From Revolution to Humanism: An Overview of Gibran Kahlil's Political Thought and Activism

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Abstract: This article reexamines the political thought of Kahlil Gibran, challenging the dominant perception of him as an apolitical mystic. Drawing on previously overlooked Arabic-language writings, letters, and journalistic contributions, the study highlights Gibran's deep engagement with anti-Ottoman revolutionary politics and Syrian nationalism in the early 20th century. It traces his ideological evolution from spiritual humanism to pragmatic advocacy for revolution, situating this shift within the historical context of Ottoman authoritarianism, sectarian fragmentation, and Western imperial encroachment. Gibran's support for militarized resistance, his critique of the Syrian elite, and his controversial call for temporary foreign occupation as a path to national development are examined to underscore the complexity of his political vision. The article also addresses the epistemological divide between Western and Arab scholarship that has led to the marginalization of Gibran's political writings. Ultimately, the study argues for a reevaluation of Gibran as both a literary and political figure whose bilingual corpus reveals a profound tension between universal humanism and urgent nationalist advocacy. By reintegrating his political writings into the broader scholarly discourse, the article calls for a more nuanced and historically grounded understanding of Gibran's intellectual legacy within Arab and global literary traditions.

Keywords: Kahlil Gibran, humanism, activism, nationalism, mysticism.

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من الثورة إلى الإنسانوية: نظرة عامة على الفكر السياسي والنشاط الثوري لجبران خليل جبران

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مستخلص البحث: يدرس هذه المقال الفكر السياسي لجبران خليل جبران في ضوء التصورات السائدة حول شخصيته وكتاباته والتي تصوره في معظمها كمتصوف لا يهتم بالسياسة. حيث تسلط الضوء على كتابات باللغة العربية، ورسائله، ومساهماته الصحفية التي تم تجاهلها سابقًا، محاولةً ابراز انخراط جبران العميق في السياسات الثورية المناهضة للعثمانيين وفي القومية السورية في أوائل القرن العشرين. حيث تتبع تطوره الأيديولوجي والفكري من إنسانوية روحية إلى تأييد براغماتي للثورة، موضعةً هذا التحوّل ضمن السياق التاريخي للاستبداد العثماني، والانقسام الطائفي، والتوغّل الإمبريالي الغربي. كما تتناول الدراسة دعم جبران للمقاومة، ونقده للنخب السورية، ودعوته المثيرة للجدل للاحتلال الأجنبي المؤقت كوسيلة لتحقيق التنمية الوطنية، لتسلّط الضوء على تعقيد رؤيته السياسية. كما تتناول المقالة الفجوة المعرفية بين الدراسات الغربية والعربية التي أدّت إلى تهميش كتابات جبران السياسية. حيث تدعو الدراسة إلى إعادة تقييم جبران بوصفه شخصية أدبية وسياسية في آن واحد، إذ يكشف إنتاجه الثنائي اللغة عن توتر عميق بين الإنسانوية الشاملة والدعوة الملحّة إلى القومية ومن خلال إعادة دمج كتاباته السياسية في الخطاب الأكاديمي الأوسع، وتدعو المقالة إلى فهم أكثر دقة وتجذرًا تاريخيًا لإرث جبران الفكري ضمن التقاليد الأدبية العربية والعالمية.

الكلمات مفتاحية: جبران خليل جبران، الانسانوية، النشاط السياسي، القومية، التصوف.

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1. Introduction

In a letter addressed to Mary Haskell[1], the Lebanese-American poet, novelist, and artist Kahlil Gibran (1883–1931) expresses his profound disappointment with a convention he attended in New York City in 1912. The event, held in honor of Abdul Basha[2] and organized by the Women's Peace Society of New York, did not meet Gibran's expectations. As he describes it, the convention was "tiresome, illogical, flat, and insipid" (Haskell, 1970). His dissatisfaction with what was intended to be a peace convention[3] arises primarily from his disapproval of the thematic content of the speeches, which centered predominantly on world peace. Gibran's critique is rooted in his conviction that peace, as a concept, holds little relevance for the modern age. He characterizes peace as a "desire of old age," suggesting that the world is still too young to genuinely aspire to it. In his view, discussions of peace are premature while global unrest and spiritual disquiet persist. In the same letter, Gibran advocates for what he perceives as the necessary purification of humanity from its moral and existential impurities. He asserts that such a cleansing process must occur—by any means necessary, including war—stating: "let there be wars; let the children of the earth fight one another until the last drop of impure, animal blood is shed" (Haskell, 1970). The letter concludes with a caution against fearing war, which Gibran argues stems from a fundamental misunderstanding. He proposes that war should instead be accepted as a natural, albeit violent, path toward the eventual realization of universal peace.

