

Amid Rebellion, Invasion and Revolution: Ottoman Centralisation in Lebanon, 1861-1915

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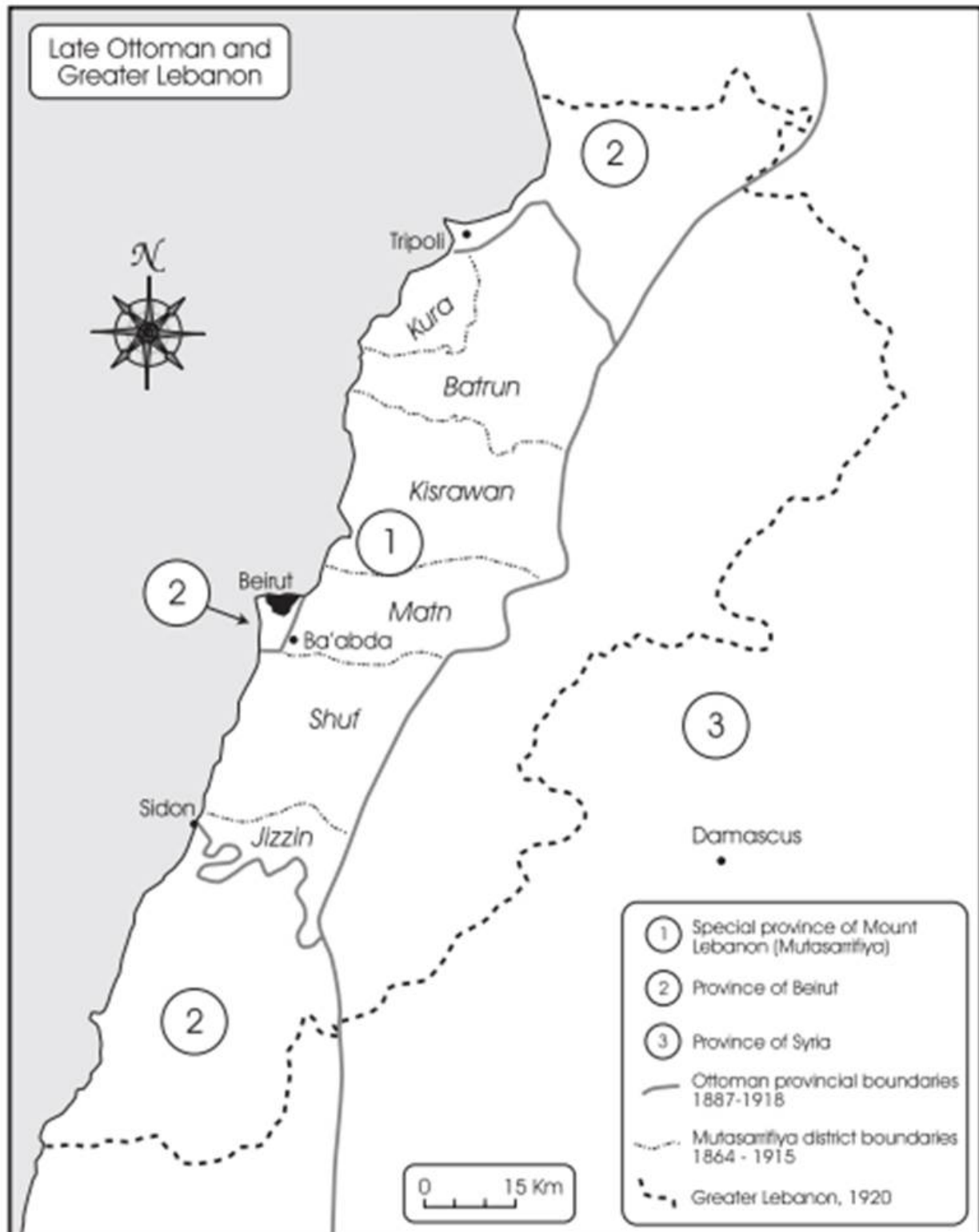


Figure 1: Late Ottoman and Greater Lebanon. Source: Harris, W. (2012)

Abstract

Times of strife dominate discussion on Lebanon, with the 2019 ‘revolution’ the latest to headline after the civil wars of 1860 and 1975–90. The reorganisation period after 1860, known as the *mutasarrifiyya*, was, however, remarkably peaceful under the Ottomans – although now mainly a forgotten time with scholars neglecting the sources and perspective of the Sultan’s reformers. Instead, nationalist historians used local chronicles and European records to present the *mutasarrifiyya* as nurturing a Lebanese nation. Likewise, later Western accounts, utilising similar material, argued that European contact prepared the Lebanese for independence. Therefore, the existing historiography follows a teleological bent in unearthing supposed signs for the eventual end of Ottoman hegemony.

To counter this approach, I conducted research in the National Archives, supplemented with Ottoman sources referenced in secondary works and guided by theories on colonial centralisation to combat Orientalist narratives. I also looked for evidence of the antagonistic factors of foreign interference, nationalism and internal divides. As a result, I opine that Istanbul’s centralisation was effective to a great extent in precluding European influence and rendering Lebanon’s secession by no means certain. This paper should help reshape our understanding of Lebanese history by accentuating longer peaceful periods over sectarianism and foreign collusion.

