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The Arab Quest for Modernity: Universal Impulses vs. State Development

A thesis

presented to

the faculty of the Department of History

East Tennessee State University

in partial fulfillment

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Master of Arts in History

by

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August 2007

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Keywords: Middle East, Arab, Arab nationalism, Pan-Arabism, Islam, Islamic modernism

ABSTRACT

The Arab Quest for Modernity: Universal Impulses vs. State development

by

Kevin Wampler Jones

The Arab Middle East began indigenous nation building relatively late in the twentieth century. Issues of legitimacy, identity, and conflicts with the West have plagued Arab nations. Arab states have espoused universal ideologies as solutions to the problems of Arab nation building.

The two ideologies of Pan-Arabism and Islamic modernism provided universal solutions to the Arab states. Both Pan-Arabism and Islamic modernism gained validity in political polemics aimed against colonialism, imperialism, Zionism, and the West. Both ideologies promised simple solutions to complex questions of building modern Arab society.

Irrespective of ideology, Arab states have always acted in self-interest to perceived external threats. The West has perpetuated universal solutions to Arab nation building through continued intervention in the Middle East. The Arabs perpetuated universal solutions to Arab- nation building as panacea to the problems of becoming modern nations.

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DEDICATION

This Thesis would not be possible without the support of my loving wife, Amanda Parsons Jones. In addition, my parents have supported me unconditionally in all my endeavors.

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CHAPTER 1

OUTLINING THE MODERN ARAB STATE

The question that Middle Eastern political leaders, historians, sociologists, and anthropologists are trying to solve is the role of identity in Arab state formation. Western Europe has submitted to the nation state since the beginning of the enlightenment; however, the Arab Middle East has only comparatively recently shed the yoke of the universal¹ Ottoman Empire. Even before the advent of the industrial and French revolutions, Europe had a long tradition of state building that centered on linguistic, geographic, and cultural lines. Yet, even in Europe, the multi-cultural and multi-ethnic empires persisted until after their defeat in WWI. The Arab Middle East was a part of a multi ethnic and non-Arab empire that has only been independent since roughly 1950². Thus, complications exist in comparing Arab state formation to Europe. Consequently, unclear models exist in explaining the development of Arab ethnic states. Furthermore, the Arab nationalists have had difficulty in defining the state. Regardless, the temptation to label the Arab nations in a delayed development between the enlightenment and modernity depends on inadequate arguments. The Arab Middle East exists in a region where the national identity is in flux. Consequently, the populations of Arab states have divided political loyalties that presented and currently impede state formation. Although the West today is a multi-cultural and a multi-ethnic entity, the population generally submits to the overall idea of the state society. Westerners largely do not question the

¹ Universal in the sense that it did not predicate its existence on any specific ethnicity, ideology, or practice but simply wherever the army could expand. The later use of universal in this paper pertains to the specific use of Arabism or Islam to create a state with one over-riding identity.

² Some states were “more” independent earlier and others were foreign dominated into the 1960’s

underlying principles of their societies and have minor variations in mainstream opinion on topics of economic or social concern, whereas the Arab Middle East has increasingly incompatible political identities competing in a deadly struggle to define society.

The Arab Middle East has three general types of state identity: Arab nationalist identity, religious identity, or a royal family identity. The Arab nationalist identity is the predominate form of identity among political elites in the most significant Arab states. Egypt, Syria, and Iraq became states with the concept of an Arab identity based on language, ethnicity, and in some instances religion. The Pan-Arab nationalist movement was a competition between Syria, Iraq, and Egypt and set a precedent for external influence on other states affairs.³ The Arab nationalist movement during Gamal Abdel Nasser's leadership of Egypt achieved its greatest political power but has steadily been declining since the late 1960s. The Ba'th Arab nationalist states of Iraq and Syria abandoned their last unity project in 1978-1979. The Arab nationalist nations have given up on the grandiose vision of the Pan-Arab nationalist state that would promote universal Arab unity. Regardless, Arab states use the failure to define Arab identity as justification for the existence of the post-colonial status quo and to give the arbitrary boundaries of the Middle East some credibility.⁴

The Islamic identity has superseded the Arab nationalist identity in most of the Middle Eastern countries and has promoted the universalistic approaches of radical fundamentalism. The Islamists play down ethnic identity in favor of a Muslim Umma centered on traditional Islamic values. The Iranian revolution, although not an Arab revolution, shocked the West with the power of resurgent Islam and the threat to "export"

³ Quamiyya nationalism implied Pan-Arab unity, but the debate became who would lead the movement.

⁴ Alan R. Taylor, *The Arab Balance of Power* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1982), 43-77.

the revolution. Iran has had success in promoting Shi'a political, religious, and philosophical thought. Iran has backed Shi'a political movements in many of the Gulf states, Iraq, and southern Lebanon. Iran interfered in Iraqi politics by supporting Mustafa al-Barzani in his attempt to create a Kurdistan before 1975 and by promoting radical Imams in Southern Iraq during the 1979 revolution. In addition, there are radical Sunni religious groups that have operated underground for years in Egypt, Syria, and other Middle Eastern states. *Ikhwan Al-Muslimin*, the Muslim Brotherhood, founded by Hasan Al-Banna in Egypt operated underground in Egypt and other Arab states. The Islamists differ on approaches to revolution and ideology but generally rely on charismatic leadership of religious elites that has mobilized the masses of society.⁵

Gulf Sheikdoms are small monarchies created based on patronage with Imperialist powers and are dependent on outside assistance to maintain their status. The British created the Sheikdoms in order to maintain favorable governments in the Middle East after their departure and prevent potentially powerful Arab states from forming true to the principle of "Divide and Rule". The United States inherited the British role in protecting the Sheikdoms and maintaining their status through defense treaties and economic patronage. The Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC), an American creation, was created primarily as a political body to strengthen the Sheikdoms regionally and promote stability. Despite the existence of the GCC, internal Islamist movements push for popular government that plagues many of the Gulf states. The GCC states do not necessarily have an identity but provide economic benefit for their population, which translates into stability. The GCC is naturally limited to oil rich monarchies. The Sheikdoms would not

⁵ John J. Donohue, "Islam and the Search for Identity in the Arab World," in *Voices of Resurgent Islam*, ed. John L. Esposito (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 48-61.

likely survive in the Middle East without the continued support from outside powers. The larger Arab states and Iran have all attempted to absorb or exert influence over GCC states. The GCC states have been specific targets of Iraqi and Iranian expansion in the past. In addition, the GCC provides the funding of many Islamic movements⁸ because of the petrol-dollars.⁶

The pre-modern political development in Europe and the Arab Middle East provided the forms of identity that would result in the failure of Pan-Arabism as a political platform and ideology. Unlike Western Europe in the modern-period, the Arabs have yet to create an ethnic based nationalism to unite the various Arab states. The comparisons of Arabs to nineteenth century Europeans frozen in a nationalistic developmental state have provided little insight into the reasons behind the failure of Arab nationalism. Western rationalism has categorized nationalism as a necessary precursor to modernization. However, rationalism cannot explain entirely the apparent advancement of Arabs past Europeans through the Middle Ages, then their lapse and decline in the late seventeenth century. Arab polemicist attribute Arab decline to the steppe nomads who assumed power and corrupted the Arab empires. Historically it is hard to deny that the influx of Mongols and their sack of Baghdad in the late middle Ages set the Arab empire at a disadvantage vis-à-vis Western Europe. Yet, Turkish power over the majority of Arabs does not yield an immediate lapse in Empire but rather expands the horizon of the Muslim empire until the reversal at Vienna in 1683. Thus, perhaps the lack

⁶Gulf Cooperation Council “The GCC Charter”. <http://www.gcc-sg.org/CHARTER.html> [Jan. 2006]

of development of Arab nationalism lies in the development of state based politics and ideology.⁷ According to Alan Taylor,

The Arab world's historical legacy is a blend of unifying and divisive forces combined with a profound psychological concern over the impact of these forces on the destiny of the Arabs as a group. Regionalism is a deeply rooted predisposition related to history and geography. The great early civilizations in the Fertile Crescent, Egypt, and the Maghreb left a cultural heritage which can never be completely erased, and the Arabian Peninsula also has traditions which go back thousands of years. Likewise, each of these areas has a distinctive physical environment that has determined the economic and social orientation of the respective inhabitants.⁸

Ironically, the Arab conception of the Umma preceded European state development by several hundred years. Muhammad envisioned the Umma as a semi-socialist polity of believers as part of a religion that performed the political, social, and economic functions of state. The Umma from its inception implied the concepts of state that Rousseau would articulate much later in Western Europe. Ironically, the concept of the Umma was much more flexible than the theories of state that prevailed in Western Europe. The Umma was more inclusive in terms of religions and had a *millet* system that

⁷ Taylor, 1-6.

⁸ Taylor, 5.

allowed religious minorities to function within the state.⁹ Europe, by contrast, developed arbitrary and absolute forms of identity. Identity in Europe became nearly formulaic by the 19th century and citizenship implied ethnic affiliation as well as association with arbitrary boundaries. Charles Tilly claimed,

The structure which became dominant in Europe after 1500, the national state, differed from these alternative possibilities in several significant ways: (1) it controlled a well-defined, continuous territory; (2) it was relatively centralized; (3) it was differentiated from other organizations; (4) it reinforced its claims through a tendency to acquire a monopoly over the concentrated means of physical coercion within its territory.¹⁰

The Umma was strictly a Muslim polity with some provisions governing the rule and regulations for both religious and ethnic participation in government, society, and basic daily life. The primary divide in the Umma was the Sh'ite branch of Islam that undermined the Sunni monopoly on the law that was codified in the tenth century. The Sunni and Shi'ite divide remains the largest rift in the Umma. However, the Umma generally allowed non-threatening religious minorities to exist and recognized their place in the society. The flexible identity of the Arab-Muslim world and the tribal traditions of the Arab society created a flexible and de-centralized system of government. European state development created an absolute centralized concept of identity centered on unity of

⁹ See for Arab ideas of state legitimacy Nazih N.M. Ayubi, *Over-stating the Arab state: politics and society in the Middle East* (New York: I.B. Tauris Publishers, 1995), 21-24.

¹⁰ Charles Tilly, "Reflections on the History of European State-Making," in *The Formation of National States in Western Europe*, ed. Charles Tilly (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), 27.

individuals, thought, and custom that allowed little deviance from the dominate political body.¹¹ Kemal Karpat claimed, “The Muslim community encompassed a great number of ethnic and linguistic groups. Before it became a predominately imperial entity, the early Ottoman state recognized these ethnic divisions. Islamic doctrine explicitly recognizes ethnic and tribal differences (in the famous sura 49:13), but it forbids the use of tribal and national affiliation to achieve domination over other Muslims.”¹²

Narrow nationalisms and extreme nationalism did not serve the Western world or the Middle Eastern world well.¹³ Nationalism as a doctrine implying a state with only a certain ethnic group and a single set of customs has failed in most states that adopted it. Since the post WWI era, nationalism was associated with far-right, fascist, and ultra nationalist groups. In some cases, exclusively nationalist governments have resulted in divisive and bitter internal struggles that led to genocide. The current situation in Darfur and the Kurdish question in the Middle East remain blatant reminders of the dangers of ethnic nationalism. Western Europe and the United States have adopted increasingly anti-nationalist policies and pursued state concepts that are friendly in a pluralistic society. Globalization, international co-operation, and commerce have rendered the narrow sense of nineteenth century ethnic nationalism obsolete. Perhaps the ideological battle between capitalism and communism provided an impetus for the modern focus on co-operative policy rather than national interest-based policy. Regardless, the European Union, out-

¹¹Kemal Karpat, “The Ottoman Ethnic and Confessional Legacy in the Middle East,” in *Ethnicity, Pluralism, and the State in the Middle East*, ed. Milton J. Esman & Itamar Rabinovich (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), 35-53.

¹² Karpat, 45.

¹³ Narrow nationalism such as France and Britain’s in the colonial period promotes exclusionary practices in society and state based on ethnicity. Whereas, extreme would be Hitler’s German nationalism that actively eliminates all non-nationals as defined by dogma.

sourcing, and the world economy all suggest the permanent defeat of strong ethnic nationalism as an ideology of state in the West.

Thus, what does Arab nationalism and Pan-Arabism mean if the concept was being developed in Arab states as Western powers were pursuing a less nationalistic and plural policy towards the world? Has Arab nationalism and Pan-Arabism been anachronisms from the beginning? The brief answer is Arab nationalism appeared as a concept not long after European nationalism was affecting European states in the nineteenth century. In the mid twentieth century Arab nationalism and Pan-Arabism were successful ideologies in providing weak central governments with a claim to validity after the independence of all Middle Eastern countries from the hegemony of England and France. The Arabic language provides two words for nationalism that distinguish between the concept of Pan-Arabism and Arab nationalism associated with state boundaries. *Qawmiyya* implies ethnic nationalism similar to the concept of *volksgeist* and *wataniyya* implies a state nationalism associated with the nation itself. Arab states espoused both *qawmiyya* and *wataniyya* at different times to mitigate conflicts between Arab states and other indigenous ethnicities. The shift of the West to pluralistic nationalistic societies was achieved because many of the states had relied on stable centralized authority rather than communal affiliations. Whereas, the Arab Middle East has yet to establish a stable centralized government with the concept of individualism. In addition, Arab states did not develop federal power that achieved the same authority as in Europe. Furthermore, in Western Europe ingrained traditions of state building provided precedents for state building. Stein Rokkan claimed, “The great paradox of Western Europe was that it developed a number of strong centers of territorial control at the edges

of an old empire: the decisive thrusts of state formation and nation-building took place on the peripheries of the political vacuum left by the disruption of the old Roman Empire.”¹⁴ Rokkan’s conclusion claimed, “The lesson of the analysis is nevertheless clear: the European sequence simply cannot be repeated in the newest nations; the new nation-builders have to start out from fundamentally different conditions, they face an entirely different world.”¹⁵ Consequently, Arab state builders were trapped in an “entirely different world” between East and West. It was within this context Arab state builders attempted to define the *watan*. Arab intellectuals witnessing the demise of the Ottoman Empire and its gradual subjugation to European colonialism began questioning the societal factors that had led to the Islamic world’s lapse in technology and military tactics. The decentralized tribal affiliations and the traditions of the Umma provide an efficacious framework for a flexible and inclusive state. However, decentralized states are generally incompatible with modernization initially and thus Arab intellectuals began in the mid nineteenth century to push for western style governments. Furthermore, tribal societies have proven to be easier to manipulate by outside powers since tribal elites view personal gain to the tribe as a greater ends than a “national” or religious interest.¹⁶

If Islam was the primary identity of the Arab masses, why did nationalist governments take power in almost all Arab states at the end of the mandate system after WWII? Naturally, the Christian minorities and other pro-western academics in the Middle East came to associate state formation and progression with the European

¹⁴ Stein Rokkan, “Dimensions of State Formation and Nation-Building: A Possible Paradigm for Research on Variations within Europe,” in *The Formation of National States in Western Europe*, ed. Charles Tilly (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), 596.

¹⁵ Rokkan, 600.

¹⁶ Adeed Dawisha, *Arab Nationalism in the Twentieth Century: From Triumph to Despair* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 218-221; for ideological background 49-74.

colonial system. Consequently, pro-western Arab academics from urban backgrounds became the elite in the majority of Arab states. Colonialism typically created the elite that undermined colonial power by exposing the colonized to European concepts and methods. However, in the case of the Arab Middle East some states already had pro-western elite that espoused nationalistic approaches to the Arab state. Sati al-Husri, the Iraqi education minister in the mandate system, formulated a state based Arab nationalism within the context of the mandate government. When the mandate system collapsed, the political power remained in the control of pro-western urban elites who by the mid-twentieth century inherited the west's disdain for religious government. Furthermore, initially the goals of the pro-western Arabs and the Islamic masses did not mutually exclude the principals of Islamic society.

Pan-Arabism in the mid twentieth century replaced Arab nationalism that existed from the nineteenth century onward as the dominant Arab intellectual goal. Pan-Arabism was a logical end to Arab nationalism that focused on the disdain of the mandate system and the broken promises of the Western powers. Pan-Arabism went against the status quo and provided legitimacy to Arab intellectuals and elites who challenged Western powers. Thus, Arab nationalism gave way to Pan-Arabism as means of Arab state solidarity against threats from Israel and provided security from Western intervention. Pan-Arabism functioned as a means of providing authority from within the boundaries of the state as well as providing a pretext for regional state expansion. Thus, it is not surprising that the three most powerful Arab states eventually adopted Pan-Arab goals as their state ideologies. Egypt, Iraq, and Syria all used similar Pan-Arab ideologies to gain domestic

legitimacy and as an ideological pretext for regional dominance.¹⁷ Taylor summarized the Pan-Arab dilemma: “This dichotomy between a national resurgence formulated in universalistic terms and a nation-building process based on regional entities created a profound psychological dilemma which has perplexed twentieth-century Arabs and complicated their political evolution.”¹⁸

The initial appearance of Pan-Arabism followed by the idea of politicized Islamic modernism created a political conflict for legitimacy. *Ikhwan al-Muslimin* and Nasser’s free officer movement were examples of Egyptian anti-colonial movements that found common ground against the old elites and attempted successfully to remove them from power. These two groups had radically different domestic agendas. Egypt’s rise as the premier Pan-Arab nationalist power under Nasser created a period of Pan-Arab dominance and internal suppression of Islamic groups. The Ba’th in Iraq and Syria had similar issues of legitimacy as a religious minority group amid politically active majorities in each country. The Alawites in Syria and the Sunni’s in Iraq were particularly interested in curtailing political identities that were religious or sectarian in nature. Syria and Iraq promoted the idea of Arab nationalism that required submission to central state authority. Post WWII, Stable societies in Iraq and Syria had been an elusive goal, but Pan-Arabism provided the means to justify the centralized state amid political chaos. The failure of the Pan-Arab movement and the conflict between Islamic modernisms were a result of the ideological disconnect between the conception of identity within the Umma and the Arab state. The majority of the Arab citizens continued to identify with the basic Arab-Islamic civilization although the Pan-Arabists were unable

¹⁷ Taylor, 108-113.

