Epilogue

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The interwar mandatory period in the Middle East was a period of rapid changes; technological, political, demographic and sociological. In both French and British regions, the authorities sought to contain and control a range of societal forces with a variety of visions for the future of an independent Middle East.¹ The following analysis examines secular, that is to say, laicised cultural institutions such as schools, newspapers and humanitarian institutions. Examining these institutions provides an insight into the context of Palestinian Christians when Syrian politics, international institutions and regional politics were still in flux and the process of forging the modern Middle East was still underway. In this role, these institutions played an important role as conduits for cultural diplomacy.

A feature of *cultural* diplomacy is that, unlike traditional inter-cultural pre-modern diplomacy or undiplomatic “hard” power wielded by the modern state apparatus, there is an element of dialogue involved; there is inter-relation and clientelism. In the Levantine context, this is an evident feature of the way in which French and British “protectors” sought to use culturally rooted networks as a means of informal diplomatic and influence activities. Thus, in a perhaps overly broad sense, we can consider informal institutions drawn from

¹Several parts of this current epilogue were first published in Idir Ouahes, *Syria And Lebanon Under the French Mandate: Cultural Imperialism and the Workings of Empire* (London: Bloomsbury and I.B. Tauris, 2018).

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societal forces to be concerned with the cultural sphere: education, heritage, ecclesiasticism, theatre and arts, photography and cinema and music. Formal institutions may be considered to relate to bureaucracy, statecraft and sovereign actors. Evidently, this is a very generic division, since there are many overlapping aspects: for instance, ecclesiastical and canon norms and laws form a fundamental basis for statecraft and sovereignty in both Islamicate and European contexts. Cultural diplomacy, thus, can be very briefly considered to be a meeting point between the questions, discourses, structures and events relating to informal and formal institutions.

In Syria, as in Palestine, the core Franco-British influence had been based on religious institutions. Yet by the interwar period, many individuals and institutions, whether sponsored by new powers such as the US and Russia, or encouraged by a new spirit of technological, moral and legal internationalism, started to use secular arguments and tools to undermine the cultural diplomacy of the European powers. The rise of these secular networks provided one angle for an informal cultural diplomacy that, within the clientelism embedded into the Levantine mandates, enabled several setbacks and frustrations of Franco-British aims.

Violence established Franco-British control of the post-Ottoman Middle East. However, a new international sphere prompted by Bolshevik anti-imperialist rhetoric and the subsequent Wilsonian moment required a dilution of imperial aims and methods.² Though initial mandate sponsors and administrators in Paris, London, Jerusalem and Beirut interpreted it as a Levantine protectorate, they soon encountered opposition emanating from local and international stakeholders. Local government actors intended to become clients for the mandate authorities used the League of Nations principle of tutelage to challenge protectorate interpretations and colonial methods. Alongside the constrictions and alterations forced upon governmental and administrative decision makers by international economic or political pressures, groups and individuals within the mandate territories overtly opposed protectorate methods.

EDUCATION

American-sponsored religious institutions represented some of the most entrenched elements hosting cultural diplomatic activity in the mandated Middle East. Schools, hospitals orphanages and other institutions were created. The greatest of these institutions was the American University in Beirut (AUB). These institutions were mostly the outcome of religiously motivated proselytisers. Yet the AUB was also the first educational institution in

²Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Garay Paul Menicucci, "The Russian Revolution and Popular Movement in Syria in the 1920s" (PhD diss., Georgetown University, 1993).

the region to introduce non-denominational, fundamentally secular, schooling. As Betty Anderson has noted for the Ottoman period, and as I show in my book on the early twentieth century Libano-Syrian mandate, the AUB became a cauldron for all sorts of Levantine attempts at financial and political autonomy and independence from Franco-British oversight, much to the chagrin of the mandatory authorities.³

In both Palestine and Syria, European educational networks had been long established. The schools that were founded by Russian, German, British, American, French or Italian sponsors often represented the various cultural influences and political interests of these countries. For instance, the Russians in Palestine tended to jealously protect Orthodox rights in the holy land, even after the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917.⁴ French interests were similarly protected although the Catholic interests they were claiming to represent were actually linguistically and ideologically quite diverse.⁵ Anglo-American, German and Scandinavian protection and promotion of Protestant-focussed education was similarly partisan during the earlier period of interventions (running up to the First World War).

