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FROM THE FREE OFFICERS COUP TO THE ARAB-ISRAELI WAR OF 1967: THE RISE AND DEMISE OF THE RADICALIZATION TREND IN THE MIDDLE EAST

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Abstract

The early 20th century witnessed the ideological triumph of Arab nationalism and pan-Arabism in the Middle East with the cultural and literary renaissance that rose in the region leading to a collective consciousness as to the Arab identity among Arab intellectuals. It was the Arab nation-identity rather than the individual Arab states' identity that shaped the political discourse of the then-Arab regimes. In addition, the political juncture with the advent of anti-colonial movements in the region following the Second World War set the stage for the radicalization trend of the military regimes which aimed to unify Arab nations under one state and carry out sweeping economic programs of modernization and centralization. On the other hand, the defeat in the Arab-Israeli War of 1967 was a defining historic moment in the reconfiguration of Arab politics in the Middle East. Since the war, Arab states moved into a post-nationalist stage in which strict ideological control and authoritarian policies were replaced with a set of limited political and economic openings and the Arab-Israeli treaty. This article investigates the birth and rise of the Arab nationalist movement along with the ideological origins of the radicalization trend of the ruling regimes in the Middle East. The article suggests that pan-Arabism, Arab socialism and anti-imperialism gained momentum in the 1950s and 1960s with a number of political developments under Egypt's President Abd-al Nasser. Nevertheless, the eventual decline of the radical regimes was witnessed with the 1967 Arab defeat that inflicted a mortal blow to the Arab nationalist movement. From 1967 onwards, the regimes lost both their capability and aspirations to realize Arab nationalist goals and in this era, state nationalism came to the forefront.

Keywords: Arab nationalism, pan-Arabism, Arab socialism, radicalization, demise, Arab-Israeli War of 1967.

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Öz

HÜR SUBAYLAR DARBESİNDEN 1967 ARAP-İSRAİL SAVAŞINA: ORTA DOĞU'DA RADİKALLEŞME EĞİLİMİNİN YÜKSELİŞİ VE ÇÖKÜŞÜ

20. yüzyılın başı bölgede yükselen kültürel ve edebi rönesansın Arap entellektüelleri arasında Arap kimliğine dair kolektif bir bilinci ortaya çıkarmasıyla birlikte Orta Doğu Arab milliyetçiliği ve pan-Arabizmin ideolojik zaferine sahne olmuştur. Münferit Arap devletlerinin kimliklerinden ziyade Arab ulusu kimliği o dönemdeki Arap rejimlerinin siyasi söylemlerine şekil vermiştir. Bunun yanısıra, İkinci Dünya Savaşı sonrası bölgede koloni karşıtı hareketlerin yükselişi ile ortaya çıkan siyasi konjonktür, Arap milletlerini tek bir devlet altında birleştirmeyi ve modernleşme ve merkezileştirmeye yönelik ekonomik programları hayata geçirmeyi hedefleyen askeri rejimlerin radikalleşme eğilimleri için zemin hazırlamıştır. Diğer yandan, 1967 Arap-İsrail savaşı Orta Doğu'da Arap siyasetinin yeniden şekillenmesinde belirleyici tarihsel bir dönüm noktası olmuştur, çünkü bu savaştan sonra Arap ülkeleri, katı bir ideolojik kontrolün ve otoriter politikaların yerini bir dizi sınırlı siyasi ve ekonomik açılımın ve İsrail'le müzakere ve anlaşmaların aldığı yeni bir döneme geçmiştir. Bu makale Arap milliyetçiliğinin doğuşu, yükselişi ve Orta Doğu'da hüküm süren rejimlerin radikalleşme eğiliminin ideolojik temellerini incelemektedir. Makaleye göre, Pan-Arabizm, Arap sosyalizmi ve emperyalizm karşıtlığı Mısır Cumhurbaşkanı Abdülnasır döneminde bir dizi siyasi gelişme ile birlikte ivme kazanmıştır. Diğer yandan, radikal rejimlerin nihai çöküşü Arap milliyetçiliği hareketine ölümcül bir darbe vuran 1967 savaşında Araplar'ın yenilgisi ile gerçekleşmiştir. 1967'yi takip eden süreçte, bu rejimler Arab milliyetçiliği hedeflerini gerçekleştirmek için yeterliliklerini ve isteklerini kaybetmişlerdir ve bu dönemde devlet milliyetçiliği öne çıkmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Arap milliyetçiliği, pan-Arabizm, Arap sosyalizmi, radikalleşme, çöküş, 1967 Arap-İsrail Savaşı.

Introduction

Arab nationalism became a prominent aspect of the Arab political life at the beginning of the 20th century when the gradual decline of the Ottoman Empire gave way to a complete downfall. Arab nationalism distinguishes itself from the concept of nation-state in Europe in that nation embraces all Arabs in the Middle East rather than creating a national identity based on an individual state. Strong cultural and religious bonds among Arabs were believed to create an Arab identity which would ultimately create an Arab state. Besides, to many intellectuals, writers, and poets at the time, Arab nationalism emerged as a response to overcome the Arab states' centuries long decline and their falling behind the West in cultural, political, and economic terms.

The Arab nationalist movement once heavily influenced the political agenda of Arab states, their foreign policy and alliance making while it also mobilized the masses towards the goal of Arab political unity. The formation of the League of Arab States in 1944, the union between Syria and Egypt in 1958, and the establishment of the Federation of Arab Republics in 1972 were notable developments that indicated

political desire by the ruling elite for a United Arab State. Nonetheless, after the humiliating rout in the 1967 Six Day War and the inter-Arab divisions that succeeded Egypt's President Nasser's death in 1970, the initial euphoria surrounding Arab nationalism faded over time giving way to a constant rivalry among the Arab states for political supremacy and divergent external alliances based on regional competition. By the turn of the 21st century, Arab nationalism and Pan-Arabism were no longer appealing for the Arab masses and intellectuals and they turned out to be ideologies sinking into oblivion.

Today the debate over the birth, rise and demise of Arab nationalism is not only vital for understanding nationalism in the Middle East or the Arab identity per se, but it has become more of an issue to understanding the nature of revolutionary regimes, also labelled as radical regimes and the political developments during their rule. Today, these regimes are labeled "radical" not because of the violent nature of change or dictatorial exercise of power, but rather because of the complete rupture of their policies and ideological stance from the former regimes. On the other hand, the radicalization trend in Egypt, Syria, and Iraq runs parallel with the blossoming of a set of ideologies reactionary to the Western hegemonic and imperialist rule in the region such as Arab socialism, anti-imperialism and anti-Zionism. In this era, suspicions towards the West due to colonial past and the Zionist challenge were influential in the radicalization of the Arab politics since Arab nationalism and pan-Arab unity would be both meaningless and shallow without a political and military victory against Israel.

