egyptian and Tunisian nationalists started to carry out foreign policies that reflected the exclusive interests of their own individual countries. The leaderships of Jordan and Iraq, by contrast, persisted in advocating the formation of a unified Arab political entity long after these two countries had secured de facto independence from Britain. Syria falls between the two extremes: nationalist leaders in Damascus shifted from what might loosely be called a multilateralist posture to one predicated on narrow self-interest during the early 1940s. Before setting out to explain the variation that is evident in these five cases, it will be useful to survey the divergent paths by which these five leaderships came to adopt foreign policy orientations congruent with the tenets of Westphalian sovereignty.

### *Egypt's Early Turn*

Nationalist leaders exerted little direct influence over Egypt's external affairs from 1882, when British troops seized control of the country, to the outbreak of the First World War. British advisers orchestrated the most important aspects of relations with surrounding states from behind the scenes, while the country's nominal ruler, the Khedive 'Abbas II, pursued the chimera of revivifying the Ottoman Empire by snatching for himself the venerable title of Successor to the Prophet (*khalifah*) from the sultan in Istanbul. To this end, 'Abbas covertly patronized the publication and distribution of a succession of tracts and periodicals that championed Egypt's role as political, cultural, and religious leader of the western half of the Muslim world.<sup>1</sup> This strategy complemented a succession of complex diplomatic intrigues, whereby the khedive jockeyed continuously with the Ottoman ruler, Sultan 'Abdulhamid II, to seize the initiative in dealing with the great powers of Europe.<sup>2</sup>

Egypt's most important nationalist organization during the first decade of the twentieth century, the National Party (al-Hizb al-Watani) led by Mustafa Kamil, espoused an intricate foreign policy that combined tactical cooperation with Britain's primary European rivals on one hand and strategic collaboration with the Ottoman Empire on the other.<sup>3</sup> The presumption that Egypt shared fundamental strategic interests with the world's preeminent

Islamic power led the party's newspaper *al-Liwa* to print a series of articles that castigated the ruler of Kuwait, Shaikh Mubarak Al Sabah, for engaging in diplomatic activities that contributed to the fragmentation of Ottoman Iraq. At the same time, the newspaper applauded the decision to build the Hijaz railway, a project that promised to enhance Ottoman control over the two holy cities of Mecca and al-Madinah.<sup>4</sup> In 1905, *al-Liwa* ran what one British official called "a series of violent Pan-Islamic articles," in response to concerted efforts by Russia and Austria-Hungary to force the Ottoman government to cede authority over the fiscal administration of Macedonia to the International Finance Commission.<sup>5</sup>

It would be too simplistic to say that al-Hizb al-Watani advocated the reintegration of Egypt into the Ottoman Empire. Closer to the mark is Dennis Walker's observation that the nationalist leadership harbored a pervasive "sense of international Muslim community [that], while awarding the central role to Turkey, instead envisaged a far wider association than the Ottoman political community that had once united Egypt and Turkey in one state."<sup>6</sup> In any case, the party's underlying vision is hard to reconcile with the principles of Westphalian sovereignty. Walker notes that "al-Hizb al-Watani's commitment to Egypt's political entity was not nationalism of the exclusive total Western type dividing humanity up into atomistic nation-state units with freedom to fluidly alter associations formed with other nation units as change of interest decrees. [Mustafa] Kamil's Egyptian nation could not gain the singleness of commitment exacted by the European nation because al-Hizb al-Watani's thought imposed a plurality of political communities, the pan-Islamic as well as the nation."<sup>7</sup> Party leaders in fact consistently argued against those who asserted that Arab interests conflicted with those of the empire as a whole, and on occasion branded as a traitor anyone who advocated Arab independence.<sup>8</sup>

Consequently, the nationalist leadership in Cairo found itself ill-prepared to deal with security challenges that emanated from Istanbul. One such episode occurred in January 1906, when the British Frontier Administration Officer for the Sinai peninsula, Jennings Bramly, received orders to set up a permanent border post at Umm Rashrash, adjacent to the port of al-'Aqaba.<sup>9</sup> The Ottoman military commander in the district quickly demanded that the new outpost be dismantled, and ordered his troops to occupy the nearby fishing village of Taba. Bramly pulled his small force out of Umm Rashrash, but returned a week later with reinforcements from Egypt. Hesitant to

engage the entrenched Turkish garrison in combat, he ordered his troops to take up positions on an island facing Taba harbor. Over the next two months, British and Ottoman units sparred with one another, not only along the northern shores of the Gulf of 'Aqaba but also in the area around Rafah on the Mediterranean coast. Then, at the beginning of May, British officials threatened to undertake "stiff measures" against the Ottoman authorities unless they accepted a broad reconfiguration of Sinai boundaries that would accord Egypt control over both Taba in the east and Rafah in the west.<sup>10</sup> Unable to rally Britain's European rivals to the defense of the empire, the sultan backed down and recognized the revised border. What is most remarkable about this incident is the fact that the leaders of the National Party firmly opposed British policy, and openly expressed sympathy for the actions and interests of the Ottoman government. In the wake of the incident, the party once again enjoined its adherents to "strive to strengthen the relations of cordiality, the bonds and the integral connection between Egypt and the Sublime [Ottoman] State."<sup>11</sup>

Pro-Ottomanism continued to guide the nationalists' foreign policy after the death of Mustafa Kamil in 1908. The new leader of al-Hizb al-Watani, Muhammad Farid, advocated forging closer links to the empire following the coup d'état that brought the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) to power in Istanbul that July.<sup>12</sup> When, for instance, a group of Egyptian students based in London asked for his advice regarding whether one of their manifestos should call for the "total" independence of their home country, Farid urged them to omit the adjective in question, lest it alienate the CUP.<sup>13</sup> Leading figures of al-Hizb al-Watani lobbied the new regime in Istanbul to authorize Egypt to send delegates to the resurrected Ottoman parliament, and Farid journeyed to the Ottoman capital on two different occasions in 1909 to show his enthusiasm for the reinstatement of a constitutional order.<sup>14</sup> He publicly congratulated those Egyptian military officers who took up positions in the reorganized imperial armed forces and wrote a series of articles praising the administrative and cultural reforms the CUP introduced. Two years later, Farid published a scathing critique of what he called "the Arab unity movement," charging that it represented nothing more than a British plot to undermine the integrity of the Ottoman realm.<sup>15</sup>