The American University of Beirut (AUB) was of central importance as an American instrument of influence in the region that shaped nineteenth- and twentieth-century Levantine elites' opinions. This certainly continued during the mandate era. In 1920, an AUB student made a vitriolic speech in front of General Gouraud, for which he was expelled, though later readmitted. This student, aforementioned scout leader Muhi Al-Din Al-Nsuli, was later reported by a French informant to be participating in the Club for the Syrian Union, a political group seeking Syrian unity.⁶ A 1924 intelligence report described the existence of *Al-Rabita Al-'Assad Al-'Arabiyya* (Association of the Arab Lion) among the AUB student body whose aims were to "propagate and defend the Arab language" and "diffuse the patriotic spirit and oriental solidarity among all students".⁷

Though such a society may have been overtly literary, it certainly engaged in political activity. When AUB Professor Boulos Kholi became honorary president of the aforementioned Association of the Arab Lion, he received a congratulatory letter from Shahbandar, who expressed his confidence in the

³Betty S. Anderson, *The American University of Beirut: Arab Nationalism & Liberal Education* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2011); Idir Ouahes, *Syria and Lebanon Under the French Mandate: Cultural Imperialism and the Workings of Empire* (London: Bloomsbury and I.B. Tauris, 2018).

⁴Merav Mack, "Orthodox and Communist: A History of a Christian Community in Mandate Palestine and Israel," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 42, no. 4 (2015): 384–400.

⁵Karène Sanchez-Summerer, "Linguistic Diversity and Ideologies Among the Catholic Minority in Mandate Palestine. Fear of Confusion or a Powerful Tool?" *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 43, no. 2 (2016): 191–205.

⁶"Rapport d'un Agent Bien Place", 25 February 1920 [Centre d'Archives Diplomatiques de Nantes (CADN)/1SL/V/2374].

⁷"Université Américaine de Beirut", n.d. [CADN/1SL/V/1565].

“great influence [of the Association], not only among its students but [...] [over] numerous Arabs as far as the [Persian] Gulf”. Shahbandar also wrote that: “If the AUB’s influence continues to grow and expand, all of its alumni will not miss the opportunity to rise up and liberate themselves in ten years’ time with the aid of the U.S”.⁸ Local newspaper *Al-Lisan al-Hal* praised the AUB as a “brilliant home” which had “inundated the countries of the Orient with its light”.⁹

Within the AUB’s walls, one group of students was fighting to keep Sultan Abdulmecid II as Caliph while the Arab Committee in the same institution sought to promote Sharif Hussein to the post.¹⁰ French intelligence was in direct contact with Anis Al-Khuri Al-Makdisi, a professor of Arabic literature at the AUB who had been educated at the Tripoli Boys’ School and was reputedly a friend of ‘Abdulaziz Ibn Saud.¹¹ Intelligence case officers monitored Al-Makdisi and determined that his activities in Iraq in the cause of pan-Arabism made him “a political agent whose propaganda seeks only to impede” French power in Syria.¹² In 1925, French intelligence reported that nearly \$150,000 had been raised by AUB alumni stretching from Istanbul, through Cairo to Brazil and America.¹³

AUB alumni, propped up by a liberal education that opened up a world of opportunities, often formed the upper crust of local society. The guest list of an alumni meeting in Aleppo reads like a Who’s Who of key local figures from doctors to dragomans.¹⁴ The AUB, if French intelligence reports are to be believed, sent student “propagandists” to America to rejoin Shahbandar and Charles Richard Crane.¹⁵ The same report quoted AUB Rector Bayard Dodge praising efforts to unite Lebanese and Syrian emigres in the Americas and encouraging the same be done with Iraqis.¹⁶ “The American University in Beirut pursues with perseverance its task of fusing the Arab world”, as one intelligence report put it.¹⁷ ‘Abd Al-Rahman Shahbandar agreed, stating that the university’s influence even extended to the Arabian Peninsula.¹⁸

The AUB would send members of its staff such as Lahoud Shehade to inner Syrian cities such as Hama tasked with outreach and a search for alumni

⁸Ibid.

