French Desire and Arab Demise: The French Mandate of Syria and Lebanon

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The day of conquest and aggrandizement is gone by; so is also the day of secret covenants entered into in the interest of particular governments and likely at some unlooked-for moment to upset the peace of the world.[1]

-Excerpt from Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points-January 8th, 1918

At the conclusion of World War I, Woodrow Wilson believed that imperialism could and would not work in the former Ottoman Empire, and that the international powers would have to work together for the sake of the independence of these dismantled Ottoman territories. Little did Wilson know that three years before his speech, the French and British had made the secret Sykes-Picot agreement that would set them in place to gain the spoils of war and benefit their own national interests in the Ottoman region. For almost thirty years after World War I, the French and British mandates set up by the League of Nations (and approved by Woodrow Wilson) lasted without any major power struggle, and in that time period, these imperialist nations showed only meager signs of preparing their directive territories for independence.

Since the dismantling of the Ottoman Empire, historians have been interested in looking at this time period, which has shaped the borders and conflicts of the modern Middle East today. For my own synthesis of these historians, I am going to focus solely on French imperialism in Syria and Lebanon. Throughout this paper I am attempting to answer two interdependent questions: First, how did the French gain so much influence in the area of Syria and Lebanon in order to control, wield the power, and guide the national destinies of these two countries? Second, how did the Arab Nationalism of Syria and Lebanon fail to mobilize a united movement, and why did their nationalist impulses fall into French control with so little physical resistance? The time period I will view is broadly from 1914-1946. The end point of my research, 1946, was the year when these countries received their actual independence.

This paper will target the years of 1914-1923 specifically, as this span of "preparatory mandate history" that best explains French influence and Arab demise.[2] The historiography of this study that will help answer these two questions can be broken up into three major parts: 1)"reactive metropole" history shaped by the views of early scholars like Polson Newman, Worrel, and Longrigg, that try to get at French notions of imperialism through undeveloped nationalist and individualist theories, not looking further into the past than 1914; 2) historians who view the periphery only as a part of the metropole like Tanenbaum, Fitzgerald and Shorrock, who use many different theories from different academic backgrounds to explain the influence of the

French in acquiring the mandate; and 3)historians following Said's *Orientalism,* like Fieldhouse, Gelvin, and Provence, who either use the periphery as their focal point, or equally link the metropole to the periphery to obtain the best understanding of how the French wielded power and how the Syrians and Lebanese fell into their arms for almost thirty years. It is necessary to understand that this historiography, like any other, is not completely linear. All and all, viewing the historiography on the French mandate as a whole gives the fullest understanding of French Imperialism in Syria and Lebanon, and cohesively creates answers for the co-dependent questions I have put forth, as the texts create a clear colonial relationship between the metropole and periphery.

I. How did the French acquire the Mandates? Historical Developments: 1914-1923

Before these complicated theories for French-Syria/Lebanon relations that scholars have created over the last century are explained, it is necessary to give a history of the events that led up to the French mandate system. The renowned historian D.K. Fieldhouse writes that, "In November 1914 no one could have forecasted the shape of the Ottoman Empire,"[3] as at that point many international powers were vying for power in this region. In 1914, the Ottoman Empire was going through political reform to appease those living in the empire. These democratic reforms completely opened the Ottoman Empire to Western political dealings. Following the nineteenth-century expansionist movement in Africa and Asia, the French and the British came out as the two supreme powers. When World War I broke out, their national desires and understanding of how important this region was to the West brought the individuals Francois Georges-Picot of France and Mark Sykes of Britain together. They met secretly (unknown to any other nations until 1917) to divide the spoils of a possibly unraveling Ottoman Empire. On November 23, 1915, the Sykes-Picot agreement was initially formed, with the French taking Lebanon, coastal Syria and south east Anatolia under direct rule and administering a sphere of influence over Inland Syria (Damascus, Aleppo).[4] Per the agreement of a possible Ottoman breakdown, the British would receive the whole of Mesopotamia (mostly modern day Iraq and Palestine), and Jerusalem would be under international protection. This agreement was by no means a treaty, but an accord that was based on whether the Ottoman Empire would fall apart or not.

1917 was a very important year for British and French determinism, as the Bolshevik Revolution broke out and toppled the Tsarist regime in Russia. Geography gave Russia a natural justification for territory in the area, but now, Britain and France had nothing in between their national interests and actual seizures of the Syrian and Lebanese territory with the fall of the Russian Empire. As the war was concluding, the Sykes-Picot agreement became public, and it became obvious to the world that the French and British would control the national destinies of the torn Ottoman territories. At this time, nationalist groups in the region were campaigning for independence from the Ottoman Empire. These Syrian and Lebanese nationalist ideals were a pretext for Western European intervention in the area, as the French politicians and officials dealing with these groups did not believe that these states were quite ready for full autonomy after being ruled by foreign powers for over four centuries (especially with

the quasi-radical nationalist factions they contained). In early 1920, British troops took over Damascus (the French could not mobilize quickly enough after the devastation of World War I, because it was primarily fought on their own soil), and positioned King Faysal of Iraq as King of Greater Syria under international supervision in March 1920. At this point, the global political voice believed that the French were so torn by World War I that their interest in these areas was now secondary.