On a more practical level, officials in Cairo imposed a comprehensive ban on imports from Austria-Hungary in the fall of 1908, after the CUP government in Istanbul announced that it intended to impose a boycott against

Austrian products.<sup>16</sup> A year later, Egyptian military personnel collaborated with Turkish officers in an unsuccessful plot to supplant French advisers in the armed forces of Morocco.<sup>17</sup> Shaikh 'Ali Yusif captured the general mood in nationalist circles in January 1911, when he wrote in *al-Mu'ayyad* that "Pan-Islam is to the Muslim the only bond, the only social union, to which he should give all his heart and his soul and his brains before all other considerations or social bonds. Muslims have never been in such need of a pan-Islamic union as they are today, when they are without a recognized country or home but are scattered under different skies and flags, living in poverty and humiliation among immigrants who eat the Muslims' bread."<sup>18</sup> Influential figures in Cairo quickly rallied to the Ottoman cause during the 1911-12 war with Italy for control of Libya: Prime Minister Muhammad Sa'id denounced as traitors all those who argued that the conflict offered an opportunity for Egypt to assert its independence from the empire, while Prince 'Umar Tusun led a public campaign to raise funds to finance the imperial war effort.<sup>19</sup> The popular committees that sprang up throughout the country collected large quantities of food and medical supplies for Ottoman units operating in Libya, and even helped volunteers to cross the western desert to take part in the fighting. Activists of al-Hizb al-Watani played a key role in coordinating these committees' activities.

June 1911 saw the appearance in Cairo of a secret society committed to liberating the whole of North Africa from European rule. Edmund Burke observes that "the initial reports did not name the group, but indications were that it included prominent Egyptian nationalist leaders and was supported by the khedive himself."<sup>20</sup> By the summer of 1912, this movement had evolved into a formal association, al-Ittihad al-Maghribi (Maghreb United), with close ties to a number of influential activists, including 'Ali Yusif and Ahmad Shara'i.<sup>21</sup> At the same time, al-Hizb al-Watani's leaders sharply criticized British plans to renovate the decaying fortifications that commanded the entrance to the port at Alexandria, on the grounds that the project would effectively sever Egypt's few remaining ties to Istanbul.<sup>22</sup> That fall, nationalist groups once again spearheaded a public campaign to collect provisions for Ottoman troops fighting in the Balkans.<sup>23</sup>

During the opening weeks of the First World War, senior government officials joined al-Hizb al-Watani nationalists in reaffirming their loyalty to the Ottoman Empire. The khedive, just before he was summarily deposed in December 1914, promulgated a decree that directed the Egyptian people to

do everything in their power to further imperial interests.<sup>24</sup> Prominent members of the royal family continued to harbor pronounced pro-Ottoman sympathies even after the deposition, as did a large segment of public opinion.<sup>25</sup> On the day that Prince Husain Kamil succeeded 'Abbas as ruler and assumed the new title of sultan, "in the Cairo Mosques the prayer for the Moslem Khalifa [i.e., the Ottoman head of state] was repeated three times in succession and each time response was general and loud, whereas that to the prayers for the Sultan of Egypt was feeble or inaudible."<sup>26</sup> In addition, a senior British adviser, Ronald Storrs, notes in his memoirs that "the harims, composed largely of Türkesses, are on the whole against us and imagine [the CUP minister of war] Enver as a pan-Islamic Superman in shining armour, ready and waiting to take away their reproach."<sup>27</sup> Meanwhile, in Istanbul, Muhammad Farid persuaded the shaikh al-Islam — the empire's senior religious scholar — to issue a *fatwa* that condemned Husain Kamil to death, on the grounds that he had "violated the authority of the Ottoman Caliphate over the Egyptian province, which was an integral part of the Ottoman Sultanate."<sup>28</sup> At the same time, the well-known nationalist journalist Shaikh 'Abd al-'Aziz Shawish was actively engaged in rallying assistance for the imperial war effort among the inhabitants of al-Hijaz.<sup>29</sup>

Concerted efforts to stamp out pro-Ottoman sentiment complemented British measures to suppress nationalist agitation throughout the war. Outspoken members of al-Hizb al-Watani, including Muhammad Farid, 'Abd al-'Aziz Shawish, 'Abd al-Malik Hamza, and Ahmad Tahir, found themselves banished for the duration of hostilities; almost all of these individuals gravitated to the Ottoman court. In their absence, a smaller organization, the Party of the Nation (Hizb al-Ummah) led by Ahmad Lutfi al-Sayyid, gained adherents in nationalist circles. This party advocated tactical cooperation with the British in return for a firm guarantee of Egypt's independence once the war came to a end.<sup>30</sup> More crucially, the party's newspaper *al-Jaridah* persistently remonstrated against the continuation of de jure Ottoman suzerainty over Egypt. As Ottoman fortunes on the battlefield faltered after 1915, even staunch pro-Ottomanists like Muhammad Farid began to assume a posture approximating the one adopted by Hizb al-Ummah.<sup>31</sup> Yet Storrs observes that the news of Sharif al-Husain bin 'Ali's capture of Mecca and Jiddah in June 1916 prompted Cairo's "Anglophobes, including nationalists, Khedivists, Turcophils, and Germanophils, [to throw] discredit upon the Sharif by representing him as a rebel against the Khalifa and the servile

instrument of the English."<sup>32</sup> The director of the Arab Intelligence Bureau noted in July 1917 that "those members of the [royal] family of Mohammad Ali who have shown any aptitude or capacity for rulership have also displayed those pro-Turkish and Anglophobe sentiments which are common to the bulk of the Pasha class, however skilfully they may conceal them when dealing with high British officials."<sup>33</sup> British officers continued until the very last months of the war to report that a majority of Egyptians exhibited pro-Ottoman leanings.<sup>34</sup>