Keywords: *Mutasarrifiyya*, *tanzimat*, Ottoman ‘borrowed colonialism’, sectarianism in Lebanon, France and Lebanon, elite politics in Lebanon

Introduction: A land of ‘maladministration, murders and counter-murders’

A century after reforms were begun under Sultan Selim III, the above quote was how the British Foreign Office described the Ottoman Empire (Foreign Office, 1985, vol. 19: 57). While demonstrating the contemporary European presentation of the Middle East as plagued by despotism and violence (Churchill, 1994: 134), this statement further reveals Western accentuation of instability – such as the 1860 Mount Lebanon civil war, the [Maronite](#) rebellions of the 1860s, the Russian invasion of the Balkans in 1877–78 and the 1908 ‘[Young Turk](#)’ revolution – to legitimate and facilitate intervention, defend their interests from these apparent threats and extend their influence. In the 1860 case, massacres of Christians by [Druze](#) forces under the British-backed [Jumblatt family](#) (Khalaf, c.1979: 89–92) were used to legitimate French occupation in 1860–61, despite the Ottoman Government, or Porte, having already restored order under their emissary, the prominent reformist minister Fuad Pasha. This French intervention resulted in the codifying, with the Ottomans, of the *Règlement Organique* as the government statute for [the Mountain](#) from 1861 until 1915, when military rule was established during World War I.

As a result of the voicing of nationalistic opposition to Ottoman repression during the War (Harris, 2012: 173–74) and the subsequent granting of the League of Nations Mandate for a ‘Greater Lebanon’ to France in 1920, the 1861–1915 *mutasarrifiyya* has been overlooked in the historiography as a period of peaceful European influence over a growing secessionist trend. Even when studied in works like Spagnolo’s 1977 *France and Ottoman Lebanon, 1861–1914* – the first to use some Ottoman sources – the West’s documents and interference are accentuated over the perspective of the centralising Ottoman state (Cronin, 1995: 137). Later, the Lebanese scholar Zamir obscures the agency of the Porte too and does not use any Ottoman sources at all. Although contrasting with Spagnolo in stressing France’s role in nurturing a Christian proto-

state (Zamir, 1985: 7–9), both foreground French schemes (Zamir, 1985: 22) and present the *Règlement as de facto*, imposed by the Powers (Spagnolo, 1977: 93).

Similarly, many works exhibit teleological tendencies by accentuating the imminent demise of Ottoman rule and the presence of *antebellum* Lebanese nationalism, even though World War I was needed for these developments. The mid-twentieth century nationalist historiographies of Hitti and Salibi, in particular, present the period as one of ‘tranquillity’ and prosperity needed to form a bureaucracy-in-waiting for a Lebanese nation-state (Salibi, 1965: 116), protected by the governors from Istanbul’s designs (Hitti, 1951: 694–96). In the last 30 years, however, Akarli’s *The Long Peace* was the first to utilise the correspondence between the *mutasarrifs* and the Porte (Akarli, 1993: 1) and emphasised Ottoman officials’ studious concern for the Mountain’s stability to prevent Western intervention (1993: 3, 34, 111 and 189). However, he remains fixated with Lebanon’s eventual secession, concluding that it was ‘quite well prepared’ for independence by 1914 (1993: 184–87). This is despite the fact that the Porte was reforming in the bureaucratic 1839–76 era known as the *tanzimat* (“*Reorganisation*”) and under the authoritarian Sultan Abdulhamid II to centralise control against separatism and foreign intervention.

Therefore, I aim to shift the emphasis towards studying the actions of the Ottoman Government to ascertain how far the *Règlement* system constituted, in practice, a successful example of centralisation by the Porte. However, while I outline a different approach in analysing the primary material, a trip to the Ottoman Archives in Istanbul was unfeasible. Therefore, I rely on the sources used by Spagnolo, namely the documents of the British Istanbul Embassy and Beirut Consulate catalogued as the FO series 195 (Embassy and Consulates, Turkey: General Correspondence) and 371 (Political Departments: General Correspondence from 1906–66),^[1] in the National Archives in London together with the papers in the British Library of Sir Austen Henry Layard, Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire 1877–80 to provide detail on the concerns of Her Majesty’s government, including for its allies in the Druze Jumblatt family, as well as the perceived influence of France over her Maronite protégées.

To compensate for not being able to access the Istanbul archives, and to check British claims of French interference, I make use of the Ottoman records referenced in Akarli’s *The Long Peace*. This should make an important contribution, as Akarli argues that relying on foreign reports presents Lebanese history as ‘the creation of an outpost of intrinsically progressive Western civilisation in an essentially stagnant, and hence history-less, environment’. Instead, Ottoman sources illustrate the Porte’s agency and success in forming a reliable government and public order (Akarli, 1993: 2–3) against opposition from foreign governments and Lebanese actors. This brings my study closer to works on European empires, such as Cohn’s chapter on post-1857 reconstruction in India in *The Invention of Tradition* (2010: 192), which uses the colonial power’s own documents.

In fact, employing both the British and Ottoman records brings a new dual perspective to studying the *mutasarrifiyya* as, before Akarli, European documents were foregrounded while *The Long Peace* itself used only three direct citations to British Foreign Office sources to supplement the Porte’s material (Akarli, 1993: 43, 45, 51). Therefore, this combination should be sufficient to assess how far centralisation was successful against the first antagonistic factor of foreign interference. The two other factors, however, concern the motivations of Lebanese actors, including the land-owning, religious and nationalist elites. As this article is concerned only with how these actors interacted with the initiatives of the central government, writings by Lebanese themselves are not included in the research. Although I argue that most people in the Mountain expressed their opposition while still respecting Ottoman suzerainty, nationalist or separatist sentiments are

separate topics that I plan to study in future work utilising Arabic-language sources. Rather, this paper assesses whether centralisation from the Porte and their subordinates, the *mutasarrifs*, was strong enough to enforce acceptance from Lebanese. This approach counters the argument of Zamir and the nationalists who use the records of the Ottoman's internal and external enemies to present the *mutasarrifiyya* as an experiment in soft European tutelage and/or local autonomy.