This letter significantly complicates prevailing interpretations of Gibran's literary and political legacy. Most notably, his Nietzschean reflections on war and peace stand in stark contrast to the prophetic, humanistic persona often associated with him in the Western imagination. Indeed, it is primarily Gibran's advocacy of universal human values—expressed throughout much of his English-language work—that has secured his status as a transcendent literary figure in the modern West. His philosophy of human unity and spiritual brotherhood has enabled his writings to cross cultural boundaries and resonate with diverse audiences. The global reception of *The Prophet* (1923), arguably his most influential work, testifies to his enduring appeal and encapsulates many of the core humanistic principles of his thought. While many of his ideas align with Sufi mysticism, it is his emphasis on concepts such as the "universal self," the unity of life and death, the oneness of body and soul, the reconciliation of good and evil, and the collective responsibility of humankind that have distinguished his philosophical vision and attracted Western readership (Bushrui,1998).

Conversely, Kahlil Gibran's political thought differs markedly from the spiritual and humanistic themes that dominate his English-language literary work. Many of his political views, primarily conveyed through Arabic journalistic writings, exhibit a radical and revolutionary tenor. Notably, Gibran called for an Arab Syrian uprising against the Ottoman Empire in the early twentieth century. His fervent desire to liberate his homeland from Ottoman rule and to instill a sense of national consciousness among Syrians formed the ideological basis of his advocacy. To this end, Gibran employed his pen and influence, a commitment that earned him a reputation among his contemporaries as a social rebel. Indeed, he supported the militarization of the Syrian revolution as the only viable path to achieving independence for Greater Syria[4]. Although this stance was deemed illogical and ill-timed by many of his peers, such as Ameen Rihani and Mikhail Naimy, Gibran sought to realize his vision by mobilizing the Syrian diaspora and establishing civil organizations in the United States.

This evident contrast between Gibran's literary and journalistic work invites a critical reassessment of his political philosophy. It compels us to reexamine his position on key political questions and how these stances are reflected in his writings. Essential questions arise: Should Gibran be regarded as a political thinker? What is the nature of his political thought? And can he be accurately characterized as a nationalist, Arabist, or social reformist?

(1) Mary Haskell is an American woman who had a great influence on Kahlil Gibran's life and work. Gibran and Mary met in 1904 during a exhibition organized by Gibran for his paintings, after which a strong relationship had grown between the two. She supported him emotionally and financially and paid for his education during his stay in Paris between 1910-1912.

(2) Abdul Basha is a shorthand of Abdu'l-Bahá Basha, the given name of the son of the Persian founder of Bahaism. He met with Gibran on multiple occasions during his visit to New York in 1912 while promoting Bahaism. Gibran drew life-portraits of him in his apartment some of which still exist.

(3) The Women's Peace Conference was organized in New York in 1912 by the Women's Committee of the New York Peace Society and was attended by 'Abdu'l-Bahá."

(4) Greater Syria refers to the area which was administrated by France and Great Britian and includes Palestine, today Syria, Lebanon.

To address these questions, Gibran's political ideology must be rigorously analyzed within its historical context. Specifically, his political views should be considered in light of the sociopolitical developments in the Middle East during his lifetime. Unfortunately, much of the existing scholarship on Gibran's political thought treats his ideas in isolation, without adequate reference to the historical circumstances that shaped them. This oversight has resulted in a fragmented and incomplete understanding of how his political convictions influenced both his literary and journalistic work. Our analysis will focus on Gibran's journalistic articles, speeches, and literary writings published between 1910 and 1931, particularly after his return from Paris up until his death, a period marked by significant transformations in his political thinking. By situating this study within the broader framework of nationalism theory, it becomes possible to understand Gibran's thought as part of the intellectual ferment that accompanied the emergence of modern Arab nationalism—linking his calls for liberation and renewal to global currents of anti-colonial and cultural nationalist movements.