Growing commitment to principles of Westphalian sovereignty became evident among government officials and nationalists alike in the aftermath of the First World War. At the time of the November 1918 armistice, the new sultan, Ahmad Fuad, remarked to the British high commissioner in Cairo that he expected Egypt before long to become a constitutional monarchy, with an elected parliament and a council of ministers.<sup>35</sup> This conversation set the stage for the momentous 13 November meeting between the high commissioner and a trio of prominent nationalists, in which the latter intended formally to inquire what Britain's plans for the future of the country might be. In the heat of the moment, 'Abd al-'Aziz Fahmi unexpectedly asserted that he and his colleagues had come to demand Egypt's "complete independence."<sup>36</sup> A second member of the trio, Sa'd Zaghlul, subsequently headed the main Egyptian delegation to the 1919 Paris peace conference, where he reiterated the call for "full national independence for Egypt" in numerous speeches and official memoranda.<sup>37</sup> When delegates from Syria, Lebanon, and Transjordan invited Zaghlul to join them in forming a united front to push for the independence of the Arab world as a whole, he pointedly replied that "Our problem is an Egyptian problem and not an Arab problem."<sup>38</sup> More significantly, the team of al-Hizb al-Watani activists that also took part in the proceedings abandoned all vestiges of the party's long-standing allegiance to the Ottoman Empire, and submitted a statement to the conference that explicitly advocated complete independence for Egypt and the Sudan.<sup>39</sup>

Zaghlul's allies and supporters formed the core of the most powerful post-war nationalist party (known as the Wafd), whose leadership affirmed not only Egypt's right to self-determination and independence from Britain, but also its total autonomy from the Ottoman Empire. The founding manifesto of the party, issued in late November 1918, proclaimed that the country's ties to the empire had been abolished in December 1914, when the British

authorities had declared Egypt to be a protectorate and elevated Husain Kamil to the post of sultan.<sup>40</sup> Negotiations between the Wafd and the British from mid-1919 to mid-1920 resulted in a provisional agreement according to whose terms Egypt would permit British forces to provide security for the Suez Canal and other vital lines of communication and protect the prerogatives of foreign nationals residing in the country, while Britain “will recognise the independence of Egypt as a constitutional monarchy with representative institutions” and relinquish control over the country’s foreign affairs.<sup>41</sup> When senior Egyptian officials fell over one another in their haste to associate themselves with the draft agreement, Zaghlul quickly upped the ante. Claiming that the Egyptian people would reject out of hand any arrangement that circumscribed the government’s right to administer all of the inhabitants and facilities situated within Egypt’s territorial boundaries, he refused to recommend that the proposal be submitted for ratification.<sup>42</sup> Meanwhile, in early November, Isma’il Sidqi wrote a commentary for the influential newspaper *al-Abram* in which he castigated British officials for failing to protect Egypt’s western frontiers against persistent encroachments by Italian forces based in Cyrenaica.<sup>43</sup>

Two more years of intense bargaining ensued, culminating in a unilateral declaration whereby Britain relinquished all responsibility for governing the country. A key provision of the document, which was published on 22 February 1922, was that the Egyptian foreign ministry be reestablished and Egyptian diplomats once again be posted to foreign capitals.<sup>44</sup> The declaration set in motion a complicated political and diplomatic process that led in April 1923 to the promulgation of a formal constitution, whose terms stipulated that “Egypt is a sovereign state, free and independent.”<sup>45</sup> Westphalian sovereignty thus became the basis for the Egyptian leadership’s posture toward the outside world as early as 1919, almost four years before the country gained *de jure* independence.<sup>46</sup>

### *Tunisia’s Early Turn*

With the establishment of the Protectorate in June 1883, French officials gained full authority over Tunisia’s internal and external affairs. Nevertheless, prominent opponents of European rule carried out a sort of pro-Ottoman foreign policy in the aftermath of the French occupation.

Several influential advisers to the former governor-general (*bey*) of Tunis, most notably Muhammad al-‘Arabi Zarruq, hastily decamped to the court of Sultan ‘Abdulhamid II in Istanbul. Others, including Muhammad bin al-Tayyib al-Naifar, remained in the country but seriously “considered asking help from the Ottoman Empire in order to have removed this hateful occupation by force or by political solution, because they believed that Tunisia was one of the kingdoms of the Ottoman Empire.”<sup>47</sup> Still others, among them Salim Bu Hajib and Muhammad al-Sanusi, forged close ties to the Cairo-based reformers Jamal al-Din al-Afghani and Muhammad ‘Abduh, who had begun openly advocating the creation of a worldwide Muslim union to combat the spread of European imperialism.<sup>48</sup> Muhammad al-Sanusi actively promoted the ideas and activities of the shadowy Paris-based, Pan-Islamist organization al-‘Urwa al-Wuthqa following his return from an extended trip to Cairo in 1882–83, and then orchestrated an enthusiastic welcome to Tunis for Muhammad ‘Abduh a year later.<sup>49</sup>