⁹Service de la Presse, ‘RP de Beyrouth du 15 Octobre 1924’ [CADN/1SL/V/1683].

¹⁰‘Rapport d’Agent: Movement pour Abdul Mejid’, 7 May 1924 [CADN/1SL/V/1565].

¹¹‘N8. 247/2 – à l’Université Américaine’, 4 November 1924 [CADN/1SL/V/1565].

¹²‘Le Professeur Anis Khoury Makdessi’ [CADN 1SL/V/1565].

¹³‘Bulletin de Renseignement d’Alep 1ère Partie’, 18 May 1925 [CADN/1SL/V/1565].

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵High Commissioner Weygand to Commander in Chief of the *Armée du Levant*, 1 November 1923 [Centre d’Archives Diplomatiques, La Courneuve (CADL)/E-Levant/C H12/D 1A/S-D 28].

¹⁶‘Présence Américaine en Iraq’, n.d. [CADN/1SL/V/1565].

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸‘Université Américaine de Beyrouth’, November 1924 [CADN/1SL/V/1565].

donations.¹⁹ In these early years, another AUB professor, Anis Al-Maqdissi, was sent to Baghdad to examine the possible creation of an AUB affiliate.²⁰ By 1927, the AUB had nearly 130 Iraqi students within its campus, including the sons of Noury Pasha Said and Yasin al-Hashimi.²¹ In that same year, as the Great Syrian Revolt was subsiding, a French report described the American University of Beirut as the pre-eminent site for intrigues against French rule.²²

NEWSPAPERS

Levantine newspapers were fundamental in providing avenues for secular, non-traditional, discussions of the political and socio-economic developments in the region. A flagship newspaper in this vein was the Palestinian newspaper *Filastin* which was set up by Orthodox Christian 'Issa Al-'Issa and was vociferously opposed to British and Zionist Jewish activities.²³ Outside of the Levant itself, as the mandates took shape in the early 1920s, a *mahjar* (immigrant) community of Syro-Lebanese and Palestinians founded magazines and newspapers from Montevideo to Cairo.

An important figure in European *mahjar* press activity was Egyptian journalist 'Ali Al-Ghayati. Although he himself was neither a Christian nor a Levantine, he was nevertheless closely associated with leading Syrian and Palestinian activists including the Christian Lutfallah brothers. Ghayati's role in providing a platform for anti-imperialist and contrarian opposition to the Middle East mandates was not necessarily a new development. It should instead be read within the framework of long-established Islamicate opposition to European powers' interference, such as that established by fellow Egyptian Muhammad 'Abduh and his mentor Jamal Al-Din Al-Afghani.²⁴ Indeed, Al-Ghayati had reportedly been condemned to death in Egypt but had been smuggled out by the British in 1912 and, according to the Annemasse special commissioner's intelligence, was paid to write pro-British propaganda during the World War.²⁵ After the War, Al-Ghayati was the *Tribune de Genève*'s oriental affairs correspondent where, according to the

¹⁹'Propagande Américaine a 'Hama', 22 May 1925 [CADN/1SL/V/1565].

²⁰'Presence Americaine [...]'.

²¹'Information N8. 906', 19 November 1927 [CADN/1SL/V/1565].

²²'Note', September 1927 [CADN/1SL/V/1565].

²³For more on the background of *Filastin*, see: Emanuel Beška, *From Ambivalence to Hostility: The Arabic Newspaper Filastin and Zionism, 1911–1914* (Bratislava: Slovak Academic Press, 2016).