This article aims to investigate the birth of Arab nationalism and its rise as a political movement parallel with the radicalization trend in Syria, Egypt, and Iraq and reflect on the ideological foundations of radical regimes. Second, this article aims to examine the decline of the Arab nationalist movement in the ideological void created by the new political conjuncture in the aftermath of the 1967 War and the eventual victory of the nation-state over Arab political unity. To this end, the rest of the article is divided into three sections: The first section deals with the origins of Arab nationalism and the historical context in which it had taken root and developed into a political movement. The second section makes a careful definition of the subsidiary ideologies that are central to the Arab nationalist movement and constituted the ideological ground for radical regimes. In this part, three subsidiary ideologies, (1) Arab nationalism (2) Pan-Arabism (3) Arab socialism are comparatively analyzed. This section also traces the political developments in which Arab nationalism was at its height and which brought radical regimes closer to the Soviet Union. Whereas, the ideological factors went hand in hand with the ideological contest of the bipolar political structure of the Cold War, a number of political developments determined to what extent, the radicalization trend could achieve widespread

support from the grassroots level. The third section examines the demise of Arab nationalism and its numerous repercussions for the reconfiguration of the political agenda of individual Arab states.

The Birth of the Arab Nationalism

Arab nationalist ideas took root in the late 19th century, in the dying days of the Ottoman Empire. The birth of the Arab nationalist movement corresponds to the modernization efforts by the ruling dynasty to respond to requests for reform by well-educated Ottoman elite and to keep up with the progress in the West- be it intellectual, political, military or economic. This was an era in which the empire was in a tight corner on many fronts and reforms were believed to prolong the life of the empire. These liberal reforms were accompanied with the sending of Ottoman students to the West to receive higher education and bring recent developments and ideas back home. However, attempts to lengthen the life of the Empire through liberal reforms backfired and indeed speeded up the disintegration process. The following section briefly discusses the historical context in which Arab nationalist ideas gained ground among the Arab speaking publics of the Empire and how attempts towards Westernization helped to promote the Arab national identity distinct from the religious *ummah*.

Most of the Arabian lands had been under the sovereignty of the Ottoman Empire since the 16th century. In comparison to the other regions in the empire ruled by a relatively light touch, the Levant countries and Egypt were under the direct control of the Ottoman ruling dynasty due to their strategic importance linking the Ottoman Empire to Jerusalem and the Holy Land (Hejaz) and sheltering the central cities of the Islamic world; Baghdad, Damascus, and Cairo. In political terms, the relationship between the Ottoman ruling dynasty and the Arab public was based on a tacit alliance between the two; Arab Sunni Muslims were appointed to important positions in the local Ottoman administration and were regarded highly by the Ottoman Turks, and in turn, Sunni Arabs maintained their allegiance to the ruling Ottoman dynasty. The question of identity didn't create much tension among the Arab publics since the Ottoman Empire created a sense of belonging among its subjects based on loyalty to the ruling dynasty, rather than a shared national identity based on ethnic, linguistic, or cultural elements. Thus, it was not until the late 19th century that the notion of *millet* (nation) corresponding to a distinct cultural-political community of people emerged as a prominent ideology among the Arab publics, rather it was *ummah*, the religious community of Muslims, that dominated the mainstream Arab consciousness.

By the turn of the 20th century, the loyalty of the Arab publics could no longer be maintained for two reasons: First, the Arab publics were inspired by 19th century

Western ideas promoting the notion of nation-state and the identification of the concept of nation based primarily on ethnic, linguistic, and cultural terms, as opposed to religious belonging. The spread of nationalistic movements of Slavic minorities in the Balkan territories ending in their secession from the Ottoman Empire by the end of 1912 largely influenced the thinking of the educated urban elites living in great cities like Baghdad and Damascus. Furthermore, the decrees passed in 1839 and 1856 sought to introduce secularization on many fronts and abolish the marked difference on the basis of religion. By establishing citizenship based on nation instead of religious community, those reforms eliminated the single common bond between Sunni Arabs and Turks opening the way to ethnic nationalism.

Second, the Young Turk Revolution of 1908 was a defining moment in the history of Arab nationalism. Indeed, Arabs initially supported the Young Turk movement and the proclamation of the constitution of 1908 in the belief that the new constitution would promote the modernization of the empire. However, only a few weeks after its proclamation, it became evident that the new regime was trying to turn the revolution to their advantage[1]. The Young Turk revolution soon turned into a movement of purely Turkish nationalism which asserted dominance in all aspects of political and cultural life. This specific Turkish nationalism demanded the union of all Turkish speaking people within the empire and Central Asia where Turks had their origin historically. The Young Turks movement turned to a secular ideology which was anti-Islamic in its essence since it urged Turks to turn back to their roots before they adopted Islam. The Pan-Turanian doctrine adopted by the Young Turks extolled Turkish nationality over other ethnic groups and undermined the traditional privileges formerly enjoyed by the Muslim communities of the empire. In addition, this doctrine was quite the reverse of Ottomanism which privileged the unity among diverse ethnic groups under one nation on the basis of equality[2]. Another backlash was the adoption of a centralization policy by the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), the Young Turks' initial umbrella political party. While the diversity of ethnic groups within the empire demanded a decentralized form of governance and more autonomy in political and cultural issues, the CUP attempted to take a firm grip on central bureaucracy to consolidate the unity of the empire. Eventually, these attempts backfired and indeed paved the way for the dissolution of the empire.

The attempt by CUP to unite diverse ethnic groups into a political unity by imposing Turkish language and culture and shifting the ideological basis of the empire from Islamism to Turkish nationalism was alarming to Arabs who came to an understanding that under the rule of the Young Turks, they would have to renounce

1 Karol Sorby, "Arab Nationalism After the Young Turk Revolution (1908-1912)", *Asian and African Studies* 14, no. 1 (2005): 6.
2 Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* (UK: Oxford University Press, 1968): 210.

their Arab identity and cultural aspirations. Worse still was the banning of the societies established by the non-Turkish racial groups among which the Arab-Ottoman Brotherhood had an important role in building strong bonds between the Arabs and Turks[3]. While the Societies Law of 1909 outlawed the foundation of political societies on the basis of nationalism or involving the names of ethnic groups, Young Turks were openly pursuing Turkification policies. In this context, Arab nationalism was born both as a reaction to and under the influence of the pan-Turkic nationalist agenda of CUP. On the one hand, Turkification policies of CUP and their secular agenda led to the alienation of Arabs sparking an unrest among the tribes of Arab lands who severely condemned CUP and its policies as anti-Islamic. On the other hand, the nationalist agenda of CUP also raised awareness among educated secular Arabs who had received a Western style education in the new schools the Empire founded after *Tanzimat* (Reforms) was put into force in the 19th century. Western ideas such as nation, liberty, and equality, which were the key tenets of the French Revolution, began to seep into the empire with the return of those students who were sent to receive their higher education in the West.

Moreover, the adoption of a set of political reforms, *Tanzimat* and *Islahat,* to extend the life of the empire on the one hand, and the struggle to oppress the secessionist movements in several regions of the empire's vast territory on the other, created a paradoxical situation for the non-Turkic ethnic groups. As the empire paved the way for reforms and loosened its control over its territories, more non-Turkic ethnic groups embraced the idea of a break from the empire. In this regard, the unstoppable wave of secessions in the Balkans set a model for Arab intellectuals who began to view the break of Arab societies from the Ottomans as the only way to return to their glorious age.

To Arab nationalists, Arab's current backwardedness (*al-takhalluf*) was caused by the invasion and colonialization of the Arab fatherland by the Ottomans leading them to fall behind the West[4]. Meanwhile, the decline of the empire and its entry into the First World War in 1914 expanded the potential of rebellion among Arab tribes. In this political setting, the pledge by the British Empire to promote Arab independence in return for their support for the British Empire in World War I promoted the Arab societies' search for an independent state and sparked the Arab Revolt of 1916 led by Sharif of Mecca culminating in the secession of a number of Arab states from the empire. However, the secessions didn't lead to a great Arab state uniting all Arabs, instead, it ended up with the establishment of a number of Arab states as foreign-dominated mandates with artificial borders under Britain or France.