Popular demonstrations against the Protectorate erupted in the wake of ‘Abduh’s visit, prompting the authorities to arrest several of the most outspoken critics of French administration. Nicola Ziadeh observes that this incident set the stage for “the appearance, within a few years, of an organized body of reformers and patriots whose main activities were directed toward reforms within the frame of revived Islam.”<sup>50</sup> Such activists may have provided the nucleus for a local “secret society called al-jam’iya al-uthmaniya, which was formed during the mid-1880s in order to undermine the French occupation by strengthening Tunisian-Ottoman relations.”<sup>51</sup> Ziadeh connects the appearance of these “reformers and patriots” to a group known as al-Hadirah, after the weekly publication that was issued under its auspices and edited by ‘Ali Bu Shushah. The journal, which began publication in August 1888, announced that its primary objective was to protect “the interests of indigenous Tunisians that had been guaranteed by the establishment of the Protectorate,” as well as “to strengthen the ties between Tunisia and the Pan-Islamic movement.”<sup>52</sup> Besides printing articles that advocated wide-ranging administrative reform, improvements in education, and the protection of religious endowments (*awqaf* or *habus*), *al-Hadirah* published extensive reports on the domestic and foreign affairs of the Ottoman Empire. Its editors openly praised the restoration of the Ottoman constitution in 1908, a move that laid the legal foundation for a reintegration of Tunisia into the sultan’s domain.<sup>53</sup>

In December 1896, the group affiliated with *al-Hadirab* transformed itself into an organized society, called al-Jama'iyah al-Khalduniyyah, whose program celebrated the accomplishments of Islamic civilization in Tunisia and demanded the implementation of comprehensive reforms in the organizational structure and curriculum of the country's system of postsecondary education.<sup>54</sup> The new society's initial hegemony within the reform camp was challenged in 1901 by the return to Tunis of 'Abd al-'Aziz al-Tha'alibi, another associate of Muhammad 'Abduh in Cairo. In their writings and speeches, al-Tha'alibi, Muhammad al-Ja'ibi and other prominent critics of French rule consistently emphasized the historical and cultural distinctiveness of Tunisia, while pursuing what Ziadeh calls an overall "policy" of "Pan-Islamism."<sup>55</sup> Muhammad al-Fadil bin 'Ashur remarks that during the first years of the twentieth century, the members of al-Tha'alibi's circle believed that "Tunisia is nothing but a part of the Islamic Eastern Structure, which has gone through periods of glory and misfortune, exactly in the same way other countries have gone through them."<sup>56</sup>

Such ideas coalesced in 1907 with the appearance of the newspaper *Le Tunisien*, edited by 'Ali Bash Hanba. The paper urged the Arab inhabitants of Tunisia to struggle against the Protectorate to regain their legitimate "rights," which the French had usurped.<sup>57</sup> However, the paper argued, Tunisians were not yet capable of governing themselves. It was therefore necessary for the country to remain attached to a larger political entity, at least for the time being.<sup>58</sup> This theme was elaborated in a lengthy editorial by Bash Hanba that appeared in 1910: "Every Muslim is a supporter of Muslim union, and the Tunisians, to a man, are partisans of this policy and are attached to Pan-Ottomanism, which is a consequence of such an idea and a magnificent manifestation of it. If our modern education has given us a new mentality, we have, all the same, as Muslims reserved our strong loyalty to our brethren in every country. The Turks and Egyptians inspire us with feeling as much as our nearer neighbors in Algeria or the peoples in further Asia."<sup>59</sup> Sympathies like these blossomed into widespread popular support for the resistance to Italy's 1911-12 military campaign in Libya.<sup>60</sup> Shortly after the outbreak of the Libyan war, al-Tha'alibi founded a new Arabic-language newspaper, *World of the Muslims* (*Alam al-Muslimin*), while Bash Hanba set up an explicitly pro-Tripolitanian journal called *Islamic Unity* (*al-Ittihad al-Islami*), whose very title indicated "a definite orientation of his movement towards Pan-Islamism."<sup>61</sup>

Overt anti-French activity in Tunisia was forcibly suppressed in the spring of 1912, when leading critics of the Protectorate were either incarcerated or sent into exile. Several senior religious figures subsequently gathered in the Ottoman capital and set up the Committee for the Independence of Tunisia and Algeria, reportedly patterned on Egypt's al-Hizb al-Watani.<sup>62</sup> 'Ali Bash Hanba also ended up in Istanbul, where he became a founding member of the CUP-sponsored Pan-Islamic League, as well as the head of the imperial war ministry's Central Office for the Islamic Movement.<sup>63</sup> In addition, he authored a series of newspaper articles that implored the Ottoman authorities "to regain possession of Tripolitania, Tunisia and Algeria and extend their sovereignty to Morocco."<sup>64</sup> His brother Muhammad Bash Hanba took up residence in Switzerland, and in May 1916 started to publish the influential journal *La Revue du Maghreb*, which demanded an end to injustice and exploitation throughout North Africa and appealed to all Muslims living in the region to rally to the kaliphah under the banner of Islamic unity.<sup>65</sup> At the end of that same year, a collection of Tunisian exiles residing in Berlin organized a committee to work for the "united independence" (*independence integrale*) of Algeria and Tunisia, under the broad auspices of the Caliphate.<sup>66</sup> The committee tended to envisage the post-Protectorate order as one in which "each of the member countries would maintain their [sic] own political and cultural identity. This model [the group's leader, Salih al-Sharif al-Tunisi] compared with the German Empire, in which as he saw it, each of the constituent kingdoms and counties conducted its independent policies."<sup>67</sup>

As the First World War drew to a close, prominent opponents of French rule began to articulate more explicitly a demand for independence. In January 1918, *La Revue du Maghreb* printed a revised manifesto, which called on the international community to permit the people of Algeria and Tunisia, generally referred to as "*le peuple algéro-tunisien*," to determine their own future by holding a general referendum.<sup>68</sup> A year later, a group of activists dispatched a telegram to U.S. President Woodrow Wilson, entreating him to throw his support behind Algeria and Tunisia in their efforts to join the League of Nations; a second memorandum issued in February 1919 reiterated this request.<sup>69</sup> At the same time, the newly formed Comité Algéro-Tunisien published an open letter to the Paris peace conference that demanded "complete independence" for the two countries.<sup>70</sup> Yet the main thrust of the nationalist program continued to be the reinstatement of Tunisia's 1861 constitution. This objective served as the touchstone of an

overtly political organization that emerged in early 1920, Hizb al-Hurr al-Dusturi al-Tunisi, commonly known as the Destour Party. In fact, the party's original platform scrupulously avoided calling for Tunisian independence from France.<sup>71</sup>