²⁴I use Islamicate in the same sense as that established by Marshall Hodgson. For more on Al-Afghani and 'Abduh, see: Idir Ouahes, "Jamal al-Din al-Afghani," in *Islam: A Worldwide Encyclopedia* (4 vols.) (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2017).

²⁵Special Police Commissioner in Annemasse, "Au Sujet de la Creation à Genève d'un Comité Syrien," 24 June 1921 [AN-P/F/7/13411].

French consul in Geneva, he engaged in a “campaign” against France at the League of Nations.²⁶

The *Tribune de Genève* had previously led an active campaign for Egyptian independence but was flagged by French officials in 1921 for turning its attention to Syrian affairs.²⁷ The *Tribune de Genève* had published an article, written by Al-Ghayati, entitled “Syria and the League of Nations” which stated that there was a forgotten Syrian question whose “weak echo, attenuated by its distance and censorship, managed to reach us from time to time”.²⁸

Al-Ghayati’s article explained that there was a Syrian question as much as an Arab or Egyptian one despite French attempts to bury it. He noted that: The events unfolding over the past two years [...] of which only a weak echo attenuated by distance and censorship reaches us [...] rekindle this question. Among the expansionist or French clerical circles there is an attempt to put aside public opinion by representing the Syrian as satisfied with the new regime [...] Yet[...] we know [...] that the great majority of Syrians are hostile to France’s actual policy.²⁹ Al-Ghayati now had the full attention of the French diplomatic surveillance apparatus.

By 1922, the French consul in Geneva had made up his mind on Al-Ghayati’s stance and described him simply as an “Arab militant”.³⁰ In the same year Al-Ghayati, who lived in Annemasse, left the *Tribune de Genève* and launched his own newspaper, *La Tribune d’Orient*. *La Tribune* appeared twice monthly with a motto proclaiming it to be “in defence of the rights of a nascent Orient”. Its tagline quoted President Woodrow Wilson’s “14 Points” speech to Congress: “a principle evidently underlies the programme I have outlined: it is that which assures justice to all peoples”. It was published in both French and Arabic.

Al-Ghayati’s newspaper nevertheless provided an outlet for continuing challenges to French mandatory methods. In February 1923, Al-Ghayati’s *Tribune* published an open letter from nationalist leader Shakib Arslan to General Gouraud. In it, Arslan took the general to task for suggesting that part of France’s mission was the protection of the Christian communities from Muslim attacks. Arslan pointed out that during World War I, Syrian and Lebanese Muslims had done no harm to the Christians, and had even welcomed refugees.³¹ In September 1925, Al-Ghayati wrote an editorial warning France that

²⁶De Caix to Minister of Foreign Affairs, 20 June 1921 [CADL/E-Levant/C 313/D 4 /S-D 58].

²⁷French Consul in Geneva to MFA, 20 June 1921 [CADL/E-Levant/Syrie-Liban/C 313/D 4/S-D 56].

²⁸Ali Al-Ghayati, “La Syrie et la Société des Nations,” *Tribune de Genève*, 17 June 1921.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰French Consul in Geneva to MFA, 18 September 1921 [CADL/E-Levant/C 313/D 4/S-D 58].

³¹Shakib Arslan, “Lettre Ouverte au Général Gouraud,” *La Tribune d’Orient*, 8 February 1923.

the 1925 rebellion represented a rejection of their mandatory methods, explaining that: Syrians are demanding the suppression of the mandate and the recognition of independence [...] the British policy in Iraq should have long ago served to open the eyes of the French and to set an example [...] [instead they have instituted] a policy of colonisation, similar to that in Algeria or Morocco.³²