3 Eliezer Tauber, *The Emergence of the Arab Movements* (London: Frank Cass, 1993): 63.
4 R. H. Pfaff, "The Function of Arab Nationalism," *Comparative Politics* 2, no: 2 (1970):162.

After their secession, all the Arab states, except Saudi Arabia and North Yemen, found themselves under direct or indirect European control. Between the 1920s and the 1950s, three states of the Middle East,Iraq, Syria, and Egypt were ruled by a parliamentary type of government which was endorsed by the Arab elites of that era. They viewed parliamentary constitutionalism as a progressive political form that stood in stark contrast to the illiberal system of the Ottoman Empire under Abdul Hamid II or the military dictatorship of the Young Turks during World War I[5]. However, despite being sympathetic towards the West and their endorsement of the constitutionalism, the ruling elite gave precedence to the fight for independence which they considered as the only path to achieving progress in Arab societies. Despite initial expectations, under colonial rule, the Arab states didn't achieve the long-aspired progress, prosperity, and stability. Indeed, large masses of peasants, the urban poor and lower middle classes didn't feel any positive impact from this new system. It also soon became clear that the new constitutional system was vulnerable to the oligarchical and authoritarian tendencies. In other words, a liberal constitution was there in form but not in substance[6].

The educated middle class and underprivileged intelligentsia came into political consciousness and started to question the pitfalls of the existing political system and social injustice. In addition, the Arab elite resented the colonial rulers as they felt politically deceived since the colonial powers initially pledged to foster Arab nations' independence following their secession from the Ottoman Empire. As a response, numerous anti-colonial and anti-Western revolts were staged across Egypt, Iraq, and Syria to gain independence from colonial rule. These revolts indeed gained momentum to the rise of Arab nationalism and eventually, World War II enabled Arab nations to gain independence from colonial rulers. In the years following the Second World War, monarchies in Egypt, Iraq, and Syria were toppled in a military coup, the parliamentary constitutions were abolished and the new states were proclaimed to be republics by the ruling junta. Young military officers from lower urban or rural strata of the society superseded the previous monarchy system and upper civilian politicians educated in the West. Domestic reforms towards a more ideological, socialist, egalitarian change were made in an authoritarian way.

In each of these states, the change from the monarchial to a republican system was revolutionary as it was imposed from above and the army was the main determinant of social, political, and economic change. In other words, these regimes brought substantial change to all aspects of their societies at a rather fast pace and took a path that completely disengaged from the previous system. Therefore, the

5 George Lenczowski, "Radical Regimes in Egypt, Syria, and Iraq: Comparative Observations on Ideologies and Practises," *The Journal of Politics* 28, no. 1 (1966): 29.

6 *ibid.,* 30.

military regimes of this new era can be described as "radical" due to the fundamental change brought by the content of their policies and the rather fast pace at which they materialized their policies. This label is described by Lenczowski as "deliberate activity aiming at substantial change of the social, economic, cultural and political features of society, a change whose pace is so rapid and uncompromising toward the past as to justify calling it a radical departure from the previous patterns"[7].

With the rise of the radical regimes into power, Arab nationalism took a new turn. In the first half of the 20th century, Arab nationalism was concerned more with cultural and social domain, yet its political dimension didn't emerge as a fully developed ideology. Arab nationalism as a political movement was reactive at its outset. It came out first as a reaction to Turkish nationalism and pan-Turkic policies of CUP, and later as a reaction to the European colonial rule over Arab lands[8]. Nonetheless, with the long-aspired independence achieved, Arab nationalism struggled to take a proactive stance in the political domain. To achieve this, Arab nationalists had to fill the void in the ideological aspects of Arab nationalism as the concept of Arab nationalism was somewhat vague and open to interpretation then. Yet, when radical regimes took power into their hands, Arab nationalism became a vital element of their political discourse and policy-making in the cultural, political and economic sphere. In this new era, Arab nationalism took on a new meaning with the subsidiary ideologies that accompanied it and the increased politicization of the Cold War era.

In order to fully understand Arab nationalism and its underlying tenets, it is of great significance to investigate its ideological foundations parallel with the rise of radical regimes that placed Arab nationalism in the core of their political agenda. Such an attempt inevitably requires a conceptual distinction among the concepts that lie central to it and often used interchangeably such as nationalism, Arabism and pan-Arabism. To this end, in the upcoming section, these concepts will be comparatively examined along with Arab socialism which served as an integral element of the social and economic policies of the radical regimes during its glorious age.

The Rise of Radical Regimes and Arab Nationalism

A nation differs from an ethnic group in the sense that the former involves the aspiration to attain political sovereignty within a specific territory. Applied to the Arab world, the cultural, religious and emotional bonds that tie Arab speaking people to each other would be termed as "Arabism" while Arabism with the element of a strong desire to form political sovereignty in a specified territory would be termed

7 *ibid.,* 31.
8 Mahmoud Haddad, "The Rise of Arab Nationalism Reconsidered"*, International Journal of Middle East Studies 26*, no. 2 (1994): 213.

as Arab nationalism[9]. In broader terms, Arab nationalism could be understood as an ideology whose central premise was that Arabs were a single nation given that they were closely connected through a distinct culture, language, history and religion, yet set apart owing to their long history of division and domination by external forces. On the other hand, pan-Arabism is a political doctrine that envisions Arab political unity, in other words, the unity of all Arabs in one unified state. A definitional overlap between Arab nationalism and pan-Arabism emerges since the desire for political unity has been an integral component of the thoughts and the political discourse of Arab nationalists themselves.

The primary political goal of Arab nationalists was to put an end to imperialism and the Western ideas that infiltrated into the Arab world and to bring the old magnificent Arabic civilization back to the region. The new regimes of the Levant created political legitimacy based on their missions to free Arabs from the chains of imperialism and achieve unity under one political entity. According to many Arab nationalists, it was the lack of unity that brought the humiliating defeat in the 1948-1949 War over Palestine. In this regard, Sati' al- Husri, the leading theoretician of Arab nationalism, stated in one of his writings that Arabs lost the war because of their disunity and entering into the war as seven states when Israel was only one[10]. Likewise, the founders of the Baath Party declared in its opening article in 1947: "The Arabs form one nation. This nation has the natural right to live in a single state. As such the Arab fatherland constitutes an indivisible political and economic unity. No Arab country can live apart from the others"[11]. Hence, though conceptually Arab nationalism and pan-Arabism seem to differ, they are so closely connected that their legacy would not survive without one another.

