Frequent Incompatibilities: Ethnic and Religious Diversity and the Nations of the Middle East

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Throughout its long history upon the scene of civilization, the Middle East has been the crossroads of innumerable peoples and the birthplace of countless religions and sects. Most of that time has been marked by relatively peaceful coexistence among its many groups. However, in the last seventy years, subsequent to the fall of the Ottoman Empire and the rise of the area's new nation-states, this diversity has become the source of many unfortunate conflicts. For several of the region's nations, it has become a chronic problem that constitutes one of the greatest threats to their internal stability. It is the seemingly inevitable clash of ethnic and religious identities and loyalties in the Middle East, many times between minorities and majorities, but in the case of Lebanon between groups that are all numerical minorities, that have proven important in molding its modern history.

Minorities, whether ethnic or religious, have been a constant feature of Middle Eastern societies and have played an important role in shaping those societies since the beginning of the modern era. In the twentieth century they have been an important consideration in the many nation-states that have appeared in the region because they constitute a challenge to the concept of the nation-state centered on a single identity. States have had to deal with minorities either by attempting to integrate them into the larger concept of the nation, or by modifying that concept in order to accommodate them.

Albert Hourani, one of the foremost historians of the modern Middle East, traced the transformation of the region from a multi-ethnic empire under the Ottomans into a collection of nation-states in his historical essay entitled "Race, Religion, and Nationalism." He pointedly noted that, although always existing to some degree, the conflicts arising from ethnicity have not always been as intense as they are now. First, he maintained that in the Middle East there are neither distinct races nor any conflicts based upon race. Race has never had the importance it has had in the West because there has always tended to be a propensity for peoples to intermix, whether they be Turks, Persians, Arabs, Mongols, etc.[1]

The principal reason for the absence of emphasis on race in the Middle East was that Islam did not consider it important. Instead, it stressed religious affiliation, which became the primary characteristic used to distinguish among the various peoples in the region. It was on the secondary level of ethnicity[2] that conflicts in the Middle East came to resemble racial conflicts elsewhere.[3]

The Ottoman Empire provided a stable political order, one based on religion rather than race. In that respect, it conformed to the Islamic model. That is, one in which Muslims were the majority, Islam was the state religion, and the sultan was the leader of the *ummah* or Islamic community. Within that relatively stable environment, the *millets*, or non-Muslim minority communities, were allowed to govern themselves by their own religious laws.[4] The social anthropologist Ernest Gellner, who devoted several books to the study of Muslim societies, believed that it was the Ottoman state's singular strength that allowed it to apportion out administrative power to the *millets or* "quasi-national communities."[5] However, even during the Ottoman period differences increased over time such that what had been religious communities until then were transformed into nationalist ones. Inherited religious affiliation surpassed religious belief in importance, and the word *millet* gradually assumed the meaning of nation.[6]

National sentiments always existed among the many communities that comprised the Ottoman Empire, but they were not necessarily primary. Other distinguishing qualities besides religion were extant as well, such as language, common ancestry, tribal affiliation, and the long-standing distinction drawn among the three major races of Islam: Turks, Persians, and Arabs. Those various communities were scattered across the empire and intermixed to varying degrees. They tended to have close economic ties with each other. Where they were mixed, according to Hourani, they were able to achieve a kind of "symbiosis," which minimized tensions among them.[7] Also, as a result of that intermixing of communities, the primary social distinction between them tended to be functional rather than geographical.[8]

The factor that brought about a change in this state of affairs and caused the eventual deterioration of the Ottoman Empire was the influx of Western ideas in conjunction with the influence of Western powers in the region. The European concept of nationalism and Western states' use of the races as pawns of foreign policy undermined the structure of the old order. Nationalistic ideas migrated into the region with expatriates returning from studying in the West and flourished with the emergence of the new commercial and industrial classes, which, by nature of their occupations, had greater contact with Europeans. In the course of time, that Western influence led to thinking along Western lines, especially in terms of nationalism.[9]

The end product of that development was the slow crumbling of the empire that had unified the region for close to five hundred years. The revolt by the Greeks in Wallachia and Moldavia in 1821 ignited the fires of separation that subsequently led to a series of insurrections by other non-Muslims throughout the rest of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth: Serbia in 1878, Rumania in the same year, and Bulgaria in 1908.