By April 1920, the French were reconstructed following the woes of World War I, and French representatives met with the British and other international powers at the San Remo Conference. This conference basically solidified the earlier Sykes-Picot Agreement with few revisions (example: at this point, French gained direct influence over all of Syria). French troops invaded Damascus in July 1920, and Faysal's right as King of Syria was taken away. In August, all decisions were made at the Treaty of Sevres, finally giving the areas of Syria and Lebanon to the French and Mesopotamia to Britain. In 1922, Greater Syria was made a federation of five different states: Damascus, Allepo, Aloawite, Druze, and Lebanon, dividing both ethnic and religious cultures. Finally in 1923, the League of Nations approved the French mandate for Syria and Lebanon, and for twenty years to come the French would be the sole imperial administrator for Syria and Lebanon.[5]

II. The French Mandate: Primary Source Justification

The primary document of the French mandate is the perfect place to start, because it demonstrates that the French had unadulterated influence over the area and that the indigenous leaders who agreed upon this mandate basically handed them over to French direct-rule. This document as a whole sets the foreground for the historigraphical debate. The League of Nations approved the very vague "Class A Mandate" that gave the fewest restrictions to French rule. The mandate charged the French Republic "with the duty of rendering administrative advice and assistance to the population,"[6] which almost all historians view as a broad statement giving the French the right to rule however they felt necessary.

The mandate tried to show that French rule was meant to gear Syria and Lebanon for independence with the idea of "Organic law," which was an extremely vague term in the mandate, supposedly paving the way for the establishment of a constitution. The mandate states that there would be a three year period, in which the French would establish an "Organic law" for Syria and Lebanon that "shall further enact measures to facilitate the progressive development of Syria and the Lebanon as independent states."[6] The mandate does speak of establishing rights to religion, military restrictions, judicial reform, and territorial solidifications, but lacks any real specific plan as to how the French will establish this "Organic law" within three years that will gear Syria and Lebanon for independence. This point of the document makes this "Organic law" idea extremely unrealistic. The only statement that speaks of any kind of restrictions to French political rule is that "The mandate shall, as far as circumstances permit, encourage local autonomy."[4] "As far as circumstances permit," is a very broad way of saying that the French could encourage local autonomy and progressive national independence campaigns, but if anything stood in the way of French control in the area, they could crush any insurgence that would undermine their authority in the area.

From this primary source analysis, it is clear that the mandate was an annexation in sheep's clothing, meaning that the political world basically agreed that the French could pursue their own national interests to protect their territories. The League of Nations approved this document which had no real plan as to when the French would give these countries the independence for which they so rightfully asked. From this document several questions arise that will define the historiographical argument I put forward: What French influence led to the agreement of the mandate that basically handed over Syria and Lebanon? Why did the indigenous leaders agree to such an unspecific document that by no means helped their nationalist aims? These two questions are more or less the ones that the historiography of the French mandate has produced, and the first group of historians, who wrote only several years after these mandates were set up, display how difficult it is to write immediately after an event of this magnitude occurs.

III. Early Historians and the Development of the Historiographical Debate

This group of historians writing from the 1920s to the 1950s are what I like to call "reactive historians," as their writing shows that they are only reacting to the primary documents that led to the French mandate, and do not look further back in time to see how these influences were formed. Yes, every historian is reacting to an event they intend to write about, but these "reactive historians" are different, as they are writing immediately after the event occurred. Knowing the entire historical spectrum of this debate, it is clear that these authors looked through a narrowed scope, only viewing the French imperial power. These scholars are usually ignorant about the periphery, claiming that "the Orient" played almost no role in the French mandate, and they only use documents and knowledge of the early twentieth century to explain how the French acquired these territories.

E.W. Polson Newman's *The Middle East* (1926) is a perfect example of "reactive history," and it adheres to all the characteristics described. His narrow view is extremely prevalent, in which he writes that the Middle East was "where the Oriental and his neighbor from the West meet on common ground," and "The Arab just sits drinking his coffee and watches Western activity."[7] Polson Newman even goes as far to say that "Arabs are struggling for independence although they scarcely know what the word means,"[8] showing that his views on this topic are completely Eurocentric, and his own peripheral ignorance shapes how his arguments on French influence in the mandate are presented. Polson Newman does not use any documents before 1914, so his arguments are completely shaped by what was going on in the present time; therefore, his theories lack any real development. He presents the nationalist and individual theories (that almost all historians following him will exhibit) through French domestic and political examples, and these theories regardless of how broad, founded the historiography of French mandate history.

Polson Newman's argument is very primitive compared to scholars who followed him, because he speaks of no actual events or instances, but explicitly claims that the French had influence in the area due to their prior dealings with Lebanon. He points to the fact that the French had past influence in Lebanon through religious ties between French Catholics and Lebanese Maronites, but that is as far as he goes. His main idea is that the French believed they did not only have a nationalist cause for

seizing Lebanon, but had to take Syria because it was tied to Lebanon culturally and by geographic proximity. He also presents the "individualist" thesis that the French had complete control in this region, in which the mandate area was a "shop window, behind which French officials exerted complete control."[9] Polson Newman's main point is that the French could do whatever they wanted and could communicate to the public that they were gearing Syria and Lebanon for independence by putting indigenous leaders in charge. He claims that these indigenous leaders were either Maronite (a very prominent Catholic religious sect with direct connection to French missionary work) or French supporters, neglecting the fact that French elected positions were divided equally between Christians and Muslims. Regardless of how ignorant Polson Newman's piece is, it shows the nationalist and individualist theories for French influence and power that have been used ever since to describe the mandate system.

