

Arab Nationalism: Mistaken Identity

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Three lines of poetry plot the trajectory of Arab national consciousness. "Awake, O Arabs, and arise!" begins the famous ode of Ibrahim al-Yaziji, penned in 1868 in Lebanon.¹ George Antonius deployed the line as the epigraph of his influential book of 1938, *The Arab Awakening*, as the first utterance of a nascent Arab desire for independence from Ottoman rule.² "Write down, I am an Arab!" begins the renowned poem of resistance by the Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish, written in 1963 to assert an Arab identity denied by Israel and the West.³ The poem immediately entered the Arab nationalist canon, to be recited from memory by a generation of schoolchildren. In the century that separated these two lines, millions of people gradually awakened and arose, insisting before the world and one another that they be written down as Arabs.

"Are we Arabs one big lie?" This line ends a poem of anguish written in the midst of the 1991 Gulf crisis by Nizar Qabbani, the most widely read contemporary Arab poet and critic.⁴ Too much had gone wrong to sustain exclamation points of awakening and defiance; they were replaced by a question mark of doubt. Once half of Europe and a Superpower had admitted to living a lie for most of this century, the Arabs could not suppress their own doubt any longer. Their god had also failed, spectacularly so. It had been called Arabism, or Arab nationalism, or pan-Arabism, and by the time Qabbani posed his question, it had been in full retreat for a generation.

At present, many Arabs have suspended their belief in the Arab nation, and now openly doubt whether there is a collective Arab mission. Those recently swept up by Islamic activism prefer to think of themselves first and foremost as Muslims, and do so without apology. At times, their lexicon has turned "the Arabs" into a derogatory label, implying wastefulness, incompetence, and subservience. Other Arabs plainly prefer to be known as Egyptians, Syrians, Jordanians, Moroccans — citizens of over twenty independent states, each with its own flag and own interests. Some have even taken to referring to themselves as Middle Easterners, in anticipation of an Arab-Israeli peace and a new regional order of cooperation modeled on Europe. A few intellectuals keep the Arab flame alive. Yet they are most often abroad, in London or Paris, where they command dwindling audiences of Third Worldists and "pro-Arabs." For a decade they have quarreled over whether pan-Arabism and Arab nationalism are simply in remission or beyond all resuscitation.

A sense of "Arabness" still persists. It has existed for as long as the Arabs have walked the stage of history, and it has been subject to negotiation by every generation for nearly a millennium and a half. In this generation, this sense of "Arabness" must come to terms with the growth of loyalty to separate Arab states, a burgeoning Islam, the global triumph of liberal democracy, the ascendancy of market capitalism, and the prospect of peace with Israel. All were anathema to Arab nationalism as it evolved over most of this century. "Arabness" can doubtless

accommodate the new challenges, as it has always done. Arab nationalism, a modern creation of this century, may well disappear altogether under their impact.

But whatever the prospects of Arab nationalism, its history to this point represents one of the most remarkable instances of the rapid birth, rise, and decline of any modern nationalism. That history deserves a new telling, for it has not been invoked in the broader debate over the growing instability of identity that marks the end of this century. There was a time when Arab nationalism did enjoy a place of some prominence in the comparative study of nationalism, but later it became the domain of specialists, which was perhaps just as well. Arnold Toynbee and Hans Kohn, who first attempted to integrate Arab nationalism into some wider comparative framework, became its virtual partisans between the world wars despite their own reservations about nationalism in general. In a spirit of *mea culpa* — Toynbee's for British policy, Kohn's for Zionism — they accepted the most extravagant slogans of Arab nationalism as statements of sociological fact or incontrovertible moral claims, and saw none of the contradictions beneath its surface.

When the Arab states gained independence after World War II, these contradictions surged to the fore in all their complexity, and kept later theorists at arm's length. "No brief summary of the long and intricate history of the Arab world could hope to disentangle the forces which have shaped its states and peoples," wrote Rupert Emerson in scarcely concealed exasperation. "For a full-scale analysis it would be necessary to evaluate the whole record of Arab experience, including such matters as the tribal, sectarian, and other divisions, the effects of Ottoman rule, the machinations of the European powers, and the role of Islam and of the Arab language and culture."⁵ In short, it was a job for someone else who knew it better. But even the comparativists who did know Arab nationalism quite well chose not to make it the pivot of their comparisons, perhaps for fear of losing the general reader in a labyrinth.⁶

The Arab case does remain a dauntingly complex one by the standards of Europe. The speakers of Arabic today number over 200 million, in a zone stretching from the Atlantic shores of Morocco to the Arabian Sea — a region that extends parallel to all of Europe from the Atlantic seaboard of Iberia to the Urals. No European nationalism has claimed a potential constituency as large, as far-flung, or as fragmented. It has never been easy to document the historical evolution of political consciousness across this zone, and a thinness persists in its study.

Nor did Arab nationalism originate as a straightforward reaction to Western imperial rule, of the kind familiar elsewhere in Asia and Africa. Some Arab peoples experienced over a century of direct Western rule, while others experienced none at all. As a result, Arab nationalism followed distinct courses of development in the Fertile Crescent, the Arabian peninsula, the Nile valley, and the North African coast. Each of these zones encountered the West on different terms, at different times. Variations on Arab nationalism multiplied, sometimes even inspiring separate classifications, such as Nasserism and Ba'athism, and even more arcane subclassifications, such as neo-Ba'athism. Many of these became rivals, even to the point of bloodshed. This has made it difficult to generalize about Arab nationalism, and treacherous to deploy such generalizations in the larger debate over nationalism.

The purpose in the following pages is not to attempt the treacherous. It is to attempt what Emerson wished, as a prelude to comparison: to trace the political trajectory of Arab nationalism plotted by the poets, to walk an idea briskly through its historical phases, and to

characterize its relationship to those other ideas and identities that have appealed to "the speakers of the *dad*," that sound which is unique to Arabic. It is the story of a nationalism that arose fitfully, spread dramatically, then faltered and failed. It is an account of how millions of people imagined themselves to be Arabs and then, as though in a case of mistaken identity, claimed to have been someone else all along.

The Emergence of Arabism

Arabism first arose in the nineteenth century not as a direct reaction to Western rule, but as a critique of the state of the Ottoman Empire, whose reach had extended over most of the Arabic-speaking peoples since the early sixteenth century. For nearly four hundred years, these Arabic speakers had been fully reconciled to their role in the Empire. The seat of the Empire was in Istanbul, and its vast domains were administered in Ottoman Turkish. But the Ottomans professed Islam, as did the overwhelming majority of their Arabic-speaking subjects. Their state evolved as a partnership in Islam, embracing all of the Ottoman sultan's Muslim subjects, whatever language they spoke.

Those Muslims who spoke Arabic retained a pride in their language: God revealed the Qur'an in Arabic to an Arab prophet in the seventh century. They also celebrated the history of the early Arab conquests, which carried Islam from the Oxus to the Pyrenees. And they took pride in their genealogies, which linked them to Arabia at the dawn of Islam. But that very fidelity to Islam bound them to Muslims who spoke other languages and prided themselves on other genealogies, and who brought new vitality to the defense and expansion of Islam. Since the fifteenth century, the Ottomans showed precisely this vitality, harnessed to an Islamic zeal that had carried Islam to the very gates of Vienna. All the Muslim subjects of the Ottoman house saw themselves as participants and beneficiaries in this shared Islamic enterprise, and they drew no distinction between Arab and Turk.

But with the relative decline in Ottoman power, especially in the nineteenth century, the foundations of this symbiosis began to weaken. The great Ottoman carpet was being rolled up at both ends: by Europe's Great Powers, locked in imperial rivalry, and by the discontented Christian subjects of Ottoman rule in Europe, whose struggles for independence took a nationalist form. The Ottomans embarked on a succession of Westernizing reforms but eventually lost their footing in the Balkans, the Caucasus, North Africa, and Egypt. As the Empire dwindled, so did the confidence of its remaining subjects, and some discontent even appeared in the remaining Arabic-speaking provinces of the Empire, in Arabia and the Fertile Crescent — a discontent that would come to be known as the Arab "awakening."⁷

Many controversies still surround the nature and extent of this discontent, but it is generally agreed to have drawn upon two sources. First, there were the minority communities of Arabic-speaking Christians, much influenced by European currents, who worked to transform Arabic into a medium of missionary work and modern learning. From about the middle of the nineteenth century, their efforts did much to kindle interest in secular Arabic belles-lettres, through adaptation of Arabic to the modern conventions of the press, the novel, and the theater. The Arabic literary revival, centered in Beirut, did not translate immediately into Arab nationalism. But it did argue for the existence of a secular Arab culture, to which Christians and Muslims had supposedly contributed in equal measure. By elaborating upon this shared Arab



Nineteenth-century Damascus

legacy, the Christian minority sought to erode the prejudice of Muslim majority and to win Christians their full equality as fellow Arabs.

Arabism also arose from a second source. Rivalries had always absorbed the Arabic-speaking Muslim elite, especially in the keen competition over appointments to Ottoman government positions and bureaucratic sinecures. The grievances of those passed over for such spoils by Ottoman governors occasionally turned into the demand that Istanbul accord the

Arabic-speaking provinces more autonomy in the conduct of their own affairs. As the twentieth century opened, this Arabism spread to all the major cities of the Ottoman Empire where Arabic was spoken, but it centered upon Damascus, where its adherents began to organize. While the Arabism of Muslims resembled that of Christians in its pride of language, it differed fundamentally in its deep attachment to Islam. It appealed to Muslims by arguing that the greatness of the Arabs resided in their privileged understanding of Islam. The Arabs, acting in the name of Islam, had created a great empire and civilization, and only the Arabs could restore Islam to its pristine grandeur. There was nothing secular about this assertion of Arab genius, which became closely associated with Islamic apologetics and reformism.