French and Francophone newspapers afforded another avenue for secular-rooted contestation and protest. One article, written in the *Mercur de France* in 1916 by Y. Bitar, was entitled “the true French Syria”. Bitar noted the flurry of mid-First World War commentary in favour of the establishment of a protectorate in Syria on the basis of a privileged French cultural presence in the region. Though he largely agreed with encouragement of a French protectorate, Bitar nevertheless sought to note the important Syrian absorption of French culture and philosophy. His article thus gave agency to local Syrians and Lebanese in choosing to use French learning to advance their own interests. Bitar explained that: “Syrians [...] are the inheritors of this wonderful Arab civilisation [...] in every cultivated Syrian a Frenchman could recognise his [...] own culture”. Bitar used the interactions between French poets and writers and their Syrian counterparts as proof of these ties which had the effect of placing Syrians as equals to the French.³³

A month later, the *Mercur De France* also published a dissenting piece by a Maronite Christian Lebanese-French editor at *Le Temps*, Khairallah Tannous Khairallah.³⁴ Khairallah criticised Bitar for having exaggerated the extent of French influence among Syrian Christians. He also noted that Bitar had continually referred to Christians, thus passing over wholesale the large number of non-Christian Syrians. Khairallah acknowledged the predominant cultural influence of French authors in the region. However, he emphasised that this coexisted with an enduring Arab-Islamic culture and a growing Russian and British influence. Khairallah noted that even among the estimated 40,000 students educated in French schools:

The congregational [*i.e.* religious missionary] influence in Syria ends at the doors of the school. Modern developments have [...] surpassed it [the missionary influence] and [even] turned against it. The true masters are those French authors [*i.e.* Victor Hugo], who have done the most on behalf of France as a conquering army, by the simply irresistible spread of their genius.³⁵

³²Ali Al-Ghayati, “Si la France voulait [...],” *La Tribune d’Orient* no. 53, 25 September 1925.

³³M.Y. Bitar, “La Vraie Syrie Française,” *Mercur De France* no. 422, 16 January 1916, 217–219.

³⁴Khairallah’s important role in shaping French public opinion has been examined in: Samir Khairallah, “La France et la Question Arabe de L’Empire Ottoman, K. T. Khairallah et son Temps (1882–1930)” (Phd diss., University of Paris, 2011). Khairallah was for a reformed Ottoman system rather than Arab Revolt.

³⁵K.T. Khairallah, “La Vraie Syrie Française,” *Mercur De France* no. 424, 16 February 1916, 762–766.

Le Temps, a quasi-official mouthpiece of government at the time, reproduced denunciations of the Balfour Letter by Syrian and Palestinian activists at the 1919 Marseille Congress on Syria.³⁶ A few weeks later, *Le Temps*, carried another article calling for a unified and integral Syria including Palestine.³⁷ In April 1922, the Communist *L'Humanité* reproduced a telegram from reformist Islamist Syrian thinker Rashīd Riḍā, then secretary of the Syro-Palestinian Committee in Cairo. Riḍā denounced an 'unsustainable' political situation and the arrests of nationalists as well as France's crackdown on widespread protests.³⁸

Alongside the Francophone Levantine press, various Syrians, Palestinians and other post-Ottoman subjects were working as journalists and editors in Europe. French authorities monitored the Syro-Lebanese associations and journalists active in Paris and Geneva. In 1922, a special police commissioner in Paris monitored a group calling themselves the Association of Syrian Youth who had published a tract entitled: "What all Frenchmen should know about Syria".³⁹ This Association was presided by Ibrahim Naggiar, a journalist who had received French money to found *Al-Mustaqbal* (The Future). Other members of the Association were students, such as Omar Fakhouri and Hilmi Barudy. Despite its superficially Francophile background, the Association of Syrian Youth's pamphlet called on the French Parliament and public opinion to heed to their demands regarding the failed military rule of the country.⁴⁰ The Association claimed that "Syria is an 'independent state'" and that the division of Syria into separate states had been toxic.⁴¹

Later in summer 1922, French intelligence reported that the Association had links with the Syrian Union political party. This party was presided over by Michel Lutfallah, a wealthy Greek Orthodox moneylender based in Egypt, and demanded the removal of Anglo-French troops from the Levant, the end to mandates, recognition of Syria, Lebanon and Palestine, and the right to reorganise these states in an Arab Federation.⁴² The Association of Syrian Youth's members were also noted to be close to the *Union Intercoloniale*

³⁶"L'Unité de la Syrie," *Le Temps* no. 21016, 14 January 1919.