Polson Newman's piece is the cornerstone of the historical debate of the French mandate; his theories symbolize the approaches of historians of this time, and Cora Fern Worrel's dissertation, "The Administration of the Syrian Mandate" (1930), builds on Polson Newman's nationalist ideas and also introduces the international pressures theory. Worrel writes frankly that "Oil and a desire to keep up with Great Britain have led France on its desire for colonial growth."[10] This is Worrel's main argument, and even though Arabs are not invisible in her writing as with Polson Newman, she is still a "reactive historian," because she only views immediate economic and international influences of the French mandate. Oil as an economic reason for influence is understandable, as it is a prevalent resource in the area, but she does not even explain from where French interest in oil stemmed, and she completely neglects any influence dealing with anything that is not political or economic. In stating that France wanted to keep up with Great Britain, she introduces the "international pressure" theory for the mandate, as many historians like Worrel believe that if the French would have conceded the area, the British or some other superpower would have taken it.[11]

She also brings in the individualist theory like Polson Newman, as she blames the French influence on the benevolence of Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points. Worrel believes the Fourteen Points gave the French the ability to administer power as they wanted. This is a plausible explanation for how the French received so much power in this area, but ignores the historical developments of the relationship between France and Greater Syria that were set into motion far before Wilson's speech in 1918. She states that the French wielded power through Christian Maronites in office, but is not as narrow-minded as Polson Newman, as she states that seats were equally represented in government between Christians and Muslims. Worrel's theories are backed by more plausible evidence than Polson Newman's, and illustrate the development of new theories (international pressures) for the existence of the French mandate. Still, her scope is extremely limited as she barely looks at any political, cultural, or social dealings from before 1915.

D. Campbell Lee's *Mandates: How They Are Working* (1926), is yet another piece from this first group of writing on French mandates, and he continues the theme that the writers of this time were in no means interested with the periphery, and were just reacting to the current events around them. Lee believes mandates were formed with "an exalted form of trust."[12] This law of trusteeship is what Lee terms as a Roman Law

Tradition, and he explains that in France, there is no sign of "anything resembling the law of trusteeship," and that this idea of trust "is entirely foreign to their legal conception."[13] This explanation is exerting the nationalist theory, in which Lee claims France's national desires that have been in motion since expansionist campaigns began are in complete conflict with the idea of mandate. This idea explains how the French wielded power, as the mandate that the French were meant to follow was far too broad and their own nationalistic character could not allow them to adhere to this type of system.

Lee's piece is very developed and shows more substance than Polson Newman's or Worrel's, as it explains a complex nationalistic theory that France gained influence by faking this bond of trust, and they exerted power for so long because they did not believe in this type of trust. This piece shows how Lee, Worrell and Polson Newman use similar causal theories for imperial rule in this area, but use distinctly different examples and reasons for why and how the French began to administer power. Still, all these authors can be grouped together as reactive because they completely leave out the periphery, as Lee, like the other writers, only uses recent metropole history and reacts to it to form his own views.

Stephen Hemsely Longrigg's *Syria and Lebanon Under French Mandate* (1958), is another completely Eurocentric piece, in which he gives ample theories for why the French gained so much influence in the area, but still completely neglects Syria and Lebanon's role in this situation. He expounds upon the nationalist thesis than Polson Newman and Lee wrote about, explaining, like Lee, that France was only pursuing their national interest that had been unchanged since the Partition of Africa sixty years earlier. His overt explanation for influence is that France believed that there was no central threat to their power as a colonial administrator of Syria and Lebanon, so they acted upon their own national interest, not caring at all for the supposed independence campaign that they agreed to in the mandate. Longrigg claims that "Arab independence appears...as little more than a necessary evil to be tolerated by powers,"[14] and the French dealt with it by adhering to a mandate that they never really meant to fulfill. Longrigg agrees with Worrel, and uses the "Wilson individualist theory" to explain the origination of French influence. This similarity is interesting as both authors use evidence that only dates back to 1918, neglecting to look back further than the twentieth century to see earlier pretexts for French conquest.

The next writer, Phillip Marshall Brown, sets himself apart from Polson Newman, Worrell and Lee because of his understanding that some knowledge and explanation of the periphery is necessary to understand how the French acquired and wielded so much power in this region. Brown is the first author who starts to get at the second question I put forward about the indigenous people's role in the French mandate. Brown's piece *From Sevres to Lausanne* (1924) speaks of the Treaty of Sevres and how it was a treaty of defense for the French against the nationalists. Brown acknowledges this irony, as on paper this treaty was meant to protect the future mandated areas. The French used this treaty to solidify the mandates, which would quell nationalist movements, that if un-checked, could alter French political influence in the area. Brown writes, "The French had been compelled by serious troubles with the Nationalists in... the revolt of the Arabs in Syria..."[15] and regardless of what the

mandate said dealing with independence, the French could use it to crush future nationalist revolts.

Brown's understanding of the treaty shows how Arabs played themselves into the mandate, whether they knew it or wanted to do so. When the nationalists, who were not unified and defined by the West as "radicals," met at Lausanne for the treaty, "they were at a humiliating disadvantage."[16] This was because Faysal's brief experiment in Arab Nationalism proved to the Western powers that the French could exert control by any means necessary until they could form independence on their own terms. The nationalist leaders who spoke with French officials after the Arab Revolt of 1920 had no choice but to concede to international politics. This understanding of peripheral causes and the relationship between power and dependence shows where the historical debate is leading to, and the next group of historians start to speak more of the periphery as a counterpart to understanding the metropole. Still, it is necessary to understand that Brown neglects to speak of more distant causes that lead up to the Arab Revolt, or external influences of why the French felt they could take advantage of the nationalists. In summary, these "reactive" writers were ignorant to the periphery, as they believed it had no effect in the French expansionist endeavors of their time. Regardless, this group sets up the debates and questions on the French mandate that historians of the last twenty years have been studying.