More important, the Destour Party initially adopted a foreign policy posture that equated the interests of Tunisia with those of the broader Islamic world. Activists rallied outside the Grand Mosque in Tunis in March 1920 to protest the British army's occupation of Istanbul, the capital of the Ottoman Empire. Over the next two years, Tunisian nationalists also supported the Turkish nationalist movement led by Mustafa Kemal (Ataturk) in its struggle against foreign enemies. Odile Moreau relates that "when Kemalist victories were reported [in Tunis], Turkish flags were flown over houses, prayers were said in mosques and processions, bearing flower-bedecked portraits of Mustafa Kemal, marched through the streets."<sup>72</sup> In early 1923, a group of younger Destourians formed a Committee for the Caliphate to work for the reinvigoration of that institution, which was coming under increasing assault from Turkish nationalists. French agents reported that "this Committee for the Caliphate is in contact with similar bodies in Egypt, and has become at the same time a centre for pan-Islamic activity."<sup>73</sup> The Destour leadership sent a cable to congratulate Mustafa Kemal and his colleagues on the occasion of the signing of the Treaty of Lausanne in July 1923, and a delegation of Tunisian notables led by al-Tha'alibi and Jilali Ben Ramdan traveled to Istanbul for a planned Islamic congress to welcome the Kemalists to the city in the fall of 1923.<sup>74</sup> The Turkish Grand National Assembly's unexpected decision in March 1924 to abolish the Caliphate forced the Destour to reconsider its position vis-à-vis the Turkish nationalist movement. The act sparked a mass demonstration around the Grand Mosque in Tunis, and prominent figures in the party expressed sympathy for the former Ottoman sultan's efforts to win back the title of *khalifah*.<sup>75</sup>

Nevertheless, local nationalists started to narrow their conception of Tunisian interests in the years after the First World War to focus on matters of concern to Tunisia proper, as distinct from issues that faced the broader Islamic community. This trend accelerated following the defeat of the Ottoman Empire and the British occupation of Istanbul.<sup>76</sup> It was reinforced by news reports concerning the activities being undertaken by Egyptian nationalists to win independence from Britain, at least until the Resident General in Tunis succeeded in interdicting all press dispatches emanating

from Cairo.<sup>77</sup> The overall tenor of the nationalist project during the immediate postwar period is evident in an anecdote related by the Moroccan writer 'Alal al-Fasi: al-Tha'alibi invited the respected Tunisian intellectual Muhya al-Din al-Qalibi to join the Destour Party, only to be rebuffed with the reply that al-Qalibi was "prepared to work with you, but you are demanding mere constitutional reforms while I stand for the independence of Tunisia; I cannot therefore give my oath of loyalty to the party unless its aim is also for independence." Sheikh al-Tha'alibi smiled and replied: 'My son, this is a policy which my colleagues had accepted as a tactical move. For my part, I would have preferred the forthright and unequivocal attitude you have mentioned. However, do not give your oath except for independence, because it is the aim of all of us.'<sup>78</sup> The calculated ambiguity that characterized the Destour's political program during this period can be discerned in its formal greeting to the bey at the public ceremony marking the end of Ramadan in June 1920: "the Tunisian nation has come to ask its beloved Prince to recognize the full rights and freedoms belonging to it."<sup>79</sup>

Nationalist leaders continued to refrain from explicitly calling for Tunisian independence during the early 1920s. In January 1921, a delegation of Destour Party notables presented the Resident General with yet another petition that demanded the immediate restoration of the constitution, pointing out that "the word 'constitution' evokes a bundle of administrative and social measures, in fact a political regime, whose essential elements are absolutely incompatible with the principle of the Protectorate."<sup>80</sup> Vacillation within the nationalist leadership is reflected in the sudden appearance three months later of the Reform Party organized by a group of dissident Destourians, whose platform proposed a fundamental modification of the Protectorate "in the direction of British-style 'dominions.'<sup>81</sup> Meanwhile, followers of the late Shaikh Salih Sharif stepped up their campaign to abolish both the beylicate and the Protectorate.<sup>82</sup> The spread of such sentiments prompted French diplomats to inform their superiors in Paris in the spring of 1922 that the nationalist movement "is openly talking about independence today."<sup>83</sup>

There is good reason to accept the envoys' assessment. Among the specific demands that Bey Muhammad al-Nasir raised on behalf of the nationalists just prior to his abdication in April of that year was for Tunisian soldiers to serve only under their own flag.<sup>84</sup> On the other hand, many influential members of the Destour Party remained convinced that the most effective way to



ensure Tunisia's economic, social, and political progress was to maintain some kind of association with other countries, perhaps even with France.<sup>85</sup> Groups of activists based in Vienna and Naples continued to work for "l'indépendance du peuple algéro-tunisien" during 1922–23.<sup>86</sup> As late as 1931, al-Tha'alibi attended the Pan-Islamic conference in Jerusalem as a representative of all the lands of North Africa.<sup>87</sup> It seems safe to conclude, though, that a posture congruent with the principles of Westphalian sovereignty triumphed in nationalist circles during the course of 1924: the Destour's newspaper *al-Thawwab* explicitly called for Tunisian independence that spring, and over the ensuing months party members rallied to the cause of establishing an autonomous polity that would be devoted to promoting the exclusive interests of the country's indigenous Muslim population. As the year came to a close, a delegation of prominent Destourians once again petitioned the French authorities to recognize the legitimate rights of the Tunisian nation, this time emphasizing the demand for full national autonomy.<sup>88</sup>