Those rebellions among the subject peoples of the Ottoman Empire in turn, and understandably, led to a reaction from the Turks. The newly emergent Turkish reformers,

themselves not unaffected by Western ideas, were of two persuasions: those in favor of equality among the multifarious peoples of the realm and those favoring Turkish supremacy over the other communities. The latter of those two groups was the Young Turks, whose goal was to accelerate imperial reforms, but who were also possessed of "an incipient Turkish nationalism" in their thinking.[10] One aspect of that orientation in thought was the problem of defining what a Turk actually was. The Turkish nationalist faction eventually gained power and sought to forcefully "Turkize" all of the other Muslims within the realm. If the empire could not exist as a multi-ethnic entity, then they would convert it into a wholly Turkish one. That resulted in still another series of nationalistic reactions, this time by the other Muslim ethnic groups such as Albanians, Kurds, and Arabs. Their rebellions caused Turks to give up once and for all the concept of a multi-ethnic empire and to strive for their own national state.[11] The Ottoman Empire had lost its *raison d'être*.

With the decomposition of the Empire, a struggle over territory ensued. Each newly independent nationality expressed its own right to a "national territory" or "natural frontiers," which were often at odds with the same claims by another nationality. With the establishment of nation-states in the Middle East, the problems presented by minorities persisted because of the founding of the states along national or ethnic lines, on the one hand, and the intermixing that had occurred over previous centuries on the other.[12] This state of affairs made the old Ottoman practice of apportioning power to minorities more difficult, for within these new national states "Culture and polity were congruent and minorities were absorbed, expelled, or reduced to…more or less irredentist submission."[13] Of all the nations of the Middle East, Lebanon stands out as the sole exception to this trend, for it is the only case, according to Gellner, where "the communities took over the role of the state."[14] That is, the nation became a nation of *millets*.

Hourani says, "The idea of the nation tended also to destroy the unity of the *millet*," where *millet* refers to the larger community such as Jews, Orthodox Christians, etc., irrespective of their locality within the empire. The connection between religion and nationality continued within each commu nity, although between communities it had been severed. For example, Islam could be a constituent part of national identity. Hence, a Turk could be considered a Muslim. In a similar manner in Iran, Mohammad Reza Shah (1941-1979) had stressed the importance of being both Shiite and Iranian, as if to make them two necessary characteristics for being an Iranian.[15] Exceptions to that trend were to be found, however, in both Arab and Egyptian nationalism. In the former, Arab nationalists who were Christians tended to see Islam as a statement of Arab nationalism, and Muslims and Christians cooperated.[16] In Egypt, non-Muslims tended to be included in the nationalist identity.[17]

The sense of unity among the region's Arabs that took shape in the nineteenth century was based on several factors. The basic components of what later came to be termed "Arabism" were a common language, culture, and historical experience, as well as, for Muslims, a common religion and religious practices that tended to unite the faithful. Yet, early on, being an Arab was normally the least important of other possible identities, which were based on the family, tribe, region, or town. Even though the Arabs, like the Turks, were among the last to succumb to nationalistic feelings, their tardiness gave them "immediate access to a well-developed vocabulary based not only on notions of patriotism and national rights but also on associated concepts like citizenship and political representation, which could be seen as the properties of people who had managed to establish their own nation-state."[18]

At the same time, the relationship between the various new nations and the West depended upon how the Western nations viewed them at the time of independence. There was a feeling of inferiority toward the West, "both in those material resources and skills which are necessary for survival in the modern world, and in the political virtues on which the greatness and stability of states depends." The people of the Middle East felt that they were under the control and "judgement" of the West.[19]

One example of foreign influence upon the treatment of minorities in the Middle East occurred in the nineteenth century when the Europeans pressured the Ottomans to grant "legal equality" to Jews and Christians. Through "general declarations of universalism" and the creation of "communal frameworks," a sect's retention of its own identity and language was not only permitted, but promoted. Those distinguishing characteristics frequently endured under colonialism wherein the sects became recognized as "minorities" requiring Muslim protection.[20]