This "Arab awakening," Christian and Muslim, failed to produce a trenchant social criticism or a truly modern language of politics. Ultimately it would defeat itself by its apologetic defense of tradition and religion.⁸ But it did go far enough to shake the confidence of some Arabic-speakers in the legitimacy of Ottoman rule. A few pamphleteers even tried to conjure up Ottoman fears (and foreign subsidies) by publishing tracts in the name of an "Arab movement." Most of these appeared in Europe, and some journals of opinion in Europe's capitals began to debate "the Arab question." The debate was premature. In 1907 the English traveler Gertrude Bell gave the commonplace assessment of these stirrings:

Of what value are the pan-Arabic associations and inflammatory leaflets that they issue from foreign printing presses? The answer is easy: they are worth nothing at all. There is no nation of Arabs; the Syrian merchant is separated by a wider gulf from the Bedouin than he is from the Osmanli, the Syrian country is inhabited by Arabic speaking races all eager to be at each other's throats, and only prevented from fulfilling their natural desires by the ragged half fed soldier who draws at rare intervals the Sultan's pay.⁹

Yet by the eve of World War I, Arabism did begin to take a more palpable form against the two challenges of Turkification and Zionism.

Turkification threatened the cultural status quo. The Turkish-speaking subjects of the Ottoman Empire had been exposed to European-style nationalism, largely through its penetration into the Balkans. Turkish-speaking Muslims then began to construct for themselves a new identity as Turks, a trend strengthened by Western philologists and romantics who sought to establish the greatness of an ancient "Turanian" civilization.¹⁰ As the Ottoman Empire stumbled, Ottoman authorities attempted to give the polyglot Empire more the character of a European nation-state by enforcing the use of Turkish at the expense of other languages, including Arabic. This policy, never fully implemented, caused some apprehension in the Arab provinces on the eve of World War I, and may have helped to rally the supporters of cultural Arabism to a political purpose.

Zionist settlement in Palestine threatened the political status quo. Ottoman authorities tolerated the influx of Jewish immigration in the belief that it would ultimately benefit the Empire, as it had in successive waves since the Spanish Inquisition. But not all of the sultan's subjects concurred, since this latest wave of immigrants saw the land on which they were settling not merely as a refuge but as a state in the making. As the pace of Zionist immigration and settlement increased, their immediate neighbors grew apprehensive about the looming possibility of dispossession. From the turn of the century, Ottoman policy toward Zionism became a matter of growing debate and criticism in the Arabic press.¹¹

Arabism thus arose from a growing unease about the pace and direction of change. Yet, while the Ottoman Empire lasted, this Arabism did not develop into full-fledged nationalism. Its adherents pleaded for administrative decentralization, not Arab independence, and they had no vision of a post-Ottoman order. They imagined a solution in the form of an accountable government, and professed a vague admiration for the liberal democracies of the West, especially of France and England, although they had an imperfect grasp of the meaning behind the slogan of "liberty." Above all, they were practical. They did not indulge in dreams of Arab power. Their grievances, in the words of a critic of later Arab nationalism, "were local and specific; they related to the quality of government services or to the proper scope of local administration; and those who sought redress for such grievances were mostly men well known in their communities, able perhaps to conduct a sober constitutional opposition but not to entertain grandiose, limitless ambitions."¹² On the eve of World War I, they were probably still in the minority, outnumbered by Arabic-speaking Muslims and Christians who raised no doubt about the legitimacy of Ottoman rule, and even stood prepared to defend it.

The Arab Nation and the European Empires

World War I forced a choice upon the adherents of Arabism. After some hesitation, the Ottoman Empire entered the European war on the side of Germany, prompting Britain and France to fan every ember of dissent in the Empire. The Allies held out the prospect of independence for something they called "the Arab nation," and they eventually found a partner in a local potentate of Mecca, the Sharif Husayn. The Sharif had an ambitious vision of a vast "Arab kingdom" for his family, and in 1915 he secured commitments from Britain regarding its future independence and frontiers. In 1916, he finally raised the standard of revolt against Ottoman rule.

The Arab Revolt that began in Arabia had little to do with the Arabism that had emerged in the Fertile Crescent. It more faithfully expressed the dynastic ambition of the Sharif, and the

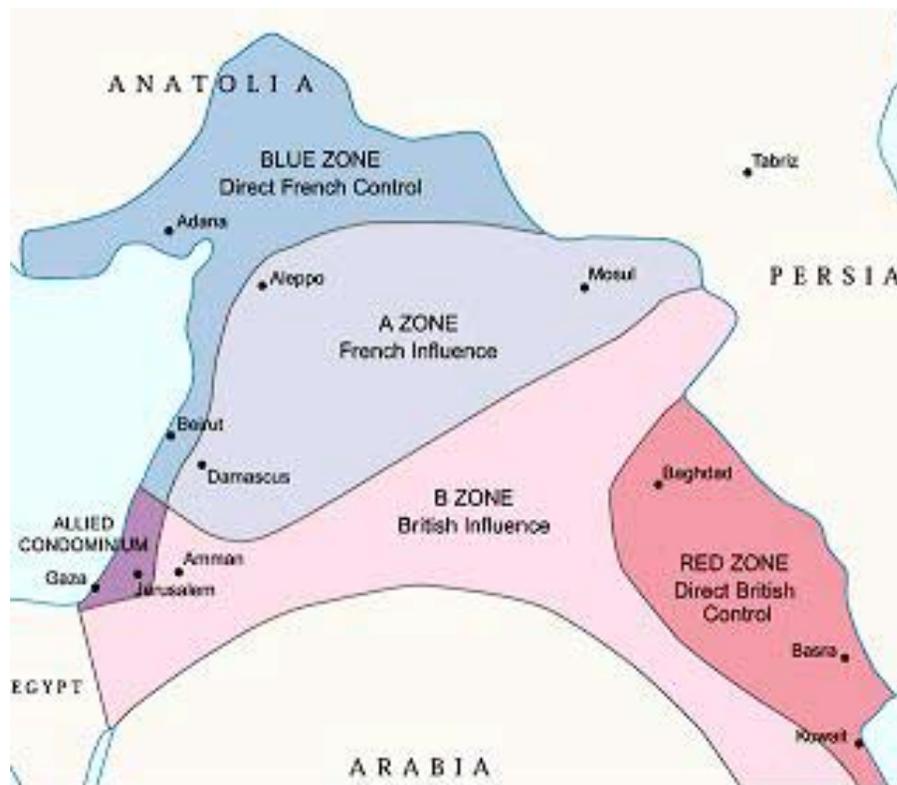


Emir (later King) Faysal

enthusiasm for British guns and gold among Arabia's desert tribes. However, the Sharif's sons, the Emirs Faysal and Abdallah, also established contacts with the existing Arab societies in Damascus, and the revolt recruited dissident Arab officers who had deserted Ottoman ranks. These officers had attended Ottoman military academies, where they had imbibed the idea of the army as the "school of the nation" from the German officers who had trained and advised them. The revolt thus made for a volatile mix, whose diverse participants dreamed the different dreams of Arab kingship, desert anarchy, liberal constitutionalism, and military dictatorship. While the revolt lasted, they suspended their differences in the drive for independence.

In 1918, as the Ottomans retreated before British arms in Palestine, the Arab Revolt culminated in triumph when Faysal led his followers into Damascus and there formed an "Arab Government."

In 1919, he went to Versailles, where he asked that "the Arabic-speaking peoples of Asia" be recognized as "independent sovereign peoples," and that "no steps be taken inconsistent with the prospect of an eventual union of these areas under one sovereign government." Finally, in 1920, a "General Syrian Congress" declared the independence of a "United Kingdom of Syria" including the entire Levant, and proclaimed Emir Faysal king. From Damascus, an "Iraqi Congress" also proclaimed Iraq independent, under the kingship of the Emir Abdallah.¹³



Sykes-Picot (Anglo-French) Accord, 1916

An Arab nation had entered the game of nations, and from the outset, its members made far-reaching claims that ran up against other claims. Most notably, Britain had made wartime commitments to France and the Zionist movement. The first, the so-called Sykes-Picot agreement, secretly recognizing most of the northern Levant as a zone of French privilege; the second, the Balfour Declaration, publicly supporting a Jewish national home in Palestine. Britain also had strategic and

economic interests in the territories demanded by the Sharif Husayn and his sons. The contradictory claims were sorted out in April 1920, at the San Remo conference, where Britain and France settled on the division of occupied Ottoman territory, which they planned to administer as separate League of Nations' mandates. On the basis of these agreements, French forces drove Faysal and his followers from Damascus in a brief battle in July, and imposed French rule on Syria that would last for a quarter century. At the same time, Britain began to fulfill its commitment under the Balfour Declaration by opening Palestine to more extensive Zionist immigration and settlement. Arab violence against Jews first broke out in April, presaging the strife between Arab and Jew that would become a fixture of the British mandate for Palestine. In June, a widespread insurrection against the British broke out in Iraq, which British forces suppressed by force.

Increasingly, Arab nationalists charged that Ottoman rule had been replaced by British and French imperialism, government even more alien than its Muslim predecessor. Britain did move to compensate the leaders of the Arab Revolt in 1921: it appointed Faysal as the king of Iraq in expanded borders, and carved an emirate of Transjordan out of the Palestine mandate, which it then exempted from Zionist immigration and turned over to Abdallah. But the Arab nationalists now nursed a deep grievance against Britain and France over the partition of the territories they wanted, and the denial of independence in Palestine and Syria, which they believed had been promised to them. Arab nationalism, once inspired by the West's liberalism, began to redefine itself as a negation of its imperialism.