### *Jordan's Late Adoption*

Throughout the 1920s and 1930s, nationalist leaders in 'Amman undertook a string of initiatives aimed at replacing the collection of Arab states that had been set up during the Mandate era with a unified Arab political entity. Walid Kazziha claims that from the very beginning, Amir 'Abdullah bin al-Husain and his allies considered the emirate of Transjordan to be little more than a way station along the road to a more extensive polity: 'Abdullah, Kazziha argues, "agreed to act as temporary head of the administration of the new Emirate in the hope that he would later on acquire the Syrian throne."<sup>89</sup> Following the death of Iraq's King Faisal bin al-Husain in September 1933, the Transjordanian ruler launched a campaign to convince Syrian nationalists to agree to set up a unified political entity; this effort culminated in an April 1936 telegram to the leaders of the National Bloc in Damascus, in which 'Abdullah urged the Bloc to recognize him as king of Syria.<sup>90</sup> The campaign was revived in 1937, when France balked at implementing the terms of the 1936 treaty, and again in 1938–39, after key figures of the 1925 Syrian revolt were at last released from confinement and the Turkish Republic signaled a willingness to acquiesce in the unification of Transjordan and Syria.<sup>91</sup>

During 1940–41, the leadership in 'Amman repeatedly petitioned British military commanders to authorize it to play a greater role in shaping Syrian affairs.<sup>92</sup> Transjordan's Legislative Council adopted a resolution in July 1941, stating that "Syria, in view of its geographic position and natural resources, cannot survive, particularly from an economic point of view, except if united;"<sup>93</sup> Amir 'Abdullah publicly reaffirmed his intention to pursue unity with Syria that November.<sup>94</sup> When the British Eighth Army finally succeeded in driving the German Afrika Korps out of Egypt in the fall of 1942, 'Abdullah wrote directly to Prime Minister Winston Churchill to propose the "complete union" of Transjordan, Syria, Palestine, and Lebanon, as well as "a cultural union between greater Syria and Iraq."<sup>95</sup> Such entreaties set the stage for the publication of a March 1943 manifesto that demanded the immediate formation of a United Syrian State with 'Abdullah as its ruler.<sup>96</sup> A month later, the amir issued a call for Syrian nationalists "from the Gulf of 'Aqaba to the Mediterranean and the Upper Euphrates" to gather in the Transjordanian capital to discuss "the proper form of government in Bilad al-Sham [geographical Syria]."<sup>97</sup> On the other hand, the leadership in 'Amman joined the National Bloc in Damascus in denouncing the Iraqi government's Fertile Crescent Unity project, albeit for reasons having more to do with intra-Hashemite rivalry than any lack of sympathy for the notion of regional unification.<sup>98</sup>

As soon as Syria and Lebanon gained de jure independence in July 1943, 'Abdullah issued a proclamation to the people of Syria, Lebanon, and Palestine, reminding them that the entire region "with its natural boundaries is one fatherland united by bonds of nationalism, geography and history." It was now incumbent on the people of geographical Syria, the document continued, to take immediate steps to "prevent the disruption of our own true home, our one fatherland and our one family."<sup>99</sup> This pronouncement was followed by a personal letter from 'Abdullah to the Syrian nationalist Faris al-Khuri, in which the amir observed that "Free France has promised the country [i.e., Syria] its independence and its sovereignty. . . . When this was proclaimed, Transjordan expressed its desire to be annexed to Syria or to annex Syria to it. I approved this for the sake of unity and the security of the homeland. I do not know what the future form of government will be, whether it will be a republic or monarchical, and this is a sacrifice on my part."<sup>100</sup> Transjordanian officials took pains throughout the summer of 1943 to impress upon both Iraq's Nuri al-Sa'id and Egypt's Mustafa al-Nahas that

Arab unity could only be accomplished once Greater Syria had become a political reality.<sup>101</sup>

When representatives of the Arab states gathered in Alexandria in September 1944 to discuss the possibility of establishing a regional organization, Transjordan's delegation expressed a clear preference for an entity that would possess "executive authority" with regard to its members.<sup>102</sup> In addition, the delegation "repeatedly pressed for unification of the 'Syrian provinces.'" <sup>103</sup> It exhibited considerably less enthusiasm for the idea of a league of sovereign states. Prime Minister Tawfiq Abu al-Huda remarked to the Syrians during the course of the deliberations that even if such a league were to come into existence, "there was nothing to prevent Syria and Transjordan from uniting. Palestine could join them later if this proved possible."<sup>104</sup> Transjordanian representatives played a key role in ensuring that the protocol that emerged from the Alexandria conference contained a provision stating that further discussions concerning regional unity would be undertaken under the auspices of the provisional Political Subcommittee.<sup>105</sup> When it became clear that this mandate would receive little more than lip service, the leadership in 'Amman lost interest in the proceedings. Prime Minister Samir al-Rifa'i observed in the interim between the promulgation of the Alexandria Protocol and the signing of the Arab League pact "that regardless of the results of the Cairo conference, his government would continue to believe in and work for a Greater Syria."<sup>106</sup> 'Abdullah subsequently dismissed the Arab League as "a sack into which seven heads have been thrust . . . with remarkable haste."<sup>107</sup>