¹⁸ Taylor, 109.

to understand that affiliation. Furthermore, Pan-Arab governments never fulfilled the basic premise of their Western-style leadership that centered on providing social, economic, and political benefits. Unlike other geographic areas involved in the colonial system, the Arab Middle East had always been close to Western Europe. Throughout the Middle Ages Arab Muslims frequently defeated and subdued Western powers. The Arabs who are part of the proud traditions of the Islamic Empires of the Middle East have had a long established civilization leading back to pre-Islamic Arabia. For that reason, it was difficult for any Arab culture to accept foreign domination and manipulation. It was especially difficult for a culture that has a history of competition with the domineering power. Furthermore, the Arab elites who have ruled their respective colonial creations since their independence in the nineteen fifties and sixties all failed to alleviate the basic problems of their societies. All states continue to face problems with basic building of the infrastructure, the economy, and the social issues. The increased appeal of the Islamic fundamentalist identity is by far the most shocking consequence of inadequate governments in the Arab states.

Thus, the initial question remains; what is the identity of Arabs living in the Middle East and what role has that identity played in state formation. Does Arab history suggest that either secular Arabism or Islamism will triumph in determining the Arab state? Identity in the Middle East was flexible long before the advent of modern European liberalism. However, the modern battles between secular Arabism and Islam have become increasingly hostile. No matter the intellectual and political attempts to bridge the gap between popular Islamism and elitist secularism the ideologies remain incompatible. Consequently, Pan-Arab identity never supplanted the primary modes of

Arab identity. The regional ineffectiveness of Pan-Arab ideology did not mean Pan-Arabism was not an effective means of pragmatic elites to maintain authoritarian regimes in the face of popular Islamism. Thus, the regional aspirations of Pan-Arabism have failed and have been replaced with the regional aspirations of Islamic modernism. Yet, it is likely that universalistic ideologies will continue to fail in the Arab Middle East because of intellectual, political, and social factors that suggested the triumph of the colonial nation state.

CHAPTER 2

FRAMING A FALSE DICHOTOMY: SATI AL-HUSRI AND HASSAN AL-BANNA

The ideas of Arab nationalism and Islamic modernism appeared in the Arab Middle East in the mid nineteenth century. Arab nationalist and Islamic political thought remained an elitist endeavor until after WWI. The writings of Sati al-Husri and Hassan al-Banna made the discussion of nationalist and Islamic thought a more public affair. After the 1950s Islamic modernism and Arab nationalism became embroiled in a political battle over legitimacy and survival. Islamic modernism has continued to evolve in non-Arab and Arab states. However, Arab nationalism and Pan-Arabism, as the ethos of the most powerful Arab states, have increasingly retreated from ideological positions based on Arab unity. Pan-Arab and Arab nationalism as ideologies had no political claim to legitimacy in their initial doctrines. Consequently, neither doctrine fulfilled the promise of modernity. Islamic modernism has attempted to fill the regional universal vacuum left by the retreat of Pan-Arabism. However, both ideologies have their roots in simplistic dichotomies constructed during the interwar period aimed at modernizing swiftly.

The first Arab push to define “nationalism” came from small intellectual circles in Cole Syria, greater Syria, around 1860. The Christian minorities of Cole Syria and Islamic modernists in Egypt were the first communities to provide answers for the Arab-Islamic demise. The Cole Syrian intellectuals believed that a mimic of western concepts would result in Western like states where Christians could hold greater power and possibly prevent European Colonial expansion. The Islamic modernists, appearing around 1870 in Egypt, approached the Arab-Islamic lapse in a more abstract manner and

suggested that the corruption of Islam from within had resulted in its decline. Some intellectuals attributed the demise to the Ottoman regime and called for a more traditional Islam based on core Arab values. Thus, even some of the Islamic modernists had an implied religious nationalism in their doctrines. Yet, other Islamic modernists suggested that the Islamic demise was in progress and irreversible. However, Egypt provides an interesting example of an Islamic state that attempted sincere modernization efforts and did not submit to the idea of Arab nationalism. Mehemet Ali, an Ottoman Albanian in Egypt, rose in ranks to establish an eventual Monarchy in Egypt that modernized the army and attempted limited industrialization. The divergence on his legacy ranges from the view he “founded” modern Egypt to the perception that Ali’s reign was only enacting inevitable consequences of the preceding structures and influences. The variety of opinion on Mehemet Ali is a consequence of his unique identity and his controversial role as a modernizer. Even though Mehemet Ali laid the foundation for the future state of Egypt, he was not a nationalist in the western sense. Yet, Mehemet Ali was able to establish a hereditary rule that lasted until 1952 in Egypt. The survival of Mehemet Ali’s established regime suggests that nationalist sentiment was not widespread or supported until the twentieth century.¹ The failure of the Ahmed Urabi revolt in the late 19th century that was the first *wataniyya* based revolt for Egypt implies the Western ideas of nation had not penetrated the Arab masses. In addition, the success of the *Mahdi* revolt in Sudan and the success of *Wahabism* on the Arabian Peninsula in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century suggest that Islam was still the main factor of motivation among the Arab masses and would persist into the modern period.

¹Summary by Nadav Safran, *Egypt in search of Political Community* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1961), 27-33; see 33 for direct effects on society.

The foundations of the Arab nationalism and Islamic Modernism in the nineteenth century reveal the initial problems with Arab identity. Arab nationalism, the belief that Arabs constituted a separate and distinct nation apart from other Muslims, was born in Christian minority communities in Beirut, Lebanon. The prolific writers associated with Arab nationalism were products of American and European missionary schools who indoctrinated students with the ideas of the West. Implicit in the European schools were the idea of reviving the dormant classical Arabic language. The romantic overtones of George Antonius in the The Arab Awakening articulate in detail the movement of missionaries and establishment of western schools in Cole Syria. Antonius writes in the style of idealized nationalism that revealed itself in statements such as,

But apart from its political and international consequences the upheaval of 1860 deserves to be regarded, in the history of the movement of ideas in Syria, as the decisive event of the nineteenth century. It awakened men's minds to the horrors of their moral stagnation and rekindled the zeal of those who saw that at root of the country's tribulations was the sectarian hatred that thrives on ignorance.²

Regardless, Antonius articulates that sectarian identity dominated the Middle East and European ideas somehow transcended the sectarian divide. The sectarian divide Antonius was referring to was religion and its obvious prevention of "modernization". The Christian academics of Lebanon and Cole Syria had no need to connect the traditions of Islam to the idea of building a new Arab nation. Thus, Arab nationalism from its

² George Antonius, *The Arab Awakening* (Safety Harbor: Simon Publications, 2001), 59.

inception was a call to abandon the past and adopt new forms of Western identity. Christians embraced the call to Arab nationalism because it alleviated their subordinate position in a predominately-Muslim state and reinforced their academic training that was a result of missionary activity. The economic ties of Christian Arabs with Western Europe reinforced the Christian resolve to seek western solutions to modernizing the Arab state.³ Islamic Arabic thinkers of the mid nineteenth century emphasized the importance of synthesis of Islam with modernity. Yet, Islamic Arabic thinkers were incapable of abandoning their traditions in favor of adopting European identities. Consequently, modernity could only be defined through the context of Islam and its gradual corruption. Albert Hourani articulates the view of Arab Islamic thinkers stating,

They were conscious of belonging to an Ottoman community which included non-Turks and non-Muslims; they wanted the Ottoman Empire to enter the modern world; but they were aware also of an Islamic fatherland in which they were rooted. They set high value on the social morality of Islam, and tried to justify the adoption of western institutions in Islamic terms, as being not the introduction of something new but a return to the true spirit of Islam⁴

The belief that the Arabs held a “privileged” place in Islam had long preceded any western ideas of nationalism. Mohammed was an Arab, The Quran was in Arabic, and the Arabs led the Umma to its golden age when it stretched from Iberia to the Oxus

³ Antonius, 91-93.

⁴ Albert Hourani, *Arabic thought in the Liberal Age 1798-1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 68.

River. The Umma supported a structure that rested on tradition and belief in the practice of Islam as the only path to fair government. The Umma had long held principles similar to Rousseau's social contract; welfare of the community, role of justice in society, and responsibility of the governor to the governed. If the greatest extension and power of the Umma were realized during a previous era under Arabic rule, it is only a logical deduction to think that corruption of the initial ideals of the Umma have led Islam to ruin (or simply less influence). Muslims, unlike their Christian counterparts, had a long tradition of a religiously and ethnically tolerant culture. The tolerant aspects of Islamic belief had long been practiced in the Caliphates of both Arabic and Turkic origins. However, Islam, unlike Christianity, had no separation of church and state. The political community and the community of believers in Islam had developed together and thus made the Western conception of a secular state unacceptable to the Islamic tradition in the nineteenth century. The Islamic modernist movement arose out of the need to synthesize the concepts of Western modernization with the idea of the Islamic state.⁵ Two great proponents of the western/Islamic synthesis are Jamal al-Din al-Afghani and Muhammad Abduh.

Jamal al-Din al-Afghani and his disciple Muhammad Abduh proposed Pan-Islamism as a solution to the Western question in the nineteenth century. Both men believed that reform of Islam from within could revive the Islamic civilization and counter the western threat. Afghani tended to emphasize the Arab role in Islamic grandeur and Abduh idealized the role of the states. However, both chose Egypt and the Arabic language as their main platform of communication.⁶ The ideas these men put

⁵ Hourani, 1-24.

⁶ Hourani, 103-160.

forward evolved into an Islamic path that would continue to put more focus on religion. Muhammad Rashid Rida further emphasized the role of Islam as a method for creating a modern Umma. Rida's tradition emphasizes the extension of the Islamic ideas of al-Afghani and Abduh.⁷ Rida's was concerned with the lapse in the Umma vis-à-vis the dominant West. Rida continues to maintain the supremacy of the doctrine of Islamic unity in the face of narrow nationalisms. Rida was a traditionalist as he purported a return to the values of the Quran and an escape from the corrupt despotic rulers of the Umma. The Umma for Rida is a unitary community that can gain the advancements of the West by "behaving" like a European nationalism.⁸ Yet, unlike his predecessors, Rida puts further emphasis on Sunni interpretations of Islam and distrusts the Shi'a mysticism and the Sufi tradition. Ultimately, Rida was not an Arab nationalist because he believed in the necessary alliance of Turks and Arabs in one Umma to restore Islamic civilization. Rida's vision was not exclusionary to the Arabist position of putting emphasis on the Arab language and role Arabs played in the early Caliphate.

The nineteenth century proved to the Ottoman Empire and many Arab thinkers that the superiority of the West was undeniable in certain fields. The question became for these thinkers how to explain the apparent lapse in their culture vis-à-vis that of the West. Increasingly, the Western powers annexed away the fringes of the Ottoman Empire and it was only each other's greed that kept the "sick man of Europe" alive. Britain, France, and Russia all had their designs on the Ottoman Empire for a multitude of different reasons. Furthermore, you see an extensive "reach" of each of these powers to associate with Christian minorities within the Arab Middle East. Therefore, it is not surprising that

⁷ Hourani, 228.

⁸ Hourani, 230-233.

Christian minorities in Syria during the latter half of the nineteenth century began to develop extremely close ties with Western concepts and methods.⁹

The Christian Arab minorities would develop an entirely different path for their vision of the solution to the western question. The Christians having no organic connection to the concept of the Umma were not hesitant to disregard its claim to social authority. In addition, the Christians were more apt to comment on and catalogue the advancements of the West in science and politics. The mission schools of Lebanon and Syria produced many of the reform minded Christian Arabs who would ultimately come to govern the secularist Arab nationalist movement.¹⁰ The Christians were interested in creating a society that could mimic the advancements of the West while allowing the Christians themselves some say in its politics. Since the Christians had no place in the political authority of a religious Umma, logically they perused an identity that tied them to the majority of the population where they lived: Arab ethnicity. Christian Arabs argued that national unity to the *watan* would transcend unity to a religious identity and promote freedom and equality. The Christians also argued that a state bound to the concept of a religion of ultimate truth would only lead to persecution. A state based on absolute truth in principle cannot have any flaws.¹¹ The Christians wanted equal footing in the political authority of the state and were consequently willing to mitigate the dominant Islamic identity in their favor for more expedient forms of identity. The Arab nationalism that the Christians presented in the nineteenth century would not evolve into Pan-Arabism until an Iraqi minister codified it as a Pan-Arab vision.

⁹ Antonius, 79-100.

¹⁰ Antonius, 45-60.

¹¹ Hourani, 245-259.

Sati Al-Husri was the first academician to articulate Pan-Arab nationalism as a clear ideology. Arab nationalism before Sati Al-Husri had centered on regional traditions or religious precepts concerning Arabs position in Islam. Al-Husri borrowed his nationalist ideals from French and Germanic thinkers. Al-Husri's adoption of Germanic nationalism resulted in his rejection of the Ottomanism he once espoused.¹² Al-Husri's dogmatic reliance on secular and linguistic national themes laid the foundations of the Pan-Arab nationalist movement. Furthermore, Al-Husri's thought about individual liberty would govern the idea of the national Arab state. William Cleveland translated al-Husri's view of freedom as, "To be free does not mean the possession of constitutionalism or democracy, but of national unity."¹³ Al-Husri articulates the ideological precedent for a unitary state that ignores the popular sentiment of the people. Implicit in al-Husri's ideology is the necessity of the legitimacy and secular nature of the national state. Al-Husri's ideology provides a pretext for the dictatorial Pan-Arab regimes that would come to govern a majority of Arabs. As al-Husri produced his intellectual works, codifying what would become Pan-Arabism in the inter-war period, at the same time Hassan al-Banna was formulating a clear vision of Islamic modernism in Egypt.

Hassan al-Banna articulated the basis for Sunni political Islam in the modern period like Sati al-Husri had done for Pan-Arabism. However, al-Banna's movement and thought began at the grass roots level and evolved into a platform for political action. Al-Banna from a collection of fears and orthodoxies targeted secularism and nationalism as a

¹² William L. Cleveland, *The Making of an Arab Nationalist: Ottomanism and Arabism in the Life and Thought of Sati' Al-Husri* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), 84-89.

¹³ Cleveland, 96; Summarizing Sati al-Husri from *Ma hiya al-qawmiyyah? abhath wa dirasat 'ala daw' al-ahdath wa al-nazariyyat*.

problem for Arabs and Islam.¹⁴ The politicization of al-Banna's club was the result of the growing conflict with Zionism in Palestine.¹⁵ Al-Banna's movement, known as the *Ikhwan*, outlined a plan that claimed the necessity of Islamic government in the Middle East. However, al-Banna approached the issue of Islam in a more uncompromising and fundamental way than the Islamic modernists of the nineteenth century. The three fundamental aspects of the *Ikhwan* were the absolute necessity of Islam in life, the primacy of the Quran and the Prophetic tradition, and the mutability of Islam to adapt to any context.¹⁶ Thus, al-Banna began the Islamic fundamentalist movement that would govern Sunni interpretations of Islamic revolution. In addition, Al-Banna's beliefs were a prelude to the conflict that would later develop between the Ikhwan and the Free Officers movement. Hamid Enayat states,

Unmoved by changing political realities, men like Banna, Navvab Safavi, Sayyid Qutb, Ghazzali and Maududi have taken an unequivocal stand against all varieties of Nationalism: linguistic, ethnic, and liberal. For them, resistance against foreign domination, which can be the only legitimate ground for such particularistic creeds, does not have to be formulated in the language of nationalism; Islam possesses enough ideological and emotional resources to galvanize the masses in cause of independence. Even patriotism of the vaunted nineteenth-century type is discarded from the lexicon of these leaders, because the only homeland they recognize is not the familiar one associated with specific ethnic

¹⁴ Hamid Enayat, *Modern Islamic Political Thought* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2005), 84.

¹⁵ Enayat, 84-86.

¹⁶ Enayat, 85.

groups, but the global ‘abode of Islam’-though this time called, not by the traditional term dar al-Islam (abode of Islam), but by the newly –coined al-watan al-Islami (the Islamic homeland).¹⁷

Thus, the obvious collision course between the *watan* envisioned by al-Husri and al-Banna was inevitable in ideological terms. In defining Pan-Arabism and Islamic modernism the architects of the movements define each ideology in such absolute and necessary terms that compromise seemed impossible.

Arab nationalism and Islamic modernism split into more religious and more secular movements. The division of a modern Arab state vision centered on a pro-western Christian model and a synthesized Islamic model. The sectarian divide that academics in the nineteenth century tried to alleviate persisted in the proposed solutions to creating a modern identity. Jamal al-Din al-Afghani and Muhammad Abduh would have ideologically limited taking their conclusions to the religious or the secular extreme. Islamic-Arabism implied in Al-Afghani’s and Abduh’s thought seemed rooted in the traditions of the society that they belonged to. Rida’s and the Christians’ views were more divisive for the modernist movement since Rida focused too much on Sunni Islam and the Christians emphasized views that were to radical for the Muslim majority. The political tendencies of extreme Sunni orthodoxy or dictatorial secularism were both rooted in minority views of the society in which they existed. Most Arabs in the nineteenth century had a concept of their own importance as a people with an important language, but they still held allegiance to the Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman Empire was the only Muslim bastion that could stand against the West. The Arab quest to attain par

¹⁷ Enayat, 115.

with the West was the motivating factor for both movements. As Hamid Enayat states, “In defining its relationship with Islam, Arab nationalism thus often ends where it started: with the glorification of Arabism as a commanding value in Islam.”¹⁸ The modern results of separating the two ideologies have produced both secular and religious radicals in the Arab Middle East. The circular relationship in attempting to qualify Islamic modernism and Arab nationalism does not succeed because each doctrine demands political authority to accomplish its goals. However, not all thinkers couched their ideologies in such divisive Western and Islamic terms. Abd ar-Rahman al Bazzaz was a prime minister of Iraq who synthesized the concepts of Arab nationalism and Islam. Bazzaz articulated that although Islam was a universal religion its message and expansion placed in the responsibility of the Arabs. Furthermore, Bazzaz argued that Pan-Arab nationalism could not contradict the goals of Islam politically because the Arabs as the creators of Islam would expand Islam’s power as well. Essentially, Bazzaz glorified the historical role Arabs played in Islam. Bazzaz concluded that modern pride in the Arab race was not western but a religious respect for the founders of the Islamic religion.¹⁹ Yet, the more fundamentalist doctrines would have accused him of arousing sectarian sentiment within the Umma. Bazzaz’s focus on the “Arabic” nature of Islamic traditions gave the Arabs a revered status within Islam and within Islamic empires. However, Bazzaz’s views could never reconcile the political competition between Islam and Nationalism.