From its inception, Arab nationalism was a political project that was born as a reaction to colonialism and Western imperialism. As Choueiri suggests nationalism in the Middle East was an integral component of a wider movement arising from the sudden political awakening of the East as it struggled to liberate itself from the shackles of colonialism[12]. To Arab nationalists, it was imperialism which reappeared as colonialism that divided the Arab World into many artificial political entities and hindered them from achieving their potential. Pan-Arabism was essential to bring back Arabs' centuries old glorious past and to challenge imperial rulers. Egypt was first to take a pan-Arabist stance as it had seen the advantages of pan-Arabism in its struggle

9 Adeed Dawisha, *Arab Nationalism in the Twentieth Century: From Triumph to Despair* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003), 13.
10 *ibid*., 3.
11 Sylvia Haim, *Arab Nationalism: An Antology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1962), 233.
12 Youssef M. Choueiri, *A Companion to the History of the Middle East* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 292.

to liberate itself from British colonial rule. Besides, to enable Arab nations to take a more coordinated and proactive role in the regional and global politics the League of Arab states was established in 1945 and expressed new drive towards an Arab unity.

In this period, in all Arab countries, nationalist sentiment and a desire for Arab political unity was reflected in the political discourse, yet these nationalist sentiments didn't necessarily lead them to take the same path. Instead, their internal politics and perceptions of need for change differed radically from one country to another in the region. The Monarchies of the Gulf States and Jordan allied with the imperialist rulers and struggled to preserve the status quo in contrast to the radical regimes of the Levant and Egypt which strongly opposed Western powers and desired a complete change in the political system towards a more equal distribution and social justice. Hence, they detached themselves from Western powers and their allies in the Middle East drawing a new political roadmap and allying themselves with the Soviet Union and its socialist propaganda which took the same ideological stance against Western imperialism and served well the goal of Arab liberation struggle and the fight for social justice. In this era, Arab socialism, a term coined by Michel Eflak, one of the ideologues of Baathism, was embraced by radical regimes filling the ideological void of Arab nationalism and pan-Arabism which were influential as an ideology but vague in practical terms and not elaborated with a particular roadmap.

Arab socialism was a fundamental component of the radicalization trend taking place in Levant and Egypt. It was an amalgamation of socialism and Pan-Arabism and differed from mainstream socialist thought with its major tenets implicated in the Baath party's trinity slogan "Unity, liberty, socialism" and its motto "One Arab nation with an immortal mission" which appeared on party publications and newspapers[13]. The three pillars of the Arab Socialist Baath (Resurrection) Party were Arab nationalism, freedom from imperial rule (*hurriyah*) and the setting up of a single Arab state (*wihdah*)[14]. The Baathists adopted socialism (*istirakiyah*) as a tool to provide social justice for the poor and underprivileged. To Eflak, Arab socialism was not an aim itself, but rather an essential means to ensure the society the highest standard of production while promoting the highest level of cooperation and solidarity among the citizens[15].

On the other hand, Arab socialism differs from mainstream socialist thought adopted by the Western Socialist and Marxist philosophies in two ways. First, Arab

13 John Devlin, "The Baath Party: Rise and Metamorphosis", *The American Historical Review* 96, no. 5 (1991):1398.
14 *ibid*., 1396.
15 John Devlin, The Ba'th Party: A History from its Origins to 1966 (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institute Press, 1975), 34.

socialism is an indigenous movement and nationalism is deeply embedded in the Arab socialist discourse while Marxist socialism is estranged from nationalism. Second, in contrast to the Marxist socialism that is inherently anti-religious, Arab socialism is inseparably linked with Islam as a source and its principles are derived from Islam and Arab cultural heritage. Arab socialism is viewed as subservient to Islam in that it aimed to promote a more egalitarian redistribution of wealth, a sense of solidarity among citizens and to ensure social harmony between the wealthy and the impoverished. In other words, Arab socialism is a blending of revolutionary philosophy with a traditional religious doctrine. In relation to the link between Arab socialism and Islam, Abdul Salam Arif, the former president and the founder of the Arab Socialist Union of Iraq stated:

"The socialism we seek is the solidarity desired in Islam and which rests on Arab tradition in respect to fraternal sentiments and mutual assistance whether on individual, tribal or collective basis. By socialism we mean social justice, non-exploitation, abolition of monopoly and the offering of opportunities to all in compliance with Allah's decree: And those in whose wealth the beggar and the deprived have specific right"[16].

Arab socialism, just like Arab nationalism, was a reaction to the economic foundations of capitalism which is seen as a tool to exploit the sources of the Middle East and elsewhere. As manifested in Nasserism and Baathism, the official state ideologies of Egypt (1952-1970) and of Iraq and Syria from the 1960s to the mid-1980s respectively, the educated middle class and the ruling elite agreed on the most urgent needs of their countries which were independence on the political front, and economic development and modernization on the economic front. To the Arab socialist view, the state was a natural vehicle to carry out both economic development and modernization which were to be achieved by a strict centrally planned economy and large scale nationalization to ensure the sharing of resources of the country by its citizens. To this end, banking, insurance, large industries, and private and foreign owned companies were all nationalized and in turn, state-run social, health, educational, and welfare services expanded. The socialist economic development model was expected to remedy the long-standing wounds of the masses, particularly from the lowest strata of society.

Cleveland and Bunton argued that Nasser adopted socialism for pragmatic reasons rather than ideological commitment. Socialist economic reforms allowed Egypt to nationalize the country's various enterprises and generate funds needed for its development schemes, otherwise, the regime would have had difficulty in rais-

16 George Lenczowski, "Radical Regimes in Egypt, Syria, and Iraq: Comparative Observations on Ideologies and Practises", 40.

ing funds for projects aiming to improve the country's infrastructure[17]. In 1961, the government launched an agrarian reform program which allowed landholdings per family up to 100 fedans and in 1969 it was restricted to 50 fedans[18]. The agrarian reform in Egypt enhanced the economic and social status of middle-class peasants and brought a more egalitarian distribution of resources. A similar agrarian reform was introduced to Syria in 1958 under the United Arab Republic and the Syrian Baath Party took initiatives towards nationalization of sources and free enterprise as well as strict central planning of the national economy. Likewise, under Qasim, an agrarian reform law similar to that of Egypt in 1952 was issued in Iraq and the government nationalized all banks, insurance, and large manufacturing companies. These reforms, aimed to address the large masses of peasants who were left untouched by the monarchial rule and to mitigate income inequalities[19]. The Arab socialist discourse and the economic modernization programs that sought to restructure the economy in favor of the lower class were welcomed by the Arab publics and earned the revolutionary regimes public support and political legitimacy, particularly in the eyes of middle and lower class citizens.

Consequently, the years between 1952 and 1970 saw a radical transformation from a traditional-feudal society into a progressive socialist one in the states of Egypt, Syria, and Iraq. The drive for Arab political unity, the pursuit of Arab solidarity and a more equitable share of resources marked a distinctive era in which for the first time in Arab contemporary history, ideology prevailed in politics. Nonetheless, though Arab nationalism reached its ideological maturity from 1950s onwards, the decisive moment for the rise of Arab nationalism took its turn with a number of regional developments that shaped the course of the Arab nationalist movement and its future. While domestic policies and political discourse formed the basis for the rise of Arab nationalism, it was a set of historical episodes that had far-reaching repercussions and evoked mass fervor among Arab intellectuals and political elite for political unity during the heyday of Arabism under Gamal Abdel Nasser. To that end, the following section investigates the key political developments that gained momentum to the Arab nationalist movement and the radicalization trend in the region.