Today, Hourani said, national tensions tend to be strongest when certain criteria exist. They are present when a state represents the nationalist idea of its major ethnic group, its population is ethnically mixed, there are "rival bourgeoisies," there are continuing religious loyalties along with national ones, or there is the disrupting influence of foreign powers. Once a conflict arises around such issues, he said, and "the issues of religious and national loyalty were raised no individual could stand aside" because dominance became the central factor.[21] Gellner believed that there is incongruity in the present nature of disputes in the Middle East. Conflicts in the region are, he contended, examples of Khaldunian feuds between manifold local groups taking place within Durkheimian societies that are culturally homogeneous and possess shared norms and values. Such feuds took place "when communities, which were previously segments of a wider world [i.e., the Ottoman Empire] become 'national' states…controlling an exclusive territory and a relatively homogeneous population." A conflict over rights was unavoidable in the transition from the *millet* system to the nation-state. As he said, "the drawing of boundaries between the new culturally homogeneous units [states] must inevitably mean a 'loss' of territory by some old criteria." Any hope of returning to the former conditions, according to Gellner, was "illusory." The ironic situation thus resulting posits modern states confronting one another "with the methods of tribal [Khaldunian] society."[22]

The historian Roger Owen seems to disagree with Gellner on this point. Whereas the latter believed that conflicts in the region are still essentially "tribal" in nature, Owen, with some justification, believes that scholars like Gellner are in error when they choose to view the Middle East as either consisting of groups smaller than the state—such as tribes, sects, or clans—or those larger than the state, like pan-

Arabism or pan-Islamism, and thus seem to ignore "national boundaries and national politics." In this way, such scholars continue to view the Ba'thist regime of Syria as an Alawi one and the regime in Baghdad as a Tikriti one, as if those governments were still functioning on the order of "tribes." Instead, Owen believes that "methods of political organization and styles of political rhetoric are largely defined by the context," which "was created by the territorial state." Over time, there was a move away from the old pattern of tribal rivalry to one where "those who wanted power, access to resources or simply self-aggrandizement had to organize themselves in a way that made sense in terms of the new realities [i.e., states]."[23]

As Hourani suggested, foreign powers have in some cases exacerbated the minority problem in the Middle East by using them as parts of their policy in the region. One example of that was the strategy of the French, who, between 1921 and 1945, pursued a "minority-oriented policy" in Syria whereby the largest percentage of recruits in the army came from among the Alawis, Druzes, Circassians, Kurds, Assyrians, Armenians, or Ismailis, rather than the majority Sunni Muslims.[24]

In spite of the rhetoric of officials, there is often a definite bias in the modern states of the Middle East against minorities. Lip service is repeatedly paid to equality among various ethnic and religious groups existing within a country; "In defining the rights and obligations of citizens, the constitutions of most Middle Eastern states are blind to their ethnic or religious origins." However, "the relative weights of religious and ethnic communities weigh heavily in the political calculus of each state's leadership."[25]

The most poignant example of the failure to form a nation around a selection of different religious communities is doubtless that of Lebanon. In many ways, it contained the formula for its own descent into vicious civil war from the beginning in the virtual equality of its many communities. For Ghassan Salamé, a political scientist and Lebanese himself, the tragedy in Lebanon was a "game of mirrors" that revolved around the problem of national identity. In order to build a strong state, an equally strong sense of national identity was necessary. However, in the case of Lebanon, that endeavor to fashion a broader identity failed because the creation of the state necessarily required a transfer of allegiance from the traditional groups of family, sect, and tribe, to that of the "abstract and alienating structure" of the state, which led to a "permanent flux" between sectarian identity on the one hand and a more comprehensive national one on the other.[26]

Salamé believes that part of the problem lay in the nature of Lebanon's two major religions. Proselytizing is central to both Christianity and Islam, and that, he maintains, intensified the contradiction between religion and community. "The communal-confessional split…springs from an atavistic attachment to a group" and a religion possessing an "unquestionable missionary zeal," but in the absence of anyone to convert, the community will focus "inward" and become "bound up in its past, proud of its identity and apprehensive about its future." The absence of proselytism in Lebanon leads him to conclude that the communal spirit outweighed religious faith and resulted in the kind of "tribal nationalism" now seen there. The political order established during the period of the French Mandate from 1920 to 1946 served to intensify that situation because it "inordinately reinforced confessional affiliation as the basis for one's identity."[27]