2. Literature Review

Several factors have contributed to the persistent neglect of Gibran's political activism within scholarly discourse. Chief among them is a significant epistemological disconnect in Western academia regarding Gibran's Arabic writings. A cursory review of scholarly work from recent decades reveals a pronounced neglect of his Arabic-language output. This oversight is due in part to the lack of translations from Arabic to English, which has led many Western critics to erroneously categorize Gibran's work as apolitical and purely spiritual. The absence of intellectual exchange between Arab and Western academic spheres has further reinforced this marginalization. As Ludescher (2002) notes, three distinct scholarly traditions have developed around Gibran's work—one in Arabic, one in French, and one in English. She observes that "although there is some overlap in knowledge, scholars are frequently unaware of work that has been done in languages other than their own" (Ludescher, 2002).

Wail Hassan similarly highlights this Western epistemological isolation in his analysis of Arab American literature. He argues that this divide is one reason Gibran has been largely excluded from American literary canons, despite being one of the most widely read authors in the West (Hassan, 2011). According to Hassan, the dominant themes of personal freedom and the lack of overt political content in Gibran's English writings have led to their dismissal as "juvenile literature" lacking the complexity required for canonical recognition. While this marginalization may also stem from racialized notions of literary value in the U.S., Gibran's focus on spiritual themes and self-actualization further reinforced perceptions of his work as apolitical (Hartman, 2010).

However, such a reductive portrayal of Gibran's oeuvre fails to capture its full complexity. A significant portion of his Arabic writing—and that of many of his contemporaries in the Arab diaspora—was deeply political. The proliferation of Arabic-language newspapers in the United States during the early twentieth century provided a crucial platform for Arab writers to express political opinions freely, unencumbered by censorship. Publications such as *Kawkab America*, *Al-Ayam*, *Al-Huda*, *Mir'at al-Gharb*, among others, served not only as "socializing agencies" but also as important voices for the diverse Arab communities in America (Suleiman, 1999). Writing in Arabic within a non-Arabic-speaking environment allowed for greater intellectual freedom and fostered a politically engaged literary enclave.

Gibran was a prominent contributor to this journalistic landscape. As Robin Waterfield (1998) notes, he wrote regularly for *Al-Moharer* and found a platform in newspapers such as *Mir'at al-Gharb*, and later *Al-Funun* and *As-Sa'ih*. The politicization of his Arabic-language work can be attributed in part to the liberties afforded by writing outside of his homeland and in a language that allowed him to evade the dominant political and cultural pressures of assimilation in the United States. Wail Hassan affirms this point, emphasizing that Gibran's bilingual production was a strategy to navigate the restrictive social environment of early twentieth-century America (Hassan 2011). According to Hassan, neither Gibran nor his fellow Arab American writers who wrote in both Arabic and English had the capacity to counteract prevailing stereotypes about Arabs and the Middle East. Instead, Gibran's English-language works adopted a depoliticized, often exoticized tone, aligning with orientalist expectations and enabling his writing to be more palatable to a Western audience.

We now turn to Gibran's political thought—an aspect of his literary legacy that remains largely understudied in the West—namely, his journalistic and literary production in the Arabic language. This body of work reveals the political consciousness and revolutionary dimension of his intellectual persona. Before delving into this phase, however, it is essential to briefly examine his early years and the revolutionary spirit that nourished his political outlook from a young age.