The Arab nationalist lament against the arbitrary partition of the Fertile Crescent had much validity. None of the new states was commensurate with a political community. Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Transjordan, Palestine, Lebanon — these names derived from geography or classical history, and their borders largely reflected the imperial jostling for strategic position or oil.¹⁴ Only the idea of Lebanon had some historical depth, since the Maronite Christians of Mount Lebanon maintained a strong sense of separate identity and had achieved some autonomy even in the late Ottoman period. But the Maronites were too few, and the borders of Lebanon drawn in 1920 by the French (at Maronite insistence) included large numbers of Muslims. Maronites would later attempt to manufacture the idea of a Lebanese nation, distinguished by a seafaring commerce and culture dating back to the Phoenicians — safely before the rise of any of Lebanon's contemporary religions. But the Maronites failed to persuade the Muslims in Lebanon that the idea of "eternal Lebanon" expressed anything more than the sectarian solidarity of the Maronites themselves. Half of Lebanon's population regarded their forced inclusion in Lebanon as still another trick of imperialism, as cruel as the other tricks the Arab nationalists thought had been played against them in 1920.¹⁵

But the idea of an Arab nation seemed just as arbitrary to most of its supposed members. It satisfied the makers and backers of the Arab Revolt, who regrouped in Iraq after their flight from Syria, and there established another Arab nationalist state. But in the fragmented societies of the Fertile Crescent, few persons were accustomed to regarding themselves as Arabs. As in Ottoman times, most continued to classify themselves by religion, sect, and genealogy. They were Muslims or Christians, Sunnis or Shi'ites, Maronites or Druzes, members of this or that clan, family, tribe, village, or urban quarter. They did not wish to be ruled by foreigners from over the sea. But neither did they desire to be ruled by strangers from across the desert, even if those strangers spoke Arabic. During the war, some of them had made their own diplomacy, to

secure separate independence.¹⁶ After the war, their allegiance proved difficult to win, as the Arab nationalists soon discovered. The Arab nationalist state under Faysal in Damascus proved to be chaotic, and his subsequent reign in Iraq rested on the bayonets of the British. In correspondence, the British called Faysal "The Great Imposed," a stranger to his subjects, who had been awarded a fragmented polity in arbitrary borders. The Arab nationalists in Faysal's entourage dreamed of a great Arab state, but it was all they could do to keep together the would-be Arabs whom they ruled.

Faced with masses of people who had not chosen to be Arabs, the Arab nationalists developed a doctrine that denied them any other choice. Between the wars, the Arab nationalists progressively discarded the French idea of the nation as a voluntary contract, formed by individuals to secure their liberty. Increasingly their nation resembled the German Volk, a natural nation above all human volition, bound by the mystery of language and lore. Only the unity of this nation could restore its greatness, even if the price of unity meant the surrender of freedom.

This struggle had to be conducted not only against imperialism, but also against the would-be Arabs themselves. Not all of them were eager to be Arabs, and some openly professed to be something else. In such instances, Arab nationalism assigned itself the task of educating them to an Arab identity, preferably by persuasion but if necessary by compulsion. According to Sati' al-Husri, Arab nationalism's first true ideologue and a confidant of Faysal,

Every person who speaks Arabic is an Arab. Everyone who is affiliated with these people is an Arab. If he does not know this or if he does not cherish his Arabism, then we must study the reasons for his position. It may be the result of ignorance — then we must teach him the truth. It may be because he is unaware or deceived — then we must awaken him and reassure him. It may be a result of selfishness — then we must work to limit his selfishness.¹⁷

This ominous passage presaged the drift of Arab nationalism away from the liberal model of a voluntary community. "We can say that the system to which we should direct our hopes and aspirations is a Fascist system," wrote al-Husri in 1930, raising the slogan of "solidarity, obedience, and sacrifice."¹⁸ The idea of the nation as an obedient army immediately appealed to the army itself, especially its officers. It went hand in hand with a growing militarism, and the belief that only the armed forces could rise above the "selfishness" of the sect and clan, enforcing discipline on the nation. Iraq pioneered this trend. The country became independent in 1930, and joined the League of Nations in 1932. Less than a year later, the army conducted a massacre of the Assyrian (Nestorian Christian) minority, accused of infidelity to the Arab cause. In 1936, a coup d'état established a thinly veiled military dictatorship, in the name of national unity. Finally, in 1941, a junta of colonels led Iraq into war of "liberation" with Britain, which it promptly lost, and in the course of which the nationalists inspired a pogrom against the Jews of Baghdad.

Mistreated minorities, military strongmen, lost battles — in retrospect, Iraq's early experience of independence anticipated an entire era of Arab nationalism. Yet this nationalism, and its extravagant extrapolation, pan-Arabism, gained immensely in popularity from in the 1930s. Accelerated migration from desert encampment to settled town, from village to city, began to unloose primordial ties, diminishing resistance to nationalist ideology. With the expansion of education, Arab nationalist pedagogues indoctrinated masses of young people, from primary

school through university. The spread of literacy and the growth of the Arabic press brought the message of Arab nationalism into every classroom, clubhouse, and coffee shop. In the public arena, Arab nationalism gradually achieved a firm hold on political discourse, and all other loyalties became unspeakable.¹⁹

It also began to spread beyond the Fertile Crescent, to include first Egypt, then North Africa. Arabic-speaking Africa had come under foreign rule earlier than Arabic-speaking Asia. France began colonization of Algeria in 1830 and occupied Tunisia in 1881, while Britain occupied Egypt in 1882. In every instance there had been resistance to foreign rule. But it had been formulated as local patriotism, in most instances strongly tinged with Islam. Until the 1930s, few Egyptians saw themselves as Arabs, and the earliest Arab nationalists did not include Egypt in their vision.²⁰ In North Africa, a large proportion of the population spoke Berber, and resistance to foreign rule took an Islamic form, since only Islam united its inhabitants. But no definition of the Arab nation based on language could long exclude Arabic-speaking Africa, and the very geography of imperialism created a potential bond of solidarity between the Algerian and the Syrian, the Egyptian and the Iraqi. In time, a growing number of Egyptians and North Africans began to see themselves as Arabs. Paradoxically, the empires of Britain and France linked together Arabic-speaking lands which had enjoyed few if any organic ties in Ottoman times, inspiring for the first time the idea of an Arab world from the Atlantic Ocean to the Gulf.

At the time, the division of this world did not yet seem permanent, and the message of Arab nationalism, calling for the full independence and unity of all Arabs everywhere, did not seem completely contrived. After World War II, weary Britain and France began to divest themselves of the more troublesome portions of their empires. Syria, Lebanon, and Transjordan became independent. Egypt and Iraq, their independence effectively revoked by Britain during the war, began to renegotiate the terms of British withdrawal. Full independence for the great majority of Arabs seemed only a matter of time. It would be acquired piecemeal by individual states, but Arab nationalists hoped that an Arab commonwealth might emerge from this fluid situation. Elaborate plans for Arab unification proliferated.

But these plans quickly ran aground. By now each state possessed its own ruling elite, bureaucracy, flag, and anthem. Their proposals and counterproposals, for "Fertile Crescent unity," "Greater Syria," and "Arab federation," were schemes for self-aggrandizement.²¹ After much Arab negotiation and British mediation, the independent Arab states established the Arab League in 1945, a compromise that recognized the distinct sovereignty of each of them. In the end, independence did not alter the map drawn by imperialism. The member states of the Arab League promised to assist one another, but none would sacrifice their prerogatives of sovereignty, which the Arab League charter meticulously upheld. In particular, Article 8 of the charter upheld the principle of non-intervention: "Each member state shall respect the systems of government established in the other member states and regard them as the exclusive concern of those states. Each shall pledge to abstain from any action calculated to change established systems of government."²²

Yet the article of non-intervention, while sanctifying the status quo, pointed to its greatest weakness. Not all of these states and their rulers commanded the unencumbered allegiance of their citizens and subjects. By their own rhetoric, they admitted as much. They invariably justified their actions as advancing a larger Arab purpose, even when they were pursuing their

own parochial purposes. Especially in the Fertile Crescent, states created without reason lacked the confidence to openly invoke reasons of state. The paradox could pass so long as Arab nationalism remained a loose mélange of slogans about independence and solidarity. But a growing number of intellectuals and officers, abhorring ambiguity, turned their Arab nationalism into a rigorous doctrine. They saw the Arab nationalism professed by rulers and states as posturing and began to argue the need for revolution. Their moment came when the fragile Arab order stumbled over Israel.

Arab Revolution

The rhetorical gap turned into a chasm in 1948, after the United Nations authorized the partition of Palestine into two states, one Jewish and one Arab. When the neighboring Arab states moved against Israel in 1948, they claimed to be fighting in concert, to uphold their brotherly commitment to the Arabs of Palestine. In fact they did just the opposite: each waged its own war to defend its own interests, each sought a separate *modus vivendi* with Israel. It was a hard-fought war, which ended with Israel in possession of even more territory than had been allotted to her by the United Nations, and with the Arab states as reluctant hosts to seven hundred thousand Arab refugees.