As in many other new countries, nationalism was the most acceptable ideology. But where the "nation" resided among various competing nationalisms was not always easy to ascertain on the "already confusing complexity of the religious and confessional chessboard." Proponents of nationalism in Lebanon believed that the state founded in 1920 "was the modern version of a secular Lebanon that had always existed," either since ancient Phoenicia or the sixteenth century. Still others believed it had to he adjusted to the needs of the state.[28]

Once created, the various communities reacted differently to the Lebanese state and nationalist ideology. The Muslims accepted them only reluctantly. After Sulayman Franjieh's election in 1970, the Phalange and other sympathetic Christians espoused a creed of "tribal nationalism," wherein "Lebanon was first and foremost a Christian country" in which Christians were "innately Lebanese nationalists" and Muslims were compelled to prove themselves so. As a consequence, "Lebanese nationalism deteriorated into a group ideology, losing, under this confessional grip, a great deal of its credibility."[29]

Arab nationalism, and the more recent Islamic revival, fared no better in Lebanon according to Salamé. Both yielded to the influence of the country's confessional environment. From the beginning Arab nationalism had appealed only to the Muslim sector of Lebanese society. Jamal Abdul Nasser (1954-1970) of Egypt successfully avoided becoming entrapped in the intercommunal conflicts of Lebanon, but the Palestinian Liberation Organization became deeply entangled following the 1967 relocation of its forces there. The final blow came with Israel's 1982 invasion, which, with the general Arab indifference towards that incursion, turned Lebanon into "the burial ground of a particular type of Arabism."[30] Likewise, the Islamic movements became "trapped in the confessional structure of Lebanese society." The phenomenon also exacerbated intercommunal hatred because, in the view of a Muslim, a Christian was "an alien in an even more radical sense."[31]

Marxist and leftist attempts at defining Lebanese identity in terms of class struggle also came to naught. "Class consciousness was shrouded or swept away by the politico-confessional consciousness, constantly sustained by the fact that the Other across the green line consistently defined himself as Christian. The game of mirrors continues in stymied situations."[32]

Salamé believes that a duality existed within the political system in Lebanon that pulled Muslims and Christians in contrary ideological directions. The Maronites saw themselves as "the representatives of all the Christians and the holders of Lebanese independence," while the Sunnis "considered themselves the representatives of all Lebanese Muslims…and spokesmen for the integration of Lebanon into the larger framework of Syria and the Arab world." As a consequence of that, "Being 'Lebanese'…took on a strong Maronite and more generally Christian colouring whereas being 'Arab' had definitely a Sunni and a more generally Muslim connota-

tion."[33] The war, however, disrupted that understanding. With the advent of the civil war in 1975, Lebanon was transformed into a "medieval killing ground." Battle among the militias became a form of "organized crime" because of the restriction of their interests to "war-making and financial extraction."[34]

Salamé's is a markedly pessimistic view of the situation in Lebanon written at a time when the civil war was still in progress and the division of the country along confessional lines had become most evident. The relative peace that has endured since the end of that prolonged period of strife may offer Lebanon the respite needed to reassess its causes and consequences. In any case, the country has held together in spite of the war and Syrian longings to make it part of the dream of a Greater Syria.

Censuses are understandably a delicate subject in the countries of the Middle East because of the sensitivity surrounding the issue of minorities. If they are taken at all, their figures are frequently manipulated by the governments of the region to suit their respective objectives. For example, in Turkey, an official count of the Kurds of eastern Anatolia has not been taken. In Iraq, Kurds were moved from their homeland in the northeastern parts of the country to the south and supplanted with Arabs to intentionally affect the result. In Egypt, the Copts claimed that the numbers given for them were always low.[35]

The situation is no different in Lebanon where the delicate balance between the various factions is at stake. The last official census in the country was taken in 1932 when the total population was 793,000. At that time the Maronites composed twenty-nine percent of the population, the Sunnis twenty-one percent, and the Shiites eighteen percent. Christians as a whole had a slight majority at the time within the total population. Since then, no subsequent census has been taken out of fear on the part of the Christians, and especially the Maronites, that, due to demographic changes in favor of the Muslims, their dominant position would be placed in jeopardy.[36]