Moreover, to counter contemporary Orientalism, I will employ Deringil's ideas on Ottoman 'borrowed colonialism' outlined in his article on 'The Late Ottoman Empire and the Post-Colonial Debate' (2003: 311). Based on Europeans' colonial 'civilising mission', this concept holds that Istanbul's reformers viewed the provinces as a colonial 'periphery', fusing traditional and European views of these regions as plagued by internecine feuding and therefore, believing that they could only be governed through local intermediaries to prevent conflict and foreign intervention (2003: 316–23). Although this approach would suggest that the elites preserved their autonomy from the Porte after 1860, comparing the Mountain with Cohn's presentation of Victorian India in his chapter in *The Invention of Tradition* provides another perspective. He assesses that the British administration's invention of traditional elites as part of the post-Rebellion restructuring of India was successful in bringing stability until World War I (Cohn, 2010: 208–09). Similarly, the governance of the Mountain was reorganised following a period of conflict and heralded an approximate half-century of comparative peace. The co-opting of many of the old 'feudal' elites – despite that system's abolition by the *Règlement* – into the *mutasarrifiyya* alongside newly emboldened Church leaders possesses striking resemblance to Cohn's understanding of Indian restructuring. Differing approaches by British administrators resulted in the integration of both 'feudal' princes and rising-star region- and sect-based leaders into the ruling hierarchy (2010: 190), drawing both closer to the centre as in the Lebanese case. Furthermore, it can be evinced that, after 1860, opposition by traditional leaders was expressed within the new system. Cohn likewise demonstrated that Indian nationalists formulated their political idiom based on imperial precedent (2010: 208–09).

Most recently, Lebanese journalist Habib Battah's paper 'Structures of Change in Post-War Lebanon' asserts that the success of non-sectarian 'Arab Spring' protest groups in Lebanon challenges 'exotified' expectations for reform in the Middle East that foreground coups over more subtle, peaceful changes (Battah, 2016: 2). With reference to the 2019 protests, he has further identified that in a, supposedly, sectarian state, a cross-sectarian elite are the real decision makers and not the sects themselves (Battah, 2020). Similarly, the 1861–1915 period has been characterised as a system based around sectarian allegiance, although the sects themselves were not directly represented at the top but, rather, by the traditional land-owning elites. In the words of the historian Ussama Makdisi in his study of the production of the discourse of sectarianism in nineteenth-century Lebanon, the *Règlement* created an 'elitist sectarian system' based on the old notables who 'developed a new and modernised form which still dominates Lebanon today' (2000: 161–162) in the way Battah describes. Therefore, the theory outlined above presents the *mutasarrifiyya* as a peaceful centralisation process to Istanbul using a hierarchical, cross-sectarian social system emboldened by the Porte.

However, to reach a conclusion on whether this initiative was strong enough, I study the relative weight of the antagonistic factors to centralisation, namely European influence and the Mountain's two centrifugal tendencies beginning with Lebanese particularism defined as the Maronites' separatism (Akarli, 1993: 173) rather than wider Arab or Syrian nationalism. This choice has been made using Anderson's definition of 'nationalism' as the striving by an imagined political community united by a shared print language to achieve independence within defined boundaries (Anderson, 2016: 6–7). Therefore, late nineteenth-century

Mount Lebanon's hierarchical social structure and fluid geographical boundaries suggest that the region fits more closely to Anderson's presentation of pre-nationalist orders organised vertically, rather than horizontally (2016: 13), with an elite Maronite separatism more potent pre-1915 than Lebanese nationalism. Following that, the divides in the Mountain's society, including sectarianism and class splits, are studied against the Ottoman policies used to increase ties to Istanbul.

Keeping the peace amid rebellion, invasion and revolution

The findings of my archival research illustrate a studious concern for the maintenance of peace in the Mountain on the part of the Ottoman administrators. This was especially true during the three times of crisis alluded to in the title of this article: the 1860s' Maronite rebellions led by Yusuf Karam; the 1876–78 period witnessing the Russian invasion of the Balkans and Sultan Abdulhamid II's suspension of the constitution; and the 1908 'Young Turk' revolution, which restored the constitution and elections but, subsequently, aimed for a Turkified administration free of peculiarities such as the *mutasarrifiyya* (Harris, 2012: 149). Prior to the direct rule implemented under the cloak of war in 1915, however, policy emanated from both the *mutasarrif* and the Porte, and so my analysis of the sources referencing centralisation must also be divided into two sections. Firstly, it is evident that Istanbul endeavoured to achieve more oversight over the Mountain's governance. While the 1861 *Règlement* stipulated that the new governor be 'directly responsible' to the Porte (Hurewitz, 1956, Vol. 1: 165), what is important is how effectively this worked in practice, beginning with the first *mutasarrif*, Daud Pasha, who was appointed by Fuad Pasha and confirmed in his position by the Ambassadors of the [Great Powers](#) in 1864 (Akarli, 1993: 34–35). One of the earliest challenges to his authority was the rebellion of the minor Maronite sheikh Yusuf Karam who had been emboldened by the sectarian violence of 1860. However, Daud subsequently deposed this parvenu leader as local governor, or *qaymaqam*, of the Christian Kisrawan district in favour of a member of the established Shihab elite family (Tarabulsi, 2007: 39). Daud attempted to resolve this challenge peacefully, per the Porte's instruction, and even allowed Yusuf 'Bey' to return in 1864 as a conciliatory measure to the Christians, according to Tarabulsi (2007: 44). After Karam restarted his rebellion in January 1866, however, the skirmishes he initiated failed to impede the advance of Ottoman troops^[2] who encircled and exiled him (2007: 45). Istanbul's correspondence thus demonstrates its effective backing of Daud to nullify the damage wrought by Karam's return, which the British Consul Eldridge claimed had been the 'underhand work of persons at the Porte' (1864e). Opposition allegedly instigated by the scion of the Druze Arslan family was also dealt with centrally when he was exiled to the Istanbul Council of State (Eldridge, 1868).