Palestinian from Ramla interviewed after city's fall to Israeli forces, 1948

The events of 1948, like those of 1920, shifted the ground from beneath Arab nationalism. While the Arab states negotiated fitfully with Israel, disaffected intellectuals and officers began to stir. The intellectuals, exemplified by the Syrian historian Constantine Zurayk, leveled a withering criticism against the conduct of the war, and made it difficult for Arab states to present 1948 as anything less than a rout. Then the officers moved, charging the politicians and senior commanders had stabbed them in the back. Syria's old-guard nationalist leadership was turned out by a military coup in 1949; two more coups followed that year, with another in 1952, and yet another in 1954. Abdallah, who in 1949 renamed his kingdom Jordan, and in 1950 annexed the adjacent remnant of Arab Palestine as his "West Bank," was assassinated in 1951 for his dealings with Israel. The monarchy barely held on. In 1952, a group of "free officers," invoking Egypt's failure in the Palestine war and allegations of official corruption in its conduct, overturned the monarchy in a bloodless coup and established a revolutionary republic. By 1954, one of these officers, Gamal Abdul Nasser, had emerged as undisputed leader. In 1958, a

sanguinary coup by more "free officers" destroyed the Iraqi monarchy, and the regicides established a "popular republic."

Arab nationalism, which became "anti-imperialist" after 1920, became "revolutionary" after 1948. The Palestine war had demonstrated that the Arabs, despite their formal independence, remained politically disunited, militarily weak, and economically underdeveloped. The failure could still be blamed on imperialism, and much Arab nationalist thought went into drawing images of a global conspiracy, which allegedly implanted Israel to assure the West's continuing domination of the Arabs. But some intellectuals also began to suggest the existence of intrinsic weaknesses in Arab culture and society, arguing that these had made the task of the Zionists easier. The new champions of Arab nationalism, fiery young colonels, now promised a social revolution that would overcome these weaknesses and propel the Arab world to unity, power, and prosperity. In the spirit of the times, they usually defined this revolution as socialism — or, more precisely, Arab socialism, lest it be alleged that the changes were not authentically Arab in inspiration. Arab nationalism no longer meant only literary revival and anti-imperialism. It meant land reform, extensive nationalization, and five-year plans, all in the name of "the revolution." And if, in their new lexicon, Arab nationalists cast themselves as "revolutionaries," then their opponents could only be "reactionaries."²³

The new dispensation took two parallel forms, which became known as Nasserism and Ba'thism. Nasserism married revolutionary nationalism to the personality cult of Gamal Abdul Nasser, who enjoyed immense prestige in the Arab world after he pulled a political victory from the combined British, French, and Israeli attack on Suez in 1956. Nasserism combined a program of socialist-like reform with the idea that Egypt under the charismatic Nasser constituted the very heart of the Arab world, and had the resources and will to lead all Arabs to unity. A strong streak of pragmatism ran through Nasserism, which evolved from day to day while Nasser held power. It was too makeshift to constitute an ideology, and relied more on Nasser's warm glow than on any systematic doctrine. And while Nasser gave first priority to Egypt's Arab character, at times he made Egypt out to be Muslim, African, or Afro-Asian — whatever served his particular purpose. But it was precisely that ambiguity which made Nasser all things to all Arabs, and permitted Egypt to imagine itself to be the bridge of Arab nationalism, linking the Arabs of Asia and Africa in the march to unity.

Ba'thism tended to be more ideologically stringent, if only because its founders were Sorbonne-schooled Syrians, mostly teachers hailing from minority sects, who had filled their spare time with academic debates and Nietzsche, Fichte, and Houston Stewart Chamberlain. They chose to call themselves the Ba'th, meaning resurrection, and they were "revolutionaries" as a matter of principle. Their constitution, adopted in 1947, announced that their goals could not be achieved "except by means of revolution and struggle. To rely on slow evolution and to be satisfied with a partial and superficial reform is to threaten these aims and to conduce to their failure and loss." The first of these goals was the creation of a single Arab state, since all differences among Arabs were "accidental and unimportant. They will all disappear with the awakening of Arab consciousness." And they regarded socialism as "a necessity which emanates from the depth of Arab nationalism itself."²⁴ As an early member attested, the Ba'th demonstrated all the characteristics of an ideological party: "Their interpretation of events was almost identical, but they did not trust one another; they loved the people, but hated the individual; they held the whole sacred, but they despised the parts."²⁵ The Ba'th spread its influence by penetrating the junior officer corps and eventually acquired power through military coups in both Syria and Iraq. The usual pattern was for the military wing of the local party to purge the civilian wing and install a military dictatorship, under the Ba'th slogan of "unity, freedom, socialism."²⁶



Syrian referendum card: "Do you agree to the union of Syria and Egypt in the United Arab Republic? Agree. Disagree."

Nasser and the Ba'th carried Arab nationalism to the summit of its achievements. Nasser's early gambles paid off because he was the first Arab nationalist leader who was positioned to play foreign powers against one another in a game he called "positive neutralism." When the Americans refused to finance the Aswan Dam, the Soviets came to his rescue. When his nationalization of the Suez Canal and backing of the Algerian uprising provoked an attack by Britain and France (in league with Israel), the United States came to his rescue. The Arab world, glued to these maneuvers through the now ubiquitous radio transistor, stood breathless before Nasser's high-wire act. The Ba'th in Syria longed to join it and pushed for negotiations with Nasser over unity. In 1958, the talks culminated in the birth of the United Arab Republic — a union of Egypt and Syria, offered to the Arab world as the first step toward a general Arab union. The names of Egypt and Syria disappeared from the map, replaced by a "southern region" and a "northern region." Arab nationalism reached its high-water mark during Nasser's first visit to Damascus, where enthusiastic crowds greeted him wildly. Other

Arab leaders trembled as "Nasserists" filled the streets of their capitals to clamor for their long-awaited Bismarck. Lebanon invited American troops to stem the tide; Jordan accepted British forces. No Arab state seemed capable of withstanding the march of Arab unity on its own.

But in the end, it was the United Arab Republic that succumbed. The marriage of Nasser and the Ba'th turned into a struggle for domination within the camp of Arab nationalism. In this uneven contest, the Egyptians ran Syria like a colony — and a badly run colony at that. The union did not release some pent-up potential that only the combining of Egypt and Syria could tap. Quite the opposite: the union threatened to kill all productive initiative, especially in Syria, through the imposition of "Arab socialism." In 1961, a Syrian coup ousted Nasser's viceroy from Damascus and declared the union finished. The breakup demonstrated the salience of differences far too deep to be blown away by blithe slogans. There would be more negotiations between Nasser and the Ba'th in 1963, and more unity schemes and treaties. But there would never be a repeat of the United Arab Republic.²⁷

In retrospect, the collapse of the Egyptian-Syrian union in 1961 marked the beginning of the long slide of Arab nationalism. The following year, Nasser contributed to its undoing by his massive intervention on behalf of the "revolutionary" side in Yemen's civil war. Everything Egypt did in Yemen, including aerial bombing and napalming, had the opposite of the intended effect. A British journalist who watched the Egyptians at work in Yemen was amazed by their ignorance and arrogance:

Martin Kramer, "Arab Nationalism: Mistaken Identity"

It was one of the more piquant experiences of my post-revolutionary stay in Sanaa to be hailed by most of them with a chummy affability that implied as clearly as any words that they and I were somehow in this thing together as embattled representatives of civilisation in the midst of savagery. "What can you do with these people?" they would often laugh, in tones of vastly superior deprecation, "They are not like us, you see. . . ." Having come directly from British colonial Aden I recognised the symptoms all the more easily. Creeping imperialism is a catching disease, and those Egyptians were only a step away from clapping their hands together and shouting, "Boy!" when they wanted service.²⁸

In Yemen, as in Syria, vast differences overwhelmed any remote similarity, leaving Arab to war Arab in a spirit of mutual incomprehension.

Nationalist theory had promised that unity would bring liberation from foreigners, but in the hands of actual practitioners it had become a whip of domination, wielded by some Arabs over others. The number of Arabs bearing its scars began to grow, as did the disillusionment. The Arabs, wrote one Syrian, were "like the inhabitants of an island who have been promised that the ship of deliverance will soon arrive. They have buried their tools and packed their meager belongings; but when the ship arrives, it is a slave boat."²⁹ The will to believe still remained strong in some quarters, but an edge of doubt began to show. Arab nationalism's supply of persuasive words began to dwindle. Its champions responded by making more frequent use of the persuasive prisons of Abu Za'bal and Tura near Cairo, Mezze in Damascus, and the cellars of the Nihayyah Palace in Baghdad.



**Egyptian military governor of Gaza
surrenders to Israeli forces, June 1967**

The crisis finally broke in 1967. The Arabs may well have blundered into war with Israel that June, but once they were in the thick of it, they expected more than in 1948. Most assumed that they had been strengthened, not weakened, by nearly two decades of Nasser and the Ba'th, social revolution, and the militarization of politics, all under the banner of Arab nationalism and the struggle against Israel. Instead, they got less: a truly ignominious defeat, delivered in six days. Its territorial consequences included the Israeli occupation of East Jerusalem, the West Bank, and Gaza — all densely populated by Arabs — and of the Sinai and the Golan, two geographic buffers that had kept Israel at a distance from Cairo and Damascus. The defeat represented nothing less than "the Waterloo of pan-Arabism."³⁰ When Nasser offered to step down, the crowds filled the streets to demand that he continue as their leader. Through years of pounding indoctrination, Nasser and the Ba'th had managed to silence every other voice, and many only understood and spoke the limited language of Arab nationalism. But as defeat worked its way deep into the collective psyche, two

other voices would be raised in opposition to Arab nationalism. One spoke the language of allegiance to individual states. The other spoke of loyalty to a universalist Islam.³¹

The Triumph of the State

Since their creation, individual Arab states had never hesitated to give priority to their separate interests. Yet they had been persuaded by their perceived lack of legitimacy to pledge formal fidelity to the Arab nation, and thus risked being dragged into crises generated by other Arab states, or being accused of breaking Arab ranks for staying out. As 1967 proved, however, such crises could deteriorate quickly into war, and exact a steep price in lives, territory, and prestige. Many of these states already lumbered under immense economic burdens. They did not have the means to assume the burdens of their neighbors, especially the weighty load of Palestine. Even mighty Egypt could no longer assume the sole custodianship of the Arab cause (an Egypt which sent tens of thousands of troops to defend the Arab cause as far away as Yemen, yet had difficulty feeding its own people at home.) If these states were ever to set their own priorities, they would have to openly justify their separate existence, and demand the primary loyalties of their citizens and subjects.