This correctly suggests not only that the demographic situation in Middle Eastern countries is not necessarily static, but also that changes can have important political repercussions. Informal attempts at conducting a census in Lebanon all indicate that the Shiites, who are the poorest sect in Lebanon and concentrated in the south, are now the largest single group. That affected their participation in the civil war, which was in large part motivated by their determination to win economic and political rewards commensurate with their increased numbers. According to the table provided by Alan Richardson and John Waterbury, as of 1983 they composed nearly one-third of the population of the country, with 1.1 million out of a total population of 3.58 million.[37]

The unique extent of Lebanon's confessionalism can be seen in the army, which is unique in the Arab world for the way in which it reflects the country's religious composition. One of the distinguishing features of its organization has been that recruitment among Muslims and Christians is roughly equal, and units tend to be formed along sectarian lines. Another is that there was agreement to limit the size of the army to keep the country out of the conflicts in the region, especially with Israel. It did however play an increasingly active role in Lebanese politics over time, especially between 1952 and 1970 when General Fuad Chehab's influence was ascendant. In 1970 the new president, Sulieman Franjieh, in a reversal of the foregoing policy, reduced the army's ability to get involved in domestic politics, making it unable to "play a positive role" in the period preceding the 1975 civil war and allowing the various militias and the PLO a free hand in battling amongst themselves for dominance once the war began. By 1976, and following the failed coup by General Aziz al-Ahdab, "the army was…far too weak and divided to play a role." Shortly after the coup attempt, disintegration set in after a mutiny, which "led Christian and Muslim soldiers either to desert or to regroup in sectarian units loosely attached to the major militias."[38]

Aside from the clear example of confessional Lebanon, Israel may be seen as a remnant of the Ottoman Empire as well in that it continues to retain the *millet* organization within its legal system as a result of "parliamentary stalemate" brought on by the need for coalitions in the government and the consequent importance of the religious parties.[39] It is also another demonstration of how discrimination can run along religious as well as ethnic lines. Within the country's body politic there resides the distinction between Ashkenazim and Sephardim in addition to that between Arab and Jew. The Sephardim have become a majority amongst the Jews, and yet they are still not in possession of state power. Although Israel was founded by Ashkenazi Jews from Europe, the Sephardim have had higher birth rates, their socioeconomic position has been lower, and they are perceived as being more traditional.[40]

Countries in the region have been able to maintain their national unity in spite of significant religious and ethnic divisions, even in times of war that offer the possibility of compromising loyalties. The clearest example of that was the Iran-Iraq war. Both of those countries have large ethnic or religious divisions. Iran is more than ninety percent Shiite, but its population is barely more than fifty percent ethnic Persian, the remainder being made up by Azerbaijani Turks, Turko mans, Kurds, Lors, Arabs, and Baluchis. Iraq is more ethnically united, with Arabs being approximately eighty percent of the population, but religiously less so. The Shiites are a slight majority over Sunni Arabs and Kurds. In any case, Iraq ostensibly began the war in 1980 to liberate the Arabs of Iranian Khuzistan. The Shiite Arabs of Iran, however, failed to hearken to the Iraqi Bathists's nationalist call to unity. At the same time, the Shiites in Iraq failed to respond to Iran's Islamic summons. In spite of their "profound religious, linguistic, and ethnic cleavages," both countries were more or less able to maintain national unity throughout the war.[41]

As in the Ottoman *millet* system, religion continues to be one of the primary distinguishing characteristics between groups. As Owens indicates, viewing the religious groups as "communities" wherein religion is a kind of "ethnic marker defining the boundary of one community as against another" is useful when trying to understand the manner in which they function. In this way, "communal ideas" effectively bring about mass mobilization "in favour of movements calling for particular forms of religiously based self-assertion or self-protection," which was the case with the Amal and Towhid organizations in Lebanon and the Egyptian Copts during the seventies and eighties.[42]