The Porte's next major tests arrived with the 1876 constitution and the 1877–78 Russo-Turkish War. Previously, the Lebanon Government's budget deficit had been made up from the Beirut Port Customs House to safeguard salaries and maintain effective administration. However, the 1876–78 crisis resulted in the Ottoman Government requisitioning all funds for the war (Eldridge, 1877a), which Eldridge believed could lead to 'serious consequences' arising from this failure of centralised government to pay soldiers and administrators (1877b). He believed that the local volunteer militia could mutiny over their wage arrears if the Mountain's other force, the Christian Dragoons, left due to their desire for frontline service – a striking show, as Eldridge admitted, of patriotism perhaps inspired by good government (1877e). The Dragoons themselves did, indeed, perform well later that year against 'brigands', although Eldridge complained that their commander from Damascus freed the robbers in return for bribes (1877g).

The 1877–78 crisis, however, legitimated Sultan Abdulhamid II's turn to authoritarianism by concentrating power away from the bureaucracy, suspending the constitution and instituting a centralised secular

judiciary, including in the *mutasarrifiyya* where then governor Rustem Pasha's refusal to execute certain rulings triggered a secret investigation. Rustem was exonerated though, and praised for combatting sectarian biases and the Maronite Church's influence.^[3] The judicial centralisation also extended the Istanbul High Court's oversight over all cases in the Mountain^[4] in violation of the *Règlement* to standardise law throughout the Ottoman lands. Despite repeated protest, the Great Powers, eventually, acquiesced to the innovation.^[5] The policy of subordinating the Maronite Church to the Porte also culminated in 1905 when the Patriarch expressed his allegiance personally to Abdulhamid.^[6]

Following its leading role in restoring the constitution in the 1908 'Young Turk' revolution, the [Committee of Union and Progress](#) (CUP) also sought to increase Istanbul's control. British Consul Cumberbatch reported that a member of the Arslan family, Emin, had been elected MP for Latakia 'entirely under the auspices' of the CUP who induced the popular candidate to withdraw (Cumberbatch, 1909a). Moreover, the Consul later attributed the Mountain's peace, contrasted with an attempted counter-revolution in Istanbul, to the CUP and their significant 'activity and influence' (1909b). They were also, apparently, instrumental in the unilateral prohibition of a Lebanese port, despite Cumberbatch's belief that the *Règlement* was too equivocal on the subject to merit their interference (1909d). Overall, however, a tour of the Mountain left the impression that the constitution had given the inhabitants a greater sense of freedom. Cumberbatch also noted, though, that a CUP official had reminded the neighbouring governors to keep an eye on the *mutasarrif* (1909d).

Often in a dialectical relationship with Istanbul, the governor sought to extend his power within the Mountain. Unfortunately, the article of the *Règlement* abolishing the feudal privileges of elite families was never fully implemented (Hurewitz, 1956, Vol. 1: 166). Still, Consul Drummond-Hay's 1900 complaint that the Arslans remained especially strong was clearly a reflection of the British partisanship towards their rivals, the Jumblatts (Foreign Office, 1985, vol. 19: 155). In fact, Daud's appointment of notables to the district headships was commended by Grand Vizier Ali Pasha.^[7] The *mutasarrif's* use of imperial troops to destroy a robbers' hideout was further, to Eldridge's surprise, lauded in the Mountain despite memories of soldiers' complicity in the 1860 events and the Great Powers' opposition (Eldridge, 1864b). Daud's superiors also enabled him to purchase the Beit ed-Dine palace over the French bid to secure it as a symbol of their influence (Eldridge, 1864c). Daud then began the management of the Jumblatt estate, which Eldridge appreciated, despite it being an intrusion into the affairs of an erstwhile autonomous family (1864d). He further believed Daud 'produced order and security formerly unknown in the mixed districts' (Eldridge, 1865).

Even after Maronite petitions ended Daud's governorship, Eldridge reported that, by the 1876 'atrocities' against Bulgarian Christians, their co-religionists in the Mountain felt protected by the Lebanon Administration (Eldridge, 1876c). *Mutasarrif* Rustem also managed to diffuse Druze-Christian tensions the next spring despite disturbances elsewhere in Syria (Eldridge, 1877d). Perhaps the most striking of Rustem's successes during the 1877-78 crisis, though, occurred when he used troops to arrest a group of rebellious monks appearing at Beit ed-Dine bearing 'stout cudgels'. The Patriarch's request for aid ensured Rustem's action was well-received and Eldridge, delighted, believed Karam's party extinguished as 'monkish intrigues' had been his primary support (1877i). Further actions, such as the precluding of Druze support for Syrian rebels (Eldridge, 1878b) and the troublemaker Bishop Bustani's surprise exile (1878c), ensured calm amid the general cataclysm.

Crisis averted, Rustem's successor, Vasa, focused on French influence on the *mutasarrifiyya's* Administrative Council, which consisted of 12 members elected to represent the different sects and regions of the Mountain and had the responsibility to 'apportion taxation, supervise the administration of revenue and expenditure, and give an advisory opinion on questions submitted to it by the governor', according to the *Règlement* (Akarli, 1993: 83–84). With influential Maronites' backing, Vasa called elections in 1885, which weakened France's position (Eldridge, 1885). Despite this, he complained to the Imperial Government that more roads were required to bring the Kisrawani Maronites into 'the orbit of civilization'.^[8] By 1900, however, the British Consul Drummond-Hay believed that road construction was the signal achievement of the *mutasarrifiyya*, with 414km built and 261.5km under construction (Foreign Office, 1985, Vol. 19: 152). Still, Cumberbatch reported after his 1909 tour of the Mountain that its peoples deemed foreign intervention inevitable and desirable (Cumberbatch, 1909d). The following year, relations between the *mutasarrif*, Yusuf, and the Administrative Council also reached a nadir when the former refused to implement the councillors' decisions (1910a). On the eve of World War I, new regulations also, apparently, failed to reform the council's corrupt elections (Cumberbatch, 1913).