The doctrinal conflicts between Islam and Pan-Arabism have never been resolved. Although in the realm of politics, Pan-Arab states have forged temporary alliances with

¹⁸ Enayat, 114.

¹⁹ Enayat, 112-114.

religious movements or states to gain regional advantages. Ideologically Arab nationalism progressed from a regional elitist movement to a transcendent nationalist movement heavily influenced by Europe. Conversely, Islamic modernism began attempting to synthesize western achievements with an Islamic tradition. However, the Islamic fundamentalist abandoned the move to synthesize Western thought through Islam. Al-Banna and others labeled the western ideas as inept and ultimately only Islam could guide the *watan al-Islami*. Al-Banna and others concluded that Islam had already provided the tools for Arab society to modernize. The historical political events of the Arab Middle East reflect the doctrinal changes in nationalism and Islam. In addition, the historical political context provides a means of analyzing larger themes in Pan-Arabism and Islamic modernism.

CHAPTER 3

SUCCESS BY ASSOCIATION 1860-1948: ARAB POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT

FROM 1860 TO THE MANDATE PERIOD

The Ottoman *tanzimat* reforms, a set of state reforms in the mid-nineteenth century, were politically docile for some academics in the Ottoman Empire. Arab nationalists and Islamic modernists began envisioning radical political change as a means of modernizing the Ottoman Empire. The *tanzimat* period had significantly changed some administrative structures, but the Ottoman Empire malaise continued until its demise. Specifically, Arab provinces were continually being lost to European powers. North Africa was the persistent target of French, English, Italian, and Spanish expansion during the nineteenth century. The failure of Ottoman reforms to produce tangible results and the emergence of new political identities created a political situation that allowed new political allegiances to form. The Christian Arab communities were quick to foment new identities in the wake of the Ottoman collapse. Although from 1860-1900 the idea of a Pan-Arab nationalism did not exist outside of the academic community, ideas such as Pan-Turanism and Islamic modernism were being used for legitimacy by the Ottoman state. Yet, the Ottoman Empire's use of Pan-Islamism and Pan-Turanism during the nineteenth and early twentieth yielded little success. Even thinkers such as Al-Afghani, Abduh, and Rida all participated in efforts to increase Muslim unity through the Ottoman bureaucracy and promote it on every level. The Islamic modernist movement did provide a means of effective unity for the multi-national Ottoman Empire. In addition, charismatic forms of Islamic interpretation such as *Wahabism* and the *Mahdist* revolt

were able to mobilize mainly Arab populations against Ottoman and European interests. Yet, Pan-Islamism and Pan-Turanism did not save the faltering Ottoman empire. The association of these two ideas with the failing Empire created a political vacuum that Arab nationalists were able to fill.

From 1900-1948 Islamic modernism lost validity as a political doctrine as Arab nationalists dominated mandate governments and political discourse.¹ However, Islamic modernists did not see their goals as separate from the Arab nationalist movements and in fact participated in nationalist parties. Arab nationalist thought from 1860-1900 was an elitist doctrine confined to the highest circles of academicians both Christian Arab and a few Muslims.

The Ahmed Urabi revolt that became the pretext for British occupation of Egypt in 1882 was an example of Egyptian state nationalism against the domination of foreign influence. The revolt was centered on state based *wataniyya* rather than an Arab ethnic *qawmiyya*. The rise of Arab nationalism benefited from the defeat of the Ottoman Empire in WWI. The Husayn-McMahon correspondence, Sykes-Picot, San Remo, and other agreements formulated the arbitrary boundaries of predominately Arab nations. The new creations of the post-WWI period have remained nearly identical in the contemporary Arab political map. However, the Hashemites propelled to the Arab nationalist heroes through their wartime actions undertook a concise campaign to unite the Arab world. Sharif Husayn's revolt and his post-war actions constitute a distinct plan to create a Pan-Arab state. However, the Hashemite plan relied on the Western power it sought to undermine.

¹ Alan R. Taylor, *The Arab Balance of Power* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1982), 7-23.

The fledgling Zionist movement in Palestine under the British mandate provided the greatest impetus to a unified Arab political front. Ironically, Britain during WWII invested in developing an Arab League to combat the Axis political overtures in the Middle East. The Arab league would become the first political body to act on Pan-Arab ideas and unify around an Arab cause. The establishment of Israel provided the social agenda for all Arab states, either religious or secular, to galvanize around. Consequently, the political influence of Arab nationalism and Pan-Arabism continued to increase from 1860s to 1947; the Ahmed Urabi revolt, Hashemite revolt, and the establishments of the Arab league are examples of the increasing idea that Arabs constitute a distinct people that should have one nation.

The Ahmed Urabi revolt of 1881 was a revolt in response to the racial preferences inherent in the successors of Mehemet Ali. Raymond Flower stated, “ For the revolution of 1881 was above all a native Egyptian movement, aimed against the Turkish ‘palatocracy’ which had ruined the country, and directing its hatred also against the Europeans after the Anglo-French control had come out on the side of the Khedive Tewfik.”² The nepotism of the Turkish Khedives and the Circassian officials in Egypt had provoked a discontent within the army. Native Egyptians began to develop a sense of national identity and Ahmed Urabi associated his army with the Egyptian national movement. However, Urabi himself made it clear he did not intend to break the dominance of Europe in Egyptian financial affairs. Urabi focused on establishing the army as the protector of the Egyptians. Urabi’s revolt took on nationalistic overtones and adopted the slogan “Egypt for the Egyptians”, but absent was Arab nationalist rhetoric

² Raymond Flower, *Napoleon to Nasser: The Story of Modern Egypt* (London: Tom Stacey Ltd, 1972), 112.

from the revolt. Although Urabi entertained individuals from the Hejaz and Yemen, his revolutionary ambitions did not entail ethnic solidarity. Nadav Safran suggested that the revolutionaries of Nasser's movement in 1952 conveniently applied the Arab nationalist overtones to Urabi's revolt. Safran claimed, "Yet it remains true that Urabi's movement was basically a negative one with no understanding of what the real ailments of Egyptian Society were or how to cure them. This is, perhaps the reason why it left little trace after it was suppressed, despite the efforts of the men of the 1952 revolution to rescue it from oblivion."³ The Urabi revolt indicated that the idea of ethnic nationalism had yet to establish itself in the Arab states. Raymond Flower argued that the Urabi revolt was indicative of a Pan-Arab conscience on the verge of revolution in the Arab Middle East. However, his research relied on European sources that did view The Urabi revolt through an ethnic lens. However, Urabi and his followers only co-opted the national party agenda after their initial army-centered demands were denied and their political position marginalized. Thus, it seems that Urabi was an Egyptian nationalist by association and his ideology did not exceed the efficacy of his immediate needs.⁴ Yet, the ethnic overtones of Urabi were implicit in the arguments made by his movement. "Egypt for the Egyptians" implied that Egyptians were not Turks or Circassian. Thus, the implicit evocations of an Egyptian identity certainly raised the question of, "What constitutes Egyptian identity?" The lack of ethnic nationalism in Urabi's Egyptian revolt is insignificant as Safran suggested. Instead, Urabi's revolt is significant because it was the first movement to question the basis of identity in a majority Arab state.

³ Nadav Safran, *Egypt in search of Political Community* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1961), 50.

⁴ Flower, 115.

Sharif Husayn and the Hashemite line are an interesting starting point for the political affect of Arab nationalist ideas. Sharif Husayn and the Hashemite line held legitimacy as the caretakers of the Islamic pilgrimage sites and as descendants of the prophet. The rights to Sharif's position had been granted in 1908 with the support of the Committee for Union and Progress (CUP).⁵ The CUP had pressured sultan Abdul-Hamid to abdicate the Sultanate by 1910 because it had de-facto control of the Ottoman state. The CUP professed a doctrine of racial equality for all citizens in the Ottoman Empire, but the precedent of Turkish dominance and Pan-Turanism never reconciled Arab claims to authority.⁶ Thus, before WWI an atmosphere of distrust and conflict continued to grow between the CUP and Shari Husayn's own political ambitions and his association with Arab secret societies provided the pre-text for the first Arab revolt. Thus, when war broke out in 1914, the Turks sided with the Central powers. For the first time British and Arab political interests coincided. The British as well as other Entente powers were well aware that the Sultan's call to Jihad threatened all British, French, and Russian colonial possessions. The British began diplomatically suggesting a practical alliance with Sharif Husayn as a means of preventing the Arab prince's participation in the call to Jihad. Husayn, aware of the delicacy of his situation between British and Turkish power, began finding out the true extent of the possibility of an Arab revolt.⁷ The Arab secret societies *Al-Ahd* and *Al-Fatah* both supported the idea of an Arab state and indicated as such to Sharif Husayn's son Faisal.⁸ Faisal began conferring with the British through Sir Henry McMahon in 1915 after a Hashemite Arab kingdom looked like a distinct possibility. The

⁵ George Antonius, *The Arab Awakening* (Safety Harbor: Simon Publications, 2001), 102-103.

⁶ Antonius, 104-107.

⁷ Antonius, 136-140.

⁸ Antonius, 152-153.

Husyan-McMahon correspondence centered on Husayn's demands for the guarantees of independent and unified Arab state. McMahon cleverly hedged on every explicit promise stating the exact location of the Arab state as theory. Thus, the first Arab nationalist project launched with the ambitions of a Hashemite monarchy and the blessings of British support. The Arab revolt began in 1916 in conjunction with British forces and together they defeated the Turkish armies throughout the Arab Middle East. However, the British and French had already conceived a plan to dismember the fledgling Arab nationalist movement by dividing the Arab states between the colonial powers.

The Sykes –Picot agreement had already divided the Arab Middle East between France and England in 1916. The Sykes-Picot agreement was modified by the San-Remo agreement after WWI due to the turmoil of Russia. Consequently, Britain acquired Iraq, Trans-Jordan, and Palestine as territories while France got Syria and Lebanon. The Arab revolt had been an alliance of convenience for the British government to advance its ultimate goal of defeating the Ottoman Empire and expanding the British Empire. Faysal accepted a British offer after his defeat to head the newly formed Iraq because his Arabist leanings made him more acceptable as a candidate to lead the religiously and ethnically divided country.⁹ The Arab nationalist movement did not capture the minds of all Arab citizens nor did the idea of *Bilad Al-Sham* (Greater Syria), while Muslim identification divided society. George Antonius claimed, “the preponderant Moslem element...asked themselves whether it were not better for them ...to continue bearing the Turkish rule”¹⁰ Rashid Khalidi noted that the revisions of Antonius' ideas have been widely accepted and suggested that regional affiliation for *Bilad al-Sham* was more politically powerful than

⁹ Adeed Dawisha, *Arab Nationalism in the Twentieth Century: From Triumph to Despair* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 47-48.

¹⁰ Antonius, 155.

Arab nationalism.¹¹ Thus, the San Remo treaty and the defeat of Faisal in 1918 confined the expression of Arab nationalism to the functions of state in the mandate system. The Hashemites became agents for the British Mandate, a position of subservience in Iraq and Jordan which gave the appearance of legitimacy. Malik Mufti summarized the plight of the Hashemites and Arab nationalism as,

For the Hashemites, pan-Arabism has never been simply a question of ideals and still less of short-term tactical considerations; it constitutes their best avenue for escaping the constraints of parochial interests as well as the designs of foreign powers and so for achieving the sovereignty that lies at the heart of their dynastic ambitions. That is why the Hashemites have so earnestly and persistently sought to dissolve the borders of the post-Ottoman Arab world.¹²

Because of the lack of any coherent identity in post-Ottoman Arab states, individuals such as Sati-Al Husri and Hasan al-Banna were encouraged to formulate their ideas of Arab nationalism and Islamic Fundamentalism. The Pan-Islamic call to Jihad by the Ottoman Empire was subdued by the co-opting of the prophet's descendants. The use of force by the French to destroy Faisal in Damascus ushered in new occupiers. Arbitrary lines lay on the sand connoting the new order of foreign domination. However, the Hashemites adapted to their new role as cooperators in the mandate period even if it were

¹¹ Rashid Khalidi, "Ottomanism and Arabism in Syria Before 1914: A Reassessment," in *The Origins of Arab Nationalism*, eds. Rashid Khalidi, Lisa Anderson, Muhammed Muslih, Reeva S. Simon (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 50-65.

¹² Malik Mufti, *Sovereign Creations: Pan-Arabism and Political Order in Syria and Iraq* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), 21.

a necessity. The reliance on British support to maintain Hashemite rule and the centralization of authority in Hashemite states suggest that the state identity of the Hashemite kingdoms was not sufficient to rule in post-WWI Arab creations. The Hashemites developed a devious game of promoting pan-Arabism to an extent and still maintaining British support. The placement of Sati Al-Husri in the Iraqi education ministry was a platform to promote the “German” Pan-Arab agenda. However, questions concerning the mandate of British-Palestine flared Zionist fears in both Hashemite States and eroded the validity of Hashemite rule. In addition, the individual egos of the Hashemite dynasty prevented practical Pan-Arab unity within their monarchical domains. Malik Mufti states that in Syria for example, “Damascene oligarchs such as President Quwwatli and Prime Minister Mardam remembered how they had been marginalized by King Faisal and his retinue during the brief monarchy of 1920 and had no intention of surrendering Syria’s independent status or the privileged position of Damascus as its capital city to the Hashemites.”¹³ However, the Hashemites did find common cause with other Arab states over Zionism in Palestine. Regardless, the idea that Arab identity existed above tribal, regional, and religious affiliation was an efficacious means for the Hashemites and the British leaders to maintain legitimacy. Ironically, although Iraq was especially prone to sectarian and ethnic rifts, it was subject to a deliberate campaign to construct an Arab identity through state education. Although Europe had defeated the Arab nationalist in WWI, they were quick to adopt the idea of Arab nationalism as a potentially unifying doctrine amid the arbitrary and sectarian creations of the San-Remo treaty. The Arab League was the first political body to organize and coordinate Pan-Arab

¹³ Mufti, 47.

aims at the inter-state level. It attempted to reverse the impositions of Mandate-system treaties from the inter-war era.¹⁴

The foundation of the Arab League in 1945 was the first political manifestation of multi-state Pan-Arabism in action. The co-operation of Arab states was beginning to appear as a genuine political reality to the Arab populations.¹⁵ However, the first true test of the Arab League came during the first Arab-Israeli War of 1948, which resulted in a humiliating defeat for all Arab nations. After the defeat of 1948, Pan-Arab politics became temporarily relegated to the periphery of Arab state concern. In effect, the actions of the Arab states in 1948 revealed a precedent for the future of Pan-Arabism. The 1948 Arab states' effort in Israel was disorganized, self-interested, and had different goals. Israel's birth in 1948 prompted the armies of several Arab nations to declare war on the new Jewish state. It seemed the goal of the Arab states was to defeat the Zionist threat. Initially, it appeared as if the Arab league was performing an authentic Pan-Arab action. However, the reality of the Arab state interaction was much different. The initial success of the Arab armies was undermined by the territorial aims of different state leaders.¹⁶ Consequently, the Israeli Defense Force was able to defeat the Arab armies and humiliate the Arab league and each Arab state involved. Egypt and the other Arab states that were involved in the 1948 war began experiencing the growth of political movements to redefine Arab identity. The history of the Arab league shows the connection that the Pan-Arab agenda shared with British foreign policy goals and the weakness of a coherent Pan-Arab identity to mitigate individual Arab state's regional goals.

¹⁴ Hussein A. Hassouna, *The League of Arab States and Regional Disputes* (New York: Oceana Publications, Inc., 1975), 3.

¹⁵ Hassouna, 3-18.

¹⁶ Hassouna, 283.

The British foreign secretary Anthony Eden recognized the strategic importance of promoting Arab unity to counter-act Axis overtures in the Arab Middle East. The threat of Axis support had already manifested itself in the form of a failed revolt in Iraq.¹⁷ Thus, Britain once again found itself supporting a Pan-Arab movement as a means of advancing its own foreign policy agenda. However, some Arab states had floated the ideas of Arab unity organizations in the 1930s, but regional competitions undermined their efficacy. At the end of the WWII, the growing Zionist threat in British Palestine created a political atmosphere that made a regional Arab organization possible.¹⁸ The goals of the Arab League were to work towards Arab integration in all aspects of political, economic, and cultural life. Yet, the Arab League formed amid a politically insecure period that witnessed the increasing presence of the Zionist threat. The Arab League by 1948 had taken a clear and unified position against any independent Jewish state. Thus, after British withdrawal from Palestine in 1948 the Arab League tested its power as inter-state organization.