The Christians in Egypt, the Sudan, and Palestine have all faced particular problems as minorities in lands dominated by Muslims. The Egyptian governments prior to 1953 were successful at integrating the Copts into the larger national community. Thereafter, the elimination of the parties that had made that possible placed the church in the prominent position whereby it became the principal organ fostering "communal mobilization" and the creation of "new benevolent and community associations," and that within a state which under Sadat was developing an ever stronger Muslim identity. Mubarak continued the "process of communalism" by encouraging Copts to join institutions directed by the church, while church leaders intensified "efforts to temper its implicit separatism with a stress on the importance of religious culture in Egyptian history and the role of Copts as saints and heroes." Because of their divisions, the Christians in the Sudan could not react as a community when the Muslim-dominated state began imposing the shariat after 1983. Re sponses ranged from protests by churches in the north to rebellion by the Christians who lived in the south.[43]

Stateless and without any "possibility of creating national institutions," Palestinian Christians had to rely upon those within the occupied territories and the PLO on the outside (after the 1967 war) for "the maintenance of unity." Given the restrictions of the occupation, expression came primarily through cultural media, where "particular readings of Palestinianism and Palestinian history" occurred in an atmosphere "in which religion was seen as cultural tradition rather than a mark of identity." With the coming of the *intifada* in 1987, that tendency not only helped the Muslim religious groups to redefine "everything in religious terms," but it also brought about pressure for the Orthodox Church "to take a public stand against military policies in the West Bank and Gaza."[44]

In the course of the civil war in Lebanon, confessionalism intensified and religion grew evermore important "as a source of identity." One of the reasons for the occurrence of the war was the Christian leaders' desire "to protect the privileged position allotted to the Maronites within the Lebanese state." The policies adopted for achieving that aim consisted of the creation of militias to counter leftist and radical Muslim pressure to change the system, the mobilization of the Maronite community, and the disruption of efforts by the opposition to intentionally "sectarianize" the conflict. As Owen says, "Given the importance attached to religious identity in Lebanon, it was a relatively easy matter to shell predominantly Muslim districts in Beirut and elsewhere and so turn the fighting into a basically Christian/Muslim conflict."[45]

Writing a year after the Lebanese civil war began, Albert Hourani suggested that one of the causes of the conflict lay in the contrasting historical outlooks of the rural and urban regions of the country. He claimed that other analyses tended to overemphasize "the balance between religious communities" and ignored other equally important factors such as the country's susceptibility to influence from its larger neighbors because of its "smallness and fragility." Also, not all commu nities participated equally in the system, and among those more or less marginalized were the Orthodox Christians, the Armenians, the Shiites, and the Palestinians. Lastly, there was a misperception as to how unified the various communities actually were within themselves and whether the division along communal lines was the only or even the most important one possible.[46]

The system that emerged in Lebanon, according to Hourani, was not one based upon whole communities, but was founded on agreements between the elites. Instead of adopting a basically Maronite political tradition that originated in certain Christian sectors of the Mountain region, as maintained by other scholars, the leaders of the Druze, Sunnis, and Shiites came to an agreement. "To the extent to which they entered the Lebanese political alliance, they did so with their own modes of action and their own traditions."[47]

Hourani maintained that there were two kinds of "ideology" extant in Lebanon: that of the mountain and that of the city. The former belonged specifically to the Maronites and their history and consisted of three aspects: the idea of the "compact community," that of the "nation," and one that Hourani termed "populism." In the first, the Maronites were an insular community, self-governing, protecting themselves from outside attack, and self-consciously "aware of themselves as the only Catholic 'nation' in the Near East." During the nineteenth century the notion emerged of a "nation" existing within "a broader political framework" and led by an elite group of families that interacted with the corresponding Druze and Sunni elites in an atmosphere of "religious pluralism."[48]

Lastly, in the 1860s, certain "populist leaders" such as Tanious Shahin and Yusuf Karam emerged in Maronite villages and small towns to oppose aspects of the Organic Law. Hourani considered those to be, in part, the predecessors of the Phalangists. The villagers, with their "mountain populism" mentality, distrusted the inhabitants of the city. Theirs was a dichotomous outlook, wherein the "rural society" was created by God and the urban by man; the life of the field is "natural" life in all its purity.[49]

From the last half of the nineteenth century onwards, however, it was the outlook derived from the cities that achieved precedence. It was from newly dominant Beirut, which, along with the other large coastal Lebanese towns, had been integrated into the rest of the country, that another understanding of "what Lebanon was or should be" emanated. As Hourani stated:

> Implicitly or explicitly, the urban idea of Lebanon was neither of a society closed against the outside world, nor of a unitary society in which smaller communities were dissolved, but something between the two: a plural society in which communities, still different on the level of inherited religious loyalties and intimate family ties, coexisted within a common framework.[50]

This view arose from the economic activities that dominated Beirut and the other coastal cities, and their accessibility from the sea. It was "the statement of the interests of a commercial city, where men must meet in peace and order to do business, and doors should be open to the outside world." It was this outlook that "guided the political development of Lebanon from 1920 onwards," not that of the mountains.[51]

Hourani mentioned two other aspects of this "urban conception." The first was the notion that Lebanon is "a kind of transplantation and modification in the city of the idea of the Christian mountain," which comes from the pen of the intellectual Michel Chiha (d. 1954), who believed in "a pluralist and non-sectarian state" along with the reluctant accep-

tance of communalism. A variation of this was the self-centered belief among Maronites that Lebanon is the inheritor of ancient Phoenicia, "the child of the Church, the only Christian country in Asia," and must participate totally in the larger Mediterranean civilization of which it is a part. In contrast to that understanding was the conviction of some Muslims that Lebanon was instead the "transplantation of later Ottoman ideas," indicating that it "should be carefully non-sectarian, with a national concept embracing all, but suffused with a memory of the Arab, and therefore Muslim, past." Moreover, it should be, in lieu of looking toward the Mediterranean, a pale of Arab civilization.[52]

This urban understanding of Lebanon formed the "ideological basis" of the state in Lebanon, whose fragility the civil war all too clearly exposed. Emphasis was placed on the presidency, but, when serious conflicts arose, the president too often could not be neutral. Consensus among the political elites of the communities did not mean agreement among the communities themselves. The villagers migrating to the cities brought with them a more deeply ingrained awareness of sectarian differences, thereby undermining the urban idea. Finally, the war demonstrated how many Lebanese were excluded from participation in the political arena. The formerly dominant Sunnis could no longer be spokesmen for all Muslims, and the mountain mentality was still embedded in the thinking of many Maronites whose hearts were still in the villages.[53]

Lebanon is only the most extreme example of the tragic end to which the ethnic and religious diversity of the Middle East has led in recent years. An account of the Kurds in Turkey, Iraq, and Iran would depict no less clearly the calamity to which the clash betwixt identities can lead. Hence, there is no doubt that this diversity has had an important influence on the internal politics of the region's countries since the nineteenth century, especially with respect to the nation-state. Nationalism, that emotional juggernaut which swept through the region during the forties, fifties, and sixties, has seen its day come and pass. For the Arabs, neither have they been successful in converting all of the minorities in their midst into Arabs, nor in uniting themselves under pan-Arabism. The days of Kamal Ataturk (1923-1938) and Reza Shah (1925-1941) are now only vague remembrances, their attempts to unify their respective nations under the banner of a single ethnic identity having clearly failed. Yet, the minorities, those remnants of previous centuries when borders were nonexistent, persist, as do the conflicts surrounding them.

NOTES

[1]Albert Hourani, "Race, Religion and the Nation State," in *A Vision of History* (Beirut: Khayat, 1961), 71. Hourani addressed many of the currents and trends that occurred in the history of Arab Middle East, particularly over the last two hundred years, in such works as *Syria and Lebanon* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946); *Minorities in the Arab World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1947); his landmark *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1789-1939* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1962); and *The History of the Arab Peoples* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1991).

[2]Hourani defined ethnicity as "communities of which members have shared a historical experience long and profound enough to give them a significant degree of identity: in language…in modes of thought and feeling, and…in physical characteristics." Hourani, "Race," 72-73.

[3]Hourani, "Race," 73.

[4]Hourani, "Race," 73-74.

[5]Ernest Gellner, *Muslim Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1984), 59. The other works in which Gellner dealt with the structures and workings of North African and Middle Eastern societies include *Saints of the Atlas* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1969); and *Islamic Dilemmas* (New York: Mouton, 1985),

[6]Hourani, "Race," 75.

[7]Hourani, "Race," 75-78.

[8]Hourani, "Race," 78-79.

[9]Hourani, "Race," 79-80.