³⁷"Liban et Syrie," *Le Temps* no. 21028, 1 February 1919.

³⁸Director of the *Surêté Générale* to Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), 17 November 1923 [CADL/E-Levant/C H12/D 1A/S-D 208].

³⁹Special Commissioner Attached to the Military Administration in Paris to the Director of *Surêté Générale*, 21 June 1922 [*Archives Nationales*, Perfitte-Sur-Seine (AN-P)/F/7/13411].

⁴⁰Association Française de la Jeunesse Syrienne, *Ce Que Tout Français Doit Savoir de la Syrie* (Paris: Emile Larose, 1922).

⁴¹*Ibid.* The Association's poster recalled French repression of popular protests ahead of the King-Crane Commission's visit to Beirut in 1919. For a comprehensive outline of the King-Crane Commission's reception, see: Andrew Patrick, *America's Forgotten Middle East Initiative: The King-Crane Commission of 1919* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2015).

⁴²*Surêté Générale*, "Association de la Jeunesse Syrienne," 26 August 1922 [AN-P/F/7/13411].

(UI), a group organised by the French Communists (PCF), with some Syrian members taking part in an UI periodicals reading circle.⁴³ This effort was overshadowed, of course, by the very active role of the Palestine Communist Party which, though dominated by Jewish Communists, also mobilised Palestinian Arabs in the anti-imperial and pro-Communist struggle in the Levant and Europe.⁴⁴

HUMANITARIANISM

The early twentieth century, particularly after World War I, saw a major expansion of humanitarian aid. In part, this was a natural increase in American external intervention and charity given the country's spectacular economic growth in the late nineteenth-century. Nevertheless, the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution in Russia also encouraged an expansion of American internationalism and humanitarianism in order to prevent a collapse of the global capitalist and liberal world order. This was evidenced by President Woodrow Wilson's push for the creation of a League of Nations and of a variety of international sphere non-governmental organisation.⁴⁵

Near East Relief (NER), was founded in 1915 as the American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief (ACASR) in New York but soon grew to become a key player in relief work. Charles Vickrey, the most active manager of the charity on a day to day basis, was general secretary. Among the executive committee were Cleveland Dodge and Charles Richard Crane, later co-author of the famed King-Crane Commission report.⁴⁶ The language used by some humanitarian administrators demonstrated a degree of respect and compassion for the victims. William H. Hall, a member of the NER precursor the American Committee of Armenian and Syrian Relief (ACASR), on had previously written an article in *Asia* in which he laid out the claims for the maintenance of the Ottoman open borders system.

In a key passage, Hall described the Syrian race as:

Like their Phoenician forebears, they too are world-traders... we need but to turn to Egypt and the building of the Sudan Government to see what this race is capable of along administrative lines. Said Pasha Shukier, born in a little village in the Lebanon Mountains, trained in the American College at Beirut, has been trusted by the British Government with the entire organisation [*sic.*] of the finances of the Sudan. Such men as... Faris Nimir [who edited the respected Egyptian *Moqattam* newspaper] also originating in the mountain villages of Syria have made names as journalists, scientists and publishers in the city of Cairo.

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴Musa Budeiri, *The Palestine Communist Party, 1919–1948: Arab & Jew in the Struggle for Internationalism* (Ithaca, NY: Ithaca Press, 1979).

⁴⁵Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment*.

⁴⁶Charles Vickrey, General Secretary New York to Ellsworth Huntingdon, 12 April 1917 [Yale Manuscripts and Archives, New Haven CT/Ellsworth Huntingdon Papers].