Unsurprisingly, the most prevalent antagonistic factor to centralisation in the documents is the foreign interference that had earlier played a crucial role in the creation of the *mutasarrifiyya* itself through British and French support for the Druzes and Maronites, respectively, in the 1860 events and the subsequent compromise agreement between Napoleon III's plans for a Christian emirate under the former Shihab ruling family and the interests of the Porte and Her Majesty's Government (Tarabulsi, 2007: 41). However, Consul-General Moore soon reported supposed evidence of agitation by the French Consul, Bentivoglio, with Kisrawani Maronites to replace the statute with a Shihabi emirate (Moore, 1861b). Although this plan failed, due partly to Moore's reciprocal meddling to alert the reformist Fuad Pasha, French influence was soon weighing upon Daud's appointments. The Kisrawan *mudir*, Emir Mejid Shihab, admitted to Moore that the 'intervention' of Napoleon III's government had secured him his position (Moore, 1861c). Still, the Patriarch later confided to Her Majesty's Consul, Eldridge, that Bentivoglio advised him to accept the *mutasarrifiyya* as it enjoyed the support of the other sects, the Great Powers and the Ottoman Government (1864a).

Despite the substitution of the [Second Empire](#) for the [Third Republic](#), Bentivoglio's successor Tricou opposed any new freedoms for the Lebanese and united with Eldridge against an 1875 decree implying a 'direct administrative link between the Empire and Lebanon'. Eldridge informed Ambassador Elliot on 15 January 1876 of his opposition; by 17 January, Istanbul had instructed Rustem that the decree was merely for his own information (Eldridge, 1876a). The British Consul also acquiesced to Tricou's intervention to exclude the Mountain from elections many Maronites believed contravened the *Règlement* (Eldridge, 1876c). Although the French Consul then incited Maronites to arm against a supposed Druze attack, this effort failed after the intervention of Eldridge and Rustem (Eldridge, 1876b). Following the Russian invasion, though, Eldridge asserted that the schemes involving rebellious monks and Bishop Bustani were only thwarted with the French Consul's backing (Eldridge, 1877h and 1878c).

Once the situation had calmed, the British returned to the problem of their Jumblatt protégés' exclusion from government, although Eldridge held off from intervening unless 'force' was used by Rustem and the Arslans (1879: 161). The new French Consul, Patrimonio, was also, apparently, disgruntled at Vasa's refusal to follow his advice, despite his role in the *mutasarrif's* appointment while his attempt to secure a Francophile on the Administrative Council also failed in favour of Vasa's nominee (Eldridge, 1885). Although triumphant here, Vasa's correspondence with the Porte reveals that he believed that the French were determined to interfere in his appointments and the elections to scupper sound administration and prove

the Ottomans' inadequacy to rule.^[9] The primary cause of concern for Eldridge at this time, however, was Kupelyan Effendi, Vasa's son-in-law and 'executive secretary', who was widely believed to be behind the proliferation of bribery in the administration (Akarli, 1993: 54). Failing to persuade the Istanbul Embassy to act, he relied on his friendship with the Anglophile Grand Vizier, Kamil Pasha, to have Kupelyan exiled.^[10]

Eldridge's death in 1890 after over a quarter of a century as Consul resulted, eventually, in increased policy agreement with the French and Maronites under the Catholic Drummond-Hay (Drummond-Hay, 1895). However, during the 1902 Ambassadorial conference on revisions to the *Règlement*, the Powers were too divided to implement any new measures to increase their respective spheres.^[11] On the eve of World War I, France even refused the Ottoman's suggestion for a Lebanese Catholic *mutasarrif* as they feared his popularity 'might be too easily placed in the service of the Porte', according to Spagnolo (1977: 280). Economically too, French influence was patchy. While most silk was exported to the Third Republic, Lebanese olive oil and cotton were mainly consumed within the Ottoman Empire. Moreover, approximately a third of Lebanese migrants chose other Ottoman vilayets over European colonies (Foreign Office, 1985, vol. 19: 148–50).

The last two antagonistic factors of Lebanese particularism and internal splits are the scarcest in the documents. Relating to the motivations of the Lebanese themselves, neither the British Consuls-General nor the Porte were concerned unless they presented a serious threat or advantage to their interests. The first motivation to be analysed is the growing sense of a Lebanese particularism often corroborated using the recurrent rumours of Karam's return, including in 1868 (Rogers, 1868a). In 1876, Eldridge also reported that the constitution produced little excitement among the populace, who were more concerned about whether the new status quo would affect their privileges (Eldridge, 1876d). Furthermore, the following year, he commented that the Lebanese were uninterested in the war and contrasted 'their happy position with the state of anarchy' and 'fanaticism' elsewhere (Eldridge, 1877f). Although Eldridge also defended Rustem against claims by the Istanbul Press that he was unpatriotic, the Consul admitted that efforts to raise Lebanese recruits in 1877 had failed miserably (1878a).

Likewise, Abdulhamid's April 1909 counter-coup attempt against the 'Young Turk' revolution did not, according to Cumberbatch, interest the people of the Mountain (Cumberbatch, 1909b), who were desirous of a European mandate. Cumberbatch also opined that opposition to the Porte's prohibition on the Jounieh dock was inspired by 'racial animosity' towards the Beirut Muslim merchants who they believed blocked the project (1909d). He did earlier state, however, that this issue was not a *cause célèbre*, but the work of a small group agitating to alienate the province from the Ottoman reformers (1909c). Likewise, Cumberbatch dismissed press attacks against *mutasarrif* Yusuf as the work of disgruntled former officials (1910b).