With the formal termination of the British mandate over Transjordan in March 1946, Amir 'Abdullah took the title of king. But, as he bluntly informed the Egyptian government at the time of his coronation, "The complete independence of Transjordan will be attained only after the realization of the Greater Syria plan."<sup>108</sup> Syria's de facto independence a month later prompted 'Abdullah to announce that the establishment of Greater Syria was "a basic principle of Transjordan's foreign policy."<sup>109</sup> The king subsequently told a group of Egyptian journalists that "my demand for Greater Syria is as natural as Egypt's desire for the unity of the Nile valley."<sup>110</sup> When the Lebanese government threatened to end its affiliation with the League of Arab States rather than acquiesce in Transjordan's continuing efforts to manipulate the League's institutions to promote the creation of a Greater Syria, 'Abdullah backpedaled: "Nothing will prevent my ascent to the throne

of Damascus. . . . I have received formal and definite promises on that subject. [But] my Greater Syria does not include the Lebanon. I have all intentions to respect the independence and sovereignty of that country."<sup>111</sup> Nevertheless, the king and his foreign minister reiterated their commitment to forging a unified Arab entity throughout the last quarter of the year.<sup>112</sup> That December 'Abdullah asserted that "I shall never cease my efforts to achieve the unity of Syria."<sup>113</sup>

In fact, 1947 represented the zenith of the Transjordanian government's campaign to form a Greater Syria. At the end of March, King 'Abdullah went so far as to tell the Lebanese newspaper *Kulli Shai* that "my policy is clear: I want a state which includes Syria, Transjordan, Palestine and Lebanon. Yes, Lebanon."<sup>114</sup> Two months later, the leadership in 'Amman "issued a 300-page Greater Syria Plan White Paper in which it attempted to justify its policy, and on the 25th [of May], on the first anniversary of Transjordan's new independence, Abdullah pleaded again for the adoption of his Greater Syria plan."<sup>115</sup> A succession of large-scale military exercises along the kingdom's northern borders during the first half of the year prompted warnings from Beirut and Damascus that the Hashemite regime planned to annex Syrian territory by force of arms.<sup>116</sup> That summer, King 'Abdullah openly complained that the institutional structure of the Arab League stood in the way of serious attempts to achieve Arab unity, because it preserved the sovereignty of the various member-states.<sup>117</sup>

The drive to forge a Greater Syria climaxed in August 1947, when the Transjordanian leadership summoned the heads of the existing "regional governments of all Syria" to 'Amman to discuss ways in which immediate unification could be carried out.<sup>118</sup> The summit's proposed agenda entailed a series of measures designed to enable the participants "to arrive at a decision regarding Syrian unity; to determine the position of Palestine with respect to the Syrian union in order to stop Jewish immigration; and to call a federal convention to write a constitution for the union." Furthermore, the organizers pledged that "as soon as the state of Greater Syria is established, it will be followed by the formation of the Fertile Crescent in fulfilment of the ideas of the Great Arab Revolt."<sup>119</sup> Despite the antagonism that the invitation provoked throughout the Arab world, 'Abdullah continued throughout the autumn to declare his intention to pursue the unification of geographical Syria.<sup>120</sup> Moreover, at a secret meeting in Naharayyim that November, the king informed the Zionist leadership that he stood ready to

grant the Yishuv a substantial degree of autonomy within the confines of a more extensive political entity encompassing Transjordan and mandatory Palestine.<sup>121</sup>

Paradoxically, the 1948 war buttressed the Transjordanian government's disinclination to recognize the territorial boundaries that divided the Arab world. The nationalist leadership in 'Amman did its best to strengthen the joint military committee that the Arab League set up in October 1947, and persistently resisted Syrian and Lebanese efforts to convince the League to authorize the deployment of each Arab country's regular army along its own border with mandatory Palestine. Instead, the authorities in 'Amman advocated the creation of a unified military formation under Transjordanian command, and any Arab guerrilla units that crossed into the kingdom without subordinating themselves to the local authorities were put under strict supervision.<sup>122</sup> Only after the Zionist forces' initial successes on the ground during March and April did King 'Abdullah order these strictures to be relaxed; even then, he only did so "provided he were commissioned to head the Arab armies' general headquarters."<sup>123</sup> At the same time, the king became increasingly outspoken in urging the Jewish inhabitants of Palestine to abandon their struggle to form a separate state and instead accept an arrangement based on local autonomy within the context of an overarching Greater Syria; 'Abdullah warned Golda Meyerson, when the two conferred in 'Amman on 10–12 May, that immediate unification represented the only way to avoid outright warfare.<sup>124</sup> By the same token, the Transjordanian leadership strenuously resisted the Gaza-based All-Palestine Government's efforts to set up an autonomous administration in the districts of Mandatory Palestine that remained in Arab hands when the fighting finally slackened that fall.<sup>125</sup>

Transjordan's leaders elicited little sympathy for Greater Syria among the military officers who seized power in Damascus in March 1949. The prospects for Transjordanian-Syrian unity brightened somewhat following Colonel Sami Hinnawi's counter-coup that August, however, and King 'Abdullah remarked that the advent of the Hinnawi regime made the creation of Greater Syria "a natural necessity."<sup>126</sup> When Colonel Adib al-Shishakli, in turn, ousted Hinnawi and his allies four months later, the door to unity with Syria appeared to slam shut. It was under these circumstances that the newly redesignated Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan opted in April 1950 to take the first step toward achieving Greater Syria by annexing the

districts of Palestine that remained outside Israeli control.<sup>127</sup> When the Political Committee of the Arab League threatened to expel Jordan in retaliation for the annexation, King 'Abdullah riposted that "if expulsion comes as a result of unifying the two parts of this besieged nation, it will be welcome. We do not wish to be of those who oppose unity in the name of the Arab League, from which we had hoped good would come." The contrast between the Jordanian leadership's notion of Arab unity and the kind of integration that was represented by the existing Arab League (i.e., integration predicated on the sovereignty of each member-state) was reiterated in the king's address to the newly elected parliament on 24 April 1950: "While we welcome the idea of collective security and of inter-Arab economic cooperation on a sound basis, we discern no security for an Arab nation without genuine unification of its component parts wherever possible through the general will of the people and without violating any pact or covenant."<sup>128</sup>