From the outset, Kahlil Gibran embodied the spirit of rebellion in its fullest sense—against tradition, injustice, and the authority of the clergy. This rebellious disposition emerged early in his life and became a defining feature of his literary and philosophical outlook. Gibran openly rejected the institutional Church and its rites, as well as any social constraints that limited individual freedom under the guise of customs and norms. His early work, *Spirits Rebellious* (1908), offers a pointed critique of clerical dominance over social life, portraying religious authority as a fundamental obstacle to human freedom and fulfillment. In this work, Gibran presents tradition as a form of intellectual and emotional confinement, stating: "everything on earth lives according to the law of nature, and from that law emerges the glory and joy of liberty; but man is denied this fortune, because he set for the God-given soul a limited and earthy law of his own" (Gibran, 1908). In *The Storm* (1920), Gibran explicitly acknowledges his defiance of social conventions, affirming his commitment to challenging entrenched norms and advocating for the liberation of the human spirit.

I am extremist to the point of madness. I tend to destroy as much as I tend to build, and in my heart, there is hatred for what people sanctify, and love for what they disapprove of. If I were able to eradicate human customs, beliefs, and traditions, I would not hesitate for a minute. (Gibran, 1994)

Gibran's rebellion against social norms and traditions was mirrored by his defiance of the established conventions of Arabic literary form, particularly his efforts to revitalize Arabic poetry. He was among the early pioneers of a poetic mode that anticipated the emergence of *shiʿr ḥurr* (free verse), a development that was unprecedented in the long history of Arabic literature. Gibran believed that Arabic poetry, which had remained largely unchanged for centuries, was in urgent need of liberation from the rigid structures of traditional prosody (Jayyusi, 1977). His stylistic audacity, thematic openness, and deliberate rejection of fixed forms not only challenged classical norms but also helped lay the groundwork for the later formalization of free verse in Arabic poetry.

Unfortunately, Gibran's social and literary activism was temporarily disrupted by the political and humanitarian crises unfolding in his homeland. The 1908 coup led by the Young Turks, followed by the outbreak of World War I, brought about the catastrophic collapse of Greater Syria's economic infrastructure. This breakdown was most tragically exemplified by successive waves of famine that devastated regions such as Lebanon and Palestine. These events compelled Gibran to shift his focus—albeit temporarily—away from literary production in order to respond to the urgent needs and suffering of his compatriots. Foremost among the humanitarian and political responsibilities that demanded much of Gibran's time and energy were his leadership of Al-Halaqat al-Dhahabiyyah[1] (The Golden Cyrcles) and his active membership in the Syrian-Mount Lebanon Relief Committee. As Bushrui and Jenkins observe, Gibran's deep involvement in the political and social affairs of his homeland came at a considerable personal and professional cost. They note that "throughout the years Gibran's political involvement often distracted him from his work, frequently calling him away from his studio to answer the telephone or to spend time downtown with his compatriots" (Bushrui & Jenkins, 1998).

It is important to recognize that Gibran's political engagement and rebellious ideas emerged not out of personal ambition, but out of necessity. Centuries of subjugation and exploitation of the Syrian people under Ottoman rule, compounded by the Young Turks' aggressive campaign of "Turkification," served as the catalyst for awakening a spirit of resistance within him. Although Gibran harbored a deep aversion to nationalism and its ideologies, these historical pressures compelled him to adopt a nationalist stance for the sake of his people's liberation. His long-held ideals of universal brotherhood and humanism were temporarily set

(1) The Golden Circles, or Al Halaqat Al Dhahabiya, was the first attempt at a literary society begun by Khalil Gibran in the United States. At his inaugural speech, Gibran expressed his disappointment in the 1909 Ottoman Statute, claiming that the Turks had not abandoned their will to retain 'absolute rule over Arabs and Arabic speaking people'.

aside in service of a greater cause—the emancipation of his homeland. Gibran articulates this tension in a letter to Mary Haskell, where he expresses his fervent wish for the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and his hope that the war would bring about its disintegration, thereby freeing the oppressed nations of the Near East. He writes, "I am an Absolutist, Mary, and Absolutism has no country—but my heart burns for Syria" (Haskell, 1970). Scholar Tansi Zakka affirms this view of Gibran as a reluctant political actor, asserting that "Gibran was a politician against his will." Zakka emphasizes that at the outset of his literary career, Gibran was wholly dedicated to his artistic and literary pursuits. However, the tumultuous political events between 1911 and 1919—a period marked by upheaval across the Arab world—compelled him to engage in what Zakka describes as "feverish political activism for the sake of his country" (Tansi, 2015).