Key Political Developments Behind the Radicalization Trend

Ideological factors that settled ground for a radical change in Arab society were able to trigger a glorious moment for Arab nationalism owing to some po-

17 William L. Cleveland & Martin P. Bunton, *A History of the Modern Middle East* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2009), 316.
18 *ibid*., 318.
19 Hossesin Askari, John Thomas Cummings, James Toth, "Land Reform in the Middle East: A Note on Its Distributive Effects", *Iranian Studies* 10, No. 4 (Autumn 1977): 267-9.

litical developments which justified the legacy of the radical regimes and mobilized popular support around them. In the post-colonial period, a group of Syrian intellectuals suggested that the differences among Arabs were in fact trivial and accidental and would fade away with the awakening of Arab consciousness and Arab political unity as a response to fragmentation and impasse in the political systems. Though the Baath party in Syria enjoyed great ideological strength, it was the historical context sheltering a number of episodes that brought political victory to the Arab nationalists in Egypt under Nasser and radical Arab nationalism lived its heyday during this era.

During the second half of the 20th century, the Baath party played a critical role in ideological mobilization of the masses across the region, spreading from its heartlands, Iraq and Syria[20]. Though Baathism was influential as an ideology, it didn't achieve much progress on the political scene. An important reason for this failure was the fractionalization and politicization of the officer corp within the Syrian military. Following Husni Zaim's coup in 1949, the military became the paramount political force in the country, which lasted up to the present. The other influential factor in this fragmentation was the French divide and rule policies which promoted identification with regional, sectarian, or ethnic communities instead of loyalty to the Syrian national identity. Even when they were appointed to posts in national institutions such as the armed forces, their communal identity played a greater role[21]. Unlike Egypt, in these countries, no single military man could gain the loyalty and support of the entire military, which rendered it vulnerable to successive coup attempts. In late 1957, being aware of their lack of strength to be in the driver's seat and suspecting that the ongoing chaos would eventually benefit the Communists who gained considerable power, the Syrian Baath leaders reached out to Nasser for a union between Syria and Egypt.

Just like Syria, following the toppling of the British-installed Hashemite monarchy by Brigadier Abdal-Karim Qasim in a military coup in 1958, Iraq suffered from a similar political instability caused by the factions among the military officers and successive military coups. The officers in the Iraqi army were plagued by ethnic and sectarian divisions as well as fragmentation along political ideology. Qasim was an ardent follower of the socialist reforms which targeted improving the position of the lower class and increasing the size of the middle class, which was resented by the elite. The revolution led by the coup initially aimed to join the

20 The Baath party was founded in 1954 by Michael Aflaq and Salah al-Din al-Bitar and the party's core ideology was based on notions of Arab nationalism and socialism. In that regard, there was a great commonality between the Syrian Baathists and the Egyptian President Nasser who considered anti-colonialism and self-governance as the fundamental to their political agenda.

21 William L. Cleveland & Martin P. Bunton, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, 324.

pan-Arabist movement, yet when Qasim came into power, he was reluctant to join a union with Egypt and he, instead, adopted the *wataniyah* first policy[22]. A power struggle existed between Qasim and Arif, his subordinate during the coup, over the former's refusal to jump on the pan-Arabist bandwagon along with his government descending into autocracy[23]. The long-lasting power struggle culminated in the toppling of the Qasim by Colonel Abd-al Salam Arif in 1963, and he ruled the country until 1966. Hence in Iraq, similar to Syria, political fragmentation in the state institutions and the military precluded one particular ideology such as Baathism to be the dominant political force with popular support. It also ruled out the prospect of a dominant leader who would be able to gain the loyalty of the whole military and other state institutions in Iraq.

In Syria and Iraq, the challenge, for the Baath regime, lay in forging a vibrant and secular ideology that could transcend ethnic and sectarian lines. This was mostly due to the fact that these societies were too divided in their ethnic, religious, and economic interests. A major obstacle facing Syria and Iraq, as Raymond Hinnebusch argues, was the mismatch between state and identity from the random placement of territorial boundaries under imperialism[24]. Artificial boundaries built during the colonial period created dissatisfaction due to the forced fragmentation within a territory and the incompatibility between identity communities and a claimed territory. As a consequence, the formation of strong sub and supra-state identities weakened the identification with the national state. However, those supra-state movements had the potential to deteriorate the integrity of the state, which in turn directed the elite towards authoritarian solutions[25]. As a response, the Baath regime urged to create legitimacy through the triumph of Arab identity with a socialist view over imperialism using authoritarian tools and tactics in order to repress other reflections of identity that were supposed to be divisive such as ethnicity and sect.

Despite the ideological strength of Baathism at the time, political dissention and communal identity conflicts in Syria and Iraq thwarted the Baathists' attempts to materialize the Arab political unity. In turn, they turned to Nasser, the only strong and charismatic political figure who could mobilize Arab masses in Egypt and across the region. Colonel Gamal Abdel Nasser was a leading figure of the core group of Free Officers within the Egyptian military which abolished the reign of monarchy in Egypt in 1953 gaining him an enormous popularity among the public. The prior-

22 William Roe Polk, *Understanding Iraq* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2005), 111.
23 At this point, it is important to note that Qasim secured the support of the Iraqi Communist Party for his anti-unification stance whereas Aref found widespread support in the Baath party, a fervent supporter of the Arab political unity.
24 Raymond Hinnebusch, "Authoritarian Persistence, democratization theory and the Middle East: An Overview and Critique", *Democratization* 13, no. 3 (June 2006): 378.
25 *ibid.*

ities of the Nasser regime were to bring down the remnants of British colonial rule, to abolish feudalism, and to create a more equal distribution of wealth among his fellow Egyptians. As Nasser rose to power, he dissolved the parliament, abolished the constitution of 1923, and outlawed all political parties. The military assumed complete control of the state.

On the economic front, the path Nasser took to achieve a more equitable Egyptian society guided the popular will rather than responding to it. The era under Nasser saw a number of economic reforms that granted citizens unprecedented access to housing, jobs, education, and health services and significant improvement in social welfare and economic growth through the agrarian reform, nationalization programs, and modernization projects. During the late 1950s, the enlargement of the public sector and the land reform program culminated in the transfer of 75 per cent of Egypt's gross domestic product (GDP) from the country's rich to the state or small owners[26]. Upon these dramatic economic and social reforms, Egyptians were convinced that the officers were delivering their promises to address social injustice, boost economic development, and turn Egypt into a regional power.

The popularity of Nasser at home with his revolutionary rhetoric and courageous attempts was accompanied with his victory in a series of notable developments in the Middle East turning him into a widely-admired pan-Arab leader. First, he took a stand against the Baghdad Pact formed to contain the Soviet Union through the use of British influence. Nasser viewed the Baghdad Pact as an initiative to expand Western imperialism and keep Arabs in the orbit of the West. Nasser was also strongly opposed to the Baghdad alliance as it had the potential to draw Arab countries into collaboration with the West and this move was against his aspirations for Arab political unity[27].

Second, Egyptian arms deals with Moscow in 1955 was a significant development which further estranged Egypt from the Western alliance. In this regard, the defeat of Arab armies in the Arab- Israeli War of 1948 had a large-scale impact on both Egyptian and Syrian politics. The Israeli army's raid of Egyptian headquarters in the Gaza Strip pushed both regimes into seeking arms trade with Washington. Egypt was also in dire need of financial aid to carry out its modernization projects. In 1954, Egypt demanded a hundred million Dollars in military and economic assistance from the United States. Yet, it remained reluctant to supply arms to Egypt and Syria as it would run counter to Israeli security interests. In addition, the Eisenhower administration turned down Egypt's aid package request due to British

26 Tarek Osman, *Egypt on the Brink: From Nasser to the Muslim Brotherhood* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010), 47.