IV. Understanding the Periphery as a Part of the Metropole

The main problem with the "reactive historians" of the 1920s and 1930s was that their subject base had not yet been completely developed. They had to take the general current events of their time as their sources, and therefore were at a disadvantage due to the fact that they could not see how the mandate system played out. This is why the historians of the Post-World War II era seem to have a better understanding of influence, cause, and effect, all because they were writing after the time period of French imperialism in Syria and Lebanon. This next group of historians is what I term as the "Periphery-influenced metropole historians:" these writers do include the periphery in their study, but only as a part of their metropolitan understanding and analysis. These writers build off of the nationalist and individualist theories that writers like Worrel, Lee and Polson Newman set up for French mandate history, but also create new theories (like the institutional theory) that tie in the periphery with metropole. These writers also begin to blend other academic fields like sociology and anthropology into the study of imperialism. The writers of this group fully answer the first question I put forth, as they explain with actual factual knowledge dating back centuries for how the French obtained influence, and how they were able to control the national destinies of Syria and Lebanon for so long. These writers still have faults though, as generally speaking, they are generally Eurocentric and do not place the periphery as an equal part of the metropole. Therefore, they do not fully answer the second question of the Arabs' role in the French mandate, as their focus is the metropole, not the periphery. With the foundation that early historians set, these writers present a fuller understanding of French influence, power maintenance, and start to get at the idea of Arab demise into French hands.

Paul C. Helmreich's *From Paris to Sevres: The Partition of the Ottoman Empire at the Peace Conference of 1919-1920* (1974) is a great starting point for this second group

of historians, because his piece presents a good bridge between the earlier historians and the more recent Post-World War II scholars. He adds substance to the nationalist thesis that Polson Newman and Worrel argued, presents the new institutional theory and also writes from a Syrian point of view on some topics. Helmreich advocates that French influence budded from their own nationalist views when he writes, "The aura of history and long-standing French moral, political, educational and economic influence formed a foundation for French interests in the Near East."[17] He also presents the institutional thesis, as he believes French administrations, at certain points in colonial administration, were more stringent or benevolent based on what individuals were in office. For example, in 1915 when the Sykes-Picot agreement was finalized, a right-wing parliament was in charge of wielding agreements like this, and that, in Helmreich's mind, is why the Sykes-Picot was as deterministic as it was. On the other hand, in 1926 the left-wing High Commissioner Henri Ponsot strove for more representative government in Syria and Lebanon to gear them for actual independence. Helmreich is using the individualist thesis that Worrel exhibited along with the idea of specific political institutions to explain why certain things happened in the colonial administration and how they were handled.

He also makes mention of the Syrian and Lebanese indigenous people and what they were thinking about the French when he writes, "Unlike the Arabs, the Syrians were politically mature enough to recognize that they were not ready to govern themselves completely..."[18] In this statement, Helmreich tries to explain why the Syrians gave in to the French, but uses stereotypes and a "Eurocentric" view to voice Syrian belief. Therefore, in Helmreich's writing it is clear that he wants to link peripheral effects to metropole influence and power, but falls short, as his views are as narrow in scope as the writers before his time.

Jan Karl Tanenbaum's "France and the Arab Middle East: 1914-1920" (1978) is a great example of how these Post-World War II era scholars do not just react to the events of their time, but looked further back into French influence in the area to explain the mandate. His first sentence acknowledges this development, as he writes, "...Since the crusades of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, France had established extremely close cultural, economic, financial, and religious ties with Syria, Lebanon and Palestine."[19] Tanenbaum asserts that the influence was created by a deep French foundation in Syrian and Lebanese culture, not by political agreements, conferences, and treaties from 1915-1920 as the "reactive" historians argue.

Tanenbaum also presents the many theories of French influence in the area, writing, "...French colonial society, economic and political pressure groups, and colonial and military authorities urged that French troops be sent into the Levant in order to assure that France would control Syria when the postwar territorial settlements were determined."[20] In one sentence he presents the nationalistic, individualistic, institutional, international pressures, and military theories as a foundation for his writing on French influence in the area. What separates him from the earlier writers is that Tanenbaum actually looks to French influence before 1915, unlike Polson Newman, Worrel, and Longrigg, and he shows an understanding of theories that explain the evolution of the study dealing with the mandate system. Still, he only mentions the periphery in relation with France as his focal point, so he barely tackles the Syrian debate.

William I. Shorrock, like Tanenbaum, explains how cultural influence solidified political justification for the mandate, but taps even more in-depth into peripheral-based accounts. He starts his book, *French Imperialism in the Middle East: Failure of Policy in Syria and Lebanon 1900-1914* (1976) with voicing the Syrian point of view (more correctly than Helmreich's stereotypes on Syrian thoughts), when he writes that it is "quite interesting and instructive to contrast the French views of their own popularity in Syria and Lebanon with the estimates of others."[21] Unlike Helmreich, he does not use a completely Eurocentric voice for the indigenous people, and is one of the first authors to point out that the Syrian and Lebanese majority did not want the French there. With this idea, he opens up the debate of the second peripheral question I put up for debate, because his writing takes a closer look at what the periphery thought of the dominant French.

He also clarifies that looking at actual documents of the mandate does not tell much about earlier French influence. His piece symbolizes how the "periphery-influenced metropole historians" attempted to get away from a limited analysis of documents from 1900-1923. He writes on the influence of the eleventh-century Catholic crusaders and how later missionary work created an economic, social, educational and cultural relationship between France and its mandated territory. Even though these missionaries created influence for the French superpower, he believes that, "...Such emphasis was useless...since the populations became hostile and frustrated by losing deep contact with their own culture."[22] Shorrock is trying to explain the failures in policy, and why the Syrians revolted against the French, focusing on how earlier French cultural infusion was detrimental to the periphery. Still, he only uses the periphery in relation to the metropole, but alludes to how these writers are starting to examine the periphery more closely.