Gibran's stay in Paris between 1910 and 1912 proved to be pivotal in shaping his political outlook and deepening his commitment to the Syrian nationalist movement. This brief but formative period, made possible through the financial support of his patron Mary Haskell, exposed Gibran not only to the city's renowned art museums and academies but, more crucially, to the vibrant Syrian émigré community residing there. At the turn of the twentieth century, Paris had become a significant hub for Syrian political opposition and would later host the first Arab Syrian Congress in 1913. The Lebanese artist and sculptor Youssef Howayek reflects on the impact of Paris on Gibran's evolving nationalist consciousness, citing a letter Gibran wrote to him during a visit to Istanbul in 1910. In that letter, Gibran expressed his disillusionment with the political inertia within Greater Syria, remarking that Syrians in their homeland were "like sheep," and asserting that meaningful change and "clear victory" would more likely be achieved through the efforts of Syrians living abroad, particularly those based in Istanbul (Howayek,1979). Additionally, Gibran's time in Paris reunited him with his friend Ameen Rihani, a fellow Mahjar intellectual known for his ardent political activism and advocacy for Arab unity. The two shared a vision of a unified Arab world and briefly traveled together to London before Rihani returned to New York. This renewed association further deepened Gibran's political awareness and reinforced his engagement with Arab nationalist thought.

Kahlil Gibran's revolutionary inclinations were, without a doubt, a direct response to the political and humanitarian crises unfolding in Syria and Istanbul during the early twentieth century. The 1908 coup against Sultan Abdulhamid II, led by the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP)[(1)], and the subsequent reinstatement of the 1876 constitution, had a profound influence on Gibran's political thinking. From the outset, the CUP's political reforms revealed clear intentions to promote the Turkification of the Arab provinces within the Ottoman Empire. This was starkly evident in the parliamentary elections of 1908, in which 70 percent of the elected representatives were of Turkish descent, despite the large Arab demographic across the Empire. Such developments made it apparent to Gibran and many Arab intellectuals that the CUP's reforms were motivated less by a commitment to constitutionalism and more by a nationalist agenda centered on Turkish dominance.

Consequently, Gibran came to believe that the emergence of an independent Syrian nation was impossible within this political framework and that revolution was the only viable path forward. His disillusionment with Ottoman rule is vividly expressed in a letter to Mary Haskell, in which he writes, "Seven times have I cursed the cruel Fate which made Syria a Turkish province! The influence of the Sultans follows the poor Syrians over the seven seas to the New World. The dark shadows of those human vultures are seen even here in New York" (Haskell 1970). For Gibran, the problem was not merely ethnic discrimination but also the systematic suppression of civil liberties by Ottoman authorities—targeting not only Arabs but also dissenting Turkish intellectuals.

This broader critique is evident in Gibran's condemnation of the Union and Progress government's mistreatment of Turkish philosopher Rıza Tevfik Bey, who was reportedly insulted and beaten by CUP officials. In a newspaper article published in *Mira'at al-Gharb* in April 1912 Gibran interpreted this act of brutality as a paradoxical badge of honor, asserting that the injustice suffered

(1) Turk organization known as the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), which advocated a program of orderly reform under a strong central government and the exclusion of all foreign influence.

by Rıza Bey [1]unintentionally elevated his stature. As Gibran poetically observed, the blood of a free man "creates for him decades of glory" (Gibran 1920). For Gibran, the CUP's actions exemplified a regime more committed to silencing dissent than promoting reform, further reinforcing his revolutionary outlook.

Early signs of Gibran's political activism emerged with the founding of the *Golden Cyrcles Organization* in 1912, shortly after his return from Paris. Based in New York, the organization was met with great enthusiasm, particularly among Syrian students. Although debates persisted regarding Gibran's exact role within the group, many Syrian students viewed Golden Cyrcles as a more authentic representation of their voice than other U.S.-based NGOs, including the Syrian Club. According to Haskell, the organization's popularity stemmed from the mindset of these students: they were pragmatic and action-oriented, unlike other Syrian expatriates, and had no intention of remaining in the U.S. after completing their studies. Their practical approach closely aligned with Gibran's own vision for the organization, which emphasized direct involvement and on-the-ground action to liberate Syria from Ottoman rule. The Lebanese intellectual Muhammad Dakrub describes Golden Cyrcles as "a social-cultural association with a liberal political character hostile to Turkish control over Arab countries" (Dakrub, 1992).