Anwar Sadat and Israeli premier Menachem Begin

Paradoxically, Egypt led the way again, this time under Anwar Sadat. Sadat launched an attack against Israel in October 1973, but this time Egypt fought a strictly Egyptian war for the return of the Israeli-occupied Sinai. Although Egypt waged the war in tandem with Syria, it quickly broke with Syria in the war's aftermath. By the decade's end, Sadat had given Israel a peace treaty in return for the Sinai. Sadat's recognition of Israel, his reliance on the United States, and his economic liberalization turned all the assumptions of Arab nationalism on their head — and Sadat offered

no apologies for doing so. Instead, he made an explicit case for Egypt's right to chart its own course and address its own problems first. Sadat paid for his policies with his life, and Egypt was briefly ostracized for its peace with Israel. But other Arab states cautiously followed suit. More often than not, they now justified their choices by invoking Syrian, Jordanian, Saudi, or Iraqi national interests, not Arab national destiny. And by legitimizing themselves as states, despite their origins in imperial map rooms, they came that much closer to legitimizing Israel, despite its origins in Zionist drawing rooms.

For the first time, it became possible to criticize the myths of Arabism, and to see the differences among Arabs not as "accidental" but as living realities, even deserving of respect. Lebanon's most prominent historian, Kamal Salibi, criticized Arab nationalism for "deluding the general

run of the Arabs into believing that the political unity they had once experienced under Islam was in fact an Arab national unity which they have subsequently lost, or of which they have been deliberately robbed." This made it "difficult for them to properly accommodate to the political realities of the present." Salibi called on intellectuals to

discount the erroneous Arab nationalist view of this history as a united national march that went wrong at some point, and correctly assess it as the parochial history that it normally was: an account of so many different Arab regional experiences of one kind or another, fitting more or less into a general pattern. No Arab country today need feel any guilt about accepting its actual existence as a willful or unwillful departure from an Arab national historical norm. It is only when the Arabs succeed in ridding themselves of the highly idealized Arab nationalist vision of their past that they will be able to live together in the modern Arab world as a coherent political community whose various members relate to one another constructively and without reserve.³²

After 1967, this once-surreptitious view could be pronounced openly, and laid the intellectual foundation for the growing self-confidence of individual states.

But that self-confidence rested as much on power as persuasion. Despite their difficulties on the battlefield, these states had mastered the technologies of domestic surveillance. The regimes realized that defeat left them vulnerable, and resolved to forestall any dissent by using these technologies to make the state ubiquitous. The approach largely worked. Unlike the defeat of 1948, which inaugurated a bout of instability, the even more humiliating defeat of 1967 marked the beginning of an era of unprecedented stability, even immobility. The flood of oil income that followed the 1973 war also permitted regimes to buy off dissent. The state had not only become legitimate, it had become omnipotent. In the words of one Syrian intellectual: "The cancerous growth of the state has been accompanied by the increasingly diminished power of everybody and everything else, especially what some Arab thinkers and leaders enjoy calling 'The People.'" As a consequence, "Arab society is on the whole cancelled out as a reality of political significance in the reckonings of all Arab regimes."³³

By the time communism collapsed, the Arab lands had become the last preserve of protracted one-man rule, and so they remain today. The king of Jordan has reigned now for forty years, the king of Morocco for thirty-two years. Libya's leader made his coup twenty-four years ago. The chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) has held his title for twenty-four years. Syria's president has held power for twenty-two years. Iraq's ruler has held sway over the country for twenty-two years, the last fourteen as president. The emir of Kuwait has reigned for fifteen years, the king of Saudi Arabia for eleven years. Egypt's president has held office for twelve years. Not one of these states could be categorized as a democracy, although after 1967 they laid unprecedented claims to the loyalty of their citizens and subjects, and intruded upon virtually every aspect of society.

Only Lebanon, the perennial exception, proved incapable of enhancing its legitimacy and its power over society after 1967. In this birthplace of Arab nationalism, social peace had come to depend on equilibrium between the myths of "eternal Lebanon" and "one Arab nation." The Maronites agreed to march in step with the Arabs, so long as they could carry the flag of Lebanon; the Muslims agreed to parade behind the flag of Lebanon, provided the parade marched to an Arab cadence. By this understanding, Lebanon would supply intellectual

rationales for Arab nationalism; others would provide the soldiers for its battles. For a time the equilibrium held, and Lebanon established a quasi-democratic public order and a free-market economy. In times of regional crisis, Lebanon did its duty by words, and managed to dodge war with Israel. But after 1967, Lebanon began to lose its balance. The Muslims, wracked by guilt, demanded that Lebanon finally take up the Arab burden of Palestine, and open its southern border to attacks against Israel. The Maronites, awed by Israel's example, thought they could turn the state of Lebanon into something comparable: a small powerhouse, armed to the teeth, defiant of the Arab world around it. In 1975, the situation exploded in civil war, and Lebanon virtually disappeared under a checkered map of militia fiefdoms, crisscrossed by green and red lines. The only lines that did not count were Lebanon's borders, and both Syria and Israel entered the fray. When Israel invaded Lebanon in 1982, it worked even more feverishly with its Lebanese allies to remake the country in its image, but to no avail. Since 1989, Syria has tried to do the same, with more resolve and success.

Aside from Lebanon, all other states exercised more confident power over their societies, and more independence from one another. Before 1967, Arab nationalism appeared to drain states of their legitimacy. After 1967, its slippage seemed to produce a surge of legitimacy that strengthened both states and incumbent regimes. This strength had severe limitations: Arab states still could not stand up to powerful external enemies such as Israel. But they could ward off interventions by one another, and enforce their will over their own societies with an almost ruthless efficiency.³⁴

The Challenge of Islam

The voice of Islam also bid to fill the silence left by Arab nationalism. Arab nationalists had always regarded Islamic loyalty as a potential rival, and had tried to disarm it by incorporating Islam as a primary element in Arab nationalism. Even the Christians among them went out of their way to argue that Arab nationalism complemented rather than contradicted the Islamic loyalties still felt by so many Arabs. "The power of Islam," affirmed Michel Aflaq, the founding ideologue of the Ba'th and a Christian by birth, "has revived to appear in our days under a new form, that of Arab nationalism."³⁵

But many Muslim Arabs saw this as a confidence game, and regarded Islam and any form of nationalism as mutually exclusive. For Sayyid Qutb, the Egyptian ideologue of Islam who was executed by Nasser in 1966, Arab nationalism signified "spiritual decadence." If the Prophet Muhammad had so wished, he "was no doubt capable of setting forth a movement of pan-Arab nationalism in order to unify the strife-torn tribes of Arabia." Instead, he called all of mankind, Arab and non-Arab, to submit to God. The Arabs thus enjoyed no privileged standing in Islam, of the kind claimed by Arab nationalism: "God's real chosen people is the Muslim community, regardless of ethnic, racial, or territorial affiliation of its members." Reflecting on early Islam, Qutb concluded that the "sole collective identity Islam offers is that of the faith, where Arabs, Byzantines, Persians, and other nations and colors are equal under God's banner." During his police interrogation, Qutb announced that Arab nationalism had "exhausted its role in universal history."³⁶

The Islamic critique of Arab nationalism extended beyond its theory to its practice. Arab nationalism had erred in breaking the primary bond of Islam during the Arab Revolt — a bond that linked Arab and Turk. The Arab nationalists betrayed their fellow Muslims in order to side

with the British, who naturally betrayed them — a just reward for those who placed their trust in unbelievers. The Arab nationalists then compounded their error by abandoning reliance on God and his divine law, in order to become liberals, fascists, and socialists, in mimicry of foreign ideological fashion. And while they professed respect for the faith of Islam, they filled their prisons with the truly faithful, whom they accused of subversion for preaching the word of God. Who did not doubt that the rout by the Jews, and the falling of Jerusalem into Zionist hands, constituted a punishment for straying from God's path? Did not Israel itself prove the power of religion and state combined?

This brand of Islamic loyalty enjoyed an immense appeal among the members of two underclasses. The first was composed of Shi'ites, who formed a majority in Iraq and Bahrein, the largest single confessional community in Lebanon, and important minorities in Saudi Arabia and the Arab Gulf states. Arab nationalism acknowledged them as fellow Arabs, but it glorified precisely that "golden age" of Arab history that the Shi'ites mourned as disastrous, during which their heroes were martyred by the very same caliphs lionized in Arab nationalist historiography. In the present, the institutions of Shi'ite Islam, and even many Shi'ite families, straddled the divide between the Arab states and Iran, so that many Shi'ites regarded Arab nationalism as an artificial division, incompatible with the Arab-Persian symbiosis of contemporary Shi'ism. After Iran's revolution in 1979, many Shi'ites in Arab lands identified so strongly with its success that they declared their allegiance to the revolution's leader, Ayatollah Khomeini, and repudiated both Arab nationalism and loyalty to the individual states in which they lived. Lebanon's Hizbullah took this the furthest, professing absolute obedience to the leader of the Islamic revolution, and denouncing "the Arabs" for self-worship and their capitulation to Israel.