Peter Shambrook's *A French Imperialism in Syria, 1927-1936* (1998) is actually more similar with the "reactive" historians' approach to documentary evidence, as he writes, "The mandate was a liberal sounding concept which covered and legitimized outright imperial control."[23] His piece shows that in recent years, some historians still completely disregard further reaching evidence and the role of the periphery in relationship to the metropole, as he believes it played an insignificant role in how French would administer its policy. The only reason he is in this second group of historians is that his individualist theory is extremely developed, and portrays a different picture of the High Commissioner Henri Ponsot than Helmreich. Unlike Helmreich, he does not believe that Ponsot was extremely benevolent, but that "The High Commissioner endeavored to maintain French control and prestige in the region, whilst he continued in public to declare his faithfulness to the official Mandatory Policy of progressive emancipation."[24] His understanding of Ponsot's actions progressive representative government and elections, while maintaining French power with a whip, explains how commissioners like Ponsot suppressed indigenous nationalism for so long. His views on French domination are completely militaristic and Eurocentric because he believes that the French basically took what they wanted without any resistance. This argument is similar to Longrigg's, and like his predecessor, Shambrook fails to voice any concern or influence from Syrians or Lebanese. This source completely exhibits the trap into which historians still fall. While Shambrook does exhibit highly-developed theories on how the French wielded

power and national destiny, he neglects to incorporate the indigenous as a pertinent to his arguments.

The next two scholars, Roger Owen and William Watson, exhibit the historical revolution incorporating other academic fields into history to get a better examination of the topics at hand. Owen, an economist, and Watson, a sociologist, explain French influence in the area with examples from their own background of analysis. Roger Owen's *A History of Middle East Economies in the Twentieth Century* (1998), uses the French economic thought process to explain why the mandate lasted so long. With the Great Depression and World War I being large economic factors to the metropole and periphery, Owen believes the French wielded power by giving concessions to the locals little by little and portraying to the public world that everything was fine in the mandate areas. Owen shows his knowledge of metropole-periphery relations when he wrote that it was hard to find the "middle path between French exaggeration and Syrian and Lebanese nationalist rhetoric."[25] He is explaining that getting the full picture of economic history in Syria and Lebanon is extremely difficult. This middle ground he is attempting to find is the metropole-to-periphery relationship, which exhibits how the French and Syrians interacted and dealt with economic policy as a group. Using economics as his background, Owen relates the two sides of the debate in a clear way that gives a better understanding of how the mandate lasted so long while economic conditions were less than stellar.

Watson's book, *Tricolor and Crescent: France and the Islamic World* (2003), illustrates the best understanding of cultural influence that writers like Tanenbaum and Sharrock exhibited before him. He does this by providing concrete examples of physical influence in the area: in the nineteenth century the French invested in Ottoman infrastructure, roads, railroads, shipping, etc.. He also demonstrates a point that most historians would not agree with: that the French were not ignorant of Islamic culture, just highly self-interested. Watson also points out that the French were the first Orientalists, as they became extremely obsessive with Near Eastern lifestyles, especially Arabic literature. He reminds his readers that the French were the first Western power to translate the Quran in 1697, and how Antoine Galland's translation of the eighth-century *A Thousand and One Nights* in 1704 opened up French public interest in the area, as there was a cross-cultural diffusion between France and the "Orient" that led to political interest. He sums up this idea when he wrote, "Orientalists greatly enhance the ability of the colonial government to gauge the varieties of problems that arose."[26] Both Owen and Watson exhibit how imperialistic history began to open up to other academic fields in the last ten years and how these different backgrounds can give a better understanding on French and Arab influence.

Edward Peter Fitzgerald's work is very important to note, as his "France's Middle Eastern Ambitions: the Sykes-Picot Negations and the Oil Fields of Mosul" (1994) builds off Worrel's ideas, but actually explains why oil was so important in the area. To recount, Worrel only explains that oil played a large role in French influence in the area, but gives no explanation to where this influence was created or why it was important. Fitzgerald explains where Worrel fails to when he writes, "Petroleum seepages and tar sands in northern Mesopotamia had been observed...long before the Christian era...[and] Western experts had been reporting on the potential of the region for oil exploitation since the 1870's."[27] Like the other "Periphery-influenced metrople

historians," Fitzgerald starts where Worrel left off, explaining why the French were so interested in the area. The Mosul oil field agreement is very interesting to this study, because French relinquishment of these fields explains why the British conceded to French imperialism in all of Syria. Fitzgerald notes that the Syrians would have been more favorable with British or American protection, but with the French conceding these supremely economically profitable fields, the British had to give up all of Syria to France. This piece shows exactly how this group of historians is approaching the subject differently.

M.B. Hayne's *The French Foreign Office and the origins of the First World War, 1898-1914* (1993) is the last piece from this group of scholars, because it shows the birth of "metropole-to-periphery" scholars with pertinent examination of the periphery. Hayne uses a specific colonial institution, the Quai d'Orsay, to explain his institution theory of how the French wielded power. Hayne's institutional thesis is like Helmreich's, but has more clout behind it, as Hayne believes that the Quai d' Orsay was the "most powerful and independent foreign office in Europe."[28] Hayne writes that the un-checked power of the Quai d'Orsay, led the French to wield power, in which this organization acted as a separate colonial government from the French domestic political government. This is not the main reason Hayne is discussed last, but he is viewed as the bridge to our third group of historians because he understands the ignorance of French colonial government.

Hayne writes this about the Quai d' Orsay: "They had a decidedly Eurocentric outlook which frequently led them to view in rather patronizing fashion less technically advanced parts of the world."[29] Yes, this quote can be used a pretext example for why the French believed they had the right rule (similar to Longrigg's overt thesis), but Hayne also understands that his sources are Eurocentric and he has to step away from that to get a better understanding of how the Quai d' Orsay wielded colonial power for thirty years. He is also the only historian in this group to view history as a post-modernist would, as he is obviously influenced by Said's *Orientalism,* which shaped the third group of historians that have left the historiographical debate where it is today.