The countries of the Arab League launched their invasion of Israel upon the declaration of an Israeli state. The Arab armies were able to hold and occupy Palestinian land. However, the prospect of a complete Arab victory over Israel seemed unrealistic by 1950. In addition, Hashemite Imperialism unraveled the trust of the Arab intervention force by annexing part of Palestine. King Abdullah's regional plans centered on strengthening his position in Transjordan with total disregard for a greater Arab unity agenda. In addition, other states pursued self-interested tactics and policies rather than a coordinated war effort. The lack of Arab coordination led to eventual defeat and failure

¹⁷ Paul Seabury, "The League of Arab States: Debacle of a Regional Arrangement," *International Organization*, Vol. 3, No. 4 (Nov., 1949), 635. JSTOR

¹⁸ Seabury, 636.

of the 1948 war, which tarnished the Pan-Arab image of the League. The Arab league after 1948 continued to affect regional economic, cultural, and pragmatic interstate affairs but never regained the initiative to provide an effective means for Arab unity.¹⁹

The period of 1860-1948 witnessed the birth of Arab nationalism, Pan-Arabism, and Islamic modernism. All three ideologies failed to provide a practical means for either Arab or Muslim unity. In fact, the colonial creations of the French and British remained resoundingly strong state entities. The mandate states when confronted with a regional threat in Palestine continued to operate as individual states and not as a unified Arab political body. Perhaps, Ahmed Urabi's vision of "Egypt for the Egyptians" had triumphed in each mandate creation. Realistically, Arab states were diverse in governments and ideology. The *Wahabism* of the Ibn Saud family was opposed to the Hashemite imperial aims. The Syrian dreams of *Bilad al-Sham* undermined Pan-Arab aims. Thus, the grounds for conflict between Arab states were diverse and complex.

Furthermore, the mandate governments had created Arab elites whose life experiences and ideas were far removed from the *fellah* of Egypt or the tribesmen of Iraq. Popular Islamic movements pervaded the Arab society while elitist of the Arab League and Mandate politics monopolized politics. Furthermore, the Arab nationalist elites had benefited by the presence of European powers. The French and British both favored Western-style nationalist thinkers in mandate governments and promoted their policies by placing nationalists in mandate ministries and posts. The British support of both Sharif Husayn and the Arab League overtly pointed to the efficacious use Pan-Arabism by the British authorities. However, King Abdullah was relegated to his throne in Jordan and Hashemite unionism ceased to be a realistic Pan-Arab goal. The Sheiks through western

¹⁹ Seabury, 639-640.

economic and security patronage were able to maintain their special status as wealthy oil monarchs. However, the Arab Middle East did not abandon Arab unity schemes after the Israeli debacle of 1948. More extreme successors to Sati-Al-Husri formed ideologies that excluded co-operation with the West and promoted radical Arab unity at any cost. The Ba'th ideology outlined a clear plan for Arab unity through radical politics and Gamal Abdel Nasser made Arab unity the primary goal of the Egyptian state. The new Arab unity schemes of the post-WWII era relied on political force and modernization as cornerstones to their unity schemes. The dictatorial nature of the Nasser and the Ba'th would result in a continual conflict with political Islam. Political Islam found itself on the defensive after WWII as most Arab states adopted a non-friendly policy towards religious based political organizations. The illusive goal of defining a clear modern Arab identity in 1948 seemed as unclear as it did in 1916.

CHAPTER 4

POST-COLONIAL ARAB POLITICS 1949-1956

The Post-colonial Arab world became a hotbed for political revolutions that were opportunistic and radical. The failure of the Hashemites and the Arab League were convenient political targets for the new forms of Pan-Arabism. In addition, the *Ikhwan al-Muslimin* became increasingly radicalized in Egypt. The *Ikhwan* by the mid 1960s through political organization and action set the precedent for modern fundamentalist movements. The Pan-Arab and Islamic ideologies were based largely on the arguments posed by Sati al-Husri and Hassan al-Banna. Al-Banna participated and supported the Egyptian revolution but was assassinated. After the 1952 revolution, the *Ikhwan* became targets of the new political regime. Likewise, al-Husri's ideas influenced a new generation of Pan-Arab leaders whose defining characteristic would be their autocratic devotion to the idea of an Arab state. The new Pan-Arab ideologies that appeared in the post-colonial period were more radical and autocratic compared to the ambitious Hashemites and the failed Arab league. Nasserism and Ba'thism were the two definitive Pan-Arab ideologies of the post-colonial period that embraced radical and autocratic political doctrines. Nasserism centered on the ability of Gamal Abdel Nasser's charismatic leadership to create an Egyptian-lead Arab super-power. The Ba'th was a political organization that attempted to advance a unity scheme based on social, economic, and political reform. The policies that the Ba'th and Nasserists implemented had temporary success but did not create any lasting Arab unity. Both ideologies targeted Imperialism and foreign meddling as the source of Arab social, economic, and political

woes. Certainly, the Hashemites and the Arab League had received Imperial support for their initial agendas. Thus, validating the reasons why Arabs considered the Hashemites and the Arab League quasi-Imperialist projects. Generally, the Ba'th and Nasserites abandoned inter-state models of progressive unity in favor of political coercion at home and abroad using Machiavellian tactics. Even the United Arab Republic (UAR) failed based on the inability of Syria or Egypt to abandon state interests. The political movement to unify the Arab states shifted from the traditional Pan-Arab centers of Syria, Iraq, and Jordan to the new center of power, Egypt in North Africa. Thus, platforms for regional divisions already existed in the Pan-Arab movement. Yet, Pan-Arabism reached its political climax during the Nasser era (1952-1970) despite a host of political difficulties. However, the climax of Pan-Arabism masked several political undercurrents. Nasser had assumed power in Egypt through dictatorial means and once in power went on a political campaign to dismantle The *Ikhwan*. The *Ikhwan* had nearly half a million active members in 1949 and over 2,000 active branches.¹ The post-colonial Pan-Arab leaders precipitated a conflict between political Islam and Pan-Arabism through the absolute forms of power they used. Nasser embodied the use of state authority to repress expressions of the Islamic *Ikhwan al-Muslimin*. Thus, the legitimacy of Pan-Arab autocracy was undermined by mass Islamic sympathy in Egypt. To understand the Arab political pressures after 1949 it is necessary to examine the Egyptian revolution and its suppression of the *Ikhwan*. This will provide a general model and will set an example for other Arab countries.

¹ Richard P. Mitchell, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 328.

The social climate in Egypt prior to the revolution formulated the Arab political ideas that would dominate the period 1949-1970. Egypt had well-organized nationalist, Islamicist and radical political groups. Most groups had overlapping membership and affiliations, but their common agenda included significant change in Egyptian Society and the removal of the conservative Wafd government that had many ties to Britain. The revolution of 1952 redefined Egypt and thus Arab nationalism as inherently anti-Western.² In the years after 1952, co-operation or association with western powers was enough to discredit political opponents domestically or regionally. The struggle for supremacy in Egypt between the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC), formally the Free Officers Executive Committee, and any perceived political competition redefined Arab politics. The Egyptian Revolution of 1952 begins the formation of the new ideological interpretations of Pan-Arabism and Islamic modernism. The history of the 1952 Egyptian revolution signifies the redefinition of Pan-Arabism through the political climate of pre-revolution Egypt, the personal role Gamal Abdel Nasser played in the revolution, and the external and internal threats that plagued Egypt.

The pre-revolutionary climate of Egypt was a milieu of radical student groups, Wafd's, leftists, *Ikhwan*, rightist, and nationalists.³ The historian P.J. Vatikiotis summarized the atmosphere of pre-revolution Egypt as,

The deeper resentment of European modernity had been encouraged for a variety of reasons by rival politicians, the Young Egypt Society, The Muslim Brethren and Fascist agents from Europe. In the meantime, the

² Hrair R. Dekmejian, *Egypt Under Nasir* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1971), 69.

³ Dekmejian, 17-22.

Palestine Question had also come on to the Arab political scene. There were parallel radical movements in the Fertile Crescent, all of which assumed an anti-British posture. Disaffection with the slow processes of political negotiation led to the option for more violent means, and for armed struggles.⁴

In the political turmoil preceding the 1952 revolution, the Free Officers movement was a unified front of eleven powerful army officers who under the leadership of Nasser represented a vehemently anti-Imperialist agenda. Nasser became a symbol of larger Arab politics. According to Vatikiotis,

If Nasser then reflects the biography of his age, his generation, with its anxieties, fears, hopes, and conflicts, his political portrait becomes relevant. His egoism and will converged with wider communal desires and aspirations, so that he mirrored the age he belonged to. He and his associates emerged in 1952 from anonymity and turned on an older Egyptian political world that had for long ignored or rejected them, and whose representatives they no longer accepted as rightful rulers of their country.⁵

⁴ P. J. Vatikiotis, *Nasser and His Generation* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1978), 82.

⁵ Vatikiotis, 59.

Nasser wrapped up in the radical political polemics of pre-revolutionary Egypt would take measures to ensure his total control of the Egyptian political machine through the Revolutionary Command Council once the revolution took place.

The Egyptian coup on July, 23rd 1952 was a swift affair preceded by intense internal chaos. The Free Officers renamed themselves the RCC and went on a calculated campaign to consolidate authority and dictate policy.⁶ Initially, the RCC appointed a civilian government lead by Muhammed Nagib to gain legitimacy. Nagib had been a hero of the 1948 war and was a devout Muslim who was regarded favorably by the Egyptian masses. However, Nasser lamented the acquiescence of the power of the RCC to civilians. Yet, the RCC had serious issues regarding the consolidation of authority. The RCC focused on eliminating political adversaries by late 1952 but hesitated to challenge the *Ikhwan* directly. The Wafd, leftist, communists, and other adversary political groups were purged from the army and targeted for arrest from 1952-1954. However, the popularity of Muhammed Nagib leads him to challenge Nasser's authority through a popular coalition of anti-Nasser political parties. Yet, Nagib misjudged Nasser's control of the loyalty of the RCC and by 1954 was arrested as an accomplice with the *Ikhwan*. Nasser, after defeating politically his most serious challenger, turned immediately to the suppression of other political parties. The RCC used arrests, propaganda, and intimidation to undermine any remaining political opposition to Nasser's authority. The *Ikhwan* had perpetuated disturbances that led to arrests in 1954 as well, but after the failed *Ikhwan* assassination attempt on Nasser, the organization faced internal suppression on an unprecedented scale. Nasser stood as the unchallenged head of the

⁶ Dekmejian, 23.

Egyptian state and the *Ikhwan*'s political power dwindled by 1955.⁷ The end of domestic strife in Egypt would allow the necessary time for Nasser to refocus his political aims regionally and internationally.

Post revolution Nasser and the RCC had to define and articulate Egypt's reason for existence as a state. The Egyptian state needed a new ideological standard to replace the antiquated etatism and Islamic norms. Nasser and the RCC used Pan-Arab nationalism as a panacea to the regional, international, and internal threats that faced Egyptian society. Regionally Israel was cautious toward the new Egyptian state. Internationally, Britain and France were skeptical of Nasser's power and worried about his motives. In addition, internal Islamic threats persisted in Egypt after 1955 that undermined Nasser's authority. Regionally, Pan-Arabism provided the Egyptian state a number of potential allies and possibly a pretext for regional dominance. Internationally, Pan-Arabism provided a counter-balance to the dichotomous Cold War world that could bolster Nasser's power in foreign affairs. Internally, Pan-Arabism provided a national purpose to a country that had been ravaged by external and internal disaster for the past 10 years. Furthermore, by 1955 regional threats to the Egyptian revolution from the Baghdad pact and the increase in British and Turkish influence convinced Nasser of the need to create a regional Pan-Arab sentiment.⁸ Nasser's ambitious regional and international agenda received a setback from the 1956 Suez Crisis. The details of the Suez crisis are in latter chapters. The *Ikhwan* did not fare well in the Egyptian revolution of 1952 their position by 1955 implies the temporary victory of the Pan-Arab political sentiment in defining the Arab state.

⁷ Paragraph mainly a summarization by Dekmejian, 24-36.

⁸ Dekmejian, 42-43; 100.

The *Ikhwan* were numerically one of the most dominant parties in Egypt before the revolution and enjoyed a broad support base from different classes of society.⁹ The founding of the *Ikhwan* in 1928 by Hassan al-Banna was a response to Western Imperialism, Westernization, and the end of the Caliphate. The pre-revolutionary activities of the *Ikhwan* focused on rejuvenating the *Dar al-Islam*, the abode of Islam, and building an “Islamic bloc”¹⁰ to combat challenges of Westernization and colonialism. In addition, initially Arabism and the *Ikhwan*’s vision of Islam were compatible.¹¹ Abdelnasser described the pre-revolution attitude of the *Ikhwan* as, “the tolerant position of *al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun* towards the notion of Arabism might have been due to the liberal atmosphere that characterized Egyptian politics in that period and that did not push for polarization of ideologies”.¹² The *Ikhwan* became a political target in post-revolutionary Egypt because the RCC could not take a risk with a powerful mass movement that could undermine their authority. After the Egyptian revolution of 1952 political Islam became marginalized in Egypt because of the political battle to control the revolution and the *Ikhwan*’s political actions from 1952-1954.

The revolution of 1952 did not immediately empower Nasser and the RCC to become the de facto heads of the Egyptian state. In fact, the confusion that followed the revolution and the support of the *Ikhwan* for the Free Officers movement led to excitement among the *Ikhwan*. Richard Mitchell described the *Ikhwan*’s view of the revolution as,

⁹ Walid Mahmoud Abdelnasser, *The Islamic Movement in Egypt* (New York: Kegan Paul International, 1994), 33-34.

¹⁰ Abdelnasser, 35.

¹¹ Abdelnasser, 33-38.

¹² Abdelnasser, 38.

at the moment –given the long association of the army officers with the Society(which, with a certain vagueness as to details, was now the common property of the hitherto unknowing membership-at-large) and the real and potential role of the members in the events of 23 July (which although not of major importance did dramatize its unique relationship to the revolution –the Society came to regard the events of 23 July as ‘our revolution’. From this auspicious beginning flowered the events which led to the second and more permanent dissolution of the Muslim Brothers.¹³

Thus, the *Ikhwan* viewed the revolution and their support of it as legitimizing their claims to authority and representing the culmination of the battle they began in 1928. The vilification of the *Ikhwan* was not a swift affair. Several issues contributed to the escalation of tension between the RCC and the *Ikhwan*. Nasser’s enmity towards Hasan al-Hudaybi, who had replaced Hasan al-Banna, and the *Ikhwan*’s refusal to participate in the new RCC government, caused the rift between the two groups. Ideologically the *Ikhwan* began agitating for the integration of the Shari’a at the national level. The RCC did not initially challenge the *Ikhwan* because their power was needed in support of the new government. However, the *Ikhwan* refused the three seats on the RCC and although Nasser was angered by Hudaybi’s position, he realized the necessity of the *Ikhwan*’s support.¹⁴ As late as 1953, Nasser and Muhammed Nagib visited the tomb of Hasan al-Banna showing their reverence for the assassinated *Ikhwan* leader.¹⁵ The RCC cleverly portrayed Hudaybi’s actions to suggest he was both anti-revolution and anti-nationalist.

¹³ Mitchell, 104.

¹⁴ Mitchell, 105-108.

¹⁵ Mitchell, 111.

By 1954 *Ikhwan* was outlawed, the initial crackdown led to the arrest of 450 members and left the majority of the *Ikhwan* functional but operating under a different name.¹⁶ The major conflict between the *Ikhwan* and Nasser was the *Ikhwan's* decision to back Muhammed Nagib in his struggle against Nasser and the RCC. However, after Nasser's triumph in the political struggle against Nagib, Hudaybi reassured the RCC that the *Ikhwan* would support the government of Nasser in return for the release of some *Ikhwan* prisoners. *Al-Ikhwan's* internal problems and the propaganda war with the government destabilized the organization, which Hudaybi had managed to achieve.¹⁷ The inability of Hudaybi to firmly control the *Ikhwan* and the resumption of terrorist activities of the Society led to their final demise.¹⁸ *Al-Ikhwan* members attempted to assassinate Nasser in October of 1954 as he gave a speech. Not only was the assassination unsuccessful but the attempt gave Nasser the opportunity to build his popularity and stature. The repression that followed the assassination attempt on Nasser included massive arrests, show trials, and government support for attacks on *Ikhwan* facilities. By 1955, the *Ikhwan* had effectively been destroyed as a viable political competitor to Nasser's authority. However, the repression of *Ikhwan* would only result in a more radical stance of the organization and provide a political precedent that pitted Pan-Arabism and Islamic modernism as foes.

The Egyptian revolution of 1952 began as a popular affair led by a multitude of groups supporting the aims of the Free Officers movement. However, the RCC and Nasser had a clear idea of controlling the Egyptian state. The RCC's battle with the *Ikhwan* established a permanent animosity between Arab nationalism and Islamic

¹⁶ Mitchell, 131.

¹⁷ Mitchell, 133-144.

¹⁸ Mitchell, 150.

modernism. Although both ideologies continued to pursue similar themes of regional unity, anti-Western ideas, and anti-Israel policies, they never co-operated to the same degree again. The *Ikhwan* became more radical after their repression and the Nasserists became more emboldened to pursue a regional agenda. In the period after which the *Ikhwan* was outlawed by the Egyptian state in 1954, Sayyid Qutb became the ideological spokesperson.¹⁹ Qutb was a fundamentalist who believed that no compromise with Western doctrines could solve the problems of the Middle East. Consequently, Qutb criticized any doctrine that sought synthesis of Western ideas and their incorporation into Islam. Thus, modern fundamentalism embraced Qutb's conceptions of no compromise with Western thought because it had been inept at solving the initial problems that beset Islamic societies.²⁰ Once Islam politicized, it no longer was a viable ideology for Pan-Arab state unity. Qutb abandoned the conciliatory rhetoric towards Pan-Arabism that al-Banna had taken towards Pan-Arabism in pre-revolutionary Egypt.²¹ Nasser's adopted Pan-Arab agenda would dictate the universalist approach in the Arab Middle East. Analyzing Nasser's policies provides an excellent example of how universal impulses in Arab foreign policy are responses to perceived external threats and are incapable of abandoning the interests of the state.