The other underclass consisted of the tens of millions of indigents who had abandoned the countryside and flooded into the cities, and whose lot worsened as populations grew and oil incomes fell. In the slums and *bidonvilles* of Cairo and Algiers, not only did the doctrines of Arab nationalism sound obsolete, but the promises of prosperity made by states also rang hollow to those in the grip of grinding poverty and unemployment. In growing numbers, the dispossessed gave their loyalty to Islamic movements that employed a more familiar vocabulary and called for the reinstatement of Islamic law as the panacea for all political, social, and economic ills. These Islamic movements were prepared to work within existing states, but only as matter of convenience. They professed loyalty only to Islamic law, and committed themselves to fight for its implementation wherever possible, even in distant Afghanistan, where many thousands of Arab Muslims fought as volunteers against Soviet forces and their "atheistic" Afghan clients. For these believers, their political community did not end at the border crossing of any state, or even where Arabic ceased to be spoken. It extended to any place where Islam reigned supreme or had to be defended.

In the void left by Arab nationalism after 1967, two ideas of community thus competed for primacy. On the one side stood those who argued that the inhabitants of any one state constituted a distinct people in a political sense. Regimes championed this idea, for it legitimized their claim to act solely in the interests of the state — identified increasingly with one ruling group or one ruler. On the other side stood those who believed that all Muslims constituted a universal political community, standing above any narrower political authority. This idea suited opposition movements, since it denied legitimacy to all existing regimes. An

immense gap separated these two visions, but their adherents agreed on one point: Arab nationalism had failed irredeemably, having either been too broad or too narrow to satisfy the quest for identity.

Arab Nationalism Adrift

And what of the remaining Arab nationalists? After 1967, their numbers and influence steadily dwindled, except among intellectuals. Many intellectuals actually did live a pan-Arab reality. They wrote in Arabic for an audience that stretched "from the Ocean to the Gulf," and published in pan-Arab journals that circulated just as widely. They jetted from capital to capital for conferences on the state of the Arabs. They had one foot (and sometimes both) in the West, where the freest Arabic press and publishing houses did their business. In this rarified atmosphere, the myths of Arab nationalism could still be sustained. For the most part, these intellectuals did not regard the defeat of 1967 as a failure of their idea, but rather as a failure of its implementation by others, who were criticized for not being sufficiently radical or sufficiently ruthless. Much of the Arab nationalist "self-criticism" after 1967 pushed even further toward advocacy of violent change. But intellectuals lacked an Arab Bismarck who would revive an idea whose time had come and nearly gone. Nasser had faltered, and in 1970 he died. The Ba'th in Syria, after more twists and turns, came to rest in 1970 under Hafiz al-Asad, a master of *realpolitik* who put Syria above all. For lack of better alternatives, Arab nationalists fixed their hopes first on the Palestinians, and finally on Saddam Hussein.



Left to right: Nasser, Saudi King Faysal, and Yasser Arafat at September 1970 Arab summit.

The Palestinians were a desperate choice, since they themselves had largely despaired of other Arabs. At the height of Nasser's powers, they had allowed themselves to believe in him, and to see him as their redeemer. Nasser also prompted the creation of the PLO in 1964, under the auspices of the Arab League. But even before the Arab armies collapsed in 1967, Palestinians had begun to transform the PLO into an instrument of their own. The dominant Fatah component had no pan-Arab pretensions. Fatah demanded the moral support of the Arab states, and even extraterritorial zones of operation, especially along Israel's frontiers. It was prepared to fight to assure the independence of these bastions. But it promoted no message of Arab revolution, and it gave first priority to the establishment of a Palestinian "entity," presumably a state, which would fit into the existing Arab state system.³⁷

But other Palestinian groups took a different course, announcing they would

work to topple the "petty bourgeois regimes" of the Arab states as a stage in their struggle to liberate Palestine. This was the pan-Arab promise of the so-called Arab Nationalists Movement and its most flamboyant offspring, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), both founded by students at the American University of Beirut. Their high-strung rhetoric and hijackings made them the heroes of many Arab intellectuals who, like their New Left contemporaries in the West, demanded "revolution" now.

The fedayeen, the Palestinian guerrillas in the rock-strewn hills opposite Israel, became the symbols of this struggle. Living on the edge and citing Mao and Guevara, they were themselves celebrated in poetry and song by the pan-Arab intellectuals. But although the fedayeen sought to imitate the methods of guerrilla warfare that succeeded elsewhere, they completely failed to liberate any part of Palestine or the Arab world, and they provoked Jordan's ruthless suppression in 1970. As Jean Genet recorded, the Palestinian "revolution" could be summed up in the phrase, "to have been dangerous for a thousandth of a second."³⁸ As the second passed, Arab nationalist enthusiasm for the Palestinian fringe waned, and even the fringe finally endorsed the mundane demand for a Palestinian state alongside Israel — one more Arab state, prepared to make one more compromise. "Our future is with Israel," the spokesman of the PFLP, Ghassan Kanafani, told a French academic in 1970 — two years before his assassination by Israel. "Neither Europe, nor China, nor the Soviet Union, nor the Arab states, collectively or individually, are interested in us or would do anything decisive for us."³⁹ The Palestinian uprising that began in 1987 in the West Bank and Gaza was just that: a Palestinian uprising, relying not on the massive quantities of arms in Arab arsenals, but on stones and knives. The Palestinians would fight their own fight, in an effort to win the far more valuable sympathy of the West.

The choice of Saddam as the pan-Arab hero represented an even more desperate step. If anything, Saddam had done more than any modern Iraqi ruler to cultivate a specific Iraqi loyalty, drawing upon the legacy of ancient Mesopotamian civilization. In art, architecture, and poetry, the state encouraged the use of Mesopotamian motifs, and it lavished funds upon archaeological digs and restorations. Since no loyalties had survived from antiquity (which well predated the Arab conquest), all Iraqis could be accommodated by the Mesopotamian myth — Arabs and Kurds, Sunnis and Shi'ites. After Saddam blundered into war with Iran in 1980, Iraq billed herself as defender of the eastern Arab flank against the Persian hordes — all the better to justify the demand for war loans from Gulf Arab states. But Saddam was no ardent pan-Arabist, and in 1982 he dismissed the pan-Arab vision as an idea whose time had passed:

The question of linking unity to the removal of boundaries is no longer acceptable to present Arab mentality. It could have been acceptable ten or twenty years ago. We have to take into consideration the change which the Arab mind and psyche have undergone. We must see the world as it is. . . . The Arab reality is that the Arabs are now twenty-two states, and we have to behave accordingly. Therefore, unity must not be imposed, but must be achieved through common fraternal opinion. Unity must give strength to its individual partners, not cancel their national identity.⁴⁰

Those twenty-two states, on which unity "must not be imposed," included Kuwait.

In 1990, Saddam's Iraq invaded Kuwait, declaring it a province of Iraq. Possession of Kuwait would have filled the Iraqi treasury in perpetuity (a treasury that held a cash reserve of \$30

billion back in 1980 but groaned under a debt of more than \$100 billion a decade later). Significantly, Iraq did not formally justify its invasion as an act of Arab nationalist unification. Iraq claimed that Kuwait belonged properly to the state of Iraq, and that the annexation asserted an Iraqi legal right, not an Arab moral claim. But Arab nationalists seized upon Saddam as though he were a reincarnation of Nasser, and an improvement at that, for being far more reckless and ruthless. While he lacked Nasser's charm, he had oil, missiles, nerve agents, and nuclear potential — power, he hinted, that would be put at the service of all the Arabs. He would be their sword, much like the four giant swords he had cast for his victory arches in Baghdad, dedicated at a ceremony in 1989 during which he paraded upon a white horse.⁴¹

Hichem Djaït, the preeminent Tunisian historian, exemplified the euphoria of the intellectuals. In 1978, in a sober mood, he wrote that "it would not be healthy to pin all hopes on achieving some sort of absolute unity," and that an attempt by any Arab state to use its power for that purpose would be "not only dangerous but doomed to failure." No Arab state had sufficient power to effect such unity, and no Arab could "entertain the notion that America, Europe, or Russia would allow so cohesive a unity to be founded in the heart of the Old World."⁴² The analysis makes perfect sense to this day, yet Djaït threw it to the winds after Saddam annexed Kuwait. Thanks to Saddam Hussein, he declared, "a new perspective is opening up, that of unification. And Iraq is its pole and motor." If that meant war, or even defeat, it still represented a start:

I don't have to tell you, as Europeans, that your nations were born out of wars. In annexing Kuwait, Saddam Hussein has entered the dynamics of history. He was trying to make sure of a source of wealth for himself, material means. In addition, he was undertaking the beginning of the unification of the Arab world. Sometimes legitimacy is more important than legality.⁴³



Saddam Hussein

"Our goal let us seek by the edge of the sword / For our goals we pursue are thus surely secured." This verse from Yaziji's ode of 1868 anticipated the preference for coercion that ran beneath the surface of Arab nationalism. Once its slogans no longer swayed millions, Arab nationalism gave up even the pretense of persuasion, to worship raw power. But Saddam had not amassed enough of that power; despite incredible military expenditures, Saddam's Iraq, like the Palestinian fedayeen a generation before, could only be "dangerous for a thousandth of a second." In the end, Djaït was right when he wrote in 1978 that an attempt by any Arab state to force unity would be "doomed to failure." In battle, the Iraqi "motor" of unification immediately broke down, and the scenes of surrendering Iraqi soldiers and burned-out armored columns recalled nothing so much as the defeat of 1967. And in the end, Saddam was right when he said in 1982 that the "Arab mind and psyche" would not accept the imposition of unity or the removal of existing borders. Most of the

Arab states joined the international coalition against him, to uphold a state system that had become their own, even if it originated long ago in an imperial partition. And it was not only Arab governments that rejected the invasion: the publics in the Arab coalition states, according to polls, never took Saddam seriously as a pan-Arab savior.⁴⁴ The Arab nationalists called 1991 a defeat of the Arabs as a whole, analogous to 1967. But it was not analogous. In 1967, three Arab states were defeated, Arab territory was lost to foreign occupation, and all Arabs felt humiliated. In 1991, only Iraq was defeated, the sovereignty of an Arab state was restored, and millions of Arabs in Casablanca, Cairo, Damascus, and Riyadh considered themselves the victors.