V. Using the Metropole as a Part of Peripheral Histories

The second group of historians used the theories and ideas that "reactive" historians before them set up, but still only used the periphery as part of metropole history, which was their main flaw. This last group of scholars, the "metropole-to-periphery historians," usually uses the periphery as the focal point for their study, which helps explain my second interdependent question: How did the Arab Nationalism of Syria and Lebanon fail to mobilize a united movement, and why did their national desires fall into French control with so little physical resistance? This group of historians was obviously influenced by Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978), which is defined as "a way of coming to terms with the Orient that is based on the Orient's special place in European Western experience."[30] This definition basically means that most historians viewing imperialism are ignorant of the Orient, and only view the Orient as historians before have created. For example, Edward Said would judge Polson Newman's statement that "the Moslem despises the Christian and hates

the Jew,"[31] as a completely ignorant way of using Eurocentric views to shape ideas on the topic.

Said believes the Occident (the West) puts this view on the Orient, and that is where the supposed colonial justification is made. It is hard to see what Said's solution to this problem is, but it seems that he believes that peripheral examination of certain topics, for example the Syrian influence on French colonial endeavors, needs to be viewed more critically to get away from Eurocentric accounts. This idea is said to be post-modernist, to differentiate between the Post-World War II writers who only used the periphery in connection with the metropole. The "metropole-to-periphery historians" use the periphery as its forefront, and Bernard Lewis's *The Muslim Discovery of Europe* (1987) portrays this idea when he writes, that in colonial endeavors "... the European is not the explorer discovering barbaric peoples in strange in remote places, but is himself an exotic barbarian discovered and observed by enquires from the lands of Islam."[32] John McTague brings this peripheral-based notion to our specific debate when he writes, "Perhaps the most striking aspect of these negotiations [Anglo-French over borders of Palestine] was the complete absence of any input from the Palestinians....[and that] the Palestine Arab community were never consulted about the borders of their own country..."[33] This last group of historians creates the metropole-to-periphery connection, which in the end will answer the two inter-related questions I have set to answer.

Heather Wagner's *The Division of the Middle East: The Treaty of Sevres* (2004) is a good starting point for this group of historians; she views the event of the Treaty of Sevres that all authors of this topic have analyzed in a new light that is obviously a product of Said's *Orientalism*. Wagner is also a good bridge between the two groups, in which her point is not to analyze the periphery, but she still does an excellent job of steering clear of Eurocentric tones that authors of the previous group fall into. Wagner establishes an idea that historians like Hayne asserted when she writes that the Treaty of Sevres and colonial decisions were "settled by leaders thousands of miles away."[34] This is her "ignorance" thesis, as she repeatedly notes her main theme that the French and other Western powers viewed this area as "a geographical generality viewed from a Western perspective,"[35] meaning that the leaders of the mandate neglected the cultural, religious and economic borders when they divided the collapsed Ottoman Empire. Now, a conflict between authors is displayed here, as Watson believed that the French were not that ignorant of Arabic culture. Still, it is probable that these two writers would agree that the way the French administered colonial power was ignorant.

This ignorance idea is similar to Said's, as Wagner believes that imperialist leaders' Eurocentric desires directly transferred to supposed influence in the area. This ignorance thesis is summed up when Wagner writes, "The boundaries carved out by the Treaty of Sevres often ignored the realities of history and population statistics; leaning more on the aims and desires of the superpower."[36] Wagner uses Said's views on imperialistic nature to explain why the French believed they had influence in the area. She also brings up the idea of separate cultural identities in the area of the mandate, which most authors before have ignored (besides J.W. Crawfoot's "Syria and the Lebanon: The Prospect," and John Spangolo's *France & Ottoman Lebanon, 1861-1914)*. She considers the fact that Syrians and Lebanese are not of the same

exact cultural or religious background, setting up the arguments for why these separate identities could not unite in order to take back their territory.

James Gelvin and Michael Provence are two of the most important writers of the historiographical development at hand, in that they are the only writers of this topic using the periphery as their focal point, trying to get at what role Syrians played in the colonial dominance of their own territory. These two writers (and Fieldhouse) all have similar theories on how French influence was not the only factor of long mandate rule, but the fact that the Syrians and Lebanese could not unite as a cohesive entity to gain their own national independences played the most significant role in mandate rule. Even Gelvin's title, *Divided Loyalties: Nationalism and Mass Politics in Syria at the Close of Empire* (1998), gives away the fact that the Syrian's could not all unite under one cause, as some indigenous were loyal to the French (Syrian and Lebanese elites), some were loyal to Faysal, and all the others were loyal to separate nationalist causes.[37]

Gelvin's largest contribution to the study is noting the prior historiography of Syrian nationalist studies. He marks the start with George Antonius's *The Arab Awakening* (1948), in which Antonius claims that the foundation of Arab Nationalism started in 1847, when nationalist scholar societies were formed by the patronage of the Americans. Gelvin and other scholars of the topic believe that Antonius's account is the starting point for the historiography of Syrian nationalism, but Gelvin believes that his theories take a small group of elites and relate their beliefs to an entire national identity. Ziene A. Ziene and other scholars left off where Antinous starts, as they claim Arab Nationalism was brought on by "proto-proto nationalist" events like the Wahhabi movement and the rule of Mohammad Ali. Gelvin contributes to the ideas set up by past scholars, as he points out a point that was previously overlooked: regardless of how the Arab nationalism began to respond, with the French intent to annex a country that was trying to unite under an "Arab identity," mass political involvement was inevitable. This background is important, because it sets the foreground for where Syrian nationalist studies are today, and Gelvin ties this past to try and explain why the Syrians and Lebanese fell into the hands of the French.[38]