27 George Lenczowski, *Soviet Advances in the Middle East* (Washington D.C.: American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1971), 78.

pressure on them as the Free Officers were reluctant to negotiate with Britain over Britain's future access to the Suez Canal[28]. This, in turn, led Egypt and Syria to turn to the Soviet Union which sought to advance its sphere of influence in this strategic region. The Soviet financial support for the Aswan Dam following the withdrawal of the American offer proved the USSR a reliable ally for Nasser. Thus, it was the Arabs' estrangement from the United States due to that administration's rejection to provide financial aid which led to the alignment with the Soviet Union rather than pure ideological affinity. From 1954 onwards, Nasser's adoption of neutralism and policy of non-alignment was gradually replaced by his clear stand by the USSR.

Third, the Suez Crisis, also named the Tripartite Aggression, further deepened the crisis between Nasser and the Western camp, yet it was the most notable development that turned Nasser into a Pan-Arab leader. Indeed, ending the British colonialism and influence in Egypt was Nasser's foremost desire from the outset of his office in the belief that the end of British presence in the Suez Canal would serve his pan-Arabist aspirations[29]. A facilitating factor in such an attempt was Nasser's disappointment with the West over arms trade and the Aswan Dam project. In 1956, Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal claiming that the government would use the revenues from the canal to fund the development projects the West declined to sponsor. Soon after the nationalization of the canal, Egypt was faced with a triple attack by Israel, Britain, and France aiming to regain control of the Suez Canal and to remove Nasser from power. After the attack, the United States, the Soviet union, and the United Nations all condemned the tripartite attack and heavy pressure from the United States and the Soviet Union led to a quick withdrawal. The Suez crisis which indeed ended up with Egypt's military defeat turned out to be a political victory for Nasser projecting an image of an Egyptian and pan-Arab hero defying two former imperial powers and Israel. Meanwhile, the Soviet Union's political support for Nasser paved the way for further Soviet-Egyptian rapprochement. Hence, the Suez crisis directed Arab politics towards the radicalization trend strengthening anti-imperialist rhetoric of the revolutionary regimes and their emphasis on pan-Arabism.

Following the Suez crisis, Nasser's desire to make Egypt the center of the pan-Arab unity was reflected in the 1956 constitution which stated that Egypt was an Arab country and a part of an Arab nation. In that regard, the creation of the United Arab Republic (UAR), the union between Syria and Egypt, in 1958 was a major step towards this goal. The demand to unite two states under one federation came from a group of Syrian politicians from the Baath Party. The triggering factors were

28 Steven A. Cook, *The Struggle for Egypt. From Nasser to Tahrir Square* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 115.

29 Galia Golan, *Soviet Policies in the Middle East: From World War II to Gorbachev* (Cambridge: Cambridge Russian Paperbacks, 1990), 47.

both ideological and pragmatic. Syria was going through political turmoil and the ensuing military coups turned Syria into an unpredictable and unstable country. The politicians in the Baath party were afraid that the growing popularity of the Communist party could lead to their government being toppled. Thus, to maintain and enhance their political power, the Baath party reached out to Nasser for unification with Egypt[30].

Soon after the proclaimation of the UAR, it turned into a state completely dominated by Egyptians instead of a federation of two Arab states as the Baath party had imagined. Nasser imposed a single-party military regime which had run like clockwork in Egypt. The Syrian military and civilian personnel were replaced with Egyptian counterparts in important positions and Syrian politicians were compelled to move to Cairo, where they exerted little power on the political issues regarding their homeland[31]. The union with Egypt, in practice, meant the Baathists' withdrawal from politics. Nasser demanded the dismantling of all political parties in Syria undermining Syrian political life and imposed a strongly centralized economic and political system on the weaker Syria and nationalized all banks, public utilities, and insurance companies. The number of the Syrian officer corp was reduced by half[32]. Each of those policies were resented by Syrian military officers, business circles, and the Syrian bourgeoisie. Eventually, the growing unrest within the units in the military led to a coup staged by a group of officers in 1961 and Syria declared its secession from the UAR.

The failure of the UAR had broad political implications. First, it indicated a failure in unifying the Arab world, thus, in broader terms, it meant the decline of the Pan-Arab movement. From this episode onwards, many Arab politicians and intellectuals began to orient their policies toward statism, sovereignty, and territorial safety and adopted a version of Arab nationalism that complied with their sovereignty and territorial identity. Second, the breakup of the first pan-Arab initiative in less than three years was a heavy blow to the popularity of Nasser and his Arab nationalist rhetoric. This occasion pointed to the decline of Egypt's role as a Pan-Arab leader.

In short, from 1955 to 1961 Arab nationalism and Pan-Arabism gained momentum thanks to a series of political developments that allowed the revolutionary regimes to challenge the West. With Nasser's challenge to the Baghdad Pact alliance, the Soviet-Egyptian Arms Deal, and the nationalization of the Suez Canal, Nasser's

30 Michael N. Barnett, *Dialogues in Arab Politics: Negotiations in Regional Order* (Bognor Regis: Colombia University Press, 1998), 7-11.
31 William L. Cleveland & Martin P. Bunton, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, 314.
32 Karol R. Sorby, "The Separatist Period in Syria, 1961-1963", *Asian and African Studies* 18, No. 2 (2009): 147.

reputation went beyond Egypt as a charismatic pan-Arab leader who fought against the imperial powers and defied them on a number of occasions. Radical Arab nationalism dominated political discourse and mobilization across the region. Nonetheless, the rise of these revolutionary regimes and their pan-Arabist aspirations declined with the short-lived UAR and the breakup of the first Arab political unity in a rather short time span was a tremendous blow to the dream of pan-Arab unity. This episode was to be followed by a more lethal blow when Nasser was harshly defeated by Israel during the Six Day War in 1967.

Asthe key pillar of Arab nationalism was the stated goal for Arab political victory against Western imperialism and Israel, the demise of Arab nationalism mainly resulted from the Arab defeat in June 1967 which brought an end to the mass fervor that the Arab nationalist movement evoked and relatedly, the radicalization trend in the region. The Arab-Israeli War of 1967 was a turning point for Middle East politics in general and the future of the Arab nationalist movement in particular. To this end, the next section analyzes the factors leading up to the Arab-Israeli War of 1967, how the course of events unfolded during the war and its numerous repercussions for the reconfiguration of the political agenda of individual Arab states.

The Demise of the Radicalization Trend in Arab politics: The Arab-Israeli War of 1967

As the need for Arab political unity was more vocal than ever during the 1960s, no Arab country could have remained indifferent to the fate of the Palestinians. The propaganda of the Nasserites in Egypt and the Baathists in Syria and Iraq for Arab solidarity, unity and liberation would only become meaningful if they took an active and strong engagement in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Hence, the aspirations for a political and military victory against Israel was central to Arab nationalism. The Arab-Israeli conflict also played a key role in determining the relations of the Arab States with the two camps of the Cold War, the United States and the Soviet Union. In that regard, the June War in 1967 was a test case for both the viability of the radical regimes and the extent to which these regimes could rely on the Soviet Union as an ally during the Cold War era.