In the war's aftermath, the United States, the Arab states, and Israel moved to translate that victory into a new regional order that would represent the ultimate undoing of Arab nationalism. That order, Middle Eastern rather than Arab, and would include Israel as a legitimate state among states, to be recognized by all Arab states following a negotiation of peace and a definition of Israel's borders. The new order would also include Turkey, and perhaps other states that wished to define themselves as Middle Eastern. The rationale for the idea of the Middle East, made most fully by some Cairo intellectuals, argued that the Arab nationalist vision had become anachronistic. It was ideological in a post-ideological age, and it pressed for continuation of a costly Arab cold war against Israel, although the Arabs could no longer count on any outside support following the end of the Superpower Cold War. The moment had come to shift priorities to the domestic agenda of economic growth, lest the Arab world sink under the weight of its swollen populations. As the unification of Europe seemed to demonstrate, the economic future belonged to regional formations composed of many nations. These cooperated to promote economic growth and collective security, relieving economies of the massive burden of military expenditure. Water, arms control, the environment, trade, tourism — these and hundreds of other issues could not be negotiated to a resolution by the Arabs alone. Arab states were also Middle Eastern states, and while they belonged to an Arab state system, they also belonged to a Middle Eastern regional order. The shape and content of that order would evolve over time; a first step would be the progress of Arabs and Israelis at the negotiating table.⁴⁵

The idea of the Middle East as a framework of identity faces many obstacles. It has nothing like the depth of the idea of Europe. The Middle East is a term that was first put into wide currency by an American naval strategist, who in 1902 described it as "an indeterminate area guarding a part of the sea route from Suez to Singapore."⁴⁶ It remains a colorless and inaccurate term, but the idea of an Arab nation "from the Ocean to the Gulf" is no older, and the term Middle East passed long ago into common Arabic usage. Its translation into an organizing principle of regional relations would constitute the final triumph of the real map over the imaginary map. All now depends on adding the last touches to the real map — the mutually agreed borders that will define Israel.

Talking Democracy and Islam

Is it true, as Fouad Ajami wrote, that this signifies the "end of Arab nationalism"? Do its defenders, mostly in exile, inhabit "fortresses at the end of the road that are yet to receive the dispatches that all is lost and the battle is over"?⁴⁷ Arab nationalism has suffered yet another blow, and has retreated almost to its point of origin, inspiring a few societies and clubs in Beirut,

and some newspapers and journals published in Europe. With the exception of Libya under the mercurial Mu' ammar al-Qaddhafi, no Arab state makes any pretense of championing Arab nationalism. Yet Arab nationalists have not lost hope that from their last fortresses, they might return triumphant to recapture the center. Did that not happen in the case of Iran, where an old ayatollah, banished to one of the last bastions of Shi'ite Islam, launched a revolution and swept to power? The return of political Islam from purgatory holds out hope to Arab nationalists that they might do the same. Their desperate gamble on Saddam failed, but there are other avenues of return, provided Arab nationalism can adapt to the changing spirit of the times.

Arab nationalism has never been totally averse to such adaptation. The core of its message has never changed, and remains the existence of one Arab nation, destined to be drawn together in some form of unity, and poised antagonistically against an array of external enemies. But in the past, Arab nationalism borrowed supplementary themes and vocabulary from liberalism, fascism, socialism, radicalism, and messianism. As the division of the Arab world became ever more established and recognized, this borrowing achieved less, so that Arab nationalism became ever more utopian in its presumptions. But given the immense economic and social problems that face Arab societies, there are Arab nationalists who believe that any moment might become a revolutionary one. They intend to be there.

Since the "defeat" of 1991, they have bid to stay in the contest by presenting Arab nationalism as the natural ally of democracy and Islam. In theory, Arab nationalism never required a commitment to either, and in practice it showed a strong preference for revolutionary dictators and a strong aversion to Islamic movements. In their prime, Arab nationalists had no qualms about banning political parties and executing Islamic activists, all in the name of Arab unity. That they now have fixed upon democracy and Islam is less a matter of conviction than convenience. They understand that the prevailing order has two weaknesses. First, it is not democratic. Its aging rulers, in power now for a generation, are under pressure from a populace that gets younger every year, and that yearns for a measure of political participation. Second, it is not legitimate in the eyes of the growing numbers of frustrated people who have filled the ranks of Islamic movements. They genuinely yearn for a measure of authenticity, which they believe can only be achieved by the creation of an Islamic state under Islamic law. Somewhere in the Arab world it is possible that a regime might succumb to one of these weaknesses. Arab nationalists hope to join the resulting fracas and perhaps emerge triumphant by championing either democracy or Islam or both.

From a reading of the leading journals of pan-Arab opinion, it appears that the slogan of Islam has been more difficult to sing. There is plenty of common ground with Islamic discourse, most notably in the shared conviction that the Arab world still suffers from imperialist domination and that Israel's presence must not be normalized. But Islam already has its champions, in the form of well-organized and disciplined mass movements, and these express almost no interest in an alliance with the discredited stragglers of Arab nationalism. The lengthy round-table debates among Arab nationalist intellectuals about their possible relationship with Islamic movements are not reciprocated by the Islamists, whose leaders have no need for guidance from others, especially those who once persecuted them.⁴⁸ Still, some Arab nationalist intellectuals, from their perches in Europe and America, have offered their intellectual services to the defense of Islamic movements before Western opinion — something Islamic movements have been ill-prepared to undertake themselves. This has created the foundations of a relationship, although

not all Arab nationalists are pleased or prepared to become apologists for varieties of Islam which, only a few years ago, they denounced with all their polemical force.

In contrast, the slogan of democracy is easier to appropriate. There are no mass democracy movements, and while virtually every Arab regime now claims to be committed to democracy, their late conversion often seems less credible than that of the Arab nationalists themselves. And so the pan-Arab journals brim with articles, conference proceedings, and study-group reports on the methods and means of promoting democracy in the Arab world. The assumption underlying this sudden enthusiasm for political pluralism and free elections is that if the people were only allowed to express themselves, they would endorse the Arab nationalist program: greater Arab unity, repudiation of the United States, and withdrawal from the Arab-Israeli peace process.⁴⁹ This belief flies in the face of the existing attitudinal surveys, which show a continuing shift of self-identification away from the Arab nation, and toward either the state or Islam. The results of those relatively free elections held to date show a similar polarization between the party of the state and the party of Islam. No Arab nationalist parties have been a factor in these elections. And while there is a constituency for some elements of the Arab nationalist program, it clearly belongs to Islamic parties, whose platforms incorporate similar repudiations of American hegemony and Israel, but are couched in the language of Islam.

In these circumstances, the commitment of Arab nationalists to democracy remains as superficial as that of the Islamists and the regimes. It is deployed as a slogan for mass mobilization against the existing order, and then as a shield against the revenge of a triumphant Islam. But even as the Arab nationalists speak of democracy, their eyes remain fixed on the horizon, awaiting the next Nasser, the next Saddam — the man who will save the Arabs from themselves and unite them. Even now, when the slogan of democracy is on everyone’s lips, half of the Arab nationalist intellectuals in a recent survey believe that Arab unity can only be achieved by force, not by democracy.⁵⁰

But Arab nationalism, having lost almost everything, now has little to lose, and its endorsement of democracy and Islam has been made in just that spirit. That Arab nationalism should now cast itself as the defender of freedom and the faith is ironic. The irony is not lost on the Arabs themselves, who have a strong sense of history and long memories. They discarded Arab nationalism because it failed to keep its promise of power, even as it exacted an exorbitant price in freedom and faith. It was not the only utopian ideology to do so at the time. And perhaps the more useful comparison, when the perspective is longer, may be between Arab nationalism and Soviet communism: two great myths of solidarity, impossible in their scale, deeply flawed in their implementation, which alternately stirred and whipped millions of people in a desperate pursuit of power through the middle of the twentieth century, before collapsing in exhaustion — and stranding their last admirers in the faculty lounges of the West.

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Notes

¹ Ibrahim al-Yaziji, “Tanabbahu wa istafiqu” (“Awake and Arise”).

² George Antonius, *The Arab Awakening: The Story of the Arab National Movement* (London: H. Hamilton, 1938).

³ Mahmoud Darwish, “Bitaqa hawiyya” (“Identity Card”).

⁴ Nizar Qabbani, "La buda an asta' dhina al-watan" ("I Must Ask the Homeland's Permission").

⁵ Rupert Emerson, *From Empire to Nation: The Rise to Self-Assertion of Asian and African Peoples* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960), 126.

⁶ See, for example, Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983); and Elie Kedourie, *Nationalism*, 4th ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993).

