

Nevertheless, within the general Islamic environment there emerged a new school of thought which was in favor of settling the Arab question by creating an autonomous Arab province within the Ottoman Empire on the basis of decentralization. This school which originated outside the main stream of Arab national thought and in opposition to the latter's call for separation from the Ottoman Empire had indirectly served the national movement by drawing into its ranks larger segments of the population who refused to associate themselves with the national separatist movement owing to the religious bond. However, they welcomed the new trend in the national movement which introduced the concept of decentralization and worked within the common framework of the existing Islamic society. Thus the call for autonomy contributed to the awakening of the national consciousness, for by merely putting forward the idea of autonomy it became a factor that awakened and uncovered the distinct identity of the Arab nation.

It might be useful to mention here that the period during which the trend which called for decentralization was gaining momentum coincided with the activities of the Young Turks against the reign of Abdul Hamid II (1876-1909), one of the most reactionary rulers of the Ottoman Empire. The Committee of Union and Progress which eventually brought down the despotic rule of Abdul Hamid II had early in its history approached the Arab organizations