Finally with Gelvin, a writer is seen giving complete respect to the specifics of the peripheral cause, as Gelvin writes that four days before French invasion, "Throughout the city, petit-bourgeois members, neighborhood toughs, unemployed youths, refugees from the Biqa valley and recent demobilized soldiers...took to the streets,"[39] rioting in order to show the French that they were not wanted there. Gelvin also looks at the complicated installation of Faysal as ruler of Syria. Gelvin notes that Faysal's twenty-two month rule was a brief experiment in Arab nationalism that was quelled by the San Remo Conference. Gelvin actually reports on Faysal's view of the French: "I refused all help offered to me by the French because I saw their desire to occupy our country."[40] It is not specifically important what Faysal said about the French, but the fact that his views did not represent his populations'. Gelvin believes that even though most indigenous were not enthusiastic about the French mandate, they could not stop it because of the historical developments of the area that were already set in place. Gelvin takes the tone of Wagner, as he explains that throughout Syria and Lebanon there are more than twenty different religious sects, separate ethnic

distinctions such as the Druze, Aloawite, Maronites (who do not believe they are Arabs) and a social structure that was doomed for disaster. Therefore, regardless of mass nationalist politics, the Syrians or Lebanese could not unite in order to stop the French cause.

Michael Provence's theme in *The Great Syrian Revolt and the Rise of Arab Nationalism* (2005) is almost identical to Gelvin's, in that he believes the most pertinent question in understanding Syrian influence on the mandate is "How did ordinary people feel about their peripheral role in politics?"[41] The "ordinary people" are the central point in this debate, because they explain the differences between the indigenous and how these "uncoordinated resistance movements"[42] throughout the mandate era failed to do much. Province furthers Gelvin's study though, as he uses peripheral accounts to explain immediate causes for a call of Syrian Nationalism. Province believes, "The military government of the French mandate, sworn to foster the developmental rights and interests of the population under the mandate, used means of repression and mechanized warfare never unleashed on civilians."[43] Provence notes the not-so-benevolent side of the French mandate, as they burned villages, shelled Damascus upon arrival, and suppressed any nationalist hopes. It is very important that Provence notes these actual peripheral events, as on top of being ruled by the Ottoman Turks for four centuries, these events gave the "ordinary people" a pretext for the nationalism at hand.

Now, Provence speaks of 1922, as what he considers the most important year for the demise of Syrian nationalism. In this year the area of Greater Syria was broken down into five states, separating these areas that were trying to unite under one common goal. Yes, the French did install this state division, but Provence just uses this year of 1922 as a comerstone for his theories, for which the cultural boundaries had been set up for centuries. Provence believes this most difficult task of overcoming the cultural differences and boundaries set up in their territory were impossible. This unworkable task is noted by Provence, in which he writes that the Syrian nationalists never really won their country. The French just left, not able to rule after the damage that World War II wreaked upon French politics. Gelvin and Provence as a whole answer the second interdependent question, as the Syrians fell into the hands of the French because of the cultural and religious barriers that caused the failure of the nationalists to unite under one singular body.

As we have come to the end of the historical developments of the mandate era, it is pivotal to view the work of D.K. Fieldhouse last because he does the best job of creating the metropole-to-periphery relationship. In *Western Imperialism in the Middle East: 1914-1958* (2006), Fieldhouse examines the metropole and periphery as equal parts of the historical debate, and his work displays in the clearest way why the two questions of French authority and Arab demise are interdependent. He also shows characteristics of all three groups of historians viewed in this text, because he uses many of the theories that the "reactive" historians set up and the "Periphery-Influenced metropole historians" developed, and finally, he is the quintessential symbol for metropole-to-periphery history.

He starts with examining the Ottoman Empire before the mandate. He writes, "Had the Ottoman territories lain as far from a resurgent Europe as China the empire might have remained largely intact."[44] This is a periphery-based examination, in which

he believes the Ottoman Empire and the future territories within were destined to be torn apart by Western Powers because of their relationship from centuries before. He then jumps to the mythical justifications for the "Glory of the Republic" founded by authors like Polson Newman, when he writes, "Coming at the end of a period of Western European expansion overseas, there was a continuing momentum of expansionist instincts, and that once the issues were opened, each power was likely to struggle to get whatever territories or advantages seemed to hand."[45] He looks past "reactive history" and understands that events at the time like the Sykes-Picot agreement or the San Remo Conference were only materializations of prior influence based on nationalist desires.

He writes on the institution thesis voiced by Hayne and Helmreich, as he speaks of the ability of colonial institutions like the CAF, Parti Colonial and Quai d' Orsay to wield power in the colonial arena. Finally, he uses the individualist theory set up by Worrel and Shambrook to explain the role of Georges Picot. Fieldhouse believes Picot pushed for control, not just a "sphere of influence" in 1915, because of his own colonial agenda and nationalist love for French domination. He sums up his arguments of French influence in connection with Arab nationalism, when he writes "It was based on a profound distrust of Arab Nationalism and more broadly on the long traditions of French colonial rule..."[46] Here we see Fieldhouse exhibit a clear understanding of the theories on both immediate and resurgent French influence to get the fullest picture of the topic.

He then moves on to discuss the Arab nationalist demise and follows the ideas of Provence and Gelvin, but with a more discrete look into social classes, and how they played a role in this disaster for Arab identity. Fieldhouse, like Province and Gelvin, believes French influence was so prime and lasted so long because Syrians could not mobilize as a whole, until the French were forced out by World War II. The most important distinction between Fieldhouse's predecessors and his work is his "social status explanation" of why the indigenous fell into French rule. He believes that the main nationalist politicians who conceded to French rule cared more about the preservation of their status than complete independence. Most of Syrian and Lebanese leaders brought to the forefront of the San Remo Conference and Treaty of Sevres were social elites, and these elites knew that the French mandate would preserve their status more than complete nationalist anarchy, which would topple the status quo out of favor. This theory best explains the Arab demise as social preservation in a territory that had just lost its empire of economic prosperity makes the most sense.