[10]Robert Owen, *State, Power, and Politics* (London: Routledge, 1992), 9.

[11]Hourani, "Race," 83-84.

[12]Hourani, "Race," 85-86.

[13]Gellner, *Muslim Society*, 59.

[14]Gellner, *Muslim Society*, 59.

[15]William E. Shepard, "Islam and Ideology: Towards a Typology," *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 19 (1987): 310.

[16]Jurji Zaydan, who wrote one of the best-known histories of Islam in Arabic, *Ta'rikh al-tamaddun al-islami* (The history of Islamic civilization), was a Christian.

[17]Hourani, "Race," 86-89.

[18]Owen, *State,* 83.

[19]Hourani, "Race," 90.

[20]Owen, *State,* 170.

[21]Hourani, "Race," 91-92.

[22]Gellner, *Muslim Society*, 97-98.

[23]Owen, *State,* 20. Owen has probably written more than any on the economic history of the modern Middle East. His two principle works in that area are *The Middle East in the World Economy 1800-1914* (New York: Methuen, 1981); and *A History of the Middle East Economies in the 20th Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998).

[24]Hanna Batatu, "Some Observations on the Social Roots of Syria's Ruling Military Group and the Causes for Its Dominance," *Middle East Journal* 35 (1981): 341. Batatu's study *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978) has become a classic social history of an Arab country in the twentieth century.

[25]Alan Richardson and John Waterbury, *Political Economy of the Middle East: State, Class, and Economic Development* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1990), 96.

[26]Ghassan Salamé, "Lebanon's Injured Identities: Who Represents Whom During a Civil War?" in *Papers on Lebanon* (Oxford: Centre for Lebanese Studies, 1986), 1-5. Salamé is the author of such influential books as *Democracies without Democrats* (New York: I. B. Tauris, 1994); *The Foundations of the Arab State* (New York: Croom Helm, 1987); and *The Politics of Arab Integration* (New York: Croom Helm, 1988).

[27]Salamé, "Lebanon's Injured Identities," 3.

[28]Salamé, "Lebanon's Injured Identities," 5-6.

[29]Salamé, "Lebanon's Injured Identities," 6-8.

[30]Fouad Ajami places the decline of interest in Arab Nationalism earlier, in the mid-1970s. The movement was, he says, abandoned in favor of economic gain represented by middlemen such as Adnan Khashoggi. Fouad Ajami, *The Arab Predicament: Arab Political Thought and Practice Since 1967* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 156. In *The Arab Predicament* Ajami focuses mainly on events and trends in the Arab World during the 1970s. He takes a broader look at twentieth century developments in his more recent book, *The Dream Palace of the Arabs: A Generation's Odyssey* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1998).

[31]Salamé, "Lebanon's Injured Identities," 9-10.

[32]Salamé, "Lebanon's Injured Identities," 12.

[33]Salamé, "Lebanon's Injured Identities," 13.

[34]Salamé, "Lebanon's Injured Identities," 21.

[35]Richardson and Waterbury, *Political Economy*, 96.

[36]Richardson and Waterbury, *Political Economy*, 97.

[37]Richardson and Waterbury, *Political Economy*, 97-98.

[38]Owen, *State,* 211-213.

[39]Gellner, *Muslim Society*, 2.

[40]Richardson and Waterbury, *Political Economy*, 98.

[41]Richardson and Waterbury, *Political Economy*, 369. The exception to this was the Kurds of Iraq, who sided with the Iranians and suffered predictable retribution from the Iraqi government after the war's termination.

[42]Owen, *State,* 168-169.

[43]Owen, *State,* 189.

[44]Owen, *State,* 189-190.

[45]Owen, *State,* 190.

[46]Albert Hourani, "Ideologies of the Mountain and the City," in *Essays on the Crisis in Lebanon*, ed. Roger Owen (London: Ithaca Press, 1976), 33-35.

[47]Hourani, "Ideologies," 35.

[48]Hourani, "Ideologies," 36-37.

[49]Hourani, "Ideologies," 37.

[50]Hourani, "Ideologies," 38.

[51]Hourani, "Ideologies," 38.

[52]Hourani, "Ideologies," 38-39.

[53]Hourani, "Ideologies," 39-40.