¹⁹ Hamid Enayat, *Modern Islamic Political Thought* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2005), 150.

²⁰ Enayat, 151-152.

²¹ Abdelnasser, 96-98.

CHAPTER 5

NASSERISM: 1955-1967 THE RISE AND FALL OF THE PAN-ARAB MOVEMENT

Pan-Arabism's most successful and ambitious period lasted a brief 12 years. The revolution of 1952 had redefined the Arab movement as an anti-Imperialist, anti-Western, and anti-Zionist idea. Consequently, Pan-Arabism became an oppositional force to Western interests in the Middle East. Historically, by 1955 the Egyptian elite's acceptance of a Pan-Arab policy was widespread.¹ Yet, the nucleus of the Pan-Arab thought came from Nasser himself for he was concerned with pragmatic application and not theory.² Thus, Nasserism entailed a policy of Pan-Arabism as dictated by Egypt under Nasser's rule. Nasserism far from being the fulfillment of some inevitable progress of history displays discernable patterns of the application of universal Pan-Arabism. Nasserism's Pan-Arab component (Nasserism will henceforth refer to the Pan-Arab policies as the Socialist component had a domestic focus) built upon Egypt's need to mitigate the danger of external threats. Pan-Arabism represented to Nasser an efficacious means of combating Zionists, imperialists, and Western incursions. Thus, Nasser could embark on a regional Pan-Arab agenda and fulfill the stated goals of the Egyptian state. However, the Six-Day War in 1967 shattered the ability of Egypt to continue the dual focus of regional Arabism and domestic development. The rise of Nasserism was accompanied by a series of foreign policy victories for Nasser that reinforced the universal claims to Pan-Arabism. The rise of Pan-Arabism was attached to Nasser's

¹ Hrair R. Dekmejian, *Egypt Under Nasir* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1971), 82.

² Dekmejian, 97-101.

association of Arab consciousness to regional threats. The demise of Pan-Arabism rested in its inability to affect true unity and mitigate regional threats.

Nasser clearly states his development of an Arab consciousness due to the sensitivity of external threats when he stated,

As far as I am concerned I remember that the first elements of Arab consciousness began to filter into my mind as a student in secondary school, wherefrom I went out with my fellow schoolboys on strike on December 2nd of every year as a protest against the Balfour Declaration whereby England gave the Jews a national home usurped unjustly from its legal owners.

When I asked myself at that time why I left my school enthusiastically and why I was angry for this land which I never saw I could not find an answer except the echoes of sentiment. Later a form of comprehension of this subject began when I was a cadet in the Military College studying the Palestine campaigns in particular and the history and conditions of this region in general which rendered it, throughout the last century, an easy prey ravaged by the claws of a pack of hungry beasts.

My comprehension began to be clearer as the foundation of its facts stood out when I began to study, as a student in the Staff College, the Palestine campaign and the problems of the Mediterranean in greater detail.

And when the Palestine crisis loomed on the horizon I was firmly convinced that the fighting in Palestine was not fighting on foreign territory. Nor was it inspired sentiment. It was a duty imposed by self-defense.³

Arab consciousness stemmed from having mutual interests against a common enemy in Nasser's mind. Interestingly, Nasser did not mention any common customs or language but rather associated his Arabness with the "historical" domination of the region. Arabism was a "duty" of "self-defense" to external threats. Nasser's adoption of a Pan-Arab policy after the revolution stems directly from external political threats. The Baghdad pact represented a British and United States backed incursion into the Middle East by the creation of a NATO style treaty. Although the true intent of the Baghdad Pact was to secure the Middle East against Soviet expansion through the policy of containment, The Egyptians were quick to label it as imperialist meddling. Britain, Turkey, Iran, Pakistan, and Iraq were the key members of the Baghdad Pact and the pro-Western head of Iraq Nuri al-Said attempted to convince Nasser to join. Nasser was in no place to co-operate with the British fresh from a revolution that labeled any British support as grounds for criticism and treason. Furthermore, Nasser was not going to submit in principle to the will of Iraq, a smaller Arab country.⁴ Dekmejian summarized Nasser's response as,

³ Gamal Abdel Nasser, *The Philosophy of the Revolution*, trans. Dar al-Maaref (Buffalo: Economica Books; Smith, Keynes & Marshall, Publishers, 1959), 62-63.

⁴ Derek Hopwood, *Egypt: Politics and Society 1945-1981* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1982), 43-44.

However, it was not until the threat which the Baghdad Pact posed to Egypt's leading position in the Arab World that a more definitive and genuine commitment to Arabism was made by Nasir. Therefore, the final decision in favor of Arabism was taken in response to an external threat and against a divided domestic public opinion base where Arabism was gaining gradual ascendancy. Subsequently, Nasir's personal identification with Arabism pushed the remaining supporters of Egyptianism into the background until the aftermath of the June War.⁵

Nasser's turn to Arabism solved a two-part problem by legitimizing Egypt's platform for having a major role in regional affairs and providing a means to comment on any regime against its agenda as a reactionary accomplice of the West. Critics such as the Syrian Ba'th questioned if even Egypt was an Arab country.⁶ Nasser's vocal and public adoption of Arabism also silenced critics of Egypt's Arab credentials. The use of propaganda through Egyptian radio reached thousands of Arabs in other countries and bolstered the sense that Egypt was at the forefront of a new movement.⁷ Jordan's dismissal of the British man John Glubb from the head of the Jordanian military was a response to Nasser's intense propaganda attacks.⁸ Nasser's resistance to the West continued to bolster his regional Pan-Arab credentials and validate Pan-Arabism in other political parties. Nasser supported likeminded Arabs throughout the Middle East and maintained anti-Imperialist rhetoric against the West and Israel. Furthermore, The Ba'th party membership rose in

⁵ Dekmejian, 93.

⁶ Dekmejian, 85.

⁷ Adeed Dawisha, *Arab Nationalism in the Twentieth Century: From Triumph to Despair* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 147-152.

⁸ Dawisha, 176.

correlation to Nasser's resistance during the Suez Crisis and the tripartite attack on Egypt.⁹ Thus, the success of Pan-Arabism and the perceived triumph in external matters have a high degree of correlation.

The Suez Crisis resulted from Nasser's nationalization of the Suez Canal and subsequent invasion of Egypt by Israel, Britain, and France. Nasser's decision to nationalize the Suez Canal was based on a series of miscalculations about how Britain and France would react. However, American political intervention in the Suez Crisis prevented Nasser's defeat and strengthened Egypt's Pan-Arab credentials. Dawisha summarized Nasser's motivations for nationalization as,

Infuriated, Nasir, in a major speech a week later, declared that since the West was unwilling to help finance the Aswan Dam, Egypt had no alternative but to raise the money on its own. This could only be achieved by nationalizing the Suez Canal Company. A law nationalizing the Anglo-French company followed, with Nasir pointedly reminding his ecstatic audience that the moment should be cherished not only by Egyptians but by all Arabs for it was an affirmation of Arab sovereignty, dignity, and pride, and a victory for the Arabs and their triumphant nationalism over the perfidious forces of colonialism and Imperialism.¹⁰

Nasser was caught completely by surprise when France, Britain, and Israel invaded Egypt. The Egyptian army put up some resistance but eventually surrendered the canal

⁹ Dawisha, 155.

¹⁰ Dawisha, 177.

region. The British and French stood poised to topple Nasser's regime, but miraculously the United States stepped in to prevent a removal of Nasser from office. The United States supported Nasser's regime not out of sympathy for the Pan-Arab agenda but rather out of resentment at the independent Israeli, British, and French action. Clearly, in the context of the Cold War America had to be consulted on matters of foreign policy. Regardless, Nasser was able to turn the Suez Crisis into a resounding regional and domestic victory.¹¹ The Pan-Arab agenda of Nasser gained a false sense of strength from the Suez Crisis. Temporarily Pan-Arab sentiment overtook Arabs in Jordan, Syria, and Iraq. Although Nasser was privately aware of the American role in ending the Suez Crisis, he publicly took advantage of the public accolades that flowed. The attempt to capitalize on the temporary Pan-Arab sentiment of the masses in Syrian politics would precipitate Nasser's next Pan-Arab action.

The United Arab Republic that existed from 1958-1961 was the only true Pan-Arab union that made it past the diplomatic stage. Neither Nasser nor Syrian politicians were seriously contemplating union between Egypt and Syria when it took place. Rather, Syrian politics driven by an intense competition to appear Pan-Arab to the masses spiraled out of control. As Malik Mufti stated, "The United Arab Republic—that crowning manifestation of pan-Arab ideals and an object even today of profound nostalgia in many Arab circles—was in reality the unintended product of a series of blunders by Syria's top political leadership. It was, in other words, simply a mistake."¹² Furthermore, Nasser and his advisors had multiple reservations about joining with

¹¹ Dawisha, 177-185.

¹² Malik Mufti, *Sovereign Creations: Pan-Arabism and Political Order in Syria and Iraq* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), 96.

Syria.¹³ The instability of Syrian politics, the lack of understanding of Syria, and the factionalized nature of Syrian politics all provided major obstacles for Egypt and Nasser. Yet, Nasser's newly anointed mantle of the Pan-Arab hero necessitated that he not back down from unity with Syria. The fears that underlay the unity of Egypt and Syria would eventually undo the union in 1961. The naiveté by which the Ba'th party had approached unity with Egypt was the core issue. Nasser sought to emulate his dictatorial rule of Egypt in Syria and to eliminate all political opponents. However, Syria's diverse and active political groups would not tolerate Nasser's singular rule indefinitely. As early as 1959, the Ba'th party in Syria was the first political party to disassociate publicly from Nasser and Egypt over the inevitable inferior Syrian position in the UAR. The politicized and factionalized Syrian army finally severed ties with the UAR in the coup of 1961.¹⁴

Although the organic unity of Egypt and Syria lay in shambles, federated attempts at Arab unity continued to persist in the early 1960s. Dual Ba'th coups in Syria and Iraq in 1963 brought a proposal forward for a United Arab State comprising Egypt, Syria, and Iraq. Learning the lessons of the UAR, the United Arab State was to be a federated union. Yet, once again, mutual suspicion among the Ba'th and Nasser and issues of leadership ended the unity talk. Neither, Egypt, Syria, or Iraq was realistically willing to give up enough sovereignty as prerequisite to creating a federated Arab state.¹⁵

As the various unity projects of Arab nationalism failed, Nasser would redefine the nationalist project in terms that gave him the most Arab credentials. Initially, Nasser supported the inevitable organic unity of all Arab states, gradually, this view changed to a federated view of unity. Finally, when federated unity failed Nasser rearticulated Arab

¹³ Dawisha, 196-198.

¹⁴ Dawisha, 221-231.

¹⁵ Dawisha, 238-242.

nationalism in terms of solidarity against Israel. Nasser's continual redefinition of Pan-Arabism was an attempt to gain the most benefit for his nationalist position. Pan-Arabism continually embroiled Egypt in other Arab state affairs and antagonized Arab relations. The civil war in Yemen was an excellent example of a movement manipulating Nasser into supporting their agenda through promises of mass Arab nationalist support. However, in reality Egyptians forces fought the overwhelming majority of the battles against the tribal prince supported by Saudi Arabia. It was the Pan-Arab nationalist dreams that continued to propel the Egyptian elite and Nasser. The Six-Day war with Israel decimated any practical vision of Pan-Arab unity and deflated the regional aspirations of Nasser's Egypt.¹⁶

The Six-Day War was not just a defeat for Nasser's Egypt, it irrevocably changed the political orientation of the Egyptian elite and made them focus on domestic issues rather than a regional ones. Nasser's dreams of regional dominance and parody with Western powers had to be abandoned in light of material losses.¹⁷ The revenge of 1948, a cornerstone in Arab policy, had to be abandoned as well. Arab humiliation stemmed from Israeli occupation of the Sinai Peninsula, the Golan Heights, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem. Yet, just as the Free Officers built their case against the Wafd in 1948, the universal impulse in Egyptian society did not die in 1967.

Nasser defined Pan-Arabism and Arab sentiment as having its roots in external threats. Propelled by the Suez Crisis into a false sense of victory, Nasser's Pan-Arab agenda secured unity with Syria and threatened "reactionary" Arab regimes. However, Nasser's Pan-Arab agenda never entailed true unity. Nasser could not tolerate political

¹⁶ Dawisha, 243-251.

¹⁷ Dawisha, 254.

voices outside of his control and thus made organic unity impractical for any self-interested state. Furthermore, federated unity always faltered on questions of leadership and power. Thus, Arab unity began to unravel in the early 1960s due to the contradictions that lay within the Egyptian regional policy. Iraq and Syria both flirted with regional federations but remained contemptuous of a repeat of Egyptian “Imperialism” as with the UAR. Nasser even contradicted himself when he prevented Iraq from unifying Kuwait back into its borders. Nasser’s appeal seems to lay in the fictional parody he had with Western powers. After Suez Nasser was the symbol of resistance to the West in its broadest terms. Political posturing had erased the American intervention to save Egypt from the Arab mind and propagated the idea of Nasser’s resilience. Yet, after the 1967 Six-Day war, the Egyptian’s appearance of parody with Western powers evaporated almost overnight. The implicit attachment of Nasser’s Pan-Arabism to the mitigation of external threats meant that after 1967 its legitimacy lay in ruins. Lastly, the inability of Nasser to share sovereignty because of his attachment to Egyptian interests undermined the possibility of Arab union. The universal Pan-Arab approach lived on only in name in Egypt. However, the Ba’th party maintained a platform of Arab unity into the late 1970s.

CHAPTER 6

THE BA'TH PARTY: PAN-ARAB DREAMS TO TRIBALIST STATES

The Iraqi Ba'th party was a party that existed in the larger context of Arab nationalism, Arab socialism, and other Middle East post-colonial revolutionary movements. Various Iraqi and Syrian leaders to conform to their political doctrine reformed the initial Ba'th doctrine on more than one occasion. The Ba'th party itself was not a monolith and had various radical and moderate branches that espoused different platforms of change in all policy areas.¹ The Ba'th party under Saddam Hussein and Hafiz Al-Assad's leadership, transformed Iraq and Syria into efficient one-party regimes that were able to fill the unstable power vacuums in both countries. The Iraqi and Syrian Ba'th party were transformed by Saddam Hussein and Hafiz Al-Assad into the most stable and successful governments in post-independence Iraq and Syria. The transformations of the Ba'th reveal the inherent problems in the politics of creating the *watan* identity. Furthermore, the various transformations of the Ba'th suggest the extensive role geo-politics of the greater Middle East affected the outcome of local politics.² The significance of the Ba'th party in the analysis of Arab identity comes from an understanding of the rise of the party and the external factors that influenced its politics.

The Ba'th party historically was never a single-minded entity dominated by one man. The Ba'th incorporated a host of academic, business, and religious elites who

¹ John F. Devlin, *The Ba'th Party: A History from Its Origins to 1966* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press; Stanford University, 1976), 309-325.

² Malik Mufti, *Sovereign Creations: Pan-Arabism and Political Order in Syria and Iraq* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), 1-16.

competed with each other and espoused different paths of change. The Ba'th party became the totalitarian in doctrine in Iraq and Syria only after individuals like Saddam Hussein and Hafiz al-Assad were able to manipulate the party structure skillfully to their advantage. The divisiveness in the Ba'th party is traceable to the historical splits among rightwing/leftwing, regionalist/Pan-Arabist, pro-Nasser/anti-Nasser and a host of other minor divisions. The Iraqi Ba'th did not hold significant political power until 1963 and came to control all Iraqi politics in 1968. During the founding phases of the Ba'th party, the Iraqi Ba'th party was a satellite of the Syrian party.³ The ideological divisions of the Syrian Ba'th party played a major role in the formation of the Iraqi Ba'th party. The Iraqi Ba'th would eventually inherit the initial Ba'th doctrine as the Syrian Ba'th state retreated to a regional focus. The Iraqi Ba'th inherited the divisions and instability of the Ba'th party that led to the atmosphere of suspicion that Saddam used to implement his authoritarian regime. The history of relevant Iraqi Ba'th party's structure and development presents three distinct periods: pre-1963 ideological development, 1968-1978 consolidation of power, and 1979 to 2003 progressions toward tribal dictatorship.