All and all, Fieldhouse's work sums up the historiographical debate of the mandate era. He pulls together all the theories for French influence in Syria and Lebanon, and explains why it is so important to understand how the Syrians and Lebanese lost their own identity. He defines the metro-to-periphery history, because he equally examines both French and Syrian influence, and how they were interconnected in French domination and Syrian disaster.

VI. Conclusions

In the course of almost sixty years of historiography, a more complete picture of the events dealing with the French mandate era has emerged. When I set out to answer these two interdependent questions, the research and historiography

displays that this study would end with a clear relationship between the metropole and periphery based on French and indigenous influence on each other. First, how did the French gain so much influence in the area of Syria and Lebanon in order to control, wield the power, and guide the national destinies of these two countries? This question is answered by the nationalist, individualist, international pressures, military, overt, and institution theories collected by the historiography of almost sixty years. The French wielded power for so long because the individuals and institutions in French society believed in their national desire to take these former Ottoman territories as colonies.

Second, how did the Arab Nationalism of Syria and Lebanon fail to mobilize a united movement, and why did their national desires fall into French control with so little physical resistance? This question is partially answered by the fact that the dominant French influence subjected these people. From taking a closer look at the periphery, it is found that the Syrians and Lebanese lacked the ability or will to unite as an Arab community, which pushed them into the national desires of the French. All and all, from Polson Newman to Fieldhouse, the authors of this historiography worked off each other to get at the colonial relationship between France and Syria and Lebanon to explain why and how the mandate was administered and accepted. Therefore, the two questions are answered by the entire historiography, and the historians of these separate groups give their readers a complete understanding of the French mandate in Syria and Lebanon.

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[1] The World War I Document Archive, "8 January, 1918: President Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points," *Brigham Young University Library Online* [Library Section on-line]; available from http://net.lib.byu.edu/~rdh7/wwi/1918/14points.html; Internet; accessed 10 March 2007.

[2] I will also examine authors of the Post-World War II era that looked to the eleventh century and on to see how these French influences originated before the actual agreements of the Partitioning of the Ottoman Empire.

[3] D.K. Fieldhouse, *Western Imperialism in the Middle East: 1914-1958* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 44.

[4] Ibid., 51.

[5] Information on the history from 1914-1923 compiled from all the books and articles found in my bibliography.

[6] "French Mandate for Syria and the Lebanon," The *American Journal of International Law* Vol. 17 (1923), [e-journal] <http://www.jstor.org> (accessed 2 March 2007).

[7] E. W. Polson Newman, *The Middle East* (London: G. Bles, 1926), 1-2.

[8] Ibid., 3.

[9] Ibid., 144.

[10] Cora Fern Worrel, *The Administration of the Syrian Mandate* Thesis (M.A.)--Ohio State University, 1930, 4.

[11] Ibid., 5-6.

[12] D. Campbell Lee, "Mandates: How They Are Working," Transactions *of the Grotius Society* Vol .12 (1926), [e-journal] <http://www.jstor.org> (accessed 2 March 2007).

[13] Ibid., 45.

[14] Stephen Hemsely Longrigg, *Syria and Lebanon Under French Mandate* (London: Oxford University Press, 1958), 59.

[15] Philip Marshal Brown, "From Sevres to Lausanne," The *American Journal of International Law* Vol. 18 No. 1 (1924), [e-journal] <http://www.jstor.org> (accessed 22 February 2007).

[16] Ibid., 116.

[17] Paul C. Helmreich, From Paris to Sevres: The Partition of the Ottoman Empire at the Peace Conference of 1919-1920 (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1974), 16.

[18] Ibid., 54.

[19] Jan Karl Tanenbaum, "France and the Arab Middle East: 1914-1920," *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* vol.68 No.7 (1978), [e-journal] <http://www.jstor.org> (accessed 22 February 2007).

[20] Ibid., 6.

[21] William I. Shorrock, *French Imperialism in the Middle East: The Failure of Policy in Syria and Lebanon, 1900-1914* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1976), 6.

[22] Ibid., 53.

[23] Peter Shambrook, *A French Imperialism in Syria, 1927-1936* (Reading, UK : Ithaca Press, 1998), 2.

[24] Ibid., 248-249.

[25] Roger Owen, *A History of Middle East Economies in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1998), 66.

[26] William E. Watson, *Tricolor and Crescent: France and the Islamic World* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2003), 41.

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[31] M. B Hayne, *The French Foreign Office and the Origins of the First World War, 1898-1914* (Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1993), 307.

[32] Ibid., 306.

[33] Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978), 1.

[34] Polson Newman, 2.

[35] Bernard Lewis, *The Muslim Discovery of Europe* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1982), 11.

[36] John J. McTague Jr, "Anglo-French Negotiations over the Boundaries of Palestine, 1919-1920," *Journal of Palestine Studies* vol.11 no.2 (1982) [e-journal] <http://www.jstor.org> (accessed 22 February 2007).

[37] Heather Lehr Wagner, *The Division of the Middle East: The Treaty of Sevres* (Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers, 2004), 6.

[38] Ibid., 11.

[39] Ibid., 81.

[40] James L. Gelvin, *Divided Loyalties: Nationalism and Mass Politics in Syria at the Close of Empire* (Berkeley: University of California, 1998), 10-15, 40.

[41] Ibid., 3-5.

[42] Ibid., 2.

[43] Ibid., 162.

[44] Michael Provence, *The Great Syrian Revolt and the Rise of Arab Nationalism* (Austin : University of Texas Press, 2005), 8.

[45] Ibid., 44.

[46] Ibid., 153.

[47] Ibid., Fieldhouse, 5.

[48] Ibid., 44.

[49] Ibid., 255.