The outbreak of the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, also known as the Six-Day War, rests on the Soviet's false intelligence report provided to Nasser stating the existence of Israeli troops' concentration on the Syrian border[33]. Two days after receiving the report, Nasser deployed his army to the Sinai and closed the Tiran Straits. After this incident, war broke out between the Arabs and Israel culminating in a humiliating defeat for Arabs and the Israeli invasion of the West Bank, the Sinai Peninsula and

33 Guy Laron, "The Cold War and the Middle East, Playing with fire: The Soviet- Syrian- Israeli Triangle, 1965- 1967", *Cold War History* 10, no. 2 (2010): 163.

the Golan Heights. It was much debated among Western and Soviet scholars as to whether the Soviets purposely misled the Egyptians or if they were also baffled by the Arab reaction. Russian analysts tended to emphasize the latter by referring to the Soviet policy of detente in that period. Most Western analysts, on the other hand, claimed that the Soviet Union aimed to spark a political crisis in the Middle East, if not a war, and yet there has been no agreement over what the Soviets' motives were to do so[34]. During the war, the Soviet Union was unwilling to intervene since they didn't want a war in the Middle East having the potential to turn into a superpower confrontation with the United States. Instead, the Soviets used diplomatic means to promote a cease-fire between the two camps and chose to collaborate with the United States for an early cease-fire. The Soviet inaction or lack of assistance, even in emergency supplies, during the war led to severe Arab resentment and the deterioration of the relations with the Soviet Union.

According to a deciphered CIA report from 2007, the Soviets themselves were misled by the Israelis who floated the rumor in the hope that the Soviets would persuade Syrians to stop their provocative acts. The telegram which was sent from Moscow to Cairo on 13 May stated:

"That Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister Semenov had told the Egyptians that Israel was preparing a ground and air attack on Syria-to be came out between 17 and 21 May. It stated that the Soviets had advised the UAR to be prepared, to stay calm, and not to be drawn into fighting with Israel, and that they had advised the Syrians to remain calm and not give Israel the opportunity for military operations. The message also said that the USSR favored informing the Security Council before Israel took military action against Syria."[35]

The CIA report confirms that the Soviets urged caution for an impending conflict. The Arabs took the information but not the advice. Obviously, the Syrian propaganda calling for the annihilation of Israel was influential in the Israeli rumor or threat of war. According to the report, the Soviet Union called for a stronger unity between Syria and Egypt, defensive measures and calmness rather than provoking them into a war. Apparently, the Soviet Union couldn't control the escalation of the conflict into a war as the CIA report suggests that the Soviets encouragement of the Arabs to take cautious steps didn't restrain them from acting aggressively. It could be argued that the Soviet Union couldn't perceive the volatility of an Arab-Israeli conflict.

34 Galia Golan, *Soviet Policies in the Middle East: From World War II to Gorbachev*, 164.

35 CIA, Directorate of Intelligence, "Soviet Policy and the 1967 Arab-Israeli War" (Reference Title: Caesar XXXVIII) March 16, 1970 (declassified June 2007). accessed December 7, 2018, https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/caesar-50.pdf

A more feasible explanation of Nasser's escalation of the conflict into a war could be that Nasser attempted to exploit this crisis to restore his position in the Arab world, since from mid-1960s onwards his image as a pan-Arab leader had begun to degrade. Nasser was no longer an Arab leader that could challenge the West, receive aid from the Soviets, or bring social welfare to the citizens by implementing economic reforms. Salah Nasr, the Egyptian Chief of Intelligence in 1967 stated that Nasser presumed he would emerge victorious from the crisis politically and in the back of his mind was the assumption that Israel would not be able to wage a war on two fronts unless it was supported by the West and that the West would be reluctant to confront the Soviet Union which would certainly become militarily involved to support Egypt[36]. At this point, the Suez crisis in 1956 was particularly relevant. Despite being a rout militarily, the crisis served as a triumph politically for Nasser to establish his role as the leader of the Arab world and in the same way, to Nasser's mind, a victory against Israel would have made Nasser a legendary figure in the region.

The radicalization trend which gained momentum beginning with the Suez crisis began to vanish with the Arab defeat in this war putting an end to the heyday of Arab nationalism and the desire for Arab political unity. Barnett argues that even after June 1967, "Arabism still shaped how Arab states were expected to present themselves, represented a source of symbolic capital, subjected them to Arab opinion and held them accountable to each other"[37]. Following the Arab-Israeli War of 1967, what remained alive was Arabism, not Arab nationalism. The most significant impact of the war was that it robbed Arab nationalism of its most vital element which was unification. From this episode onwards, while Arabs maintained their belonging to a cultural space called Arab world, they would no longer consider the political unity of Arab states a viable option.

Another reason why the radicalization trend came to an end was that the relationship between Nasser's charismatic leadership and the masses faded away with the rout in the Arab-Israeli war. Arab nationalism and its radical goal of uniting all Arabs under a single state lived on as long as Nasser and Egypt held sway over Arab politics. Iraq's reluctance to be part of the union, Syria's secession from the UAR, the protracted military operation in Yemen with no conclusion, the failure of second unity talks with the Baath party in Syria already challenged Nasser's prestige and raised questions in the Arabs' minds as to the capability of Nasser to unite all Arabs. With the June War in 1967, Nasser lost eternally. The Six Day War cost Egypt dearly both in terms of life and material. The war led not only to the death of thousands of

36 Salah Nasr, *Mozakerat Salah Nasr* (Memories of Salah Nasr), Vol. 3 (Cairo: Dar Al-Khayal, 1999), 209.

37 Michael N. Barnett, *Dialogues in Arab Politics: Negotiations in Regional Order*, 164.

civilians and military men but also to severe degradation in economy and losses in military supplies. Besides, Egypt was faced with a huge migration from the canal cities to an overpopulated Cairo due to the economic deterioration which resulted from the closure of the Suez Canal to international shipping and the loss of the oil fields in the Sinai to Israeli control. Similarly, Syria lost the Golan Heights which was a buffer zone between Israel and Syria and also an important source of water. On the top of it all, there was the humiliating presence of Israeli troops on Egyptian soil.

Not surprisingly, from the June War onwards, the revolutionary regimes had neither the capability nor the political desire to trot after the radical goals of Arab nationalism. By necessity, they turned inward to tackle with the consequences of defeat in their own countries. Particularly, Nasser put statism in the center of Egyptian politics and any involvement in inter-Arab politics was made dependent in overcoming the adverse consequences of the war. Nasser stated "Our attitude toward any Arab state depends on that state's attitude toward the battle"[38]. In the post-war era, the quest for Arab political unity was replaced with the urgent need to deal with a fragile economy, demographic dislocations and to regain occupied lands from Israel.