Michel Aflaq and Salah al-Din al-Bitar founded the Ba'th party in Syria in 1943 and both wrote parts of the definitive Ba'th constitution in 1947. The Ba'th party was an incredibly small entity that did not incorporate any figures of significant political power initially. The Ba'th party, which translates to renaissance party, did not incorporate *ishtirakiyyah* (socialism) or *wataniyya* (nationalism) in its initial doctrine but came to incorporate socialist and nationalist doctrines in time. Initially, the Ba'th party was an abstract party that sought to promote Pan-Arab unity and remove the artificial boundaries established by the Sykes-Picot and San Remo treaties after WWI. Consequently, the party

³ Devlin, 106-110.

promoted ideas without much aim of practical application in its developmental years. Targets of Ba'th party criticism included Turkey, the idea of Israel, colonial powers, the West, Iran, and the weakness of the Arab league. The scope of the topics addressed by Ba'th party dogma suggests the sensitivity of the organization to eternal regional and international developments. Thus, the impact of the formation of Israel and the Arab defeat in the Palestinian War that followed gave the growing Ba'th party legitimacy. The Arab Middle East in the wake of the defeat became disaffected with traditional leadership and began to turn to revolutionary movements. The revolutions that swept Syria in the late 1940s and early 1950s prosecuted Ba'th party members and on occasion expelled them from the country. During the period of persecution, the Ba'th party began to cooperate with other repressed political groups and eventually found common ground with the socialist parties. Consequently, by 1954 the Ba'th party had merged with Akram Hourani's socialist party prompting its first major division.⁴

The Ba'th Party in Syria increasingly moved to the left throughout the 1950s because of the tumultuous foreign affairs of the time. The attempt at the United States to gain access to the Middle East by building defense coalitions through the Eisenhower doctrine failed as it promoted a heavier reliance on leftist models. The shift of the Ba'th to the left closer to the communists produced a party crisis, as some remained committed to non-leftist government types. The divisions were growing within the party but the core of the party did not disintegrate. The government in Iraq was a target of Ba'th propaganda during the 1950s because of Nuri al-Saids alignment with the West in the Baghdad pact. The Iraqi Ba'th party during Said's regime issued pamphlets commenting

⁴ Kamel S. Abu Jaber, *The Arab Ba'th Socialist Party: History, Ideology, and Organization* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1966), 1-21; 33-45.

on the Baghdad pact and promoting Pan-Arab unity. By the 1950s, both the Suez Crisis and the Czech arms deal of Nasser had pushed the Middle East closer to the Soviet Union. In addition, the pro-Western stances of Iraq and other Arab states increased cooperation between Syria and Egypt. The impetus that Nasser provided for Pan-Arab nationalism would be an irresistible opportunity for the Syrian Ba'th party to use to realize their ultimate goal. Ironically, the Syrian and Egyptian Unity scheme would irreparably divide the Ba'th party in a schism over the Pan-Arab agenda.⁵

The United Arab Republic was on the surface the realized dream of the Ba'th party. In reality, the UAR project would turn the Ba'th into a *wataniyya*-based party in Syria. The lasting consequences for Iraq entailed absorbing of the Pan-Arab remainder of the Syrian Ba'th party. Michel Aflaq's move to Baghdad in the 1970s solidified the Iraqi symbolic shift to the remaining Pan-Arab Ba'th. The UAR promised to be a sincere union that Nasser would control directly through leadership. He would abolish all political parties and merge them all into a National government. Nasser revealed his dogmatic agenda when he shifted all power of the UAR to Cairo. Syrian political autonomy was replaced with dictatorial rule from Cairo. Nasser viewed Syria as a province of Egypt rather than a country that willing submitted to union. Consequently, Egypt installed in Syria Egyptian style reforms, laws, and politicians. Meanwhile, the Ba'th party continued to operate in Beirut and began to feel tension between Nasser's overbearing policy and their domestic agenda. The tension surfaced in the expulsion of Abdullah al-Rimawi from the Ba'th party for his pro-Nasser positions. Once Rimawi's was expelled, the divide between the Nasserites and the Ba'thists worsened. The UAR could not withstand the regional pressure from Syria for some autonomy, which finally brought its demise in

⁵ Abu Jaber, 47-56.

1961. A multi-party coup headed by the Ba'th finally separated Syria and Egypt. There were many underlying ideological reasons for the Ba'th/Nasser split, but Nasser's overbearing foreign policy provided the impetus for the Syrian Ba'th to become a regionally focused party. The regional focus of the Syrian Ba'th would cause more fracturing within the Ba'th party especially after the dual Ba'th coups of 1963 in Iraq and Syria.⁶

In Iraq, the Ba'th party had been weaker than in Syria initially but developed a more efficacious means of organization. Constant persecution of the Ba'th created an efficient party that could respond to repression effectively. The party had by the early 1960s developed an association with students and army officers. The Iraq Ba'th, lacking the experience of union with Nasser, idealized Nasserism and promoted an overtly Pan-Arab agenda. However, Nasser's propaganda war against the Ba'th party promoted a high degree of Syrian and Iraqi Ba'th unity in 1963. The Syrian-Iraqi bond was especially strong near the end of a round of Ba'th talks on the unity of Syria and Iraq. Aref, the non-Ba'thist president of Iraq, organized his political coup and ousted the Ba'th from Iraqi government. From 1963-1966 the Syrian Ba'th divided along regionalist and Pan-Arab lines made a final division in 1966 with a regionalist military coup in Syria. After the 1966 Ba'th coup, Bitar, a founding member of the Ba'th, renounced his own party and Aflaq became marginalized. Syria continued to be run by unstable governments. The Ba'th party finally brought the constant shift between civilian and military rule to an end. In 1970 Hafiz al-Assad, a non-dogmatic opportunist, took command of the party and through a coup was able to consolidate his power. Assad succeeded in stabilizing the

⁶ Devlin, 169-184.

inherently unstable Ba'th by relying on the traditional Alawite tribal source of power in Syria.

The Iraqi Ba'th would inherit the mantle of the Ba'th old guard and face similar instability as the Syrian branch of the party. Saddam Hussein ushered in an era of unprecedented stability beginning in 1979. During 1968-1978 Iraqi, Ba'th politics became a violent affair because of regional instability and meddling. Iraq maintained the Pan-Arab agenda in contrast to Syria's regionalism. The turmoil of 1960s Iraq saw multiple coups and the Ba'th governments of the early 1960s were displaced from office. However, the Ba'th would return to power in Iraq in 1968. By the late 1960s, the Iraqi Ba'th and the Syrian Ba'th were embroiled in a battle for Arab legitimacy. The Syrian and Iraqi Ba'th competition led to more developed and pragmatic approaches to policy and government. Consequently, the Iraqi Ba'th became extremely sensitive to external Middle Eastern affairs in an attempt to outmaneuver Syria.⁷

Ahmad al-Bakr and Saddam Hussein were the most prominent figures in the post 1968 Ba'th government in Iraq. Bakr remained president until 1978 and Saddam reigned as second in command. Even though Iraq inherited the Pan-Arab branch of the Ba'th party, Iraq for most of the early 1970s devoted itself to internal consolidation. The fight with Kurds in northern Iraq and the continued disputes over the *Shatt al-Arab*, the headwaters of the Persian Gulf, with Iran, left Iraq no room for extensive foreign policies. Furthermore, the bitter propaganda war with the Syrian Ba'th regime left Iraq vulnerable to external and internal influences. The Iraqi Ba'th stabilized their internal situation when they signed the Algiers agreement of 1975 with Iran. The Algiers agreement temporarily stabilized the borders of the *Shatt al-Arab* and Iran promised Iraq it would stop funding

⁷ Mufti, 201-209.

the northern Kurds. Once Iraq was free of Iranian infiltration and influence, it began its regional campaign to undermine Syria. The key topic of contest between Iraq and Syria became the oil pipeline dispute to the Mediterranean and the Iraqi dues for pipeline use. Iraq began pursuing an agreement with Turkey to build a new pipeline whose purpose was to undermine the Syrians. The bitter conflict between Iraq and Syria continued unabated through the 1970s until foreign events had profound effects on Iraqi-Syrian relations. In 1978, the Camp David accords between Egypt, Israel, and the United States brought Egypt into the “Western camp” and alienated the two last anti-Western pro-Arab regimes. Both Hafiz Al-Assad and Ahmad Bakr revived a long stagnant unity process in 1978 as a means of regime insurance against Israel. Not surprisingly, it was the issue of Israel in 1973 that led Iraq during the Middle of the Syrian-Iraqi competition to send troops to the Syrian front in an effort to halt the Israeli advance. Thus, confirming no matter the enmity between Iraq and Syria the two states could co-operate on issues that involved outside powers and mutual interests. The unity scheme revived under Ahmad Bakr and Hafiz al-Assad began to falter when Saddam Hussein, a staunch advocate of Iraqi regionalism, dogmatically pushed for immediate union.⁸ Ahmad Bakr’s sudden resignation in 1979 and alleged reports of a Syrian plot to overthrow the Iraqi Ba’th gave Saddam the pretext he needed for his restructuring of the Revolutionary Command Council.⁹ Saddam’s “restructuring” would involve his bloody grab on total power in Iraq that would last well into the late 1980s.

Saddam Hussein through his control of the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC) and the Regional Leadership (RL) branches of the Ba’th party altered its make-up

⁸ As summarized Eberhard Kienle, *Ba’th v Ba’th: The Conflict between Syria and Iraq 1968-1989* (New York: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 1990), 135-151.

⁹ Kienle, 148-149.

to fill positions with increasing numbers of Shi'a and Kurds.¹⁰ Hussein's political moving to create more diversity in the Ba'th leadership may seem paradoxical to the claim he created a tribal affiliated leadership. However, the increase in minorities does not mask the fact that Saddam Hussein placed more people of rural background in the government than ever before. Saddam gained power by appointing RCC and RL members of rural origin who had ties to Tikrit. Saddam undermined the traditional Sunni Urban elites of Iraq and thus placed appointees in power who would be indebted to him. Saddam's use of people of agrarian background suggests that he was trying to bypass the ambitious and educated urban dwellers.

Saddam's restructuring of the Ba'th party continued in the realm of actively promoting tribalism in the 1990s. Saddam co-opted shayks and spoke of the unity of tribes in Iraqi society. Saddam's gradual return to tribalism was a practical attempt to restore order and stability in the inherently unstable politics of the Ba'th party.¹¹ Saddam's shift to tribalism solidified in the Shi'a uprising of 1991 and its bloody aftermath. The problem for Saddam was how to create a state identity that provided more stability than Pan-Arabism. Arab nationalist identity had not pacified the Shi'a because they were more apt to support Shi'a Islamic universalism than secular government. The embracing of tribal shayks and tribal autonomy create a split system in Iraq that risked creating division. Yet, the Ba'th party that began becoming "agrarianized" in the 1980s supplanted urban dwellers in most Ba'th party branches by the mid-1990s. The tribe of

¹⁰ A summary of Amazia Baram, "The Ruling Political Elite in Bathi Iraq, 1968-1986: The Changing Features of a Collective Profile," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 21, No. 4 (Nov., 1989), 447-493. JSTOR

¹¹ A summary of Amazia Baram, "Neo-Tribalism in Iraq: Saddam Hussein's Tribal Policies 1991-96," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 1 (Feb., 1997), 1-31.

Tikrit had come into such prominence by the mid-1990s that the Tikriti Arabic dialect supplanted the normal Iraqi Arabic as a means of elite political communication. Thus, Saddam had come full circle and replaced the Pan-Arab agenda of the Ba'th with archaic tribal affinity. Yet, Saddam pursued a policy of political stability since instability had been the characteristic feature of Ba'th politics since its creation in 1943. Regional tribalism became the most stable and safe form of governance of Iraq (and to a lesser extent Syria). The dominance of regional tribalism reveals more about the nature of identity in the Middle East than Saddam's Machiavellian ideologies.

The Ba'th split over the UAR divided the universal Pan-Arabists from *wataniyya* Ba'th members. The move of the radical branch of the Ba'th to Iraq signifies that Iraq had adopted universal Pan-Arabism. However, the continued battle for legitimacy and regional influence only subordinated universal Arabism as an extension of state interests. Eberhard Kienle described that from 1975-1978, "Iraq but particularly Syria tried to rally other actors, either by initiating regional alliances that pretended to serve the Arab cause, or by quickly responding to similar initiatives made by other actors and trying to influence them in their own interest."¹² Universal Pan-Arabism provided a means for regional legitimacy, influence, and dominance, like it had for Nasserism which preceded Ba'thi Iraq and Syria. Interestingly, the Camp David accords of 1978 provided the impetus for a sincere effort to Arab unity. Syria and Iraq feared an Israel unchained from the concern of battle with Egypt that could dominate both powers militarily. It seemed only the fear of outside intervention could trump the interests of the colonial nation state. However, by the early 1980s Syrian support for the Iranian regime during the Iran-Iraq war signified any universal Arabism implicit in Ba'th doctrine was a façade.

¹² Kienle, 89.

CHAPTER 7

POST-ARABISM: NEW UNIVERSAL POLITICAL IDEOLOGIES

The attempted union of Syria and Iraq in 1978 was one of the last significant attempts at Arab unity from a Pan-Arab basis. What ideology replaced universal Arabism in the quest for Arab modernity? Western academics and some Middle Eastern academics have spoken of the “rise” of fundamental Islam and the conservative religious shift in Arab society. Much of the academic material produced recently about the West and Islam has focused on an oversimplified view of a dichotomous world where cultures clash in an attempt to define society. Geneive Abdo articulately summarized the academic view of Arab modernity (as it applied to Egypt) best when he wrote,

The common explanation in press accounts and academic circles for Egypt’s return to its Islamic identity had become cliché: After experimenting with socialism, Arab nationalism, and capitalism under successive leaders Gamal Adb al-Nasser, Anwar Sadat, and Hosni Mubarak, a vast majority of Egyptians were left poverty-stricken and embittered toward the West. The failures of Western-oriented ideologies and economic development, went the argument, fueled a rejectionist movement—hence, the nostalgic search for Islamic roots¹

¹ Geneive Abdo, *No God But God: Egypt and the Triumph of Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 3.

Abdo implies that the academic clichés about Islam and modernity have oversimplified the complexities of the issue. Abdo argued the academics have created a modern monolith of Islam and have associated most ideas of Islamic modernism with a fundamental and violent vision. The Iranian revolution of 1979, the American hostage crisis, and various notorious terrorist acts carried out in the name of Islam have perpetuated the monolithic western vision. However, Abdo argues that the academic focus on violent Islamic resurgence has ignored important undercurrents of the Islamic movement. Abdo states,

With radicals operating along the fringes, the moderate Islamists set about building widespread support within the broader society. Unlike the period of Afghani, and, later Hasan al-Banna and the early days of his Muslim Brotherhood, contemporary Islam has penetrated deeply into the Egyptian consciousness. Now, there is a widespread feeling that the cause of society's malaise stems primarily from a betrayal from within, rather than a domineering force from without. Here lies the greatest difference between the past and current revivals: Islamic thought in the late 1800's, and again in the 1940's and 1950's, focused on anti-imperialist sentiment and socio-economic concerns, while contemporary Islamic fervor emphasizes family values, traditional sexual mores, and cultural authenticity.²

² Abdo, 8.

Abdo concluded that the reason Islam was changing is because it had abandoned the polemics of Hasan al-Banna and allowed itself to be defined as an internal struggle by middle class adherents. Abdo alludes to a significant observation in separating the “new” Islam from the style invoked by Banna. Prior Islamic fundamentalist movements focused their attention on universal solutions pertinent to external and internal political considerations. The “new” Islam was focused on internal struggles of self and morality. Although the intention here is not gauge the direction of Islam, but to reinforce the idea that historically from the mid-1800s to recently Islam proposed universalistic solutions similar to Pan-Arabism as a panacea to Arab society. Banna and Husri framed their ideological arguments in universal terms as absolute solutions to the process of becoming modern. The necessity of the universal component in the Islamic modernism proposed by Banna and the Pan-Arabism proposed by Husri rely upon oversimplifications of historical trends, society, and external threats. The simplification inherent in universal claims to achieve modernity in Pan-Arabism and Islamic modernism are flawed abstractions. Thus, irrespective of the rise of Islam in the modern Arab Middle East, potential calls for a unified Islamic state should be suspect because historically the universal claims of Arabism were insufficient in trumping the interests of the state. Islamic modernism like Pan-Arabism does not signify a singular vision for the future of the Middle East. Islamic modernism encompasses both Sunni and Shi’a versions of a universal vision. The ideological basis for Islamic modernism provides for similar regional and ideological divisions that plagued Pan-Arabism. Analyzing Islamic modernism through ideologies, the application of Islam in Islamic states, and similarities to Pan-Arabism indicates the universal elements in Islam and how they have a similar basis for failure as Pan-Arabism.

The ideologues of Islamic modernism had been at work since the early days of the Egyptian revolution. The *Ikhwan* lost their battle with Nasser but continued to resist, publish, and provoke Egyptian society into action. The *Ikhwan* like Pan-Arabism had a broad support base and had many branches in a number of Arab states. Sayyid Qutb articulated his final vision of Islam in 1965-1966, before Nasser put him to death, which set a precedent for many Islamic thinkers. In addition, in 1969 Colonel Qaddafi's revolution in Libya relied on integration of Islamic concepts that evolved into a global theory of revolution. The Iranian revolution of 1979 figure headed by Ayatollah Khomeini relied upon Shi'a Islamic traditions and spread fear of exporting the revolution to Arab states. These three Islamic thinkers framed solutions to Arab states that promised redemption and dignity. Analyzing Qutb's, Qaddafi's, and Khomeini's ideologies present three variant ideas of the Islamic approach to universal impulses in Arab society.³

Sayyid Qutb, who inherited Hasan al-Banna's role of ideological spokesperson for the *Ikhwan*, articulated a clear, dogmatic, and concise view of Islam that challenged secular authority on a global scale. Qutb's torture under Nasser's Egyptian regime embittered him deeply and affected his views. The rigidity and lack of compromise in Qutb's works indicate his level of bitterness with secular Western society and the Arab governments he associated with it. Qutb borrowed ideas from other Muslim thinkers and organized a clear path for the process of Islamic leadership. Qutb's key ideas for the triumph of Islam were *jahaliyyah*, *jamaah*, and *manhaj*.

Jahaliyyah indicates the separation of society from Islamic tenets and divided societies into two states of being. Historical *jahaliyyah* indicates that man and society are

³ John L. Esposito, "Pioneers of Islamic Resurgence," in *Voices of Resurgent Islam*, ed. John L. Esposito (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 63-66.

separated from Islam by ignorance. Contemporary *jahaliyyah* implies the deliberate meddling of outside powers to limit the influence of Islam.⁴ The obvious deduction is that modern *jahaliyyah* pervades any secular non-Islamic society. Since Islam contains within it the solutions to all human problems Islamic or non-Islamic, Arab or foreign. These societies need to be brought under the banner of Islam. Furthermore, the *jahaliyyah* critique is extended to any Muslim society that does not fully incorporate Islam into every facet of existence. Thus, Qutb's concept of *jahaliyyah* sets a global standard as the measure of Islamic success.⁵

Jamaah was the group of individuals that would facilitate the ascension of Islam. Yvonne Haddad summarized Qutb's vision of the *jamaah* as,

He advocated the necessity of the *jamaah*, the coalition of committed individuals who become a vital organic cell of Muslims dedicated to the materialization of the true Islamic society, one in which the teachings of the Quran and the Prophet Muhammad impact all aspects of life: political, economic, legal, as well as cultural.⁶

Qutb envisioned the *jamaah* as an isolated unit of society that employed all necessary actions to encourage the spread of Islam. The ideas of isolation and separation were based from Qutb's interpretation of early Islamic and Quranic revelation. Qutb's message was that the contemporary Muslims who aspired to be part of the *jamaah* would behave

⁴ Yvonne Y. Haddad, "Sayyid Qutb: Ideologue of Islamic Revival" in *Voices of Resurgent Islam*, ed. John L. Esposito (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 85.