There is ample evidence that Gibran intended this organization to serve as a practical platform for advancing his political ideas regarding Syria's future. However, some of his proposals—particularly his rejection of European diplomatic intervention in favor of revolution and military action—were strongly opposed by other Syrian intellectuals, who viewed them as impractical and ill-suited to the realities on the ground (Haskell, 1970).

Gibran's differing views on Syria's political future are evident in his decision to decline participation in the first Arab Congress held in Paris in 1913. Although invited, along with other Syrian intellectuals, to represent the Syrian community in America, Gibran chose not to attend due to significant disagreements with his peers. He believed that attending a congress where fundamental ideological divides existed would be futile. In hindsight, Gibran regretted missing this opportunity, as his absence meant the loss of a voice for Syrians who opposed relying on diplomatic appeals for Home Rule from Turkey and Europe. Like many Syrians, Gibran distrusted the Ottoman Empire and doubted its genuine intent to grant Syria independence. He firmly believed that revolution was the only viable path to freedom for his nation. Confident in the military and economic capabilities of the Syrian Arabs, he argued that organizing a revolution required less planning than taking decisive military action against the Turks. In his view, even a failed revolution would lead to some form of Home Rule over Syria and Arabia. Ultimately, Gibran rejected diplomacy with the Ottomans, advocating instead for active resistance as the only effective strategy (Haskell, 1970).

Gibran's passionate calls for revolution, evident in his articles and speeches, do not reflect a narrow or shortsighted view of Syria's situation, nor a lack of planning for governance on the ground. On the contrary, he had a broad and well-rounded vision of how a Syrian revolution should unfold. To Gibran, a successful revolution had to be holistic—it couldn't rely solely on military action but had to address social and economic dimensions as well. Neglecting these aspects would only perpetuate a form of colonization that ignored the true needs of the Syrian people. This vision was clearly articulated in an article he published in *Mira'at al-Gharb* on March 27, 1916, addressed to Syrians both in the U.S. and abroad. In it, Gibran posed challenging questions: "هل قام السوريون بحركة اجتماعية تذكر إذا ذكرت الحركات الاجتماعية؟ هل وضعوا علما يفيدهم اوفنا ينيرهم أو صناعة تغنيهم؟" Have the Syrians ever led a notable social movement? Have they developed a comprehensive body of knowledge beneficial to their people or economy?" (translated by the author) He pointed out that many vital services in Syria—like Beirut's water system, railroads, and schools—were built by foreign powers such as the English, French, and Americans. The article urged Syrians to rise and take responsibility for their nation, emphasizing that these were sincere words from a writer who put his emotions aside to deliver honest counsel (Qawwal, 1994).

Furthermore, Gibran's vision for a Syrian revolution did not include the establishment of a

(1) Ahmet Rıza Bey (1858 – 26 February 1930) was an Ottoman educator, activist, revolutionary, intellectual, politician, polymath, and a prominent Young Turk. He was also an early leader of the Committee of Union and Progress.

Syrian government led by the existing political elite. He regarded the Syrian political and intellectual classes—both domestically and in the diaspora—as unfit to govern Syria following its independence from the Ottoman Empire. This skepticism stemmed from his conviction that Syrian society lacked the necessary social cohesion, with various factions primarily prioritizing the interests of their own sects or tribes over those of the nation as a whole.

Moreover, Gibran believed that the Ottoman Empire had systematically suppressed the emergence of a political and intellectual class capable of challenging its authority. His assessment of the Syrian political elite's inadequacy as successors to Ottoman rule aligns with the views of many historians. The intellectual, economic, and cultural impoverishment inflicted upon Syria during Ottoman rule constituted a significant barrier to any revolutionary success. In the decades leading up to World War I, Syria experienced a severe depletion of its intellectual class, driven by forced conscription, widespread famine, and limited domestic opportunities. Consequently, this period saw a large-scale exodus of Syrian intellectuals, further exacerbating the nation's plight and leaving it nearly devoid of the leadership necessary to guide its future.