Counterpoised with the examples of embryonic Lebanese nationalism are the divisions between the Mountain's different demographics. In contrast to scholarship accentuating the sectarian animosities, the Foreign Office despatches detail the political and class cleavages within the sects, dominated by the former 'feudal' elites. During his time as Kisrawan *qaymaqam*, the legendary Karam was not supported by either the bishops or the French desiring a Shihabi government (Moore, 1861a). By 1864, years into Daud's administration, the Patriarch still wanted a native governor or an electoral system abandoning sect-based representation. As the Maronites constituted a demographic majority, Eldridge's assumption that this system was desired to increase their power appears vindicated (1864a). The Catholics, however, were still not united in 1868 when Acting-Consul Rogers reported that the Khazin shaykhs had forced downtrodden

peasants to sign petitions against Daud. The mixed districts' Christians were also 'indignant' at their co-religionists' agitation against Daud, who they credited for providing security (Rogers, 1868b).

The crises of 1876–78 also threatened to disturb the peace between Maronites and Druze. Whereas those opposing Lebanese participation in the 1876 Ottoman elections were mainly Christian, Eldridge believed that most Druzes agreed with him that not cooperating would be viewed as 'insubordination' by the Porte (Eldridge, 1876d). The uncertainty caused by the Russian invasion then triggered both sects to arm in case of 'future eventualities'. Unsurprisingly, Eldridge did not question the Druzes' claims to self-defence and opined that the Maronite Bishop at Beit ed-Dine was behind the agitation to discredit Rustem (1877c). Indeed, the Maronite Patriarch's delegation was absent when the *mutasarrif* was cheered on his return from Istanbul by the other sects' representatives (Eldridge, 1878d). In contrast to British and French sponsorship for them, Vasa complained about the *de facto* survival of the abolished tax-farming elites as they had continued their exploitation of the commoners, or *ahali*, meaning that the benefits of the Mountain's prosperity were not felt by all classes. [\[12\]](#)

Centralising amid rebellion, invasion and revolution

It is evident that European interference was rife in this period. Indeed, Zamir argued that France's intervention created the *mutasarrifiyya* to undermine Ottoman sovereignty until conditions were right for Lebanon's independence under French tutelage (Zamir, 1985: 9–16). The French further prevented the Porte from extending the elections to the Mountain while Vasa's belief that Paris desired to expose the inadequacy of local rule does not appear unfounded in light of Consul Bentivoglio's repeated meddling. Fear of interference also restricted the Ottomans to pursuing peaceful resolutions by exiling rebels like Karam and co-opting old elites.

However, a need to avoid hostilities did not stop the Porte and the *mutasarrifs* from centralising control into their own hands at the Great Powers' expense. France's refusal to use 'force' stifled their plans for a Shihabi emirate and fitted with the Ottomans' 'borrowed colonialism' to 'civilise' leaders and preclude a need for foreign aid by instituting sectarian representation (Deringil, 2003: 316–18). Therefore, Vasa had enough influence to marginalise Francophiles of the Administrative Council and influence France's decision to reject a Lebanese Catholic governor, one of their main avowed goals. Constant competition between the Powers, especially at the 1902 Ambassadorial conference, also reduced their influence in the Mountain. Exploiting this, the Porte prevented the Jounieh scheme, extended judicial control and ensured that Lebanon did not distract them from constitutional crises and invasions. Evidently, as Battah opined, reform could be successful and peaceful, not fitting with the Western expectation of Middle Eastern change as resulting from regime overthrow (2016: 2).

Despite this, elevating the Mountain's elite groups could have engendered a unique identity among Lebanese. Akarli argued that Lebanese nationalism was developed by 50 years' experience of 'modern government' separate from the other Ottoman provinces (1993: 184–87). For example, it has been detailed that Lebanese gained experience in the militia and the Administrative Council while roads also brought remote villages in communication with the rest of Lebanon. Reports abound that the Mountain's inhabitants grew increasingly unconcerned or self-interested when it came to developments in neighbouring provinces and the 1876/1908 Constitution. By the latter date, the CUP were wary of the increasing independence of the *mutasarrif*.

Still, it is clear that none of the separatist movements possessed large appeal across Lebanon as they remained wedded to certain constituencies, vertical hierarchies and differing conceptions of Lebanon to adhere to Anderson's definition of 'nationalism'. Thus, grievances presented by Akarli as engendering nationalism widely, such as the Porte's prohibition on the Jounieh dock (1993: 75), were restricted to a small, literate elite venting their anger not towards Istanbul but to the hoped-for capital of the supposed Lebanese nation: Beirut. Many leading politicians, such as those from the Arslan family, also remained tied to affairs outside of the *mutasarrifiyya* and the initiatives of the centralising state, while Lebanese appreciated the use of government troops against agitators such as Yusuf Karam and Bishop Bustani.

Another task for the Ottoman state post-1860 was combatting the vested interests and divisions that had caused the conflict. Hitti opined that a policy of divide-and-rule was to blame (1951: 694), and we have seen that certain bureaucrats wished to weaken the *mutasarrifiyya* and benefit themselves by instigating Karam's return or taking bribes. However, the Porte later ensured Karam's defeat while the *mutasarrifs* precluded the growth of opposition by co-opting the feudal classes, similarly to how Indian leaders, according to Cohn, were subordinated (2010: 165–66). Likewise, Istanbul now wielded enough control to appoint Ottoman bureaucrats in place of indigenous emirs, exile meddling leaders like Arslan and restrain the Maronite Church through interventions to expel troublemakers and provide representation for the other groups. Although the Church was not incorporated into the official *millet* system, support for separatist leaders was restricted, with the mixed districts' Christians repelled by the agitation of their Kisrawani co-religionists. Most strikingly, the Ottomans' work against divisions prevented any major outbreaks of Lebanon's sectarian violence, even as the 1876–78 crises led to massacres elsewhere. As Battah noted in his appraisal of the current crisis in Lebanon, it is a cross-sectarian elite who make the decisions (2020), and they had now been subordinated to Istanbul's project of reform.