⁵ Haddad, 86-87.

⁶ Haddad, 87.

as Muhammad's earliest adherents. The *jamaah* would exist only through adopting "fundamental" Islamic practices that would inherently be opposed to mainstream society.⁷

Manhaj is the actual implementation of the plan to instigate universal Islam. The *jamaah* by forcing the realization that there are only those who support God and those who support Satan expose *jahaliyya* society. Islam and the *jamaah*, being an extension of God, inevitably triumph over Satan and institute Islam for all humanity.⁸

Qutb's dogmatic and historical necessary "observations" outlined an austere Islamic ideology that aspired to a universal status. Qutb's concepts blamed Arab societies' woes on their abandonment of Islam and adoption of *jahaliyya* society. Yet Qutb prefaced the success of *manhaj* only on the universal triumph of Islam on a global scale. Furthermore, no practical implementation of Qutb's ideas have taken root, especially since the *Ikhwan* movement was marginalized politically in Egypt and most Arab states.

Muammar al-Qaddafi envisioned a universal semi-Islamic solution to the problems of the Arab Middle East and actually implemented Islamic policies beginning in the successful Libyan revolution of 1969. Qaddafi's Islam was a pragmatic approach to building legitimacy at the domestic level in state where Islamic institutions were fundamental to authority. The *Sanusiyyah*, a conservative Islamic group, and the orthodox ulama that had preceded Qaddafi each had played a role in twentieth century Libyan politics. However, Qaddafi by the early 1970s made it clear to religious authorities that his leadership had final say in religious matters. Qaddafi's Islam was

⁷ Haddad, 87-88.

⁸ Haddad, 90.

nearly the inverse of Qutb's vision as Islam for Qaddafi was a mutable concept that was on the cutting edge of promoting nationalism and socialism.⁹

Qaddafi outlined in his book, The Third International Theory, a universal theory that was to pose solutions to all third world nations and the Arab world. Qaddafi's ideas blended religion with socialism and Islam with nationalism. Although Qaddafi's ideas were confined to Libya in respect to reform, the theories he produced proved that Islam was not a singular "fundamental vision".¹⁰ Lisa Anderson summarized Qaddafi's impact as, "Although Qaddafi's answers in his Third International Theory reflected both his Libyan roots and his personal experience and were therefore unlikely to satisfy most Muslims, the moral and political dilemmas they were designed to address were very real to many in the Islamic world."¹¹ Yet, Qaddafi proved that the context of the state determined the values of the ideologies found within the state. Even Islam was subject to the context of the Arab state if the state had a tradition of religious authority.

The importance of resurgent Shi'a Islam had greater implications for Western powers than the growth of the *Ikhwan* or Qaddafi's defiance in the 1980s. In addition, the Iranian revolution in 1979 and the growth of Shi'a Islam in southern Iraq and Lebanon have greater implications for the future of Arab states.¹² Iran, although not an Arab nation, has historically influenced the Shi'a sect of Islam in several Arab states. The Iranian revolution of 1979, although motivated by a host of issues, adopted similar themes of anti-Western and anti-Israeli propaganda. The Shah of Iran and his security

⁹ Lisa Anderson, "Qaddafi's Islam" in *Voices of Resurgent Islam*, ed. John L. Esposito (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 134-141.

¹⁰ Anderson, 142-148.

¹¹ Anderson, 148.

¹² Hamid Enayat, *Modern Islamic Political Thought* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2005), 160.

forces the SAVAK were ardent accomplices of the West.¹³ Thus, the Iranian revolution adopted similar themes of external threats posed by Western culture or Israeli force to posit universal Islamic solutions. The Shi'a approach to universalism in Iran displayed itself best through the ideas of Ayatollah Khomeini and general Shi'i tenets regarding modernity.

Khomeini followed in a tradition of *ijtihad*, interpretation, of his immediate and distant predecessors. Ali-Shariati and older thinkers laid the framework for a universal Islam in that Khomeini operated with such efficaciousness. However, Khomeini sacrificed the pursuit of self-fulfillment and enlightenment through clerical interpretation. Instead, Khomeini focused on institutionalizing Shi'ism into an understandable medium for the majority of Iranian society. Khomeini sought justification for his policies through the usual polemic of the Arab nationalists citing years of imperialism, Western intervention, colonialism, and Israeli aggression as a malaise in Iranian society.¹⁴ However, Khomeini and his revolution were initially confined to Iran. The importance that Shi'a modernism bears on Arab universal projects stems from the fact that the growing Shi'a movements in southern Iraq and Lebanon threaten the status quo. A general discussion of the four key principles of Shi'a modernism reveals implications that Shi'ite universalism has for Arab states. Hamid Enayat identified the four key principles of Shi'a modernism as *ijtihad*, constitutionalism, *taqiyyah*, and *martyrdom*.

Shi'ism brought to the Middle East a religious approach to universalism that had several historically ingrained practices. Hamid Enayat defined *ijtihad* as, "Shi'i vitality can be explained primarily by some of its potentialities for adaptation to social and

¹³ Michael M.J. Fischer, "Imam Khomeini: Four Levels of Understanding" in *Voices of Resurgent Islam*, ed. John L. Esposito (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 150-160.

¹⁴ Fischer, 170-171; for more detail see 150-171.

political change. The most essential of these are the principle of *ijtihad*, or independent judgment, as a device supplementing the sources of the jurisprudence, and a potentially revolutionary posture in the face of temporal power.”¹⁵ *Ijtihad* gave Shi’ism the ability to be interpreted and reformed to fit the needs of its contemporary guardians. The flexibility of Shi’ism separated it from the uniform Sunni interpretations of Islam. Although Sunni Islam did have some outlets for re-interpretation, it generally promoted a static view of Islam and Islamic law. Shi’ism through the principle of *ijtihad* bypassed the institutional obstacles to change in Sunni Islam. Consequently, Shi’ism, unlike other Islamic universal ideologies, was at the forefront of societal change.

The Ulama’s support of Iranian constitutionalism was a key difference in Shi’a modernism and Sunni modernism. Shi’a modernism was at the forefront of the constitutional debate in Iran as a method not promoting Westernization but Islam instead. The “vitality” of Shi’ism is seen in its embrace of constitutional reforms as opposed to the retroactive political ideas of most conservative Sunni Islamic political doctrines. The most significant difference being that Sunnis thought synthesis and the past would redeem their cause and Shi’ite Islam actively interpreted new modern religious ideas.¹⁶

Taqiyyah is one of the most widely known Shi’ite practices. The West and Sunni’s have interpreted *taqiyyah* as the shameful act of outward approval but inward dissent in the name of self-interest. The incorrect political defining of *taqiyyah* has been more useful for the enemies of Shi’te Islam than describing an actual political practice. *Taqiyyah* was a necessary tool of self-preservation when Shi’ism was a ruthlessly persecuted minority in Islam. However, the modern uses of *taqiyyah* have been

¹⁵ Enayat, 160.

¹⁶ A summary of Enayat, 164-175.

vigorously debated among Shi'a scholars. The debate has centered on at what point does *taqiyyah* become cowardice in the face of external threats to Shi'ism. The ulama have had difficulty in reconciling the precedence of martyrdom and the practical application of *taqiyyah*. The modern interpretation of *taqiyyah* outlines boundaries of actions that are unacceptable to feign even if the consequences are dire. Yet, the justifications for these boundaries are vague and *taqiyyah* continues to play an important role in Shi'ite ideology.

Martyrdom is the most notorious and exaggerated tenet of modern Islam. Martyrdom in Shi'ism traditionally centered on remembering the death of Husayn in Karbala through ritual and ceremony. The traditional practice had nothing to do with vengeful violence but rather focused on cathartic weeping in a sign of solidarity with Husayn. Predominately, Modern Shi'ism is the twelfth Imam interpretation that eulogizes Husayn and all martyrs in the ceremonies of *ashura* in Arab states and *ta'zieh* in Iran. The cathartic reverence for his martyrdom is a key tenet of modern Shi'ism. However, Sunni Muslims and Shi'ites have reinterpreted Husayn in varying literal contexts that promote their personal agenda rather than analyze him historically. The result is the traditional reverence afforded Husayn through ritual has been interpreted as some as inadequate. Instead Husayn was to provide an example of human sacrifice in whose footsteps were to be followed.¹⁷ Hamid Enayat summarized,

As can be readily seen, the principal aim of the 'Immortal Martyr' is the politicization of an aspect of the Shi'i Imamology which until recent times was generally interpreted in mystical, lyrical and emotional terms. The

¹⁷A summary of Enayat, 175-181.

result has been a cautious, but growing tendency among the Shi'i militants to treat the drama of Karbala as an essentially human tragedy, and concurrently, to avoid regarding Husayn's heroism as a unique and inimitable event in history, above the capacity of the common run of human beings. This tendency is epitomized by Khumayni¹⁸

The resounding conclusion of modern Islamic thought is that it is diverse, regional, and contextual. Qaddafi, Qutb, and Khomeini produced three distinct visions of a universal Islam that had completely different ideas, platforms, and traditions. All three men were responding to the problems of their immediate society and each thought his vision provided an efficacious means to modernize. Consequently, universal Islam is as much of a construct of Pan-Arab nationalism and continues to be influenced by the context of the immediate state and the need to legitimize authority. Modern Shi'ism from its shared minority status and history of persecution has a more universal agenda than modern Sunni Islam. Sunni Islam, having been a part of most states' government in the Middle East until recently, developed more isolated and regional identities. Shi'ism developed a closer solidarity through the shared heritage of persecution and struggle. Regardless, modern Islamic ideologies that frame their arguments in universal terms have extremely large societal gaps to bridge. Shi'ism is still a minority within the Arab Middle East and the long-term implications for Arab states are limited. Shi'ism would unlikely impact Arab states other than Lebanon, Iraq, and some Gulf states. Though the potential for Shi'ite power there is strong, it is doubtful that Shi'ism would propose such a universal Islam as to incorporate their Sunni neighbors. Islam has only begun to

¹⁸ Enayat, 194.

challenge the status-quo in the Arab Middle East. Although the power of Islam is unquestionable in Arab society, it is doubtful the universal solutions proposed by modern Islamic thinkers will escape the context of their state.

CHAPTER 8

THE WEST AND ISRAEL IN ARAB POLITICS

The definition of “the West” is America, Western Europe, Soviet Union, and their direct affiliates. Israel fits into the West, as it is the extension of the West in the Arab Middle East. Although Israel came into existence from the backing of the Soviet Union and America, Israel developed a special relationship with the United States through political patronage by efficacious political lobbies. The purpose of this chapter is to clarify the effects of the West and Israel on Arab state formation and not to comment on the Western-Israeli relationship. In addition, the academic and institutional biases against the Arab Middle East have a long tradition in Western thought. The modern universal impulses in Arab society stem from a combination of the adoption of Arab elites of the Western institutional biases about themselves and the foreign policies of Western powers and their affiliates.

The Arab Middle East has had a long history of interaction with the West from them occupying the Iberian Peninsula to being colonies under the mandate system. From the time the Arabs emerged out of Arabian Peninsula and conquered much of Byzantium and North Africa, the Arabs and Islam have been viewed with an air of mystique, suspicion, and antagonism. The Christian polemics in the middle ages only served to exacerbate differences and demonize the “enemy”. Islam presenting itself as the end to the cycle of prophecy of the *ahl al-kitab*, people of the book, only further enraged insecure Christians and challenged Papal authority. Thus, until the advent of rationalism in the late eighteenth century much academic time and effort was devoted to outlining the

Christian-Islamic polemic. However, rationalism ushered in new problems for Islam and the Middle East, which became the vestige of old and antiquated values. The Arabs in particular were categorized as tribal backward people incapable of governing themselves and creating a modern society. However, during the age of Imperial Europe the Arabs were not unique in their label as incapable of ruling themselves. Yet, other colonial possessions of the European powers had not once threatened the existence of Christian Europe. There seems to be a Western subconscious impulse to be extremely fearful of any Islamic movements. This allows monolithic generalizations about Islam and the Arab Middle East.¹ The United States adopted European ideas about the Arab Middle East. For example, the United States in the early nineteenth century referred to the “Barbary States” of North Africa. The term barbarian was usually reserved for the teeming masses of steppe nomads and Germanic hordes that wrought total destruction on the faltering Roman Empire. The use of “Barbary States” at least signifies that the United States used fear-induced visualizations of the Arab Middle East similar to Europe. Regardless, Edward Said, Albert Hourani, Norman Daniel, Hichem Djait, and Amin Saikal have outlined in detail the historical and political assumptions about the West and Islam. The common theme of all these academics is that misconceived notions of the “other” in Western thought govern the West’s interaction with Arabs. Generally, the historical assumptions about Islam and Arabs pervade popular society and some academic circles. However, through the process of the institutionalization of orientalism, the Arab Middle East has been subject to overt generalizations that reduce them to a monolith of culture and society. Thus, it is not surprising that western leaning academics and political leaders adopted the singular Western vision of their own nations and people. For example, the

¹ Hichem Djait, *Europe and Islam* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 168-173.

political simplification of Arab identity into a universal idea stems from Western thought. Sati Al-Husri's ideologies and Nasser's policies both reflect the inherent orientalist simplifications of the Western orientalist in formulating solutions for Arab society.² Consequently, on some level Arabs and Middle Easterner Arabs have adopted Western orientalist institutional biases about themselves and overtly simplified policies and ideologies to appeal to the "Arab" or "Islamic" masses viewed in universal terms. The indirect intellectual assumptions about the Arab Middle East governed how the West viewed the Middle East and the Middle Easterners viewed themselves. However, even the intellectual and institutional biases did not promote the universal solutions to the Middle East problems as much as the direct actions of the West and Israel.

The adversarial relationship between the West and the Middle East in the first half of the twentieth century revolved around the European mandate system that was discussed in Chapter 3. Since WWII, the relationship between the West and the Middle East revolved around the Arab-Israeli conflict and the political context of the Cold War. Thus, a historical analysis of the Arab-Israeli conflict and the Cold War provides valuable insight into the West its interactions in the Middle East. The historical analysis provides a mean of analyzing the West as the omnipresent force that provides legitimacy to the universal forces implicit in Pan-Arabism and Islamic modernism.

The goal of this section is not to pass moral judgments upon Israel or the Arabs but rather to asses the impact of the Arab-Israeli conflict on the development of the Arab states. Israel has been an omnipresent Arab state concern since it was brought into existence in 1948. The immediate declaration of war by Arab league states and their

² Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 31-49; 329-352.

subsequent defeat by Israel had lasting repercussions in Arab state development. Many Arab foreign, domestic, and regional policies stem from either the result or consequences of the ongoing Arab-Israeli conflict. A chronological analysis of the Arab-Israeli conflict reveals some trends in the Arab-state response to the issue. The Arab-state generally used the Arab-Israeli conflict to galvanize regional support for their policies, critique regional powers, and as a test to judge the success of the current state.³

The existence of Israel in 1948 had been prefaced by an ever-increasing flow of Zionists entering Palestine since the mid 1930s. The Arab mandate governments were suspicious of Zionist intentions. Domestic turmoil ensued because of the increase in Jewish immigration. The proclamation of the Israeli state in 1948 brought immediate condemnation from the Arab States. The Arab league met to prepare for their first enter-state action. The Arab league's war against Israel was a disaster and exposed the fallacy of Arab unity. The Arab states involved were ill prepared to deal with the problem. They also pursued an independent agenda rather than unified military aims. Consequently, any material advantage the Arabs had was squandered and Israel emerged victorious. The immediate consequence of defeat was the discrediting of the Arab league and the radicalization of political parties in the Arab states. The Free Officers movement and other revolutionary Egyptian movements sought to reverse the defeat of 1948 as a cornerstone to their foreign policy. Egypt's resistance to Israel would continue unabated using *fedayeen* raiders on cross border attacks. However, the unstable truce since 1948 would only drive Israel' desire for security and the need to take more land. The quasi-war

³ Ian J. Bickerton & Carla L. Klausner, *A Concise History of the Arab-Israeli Conflict* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1991), 95-108.

status between Israel and Egypt would prompt Israeli leadership to collude with the Western Imperialist powers in their next attack.