In his discussion of Armenian relief by the League of Nations, Keith Watenpaugh noted the objectification of the refugees and the general targeting of Christian communities with less regard for non-Christians.⁴⁷ This is somewhat unsurprising given the deep orientalism at the heart of Western engagement with the East, and in the context of Western public and governmental perceptions of the Ottoman authorities as being repressive their dealings with Christian minorities.⁴⁸ A detailed examination of American humanitarian activity, however, complicates this picture. There were undeniable religiously motivated essentialisms of the objects of humanitarian action, yet so too were there serious efforts at humanising the unfortunate as subjects worthy of compassion from the highest-level down.

From the French point of view, claims of cultural affinity and governmental competence were fundamental to their ability to gain and retain their League of Nations mandate. The French project for the Levant was a paternalist one that sought to forge “colonial citizens” in countries envisioned by imperial diplomacy and imposed through violence.⁴⁹ French publicists, planners and administrators faced difficulties translating talk of a Levantine protectorate into effective control over established and new clients.⁵⁰ Yet at the heart of clientelism lies a dialogue between patron and protectee. Such a clientelist dialogue is not held between equally powerful parties. Yet, in stark contrast to the *tabula rasa* methods employed by the military and colonial settlers in the early Algerian colony, it was premised on the recognition of dialoguing participants.⁵¹

This was particularly the case following the growth of an international arena and norms that, in theory, regulated imperial actions and brought previously obfuscated domestic affairs into broader consciousness.⁵² American humanitarian groups, the French *Mission Laïque*, and various newspapers in the U.S. and Europe provided an avenue for Syrian and Palestinian Christians and their allies to contest mandate methods and carry out a dialogue and informal cultural diplomacy. Although many of these institutions were not entirely, or “purely” secular, most enabled students, authors, propagandists

⁴⁷Keith David Watenpaugh, “The League of Nations’ Rescue of Armenian Genocide Survivors and the Making of Modern Humanitarianism, 1920–1927,” *American Historical Review* 115, no. 5 (December 2010): 1315–1339.

⁴⁸Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin, 2006); Keith David Watenpaugh, *Bread from Stones: The Middle East and the Making of Modern Humanitarianism* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2015), 7.

⁴⁹Elizabeth F. Thompson, *Colonial Citizens: Republican Rights, Paternal Privilege and Gender in French Syria and Lebanon* (New York, NY: Colombia University Press, 2000).

⁵⁰Martin Thomas, *Empires of Intelligence: Security Services And Colonial Disorder After 1914* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2008), 293–294.

⁵¹William Gallois, *A History of Violence in the Early Algerian Colony* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2013).

⁵²Martti Koskeniemi, *The Gentle Civilizer of Nations: The Rise and Fall of International Law 1870–1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

and activists to develop secular anti-imperial politics from a range of inspirations. Thus, they provided internationally and regionally situated platforms for secular-rooted protest, contestation and informal diplomatic pressure on the British and French mandatory powers in Syria and Palestine.

CONCLUSION

A variety of Christian Syrians and Palestinians in the mandated Middle East, ranging from wealthy Greek Orthodox like the Lutfallahs, to Maronite publicist Tannous Khairallah, sought to challenge imperial claims and plans. This was made possible by the overlapping institutions, including the secular-rooted institutions such as the modernised American humanitarian machine, the Republican *Mission Laïque* and the Francophone public sphere. Syrian activists and networks, using secular French cultural institutions such as those examined above, closely paralleled and often overlapped with the Palestinian one. There is clear evidence of the role of these secular cultural institutions in shaping possibilities to challenge and shape the direction of the Middle East's future. More research on these institutions, and the countervailing ones such as the Catholic, Islamist and those belonging to other cultural-ideological movements, can help paint a more complex and complete picture of the mandated Middle East, and the shaping of the region's modern history. In particular, the extent to which these secular cultural institutions were used by Levantine Christians to achieve their aims and interests, and how this relationship changed during the mandatory period as competing cultural institutions emerged from the other cultural-ideological movements, needs further investigation.

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