Despite the general opprobrium that the annexation of the West Bank engendered throughout the Arab world, leaders in 'Amman persisted in their quest for Arab unity. During the course of a visit to the Jordanian capital by the Iraqi regent in June 1950, King 'Abdullah discussed the possibility of amalgamating Jordan and Iraq after his death.<sup>129</sup> Jordanian officials responded favorably to the Syrian prime minister's call that November for a redoubled commitment to regional unification. More tellingly, the government categorically rejected the Iraq-sponsored Arab Collective Security Pact, whose institutional structure was designed to guarantee the sovereign prerogatives enjoyed by its individual member-states.<sup>130</sup>

In the spring of 1951, the Jordanian authorities made an even more serious bid to unify with Iraq.<sup>131</sup> The effort was undertaken in the context of growing concern on King 'Abdullah's part that his elder son 'Talal might prove incompetent to act as his successor: The king confided to Lebanon's Riyad al-Sulh, "I do not see in 'Talal or Na'if a suitable man to mount the throne and administer the country. For this reason, I have been turning this subject over in my mind for a long time. To my mind, the best way to solve this problem is an agreement with Iraq on a unification or union of the two countries under my crown, with the proviso that the whole kingdom revert after me to His Majesty Faisal the Second."<sup>132</sup> Unlike earlier unity proposals, however, this one envisaged "the creation of a High Federal Council, with the chairmanship alternating between the two countries' prime ministers; [the] development of 'a single foreign policy'; and [a] consolidation of

diplomatic representation," rather than comprehensive amalgamation. In fact, as Robert Satloff observes, the Jordanian authorities "had been careful to add that nothing should infringe on either kingdom's 'present rights and constitution in full.'"133 The assassination of King 'Abdullah that July piqued Baghdad's interest in a merger with Jordan; the Iraqi delegation that attended 'Abdullah's funeral even tried to pursue the matter with Prime Minister Samir al-Rifa'i during breaks in the ceremonies.<sup>134</sup> But by this time, powerful actors in 'Amman had begun to harbor serious misgivings about Arab unity in general and an immediate merger with Iraq in particular.

Chief among those who now backed away from the Greater Syria project were the reinstated prime minister (Tawfiq Abu al-Ihuda), the regent (Prince Nayif), and the newly acknowledged successor to the crown (King Talal).<sup>135</sup> Despite fundamental differences with one another, these three personages colluded in a campaign to reorient Jordanian foreign policy so as to affirm the kingdom's willingness to cooperate with other Arab states on the basis of mutual recognition and sovereign equality. Throughout the summer of 1951, the prime minister "publicly renounced any attempt at either a separate peace with Israel or a Hashemite-focused Greater Syria plan, and he let it be known that his was a policy of live-and-let-live with the rest of the Arab world."<sup>136</sup> Prince Nayif opened parliament in early September by declaring that the regime's priorities included "ensuring the safety of the Throne, [the] development of conditions of political stability in the country by safeguarding the constitutional government, [the] realization of national aspirations, [the] initiation of vital reforms [and the] maintenance of closer relations with Arab and friendly states."<sup>137</sup> Abu al-Huda's own policy statement to the Assembly of Representatives two weeks later "denied that the [interim] government had been approached" by the Iraqis and "emphasized the need for stability in Jordan and preservation of the Crown."<sup>138</sup> As the year ended, the prime minister explained his cabinet's abandonment of further unity discussions with Iraq by remarking that the two countries' leaderships possessed divergent conceptions of the form that unification should take: "If the suggested union were aimed at unification of defense or the Army, or at any other practical joint action, we would have considered it useful and promising. But the written and unequivocal plan is confined to unification of the Crown, leaving the Army to receive aid from abroad, as before, and preserving its present character and composition for another five to ten years."<sup>139</sup>

By mid-1952, Jordan had completed the turn to Westphalian sovereignty.

At the beginning of the year, the leadership in 'Amman finally signed the Arab Collective Security Pact. This move was followed by a series of overtures to the State of Israel, during the course of which the senior Jordanian representative on the Mixed Armistice Commission worked out with his Israeli counterparts a plan to exchange barren land around the Dead Sea for a collection of villages in the district around Qalqiliyyah. More important than the specific arrangement at hand were the prospects that the deal might set "the precedent of territorial rectifications with Arab states individually, not collectively."<sup>140</sup> King Talal's return to Switzerland for medical treatment that May prompted Prime Minister Abu al-Huda to proclaim that the government no longer intended to explore possibilities for amalgamation with Iraq and would instead take steps to preserve the monarchy for the young crown prince, Husain bin Talal.<sup>141</sup> Immediately after ascending to the throne in May 1953, King Husain directed the new prime minister, Fawzi al-Mulqi, to "aim at safeguarding the national sovereignty and Arab rights through full co-operation and understanding with all the Arab countries."<sup>142</sup> When Israeli commandos attacked the border village of Qibya that October, officials in 'Amman pointedly avoided issuing an invitation to the armed forces of neighboring states to take up forward positions inside the kingdom; the authorities instead solicited funds from the League of Arab States to expand and upgrade the country's own military establishment.<sup>143</sup> With these developments, Jordan's long-standing crusade to replace the Arab states that had been created during the mandate era with a more extensive political entity finally evaporated.

### *Iraq's Late Adoption*

Despite Britain's decision to grant de jure independence to Iraq in 1932, the nationalist leadership in Baghdad consistently worked to replace the existing Arab states with a more comprehensive polity. King Faisal bin al-Husain had undertaken a series of such initiatives throughout the 1920s and into the early 1930s.<sup>144</sup> The country's influential minister of foreign affairs, Nuri al-Sa'id, furthered the campaign, beginning in 1935 with a proposal to create a union of Iraq and Transjordan.<sup>145</sup> A year later, the Iraqi government informed British authorities that it intended to work for the unification of the Arab world, this time in the shape of "a loose union of states, a commonwealth