Gibran articulated a vision to address the crisis of Syria's lack of a qualified political leadership in the post-Ottoman era. His proposal entailed Syria coming under the temporary occupation of a friendly power—specifically France—until a capable Syrian political class emerged to govern the state independently. Gibran elaborates on this vision in an article published in the New York-based Arab newspaper *Mira'at al-Gharb*, wherein he outlines his solution for restoring social cohesion among the Syrian people and for cultivating a well-prepared political elite. The article frames this solution as a dialogue between two fictional interlocutors, Zaid and Obiad. When Zaid inquires, "What brings political unity to the Syrians?" Obiad responds, "There is only one means, which is for Syria to be occupied by a strong and just state that wishes good and progress for the Syrians, and to keep it under its control until the Syrians learn how to run their affairs without an intermediary" (Qawwal, 1994).

It is important to note that Gibran did not initially endorse the idea of Syria being governed by a foreign power prior to the Young Turks' revolt. Indeed, he firmly opposed any form of subjugation of Syria to external authorities or the Syrian people aligning politically with any entity other than their own nation. Adel Beshara corroborates this stance, highlighting Gibran's disdain for the political loyalties exhibited by various sects within Syria—for instance, the Druze's allegiance to England, the Orthodox Christians to Russia, and the Maronites to France. Gibran regarded such foreign affiliations as "foolishness," advocating instead that Syrians place their trust solely in local governance (Beshara, 2010). This caution against external political and religious affiliations recurs throughout Gibran's early writings. In his article *You Have Your Lebanon*, he compares those who maintain foreign loyalties to a "ship without rudder or sail upon a raging sea," emphasizing that such attachments are restrictive and ultimately detrimental to the Syrian nationalist project in the long term. He argued that individuals aligned with foreign powers merely replace one form of tyranny with another. According to Gibran, these so-called reformers and liberators are courageous only within their own limited spheres, yet ultimately act as cowards, continuously manipulated by European interests. He asserted:

They are brave, the liberators and the reformers, but only in their own area. But they are cowards, always led backwards by the Europeans. They are those who croak like frogs boasting that they have rid themselves of their ancient, tyrannical enemy, but the truth of the matter is that this tyrannical enemy still hides within their own souls (Gibran, 1920).

This significant shift in Gibran's position can be understood as a response to the evolving political realities on the ground. The objectives of his Syrian nationalist project, initially centered on expelling Ottoman rule, transformed following the Empire's collapse and the declining influence of the Lebanese Maronite community in shaping Syria's political future.

3. Conclusion

Taken together, the evidence demonstrates that Kahlil Gibran's political ideology was not a marginal aspect of his intellectual legacy, but rather a vital and urgent articulation of his engagement with the turbulent political realities of his era. Contrary to the enduring image of Gibran as a depoliticized mystic in Western literary circles, he emerges as a politically

conscious thinker whose revolutionary spirit was shaped by profound disillusionment with Ottoman authoritarianism and a fervent dedication to the liberation of Greater Syria. His Arabic writings, in particular, unveil a nuanced and evolving conception of national self-determination—one that vacillates between idealistic humanism and pragmatic nationalism. This dynamic tension reflects a deeper ideological struggle within Gibran's thought: the effort to reconcile spiritual universalism with the demands of anti-colonial resistance and political agency. The continued neglect of Gibran's Arabic-language political essays in Western scholarship has resulted in a partial and often misrepresented account of his intellectual contributions. A more comprehensive approach—one that contextualizes his political thought historically and engages critically with his bilingual body of work—reveals Gibran as a thinker deeply entwined with the ideological currents of early twentieth-century Arab nationalism. His advocacy for revolution, his calls for social reform, and his critiques of sectarianism all point to a political philosophy rooted in moral urgency and principled conviction. Reincorporating these dimensions into academic discourse not only repositions Gibran within the Arab intellectual tradition but also disrupts dominant paradigms in global literary studies that have historically overlooked the political dimensions of diasporic literature.

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