The Suez Crisis in 1956 involved Israel, Britain, and France in reaction to the nationalizing of the Suez Canal, which prompted Anthony Eden, Prime Minister of Britain, to seek the removal of Nasser from office. Nasser's radical stance toward Israel and opposition to Imperialism throughout the region threatened Israeli, British, and French interests. The three-pronged attack on the Suez reinforced Arab ideas about Western intervention and proved that Israel was in direct collusion with former Arab colonizers. The Suez Crisis provided Gamal Abdel Nasser the event he needed to catapult his Pan-Arab agenda in the regional and on the international level. Although the Egyptian army was soundly defeated, diplomatic intervention by the United States saved Nasser. Nasser was able to portray the "victory" in Suez as his personal accomplishment. Arab states and Arab individuals rallied to his anti-Imperialist Pan-Arab cause and built his regional status immeasurably. Two examples of Nasser's new regional status were the formation of the United Arab Republic in 1958 and his increased regional meddling. The continual accumulation of arms by Syria and Egypt proceeded unhindered through the 1950s and 1960s. Egypt also began heavily supporting the republican side in the Yemeni civil war in 1962 and although the UAR failed, Egypt and Syria signed a mutual defense pact in 1966.⁴

The persistent threat of Israel did not diminish and neither Egypt nor Syria was any closer to accepting the long-term existence of Israel. However, the Six-Day War of 1967 fundamentally changed Arab-Israeli relations. The consequences of the Six-Day War reshaped Arab state policy and undermined the political viability of the Pan-Arab

⁴ Bickerton & Klausner, 124-138.

movement. Specifically, the Pan-Arab movement under Nasser had defined victory over Israel as a prerequisite for the realization of Egypt's Pan-Arab aims. Nasser even gave speeches specifically referencing 1948 and 1956 as events that would be reversed in the face of Arab-Israeli conflict. Thus, when Israel crushed Arab armies on three fronts, the rhetoric of Nasser began to lose legitimacy. The humiliation of the Egyptian government was so complete that Nasser attempted to resign, although public outcry returned him to office. Realistically, the Israeli victory in 1967 meant that a reversal of the 1948 defeat was not possible for Arab states. Also, it meant that Israel was going to be a long-term presence in the Arab Middle East. Thus, after 1967 the new Pan-Arab movements were discredited just as the Arab League had been discredited in 1948. Egypt had to abandon its campaign in Yemen and retract its regional Pan-Arab focus. Nasser's death in 1970 led to political leadership of the domestically focused Anwar Sadat. Furthermore, Hafiz Al-Assad who consolidated power in Syria by 1970 shifted his policies to a *wataniyya* focus. Thus, universal Arabism defined in relation to victory over Israel by its most prominent spokesperson, Nasser, ceased to be an effective tool of state authority after 1967.⁵

Although Egypt's focus after 1967 centered on the state, it did not abandon conflict with Israel as an immediate concern. By 1969, Egypt had begun a small-scale border war in the Sinai and continually pressured Israel. The idea of regaining honor and territory became a significant concern for Egypt. With the death of Nasser in 1970 and his replacement by Anwar al-Sadat, Egyptian policy remained focused on the state and closer ties with the Soviet Union were established. Hafiz Al-Assad in Syria was intent upon regaining the Golan Heights and redeeming Syrian Honor in the wake of 1967. As

⁵ Bickerton & Klausner, 138-164.

early as 1971 Sadat had started to plan a comprehensive attack on Israel aimed at regaining the Sinai. Sadat was able to secure Syrian co-operation, and in 1973 Egypt and Syria jointly launched the Yom Kippur War. The Yom Kippur War re-established Arab dignity and upset Israeli visions of impenetrable military superiority. Yet, militarily the Arabs suffered a defeat; however, the much needed diplomatic victory propelled both Egypt and Syria closer to their goals of regaining lost ground. Furthermore, the oil embargo that Sadat had pre-negotiated before the war proved to be an effective tool at directing world attention to the affairs of the Arab.⁶

Sadat had orchestrated the 1973 war not as a final triumph over Israel but as a regional project aimed at regaining specific territory. Sadat also wanted to initiate some level of peace with Israel to secure the territory that had been gained. After the super-powers stepped into the conflict, both sides eventually stopped fighting. The peace process, which began in the aftermath of 1973, led to the 1978 Camp David Accords. Although Sadat had envisioned total Arab peace with Israel, he found that Egypt was alone in its peaceful stance. Consequently, Syria began looking for hard-line Arab allies to continue their conflict with Israel.⁷

When the Camp David Accords were signed in 1978 between Egypt and Israel, it shocked the leaders of the Arab world. Syria began extensively more co-operative measures with its traditional rivals such as Iraq. Furthermore, Syria became more committed to the Lebanese civil war. Certainly, the Arab loss of Egypt in the struggle against Israel and the West meant that traditional followers of that polemic would have to find a new banner. The Camp David Accords did send the resounding message that the

⁶ Bickerton & Klausner, 163-181.

⁷ Bickerton & Klausner, 189-206.

Arab nationalist project begun by Nasser and outlined in terms of resistance in Palestine had given way to pragmatic foreign policy based on the needs of the state.⁸

The United States and the Soviet Union both played significant parts in the drama of Israeli and Arab relations. The special relationship between the US and Israel only became closer from 1948 onwards, whereas the Soviet Union patronized multiple Arab states at different times in hopes of gaining a strategic ally. In addition, the United States acted independently at times and attempted to constrain Israel in respect to its foreign policy needs. Arab leaders such as Nasser and Sadat were both aware of the role the United States could play in taming Israeli policy. The Suez Crisis and the Camp David Accords showed Egyptian leaders that the United States was capable of mediating fair and beneficial agreements between Arab states and Israel. The Soviet Union tended to support any leftist Arab regime with hardware and funds. Generally, the United States pursued a policy of regional security for Israel and the Soviet Union was on a regional quest for a permanent ally.⁹ The end of the Cold War has seen much change in United States policy, but the policy coheres around protecting Israel and defending United States' interest. The absence of the Soviet counter-balance in foreign policy has allowed a unilateral approach from the US in the Middle East. Furthermore, the US-Israeli alliance has become closer due to the perception that Islamic radicals threaten both nations. However, the European Union questions Israeli policies in Palestine and has continually challenged the United State's actions in Iraq. The European Union does not have the

⁸ Bickerton & Klausner, 189-206.

⁹ For Soviet policies until 1970, see Enver M. Koury, *The Super-Powers and the Balance of Power in the Arab World* (Lebanon: Catholic Press. Beirut, 1970), 142-176.

same political power as the Soviet Union did but has continually provided dissenting opinions to US and Israeli Middle Eastern policies.¹⁰

Since 1973 there has not been another major Arab-Israeli war but, instead, a series of non-state actors such as the Palestinian Liberation Organization, Hamas, Hezbollah, and al-Fatah continuing resistance to Israel and its existence. Most Arab states abandoned support of the Palestinian cause in practice (not in rhetoric) in favor of state interest. Iran and Iraq both found some regional legitimacy in supporting Palestine and Lebanese resistance groups but only as tools in their regional policy. The continued Arab and Islamic resistance to Israel reflects the immediate situation of those closest to the state. Hezbollah has found power in its link with Iran via Shi'a universalism. Whereas, Hamas has had difficulty in sharing power with the older elite of the PLO. Arab nationalism found a latent power in defining itself as the continuation of Arab struggle in Palestine through Nasser. The Palestinian issue no longer drives the universal impulses of the Arab nationalists. Instead, the Palestinian issue stands to become the rallying banner of Islamic resurgence and like Arab nationalism will be judged in respect to how effectively Islamic resurgence can solve the Palestinian issue.

¹⁰ For end of Cold War and prospects for Palestine see Bickerton & Klausner, 244-246, 260-267.

CHAPTER 9

CONCLUSION: UNIVERSAL RESPONSES TO OMNIPRESENT THREATS

Can historians fairly ask whether the Arabs have a cohesive identity or are modern in terms of state formation? Western historians disagree passionately on the topic of modernity and what signifies the state of “modernity”. Thus, how can we question whether the Arab states are approaching an ill-defined phenomenon? Western society irrespective of the intellectual debates submits to the overall idea of the state and its function. Generally, the issue of identity is irrespective to the quest for material gain or individual wants. An overwhelming number of Arabs in the Middle East have been left out of the material success of the West and repeatedly find themselves under autocratic and corrupt governments. The universalistic claims of Pan-Arabism and Islamic modernism have been keys to the door of modernity for over 50 years. The story goes if the idea of Pan-Arabism or Islamic modernism succeed then the woes of Arab society will wilt away shortly their after. Universalistic and absolute claims have historically been brilliant masks for ulterior motives of personal power and autocratic regimes. Thus, why should the historian expect different motives for the universalism inherent in Islamic modernism or Pan-Arabism? Both ideologies have been convenient refuges for dictators, demagogues, and disillusioned intellectuals. The identities of the Middle East have been constantly changing since the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, but the arbitrary nation state has remained relatively static. The romantic Pan-Arab nationalism and idealized fundamental Islam of the twentieth century is too simplistic for the complex loyalties, ethnicities, and customs of the Arab Middle East. In addition, The “Arab” Middle East

includes the ethnic minority groups of Kurds, Berbers, Copts, Assyrian Christians, and others. Thus, why does the universalistic dream of Pan-Arabism and Islamic modernism have such lasting appeal in the Arab Middle East? In part, the West has perpetuated the universalistic dream of the Arab Middle East by continually manipulating, interfering, and providing an omnipresent threat that causes Arab states to seek security. The irony of Islamic modernism and Pan-Arabism is that they have the same end goal in mind in response to the same social, economic, and cultural issues. Although Islamic modernism invokes a “fundamental” moralism it promises to solve the pressing issues of Arab States that Pan-Arabism promised to resolve. Pan-Arabism at the state level has provided a pretext for muddled inter-state affairs that individual dictators have used to claim authority over other Arabs. The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait provides an excellent example of a Pan-Arab dictator invading an arbitrary colonial creation in the name of Arab unity. Yet, the reality was Saddam was using his military might to subdue a weaker neighbor to pay for an expensive war with Iran. Furthermore, the Arab world condemned Saddam’s act and helped destroy his occupation force and decimate his army. Thus, had Saddam used a Pan-Islamic justification as a basis for the inclusion of Kuwait into Iraq, would the base motivations be any different? Such universalistic simplifications of Pan-Arabism have been providing excellent Machiavellian guises to inter-state Arab politics since the post-colonial period. What would make the rise of Pan-Islamic modernism any different?

Islam does provide a primary similarity between a majority of an overwhelming amount of the Arab Middle East. Does the prevalence of Islam and Islamic practice mean that Islamic modernism will succeed where Pan-Arabism failed? It is doubtful that Islamic modernism will succeed in the unification of the Arab Middle East into one

nation-state. However, Islamic modernism that abandons the external prerequisites of universal unity may be able to reconcile finally the traditional forces in Arab society with the pressures of the modern era. However, the recent election of Hamas in Palestine and their battle with *al-Fatah* suggest that the ideological battle between Pan-Arabism and Islamic modernism has continued to the political realm. However, it is too early to suggest that Hamas will remain an uncompromising Islamic movement. The longer the dictatorial Arab regimes maintain a monopoly on power the more likely radical political change will ensue. Furthermore, the continued interference of the West in Middle Eastern affairs continues to provide an excellent motivation for radical political movements just as Israel did in 1948. In addition, the success of the insurgency in Iraq and the campaign of Hezbollah against Israel suggest that the tactics of the radical Islamist are more adept at combating the West (Israel here viewed as an extension of the West). The military success of the radical Islamic movements only builds their credentials in the Middle Eastern political arena.

Despite the modern polemics of the West and radical Islam, moderate versions or democratic versions of Islamic modernism may be able to alleviate the social inequities of the Middle East if Islamic modernists are willing to compromise. The false promises of absolute ideologies are tempting for justifications to grasp political authority. As of yet, it is too early to determine whether Islamic modernists will make the same political mistakes as Pan-Arabists. However, the triumph of Islamic modernist over the remaining autocrats in the Middle East is not relevant to the overall argument of Arab state formation. Irrespective of the ideas that guide the Arab colonial creations, their continued existence remains a certainty. Because, even if a future Islamic modernist lays claim to a

universal Islamic state, it can only be from the context of the interest the state. However, Pan-Arabism and Islamic modernism found broad political power in the continued polemic against Imperialism. Islamic modernism has adopted the Pan-Arab disdain of all things Western. Nasser's ability to use Pan-Arabism against the West and other unfriendly Arab regimes built Egypt's stature effectively. The GCC states of the Arabian Peninsula and the Arab dictators have become targets of the new polemic aimed at Western interference. The status of the GCC will depend on its ability to maintain the support of the West lest it collapse to Arab or Iranian forces.

The states of the GCC remained a persistent reminder of Western influence and wealth. Furthermore, the GCC states have recently provided a framework for economic integration at the inter-state level. The GCC states have increased economic, social, and defense ties since the early 1980s in stark contrast to the political project of Pan-Arabism. The GCC states have achieved economic success on parity with some western states and have modern societies with all the amenities of the West (limited in some cases by Islamic law applied to the non-ruling class). Thus, why can these states not be held up as examples to the Arab world as success stories of modernization? The GCC states have breed resentment rather than respect among the predominant Arab nations. Egyptians mock the wealthy philanderers of the Gulf state who party in Cairo and revive the old scapegoat of Western patronage to explain their success.¹ It is true that Western states provided the oil infrastructure that brought the wealth to the GCC states, but those states

¹ Sivan Emmanuel, "Arab Nationalism in the Age of Islamic Resurgence" in James Jankowski and Israel Gershoni ed. *Rethinking Nationalism in the Arab Middle East* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 207-228.

diversified and invested in infrastructure rather than military hardware. The GCC states are a glaring reminder of Western materialism and the benefits of co-operation at the cost of submitting national interests. Yet, the material success of these states rather than inspire other Arab states incite the usual Pan-Arab or Islamic polemic diatribe against Western co-operation. However, how can Syria and Egypt reconcile their support of the USA in the first Gulf war? Arab states must acknowledge their own betrayals of their so-called universalistic principles before they can focus on the important developments of the state. The post-colonial Arab state never shed the idea of the arbitrary nation-state. Thus, Syria in the UAR was operated like a European colony by Egypt. Likewise, Syria interfered in Lebanon's affairs to advance the interest of the Syrian government. Iraq and Syria's "battle" to control the Ba'th, Syria's support of Iran in the Iran-Iraq war, and the constant rejection and readmission of states into the Arab league all suggest that *wataniyya* interests have trumped Pan-Arab ideology.

Abstractions and polemics aside, the threats posed by Western powers manifested themselves in direct action and intervention. France and Britain drew the borders of the Middle East after WWI and Israel modified them in 1948. France and Britain controlled Arab countries years after WWII and had special patronage based agreements with "co-operative" Arab states. Thus, Imperialism and Imperial designs were a constant source of concern for Arab political leaders. The persistent meddling of Western powers throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries in Middle Eastern affairs has had direct consequences on Arab society. The modern boundaries of the Arab-states and the inter-state disputes of these creations are largely problems inherited from the British and French mandate system. Regardless, the failure of Islamic modernism and Pan-Arabism

to fulfill their dogmatic premises is not the fault of the West and its affiliates. Political ideas and powerful political leaders constantly trump an atmosphere of regional hostility and domestic resistance to their agenda for change. The triumph of the arbitrary Arab nation-state implied that in the context of the Post-Ottoman world the power-vacuum that existed was not ready to be filled by a regional Pan-Arab or Islamic state. Even the perpetual external threat of Israel after 1948 and Nasser's Pan-Arab agenda could only manage to join temporarily Syria and Egypt in the UAR. Arguably, the Arab nations since the collapse of the Soviet Union have become even more isolated. Particularly the United States has attempted to perpetuate the vision of a singular Arab Middle East dominated by antiquated and corrupt values who deserves our humanitarian "assistance". Also, the call for democracy in some Arab states and the patronage of Arab despots elsewhere reveal the contradictory regional policies aimed at furthering American interests. In the absence of the counter-balance of the Soviet Union, the American-Israeli agenda has become more emboldened since 1991 and imposed a quasi-ultimatum on Arab states: co-operate or perish. Yet, the current Arab regimes did not provide any significant resistance to the new Imperial interventions. Thus, the Pan-Arab regimes have mimicked the behavior of the corrupt governments of the post WWII era. Islamic modernism and militant Islam get their strength from using the same Imperial polemic that Nasser used against the Wafd in 1952. Thus, the West is at fault in providing the political realities that create radical polemics against them.

Viewing the Arab quest for modernity as attempting to alleviate a set of social ills that beset Arab states because of their socio-political status clarifies the complexities of Arab modernization efforts. The challenge for the Westerner is to allow the presence of

Islam into the idea of Arab modernity. Our current society, government, and media perpetuate the monolithic thinking associated with Islam, Arabs, and the Middle East in the Western mind. Academia and some writers are attempting to purge the West of that notion, but their goal is an arduous one (although some academicians perpetuate the polemics). The false Arab dichotomy of “watan or Umma” framed during the mandate period has created an adversarial political precedent as it was applied to the Arab state after WWII. The West as an entity continually provides an impetus to simplistic universal ideologies in the Middle East by continually exposing the weakness of Arab regimes. The nation-states of the Arab Middle East have just recently abandoned the elitist universal impulse to achieve Arab unity. However, the mass appeal of the Islamic movements and their adherents still threaten the secular regimes.

Yet, even if political Islam does take the reigns of power and invokes a call of Pan-Islamism in the Arab Middle East, the concerns of the Arab state will prevail. Iran provides an excellent example of a state that adopted much of the same concerns of the Shah’s Iran even after the Islamic revolution. Likewise, The Soviet Union adhered closely to Russia’s previous policy even though it adopted an internationalist communist agenda. The Arab Middle East beset by the complexities of social disparities, inadequate economic distribution, and repressive regimes needs a domestic development program. The Arab states must solve the domestic issues of state before embarking on a regional integrative program. Arab or Islamic unity may be possible, but only as a willing project between the current regional Arab states and their peoples. The universalistic responses to the problems of state will continue to grow in Islamic political responses as the West continues to intervene in Islamic affairs. The attempt of the West to superimpose a

singular vision of Islam in the mind of its public continues unabated. The oversimplification of the “clash of civilizations” in our own nation has only exacerbated a sense that Islam must combat the universal Western threat. Continually defining a “universal” Islam as the enemy only promotes the adoption of a universal agenda by radical Islamic minorities who want to portray a simplistic vision to their audience. Although the universal claims of the Islamic modernist may initiate societal change or even take power in their respective Arab states, their polemic will not likely yield any more success than that of Pan-Arabism.

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