Indeed, as Michael Barnett put it, "what halted the unstoppable tide of Arab nationalism were the same Arab leaders who proclaimed themselves its guardian"[39]. It was first and foremost Nasser himself who led the glorious moment of the Arab nationalist movement and mobilized the masses particularly by means of the Voice of Arabs Radio Station in Cairo. Following the Arab-Israeli War of 1967, Nasser moved away from the revolutionary Arab nationalist rhetoric and its crucial element, Arab political unity. The closing the Voice of Arabs radio station, once a symbol of Nasser's radical ideas for the Arab political unity, was apparently a signal of the shift in Nasser's political orientation. One reason for this shift was his mounting reliance on the financial support flowing from the conservative Arab states of the Gulf which vigorously opposed Arab nationalism and the radicalization trend in the region. Nasser's tendency towards statism also manifested itself in the Khartoum Summit meeting in August, 1967. Nasser was able to receive grants from the oil rich Gulf States only after its acceptance of a version of Arabism that was compatible with sovereignty in the Summit. In other words, Nasser's statist approach and pragmatic considerations outweighed his ideological fidelity. Without Nasser as the pan-Arab leader, it was apparent that the revolutionary Arab nationalism and pan-Arabism wouldn't survive.

With the shift in Nasser's political orientation, the ongoing *qawmiya* (Pan-Arabism)- *wataniya* (state nationalism) debate finally ended up with the victo-

38 Adeed Dawisha, *Arab Nationalism in the Twentieth Century: From Triumph to Despair,* 255.
39 Michael N. Barnett, *Dialogues in Arab Politics: Negotiations in Regional Order*, 28.

ry of *wataniya* advocates who privileged state nationalism over Arab political unity stating that despite the overarching Arab identity, geographic and cultural separation among Arabs were so strong and real that they wouldn't allow an organic political unity[40]. The gradual decline of Arab nationalism from the failed attempt of the UAR to the defeat in the Six Day War proved the strength of this argument. Indeed, even the Baathists recognized the limited capabilities of their unionist party as well as their country's own needs. In 1968 the Baath party resolution stated that the party was driven to achieve the Arab nationalist tasks which largely went beyond its capability since it needed to achieve many tasks on the local (*watani*) level first such as bringing stability to the political system and settling the Kurdish problem[41]. By prioritizing Iraq's own national interests over Arab nationalism, the Baathists didn't abandon their commitment to *qawmiyya* , rather they felt that in order to achieve Arab political unity, they had to achieve political harmony within their country, overcome its ethnic and sectarian problems, and revive its economy. Without these achievements, pan-Arabism wouldn't produce any positive outcome.

The end of Nasser's tenure in Egypt left Egypt's political scene to Sadat who was neither a fervent supporter of pan-Arabism nor Arab socialism. Pan-Arab nationalism lost its appeal and slowly died under Anwar al- Sadat who took a political path that completely diverged from that of Nasser. Under Sadat, Egypt adopted a political rhetoric targeting democratization of Egypt's political system and moved away from Egypt's traditional alliances with the Eastern Block while building closer ties with the West. Sadat raised sentiments of Egyptianism and reoriented the state's cultural and educational polices toward Egypt. Unlike Nasser's continual emphasis on Arab's glorious history and culture, Sadat highlighted Egypt's unique cultural and historical characteristics. To this end, Sadat introduced a new school curriculum shifting Egypt's long history and cultural reputation. His embrace of Egyptian nationalism rather than Arab was also evident in his shifting the name of the state from the United Arab Republic to the Arab Republic of Egypt where Arab is only an adjective that complements Egypt[42].

The Arab socialist propaganda, an important pillar of the Arab nationalist movement, gradually faded away with Sadat's launch of *infitah* policy which aimed at opening the door to private investment and liberalizing the economy. Sadat also took steps to revamp the country's foreign policy. His trip to Jerusalem in the pursuit of a permanent peace settlement with Israel was subject to an unprecedented outrage in the Arab world. Sadat signed a peace agreement with Israel, known as the Camp

40 Adeed Dawisha, "Requem for Arab Nationalism", *Middle East Political Quarterly* 10, No: 1 (Winter 2003): 25-41.
41 Adeed Dawisha, *Arab Nationalism in the Twentieth Century: From Triumph to Despair,* 288.
42 Eberhard Kienle, "Arab Unity Schemes Revisited: Interest, Identity, and Policy in Syria and Egypt", *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 27, No: 1 (February 1995): 66.

David Accords in 1978 which laid the groundwork for diplomatic and commercial relations between the two countries. While the Camp David Peace Accords enabled Egypt to regain its lost territories in the strategically critical Sinai Peninsula won by Israel during the Six Day War, this initiative was severely condemned by the Arab states leading to the suspension of Egypt's membership in the Arab League in 1981 and Sadat's eventual assassination in the same year. With the peace agreement with Israel, Egypt lost its position of leadership in the Arab world eternally.

On the other hand, in Iraq and Syria, the Arab nationalist movement could hardly survive due to the divisions between the Kurds and Arabs on the one hand, the Shiites and the Sunnis, on the other. Instead, the Arab nationalist concerns gave way to formulating common Iraqi and Syrian identities. By the 1980s, Arab nationalism died both in political rhetoric and policy-making. This was mostly evident in the Iran-Iraq War (from 1980 to 1988) when Syria failed to uphold Arab ideals by aligning with a non-Arab country and it developed a quasi-alliance with Iran that continued up to the present. Eventually, by the turn of the 20th century, pan-Arabist nationalism became an irrelevant ideology and Arab states determined their domestic and foreign policies based on their national interests and pragmatic concerns.

Conclusion

Arab nationalism developed as a nationalistic ideology in response to the Western domination of the Arab world and under the influence of the nationalistic tendencies of CUP and the secessionist movements taking place in the Ottoman Empire. Arab nationalism differed from nation-state nationalism in that it referred to the unification of all Arabs regardless of their nationality and location into one single Arab state. By the 1950s, Arab nationalism became the dominant ideology leading the political discourse and policies of the military regimes which replaced the former monarchies of the Middle East and brought radical changes both in their internal and foreign policies. Whereas in internal politics, they strived to bring a more just and egalitarian system to their societies by adopting statist-socialist policies, in their external politics they took a firm stand against Western powers. These newly founded regimes were revolutionary with their ideological bearings rooted in pan-Arabism, Arab socialism and anti-imperialism, in other words, they indicated a radical rupture from the policies and ideology of the former regimes.

To Arab nationalists, Arabs lagged behind the West and faced a humiliating defeat in the 1948 War over Palestine due to their disunity and division into several states. Hence, it was imperative for Arab states to unite under one political entity to

realize their full potential. The merger of Syria and Egypt in 1968 was an attempt, to this end, yet it failed in less than three years, raising questions over the viability of such a political project. On the other hand, the Arab-Israeli War of 1967 which ended up with a humiliating defeat for Arabs was a defining moment for the Arab nationalist movement. The defeat directed regimes to seek bilateral negotiations with Israel in an attempt to take back their lost territories. In other words, the war manifested that *watani* concerns had precedence over *qawmiyya* interests and thus, the espousal for Arab nationalism gradually faded away. Nasser's prestige, which already suffered from the failure of United Arab Republic, was severely damaged following the defeat in the Arab-Israeli War. Without Nasser, the leader of the Arab world, Arab nationalism was destined to fail since Syria and Iraq were too fragmented in terms of their ethnic and sectarian structure, which meant that their weak regimes needed to ensure political unity within the homeland first.

Eventually, the revolutionary ideas of Arab nationalism and pan-Arabism were overshadowed by the political realities and national interests of individual Arab states and in the era succeeding the war, pragmatism superseded radicalism in Arab politics. From 1980s onwards, the differences between the Arab states and their foreign policy orientation became more visible and the ethnic and sect-related hostilities along with regional conflicts made the dream of Arab nationalism a long shot.

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