Conclusion

Therefore, we have seen throughout that the maintenance of Ottoman suzerainty, let alone initiatives to centralise their rule, faced significant challenges with foreign interference rife in the *mutasarrifiyya*. Vasa was convinced that France wished to end Ottoman rule altogether through meddling in sectarian and intra-elite conflicts, especially during the crises of 1876–78 and 1908. A feeling of separateness from the rest of the empire was also growing among some Lebanese when they refused to shoulder the collective burden of defence and reform. The policies of the *mutasarrifs* and the Porte, however, demonstrate that both were aware of these challenges and the strategies to thwart them without triggering further conflict. As Cohn argued with regards to British invention of Indian elites, the Ottomans institutionalised sect-based representation under religious and former 'feudal' leaders, which endures to this day. Opposition also came to be expressed peacefully, while Istanbul was able to exile leaders like Arslan without recourse to violence or European aid. Thus, it is, surely, not certain that the British Raj was stronger in imposing its rule on local leaders, whereas the Ottomans had to rely on intermediaries to prop-up their suzerainty.

The co-opting of Lebanese leaders also reveals the quasi-Orientalism of Ottoman statesmen like Fuad Pasha, who believed that sectarian and feudal representation was the only way of pacifying tribes known for their 'age-old' feuds and 'ignorance' (Makdisi, 2000: 3–5). The efficacy of this policy also shows the continued strength of pre-national hierarchies, per Anderson, and, therefore, the restriction of nationalism to small groups. The rare yet decisive use of imperial troops too ensured that rivalries and sectarianism did not cause widespread violence or prompt further Western intervention. Thus, it can be seen that Ottoman centralisation, from the Porte and Beit ed-Dine alike, was successful to a great extent in the period 1861–

1915, bringing the Mountain closer than ever to Istanbul, with secession less likely than in 1860 when European influence and social tensions had been more potent. This then undermines the teleological viewpoint of 1915 Mount Lebanon as, merely, a proto-state waiting for French occupation to deliver the *coup de grâce* for Ottoman suzerainty.

Still, not having access to the Istanbul archives does make it difficult to see how far the co-opting of elites and maintenance of peace were part of a sustained colonial mission or merely reactive measures to remain in control. Even Deringil concluded that 'borrowed colonialism was fated to remain an art of the possible' and too reliant on intermediaries' goodwill (2003: 339). Although the exile of rebels in Lebanon suggests otherwise, further study of Ottoman sources would be required to ascertain how far these actions relied on the co-operation of local powerbrokers. Two areas for future research are the documents in Abdulhamid's Yildiz palace and the *mutasarrifiyya* records held in the National Museum of Beirut, both of which Akarli did not exhaust (1993: 203–04). These could illuminate whether Istanbul could impose its will on distant subjects as the British could in Cohn's presentation of India.

It is evident that my research could have significant implications for our understanding of Lebanon and its history, and that of the wider Middle East, if further study is conducted of Ottoman sources. Referenced in Deringil's article is Hopkins' call, over 20 years ago, to study 'the interaction of several types of empire at various stages of development and decay' over the history of nation states to show 'that imperial history does not have to be Western history' (Hopkins, 1999: 203). This paper, through a study of both Western and Ottoman sources, has, indeed, moved the focus away from a nationalist reading of Lebanese history and demonstrated that colonialism is not restricted to European empires. However, it is evident from media representation of Lebanon and the Middle East today, as noted by Battah (2020), that corruption and sectarianism are still viewed as endemic to the region without proper analysis of these narratives' causes. Further study would illuminate the interaction of Ottoman and European influence in producing this discourse.

Moreover, research could also highlight how times of war, seemingly corroborating the above narratives, are not the rule in Lebanon. Akarli noted how a deeper understanding of change and continuity can only be reached if longer, relatively peaceful periods are studied (1993: 2). Indeed, my research has demonstrated that, despite being an era of Western European domination, the Ottomans' exploiting of internecine Great Power rivalries rendered ineffective schemes often seen as extending European power, such as the *Règlement*. This helps to explain why an empire, supposedly in decline for centuries, was able to centralise successfully to pursue post-war reconstruction and smooth divisions. As a result, perhaps the influence of the sectarianism and foreign interference of the 1975–90 Lebanese Civil War over current discourse could be reduced just as this study has countered the dominance of the religious feuding and Western meddling of the 1860 events over discussion on the *mutasarrifiyya*.

Notes

[1] Comprised of letters by the British Consuls-General in Beirut: Niven Moore, 1853–1862; Noel Moore, 1862–3; G. J. Eldridge, 1863–1890; Colonel Trotter, 1890–1894; Sir Robert Drummond-Hay, 1894–1908; Henry Cumberbatch 1908–1914.

[2] Istanbul Prime Ministry Archives, Gelen-Giden Defterleri (GG) 1013, February 1865, letters from Porte to Daud, 38. See, *The Long Peace*, 38.