⁷ First assessed by George Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*. For subsequent accounts, see Zeine N. Zeine, *Arab-Turkish Relations and the Emergence of Arab nationalism* (Beirut: Khayat's, 1958); Sylvia Haim, *Arab nationalism: An Anthology* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1962), pp. 3-72 (introduction); Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age 1798-1939* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962; reprint, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); C. Ernest Dawn, *From Ottomanism to Arabism: Essays on the Origins of Arab Nationalism* (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1973); Philip S. Khoury, *Urban Notables and Arab nationalism: The Politics of Damascus 1860-1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); A. A. Duri, *The Historical Formation of the Arab Nation*, trans. Lawrence I. Conrad (London: Croom Helm, 1987); Bassam Tibi, *Arab nationalism: A Critical Inquiry*, 2d ed., trans. Marion Farouk Sluglett and Peter Sluglett; (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990); and Rashid Khalidi et al., eds., *The Origins of Arab Nationalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991).

⁸ For the most systematic critique of the "awakening," see Hisham Sharabi, *Arab Intellectuals and the West* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1970). For its difficulties in creating a modern vocabulary of politics, see Ami Ayalon, *Language and Change in the Arab Middle East: The Evolution of Modern Arabic Political Discourse* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).

⁹ Gertrude Bell, *The Desert and the Sown* (London: W. Heinemann, 1907), 140.

¹⁰ Turkish nationalism, inspired by Balkan nationalisms, in turn inspired much of the outlook of early Arab nationalism. On its genesis, see David Kushner, *The Rise of Turkish Nationalism, 1876-1908* (London: Frank Cass, 1977).

¹¹ See Neville J. Mandel, *The Arabs and Zionism before World War I* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1976).

¹² Elie Kedourie, "Pan-Arabism and British Policy," in Elie Kedourie, *The Chatham House Version and other Middle-Eastern Studies* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1970; reprint, Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 1984), 213.

¹³ On Arab politics in the immediate postwar period, see Zeine N. Zeine, *The Struggle for Arab Independence: Western Diplomacy and the Rise and Fall of Faisal's Kingdom in Syria*, 2d ed. (Delmar, New York: Caravan Books, 1977).

¹⁴ For the genesis of the names that filled the postwar map, see Bernard Lewis, "The Map of the Middle East: A Guide for the Perplexed," *The American Scholar* 58, no. 1 (winter 1988-89): 19-38.

¹⁵ The deep debate in Lebanon over the very definition of its history is considered by Ahmad Beydoun, *Identité confessionnelle et temps social chez les historiens libanais contemporains* (Beirut: Université libanaise, 1984); and Kamal Salibi, *A House of Many Mansions: The History of Lebanon Reconsidered* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988).

¹⁶ While the story of the Arab Revolt has been told many times, most famously by T. E. Lawrence and George Antonius, there are fewer accounts of the rival campaigns for separate independence in different parts of the Fertile Crescent. For a widening of the perspective, see Eliezer Tauber, *The Arab Movements in World War I* (London: Frank Cass, 1993).

¹⁷ Quoted by 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), 127.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 163-65.

¹⁹ On this evolution, see C. Ernest Dawn, "The Formation of a Pan-Arab Ideology in the Inter-War Years," *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 20 (1988): 67-91.

²⁰ On the Egyptian debate over identity, see Israel Gershoni and James P. Jankowski, *Egypt, Islam, and the Arabs: The Search for Egyptian Nationhood* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).

²¹ These plans have been considered in great detail by Yehoshua Porath, *In Search of Arab Unity 1930-1945* (London: Frank Cass, 1986).

²² J.C. Hurewitz, *The Middle East and North Africa in World Politics: A Documentary Record*, 2d ed., vol. 2, *British-French Supremacy, 1914-1945* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), 736. For the development of inter-Arab relations in this period, see Bruce Maddy-Weitzman, *The Crystallization of the Arab State System, 1945-1954* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1993).

²³ For a contemporary discussion of the transition to ideological politics, see Leonard Binder, *The Ideological Revolution in the Middle East* (New York: John Wiley, 1964).

²⁴ Translation in Haim, *Arab nationalism: An Anthology*, 233-41.

²⁵ Sami al-Jundi, a member of the Ba'th from its earliest years who wrote a devastating account of the party, as quoted by Elie Kedourie, *Arabic Political Memoirs and Other Studies* (London: Frank Cass, 1974), 201.

²⁶ For the early history of the Ba'th, see Kamel S. Abu Jaber, *The Arab Ba'th Socialist Party: History, Ideology, and Organization* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1966); John F. Devlin, *The Ba'th Party: A History from Its Origins to 1966* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1976); and Kanan Makiya [Samir al-Khalil], *Republic of Fear: The Politics of Modern Iraq* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1989), 149-257.

²⁷ For this period, see Malcolm H. Kerr, *The Arab Cold War: Gamal 'Abd al-Nasir and His Rivals, 1958-1970*, 3d ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1971); and P. J. Vatikiotis, *Conflict in the Middle East* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1971).

²⁸ David Holden, *Farewell to Arabia* (New York: Walker, 1966), 101.

²⁹ Abdul Aziz Said, "Clashing Horizons: Arabs and Revolution," in *People and Politics in the Middle East*, ed. Michael Curtis (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction, 1971), 279.

³⁰ Fouad Ajami, "The End of Pan-Arabism," in *Pan-Arabism and Arab nationalism: The Continuing Debate*, ed. Tawfic E. Farah (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1987), 98.

³¹ The most thought-provoking account of the post-1967 crisis of Arab nationalism remains Fouad Ajami's *The Arab Predicament: Arab Political Thought and Practice Since 1967*, updated ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992). Other works representative of the reassessments made by Arab intellectuals include Abdallah Laroui, *The Crisis of the Arab Intellectual: Traditionalism or Historicism?*, trans. Diarmid Cammell (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1976); Samir Amin, *The Arab Nation* (London: Zed Press, 1978); Hisham Sharabi, *Neopatriarchy: A Theory of Distorted Change in Arab Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988); and Paul Salem, *Bitter Legacy: Ideology and Politics in the Arab World* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1994). For a variety of assessments by non-Arabs, see Michael Hudson, *Arab Politics: The Search for Legitimacy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977); Jacques Berque, *Arab Rebirth: Pain & Ecstasy*, trans. Quintin Hoare (London: Al Saqi Books, 1983); David Pryce-Jones, *The Closed Circle: An Interpretation of the Arabs* (New York: Harper and Row, 1989); and Olivier Carré, *Le nationalisme arabe* (Paris: Fayard, 1993).

³² Salibi, *A House of Many Mansions*, 218, 231.

³³ Kamal Abu-Deeb, "Cultural Creation in a Fragmented Society," in *The Next Arab Decade: Alternative Futures*, ed. Hisham Sharabi (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1988), 165.

³⁴ The strengthening of the Arab state served as the theme of a multiyear project on "Nation, State and Integration in the Arab World," which generated four volumes of detailed studies. The most significant of these studies are collected in Giacomo Luciani, ed., *The Arab State* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990).

³⁵ Michel Aflaq, *Fi sabil al-ba'th* (Beirut: Dar al-Tali'a, 1963), 55.

³⁶ Quoted by Emmanuel Sivan, *Radical Islam: Medieval Theology and Modern Politics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 30-32.

³⁷ On the evolution of this approach, see Moshe Shemesh, *The Palestinian Entity 1959-1974: Arab Politics and the PLO* (London: Frank Cass, 1988).

³⁸ Jean Genet, *Prisoner of Love*, trans. Barbara Bray (London: Picador, 1989), 239.

³⁹ Quoted by Olivier Carré, *Le nationalisme arabe*, 175.

⁴⁰ Quoted by Amatzia Baram, *Culture, History and Ideology in the Formation of Ba'hist Iraq, 1968-89* (London: Macmillan, 1991), 121. The book includes a detailed discussion of the issue of identity in Iraqi politics, and the genesis of the Mesopotamian myth.

⁴¹ See Samir al-Khalil [Kanan Makiya], *The Monument: Art, Vulgarly and Responsibility in Iraq* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991).

⁴² Hichem Djaït, *Europe and Islam*, trans. Peter Heinegg (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985), 140-41.

⁴³ Quoted by Kanan Makiya, *Cruelty and Silence: War, Tyranny, Uprising, and the Arab World* (New York: Norton, 1993), 242. The second half of this work is devoted to the rush of Arab nationalist intellectuals to endorse Saddam Hussein before and during the Gulf crisis.

⁴⁴ David Pollock, "The Arab Street"? *Public Opinion in the Arab World*, Policy Papers, no. 32 (Washington: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 1992), 29-41.

⁴⁵ An example of this trend is the article by the Egyptian intellectual Lutfi al-Khuli, "Arab? Na'am wa-lakin sharq awsatyiyin aydan!," *Al-Hayat* (London), 20 May 1992.

⁴⁶ Roderic Davison, "Where is the Middle East?," in *The Modern Middle East*, ed. Richard Nolte (New York: Atherton, 1963), 16-17.

⁴⁷ Fouad Ajami, "The End of Arab nationalism," *The New Republic*, 12 August 1991.

⁴⁸ For an example of such a debate, see the proceedings of a roundtable of Arab nationalist intellectuals on the possibility of a nationalist-Islamist rapprochement, in *Al-Mustaqbal al-arabi* (Beirut) 161 (July 1992): 96-119.

⁴⁹ For a typical statement of this view, see As'ad AbuKhalil, "A New Arab Ideology?: The Rejuvenation of Arab nationalism," *Middle East Journal*, 46 (winter 1992): 22-36.

⁵⁰ The survey was conducted by researchers at Yarmuk University, and included almost one thousand respondents from several Arab countries. See *Al-Mustaqbal al-arabi* (Beirut) 164 (October 1992): 27-33.