- [3] Yildiz Palace Archives, Yildiz Esâs Evrâki (YEE) 18/417/3/40, November 1882, report of Hamdi Pasha. See Akarli, *The Long Peace*, 141.
- [4] Istanbul Prime Ministry Archives, YEE 35/439//122/105, March 1887, defters 2, 22–23. See Akarli, *The Long Peace*, 139.
- [5] Istanbul Prime Ministry Archives, GG 1013, August 15, 1892, 105–06, 153–54, 160–1 and 165–67. See Akarli, *The Long Peace*, 140.
- [6] Istanbul Prime Ministry Archives, Mümtâze: Cebel-i Lübnân Dosyaları (CL) 3/144, September 1905 – January 1906, nos. 1–35. See Akarli, *The Long Peace*, 171.
- [7] Istanbul Prime Ministry Archives, GG 1013, October 1861, 44, Ali to Daud. See Akarli, *The Long Peace*, 149.
- [8] Yildiz Palace Archives, YEE 35/439/122/105, June 1886, defter 1, 13. See Akarli, *The Long Peace*, 52.
- [9] Yildiz Palace Archives, YEE 35/439/122/105, defters 1 and 2. See Akarli, *The Long Peace*, 49.
- [10] National Archives, FO 424/145, March 18, 1888, White to Salisbury. See Spagnolo, *France*, 184.
- [11] National Archives, FO 78/5311, September 20 1902 O'Connor to Lansdowne. See Spagnolo, *France*, 222.
- [12] Yildiz Palace Archives, YEE 35/439/122/105, June 1884, defter 2, Vasa to Interior Ministry, 9 and YEE 34/439/122/105, August 1887, defter 1, 36–38. See Akarli, *The Long Peace*, 155–56.
- [13] The series of archival sources is given first in italics, followed by the underlined reference for the bound volume before the details of each individual letter is given indented afterwards.

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Glossary

Committee of Union and Progress (CUP): One of the secret Ottoman reformist organisations in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries involved in the 1908 'Young Turk' revolution. The party later took sole control of the state in 1913 under the triumvirate of Talât Pasha, Enver Pasha and Cemal (Jemal) Pasha initiating more overt 'Turkification' policies, especially after the Ottoman Empire joined World War I on the side of the Central Powers. Responsible during the conflict for the Armenian genocide and the alienation of much of the empire's Arab population due to Turkification and Cemal Pasha's draconian rule in Syria (inc. Mount Lebanon) from 1915.

Druze: A syncretic religious group originating in tenth-century Shi-ism but incorporating elements from neo-Platonism and the other monotheistic religions and residing mainly in the Lebanon, northern Israel and the Hawran in Syria. One of their adherents, Fakhr ed-Din II, ruled much of the Levant largely autonomously from the Ottomans in the early seventeenth century and their temporal leaders continued their hegemony over the other sects until the nineteenth century. Split between the followers of the Arslan emirs and the British-backed Jumblatt family.

Great Powers: The five most powerful European states in the nineteenth century that had emerged from the Napoleonic Wars, namely Austria, Great Britain, France, Prussia and Russia. These countries engaged in various conferences and interventions to limit any one power from taking a dominant role and threatening the peace of Europe. The comparative weakening of the Porte by this time led to numerous actions by the Great Powers, including in Mount Lebanon in 1861, to ensure that none of them could take an ascendant position through exploiting this weakness or invading the Ottoman territories.

Jumblatt family: One of the historic elite families of the Druze of Mount Lebanon ascendant above all others by the first half of the nineteenth century. Though this position allowed the unity of their sect in 1860, their prominent role led to their subsequent exclusion from power for many years in favour of their rival family of the Arslans. Still active in Lebanese politics today as the hereditary leaders of the Progressive Socialist Party (PSP).

Maronites: Christians belonging to the autonomous Maronite Church recognising the Pope, although possessing their own Patriarch and named after the fourth-century Saint Maron. Since the seventeenth century, the Catholic countries of Europe, and especially France, have seen themselves as the Maronites' protectors. Long confined to the Mountain, a substantial population increase during the eighteenth century led to migration first to coastal cities such as Beirut and then to South America, Africa and Australia.

Mount Lebanon/ "The Mountain": Synecdoche for the Lebanon mountain range and the surrounding districts and valleys. The region's steep slopes and cold winters for centuries made it quite inaccessible for Muslim rulers encouraging the settlement of Christian communities and heterodox groups like the Druze, who lived together in relative autonomy from Ottoman rule.

Règlement Organique: The "Organic Statute" agreed between the Ottomans and the five Great European powers in 1861 after the 1860 civil war and French occupation. Revised in 1864, this document outlines the new *mutasarrifiyya* system of government for Mount Lebanon.

Second Empire: The authoritarian regime of Napoleon Bonaparte's nephew, Napoleon III, which ruled France from 1852 to 1870 until defeat in the 1870-1 Franco-Prussian War.

Tanzimat ("Reorganisation"): The period of Ottoman state-led modernisation and reform beginning with the 1839 Hatt-ı Şerif of Gülhane decree and culminating with the declaration of the first Constitution in 1876. The suspension of this document by Sultan Abdulhamid II is then seen as the end of the tanzimat and the beginning of the authoritarian 'Hamidian' era. The reform decrees are often presented as influenced by contemporary European ideas of modernity in promising religious freedom, equality, a parliament and state and military restructuring, although each was also consciously rooted in the language of a return to the more centralised rule of the sixteenth-century "Golden Age". The period is also characterised by the influence and power of the bureaucracy and reformist statesmen such as Fuad, Ali and Reshid Pashas, over that of the Sultan.

Third Republic: The third republican form of government instituted in France after the French Revolution and adopted after the fall of the Second Empire in 1870 until the Fall of France to Nazi Germany in 1940 during the Second World War. Oversaw much of France's overseas colonial expansion in Africa and Asia.

'Young Turk' Revolution: The name given to the revolution started by members of the Ottoman army in July 1908 which succeeded in forcing Sultan Abdulhamid II to restore the 1876 constitution, recall parliament and usher in an era of multi-party politics.

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