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The Arab League: A Study in Arab Unity

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Thesis

THE ARAB LEAGUE: A STUDY IN ARAB UNITY

by

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. THE ARAB WORLD</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. ARAB NATIONALISM</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. SCHEMES OF ARAB UNITY</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. THE ARAB LEAGUE AND ARAB UNITY</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. CONCLUSION</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION

The importance of the Arab World is well-known. Lying across the very center of the old continents and near the fringes of the new Communist domain and with the largest proved petroleum reserves, it is commanding increasing international attention.

Less well-known is the fact that today the Arab World is in a situation of crisis. It is undergoing the fundamental phase of rethinking and reordering the very basis of its life. It finds itself in a state of rapid mobility. Its kings are bowing out, its landlords are weakening, its middle class is rising, its intellectuals are restless, its workers are growing in number, and its peasantry is beginning to move. It finds itself also torn between forces and ideas that lash at it from east and west and then there is the potent pull of its ever-present past. Open to all the winds of thought, it seeks a new anchor on which to lean, some new principle of life, a new living law that would vivify the pulses of its people and brace them against the pressure of the outer world.

Many Arabs today find in the idea of Arab unity the very living law that their world is after, and they are pushing it forth with increasing vigor into the imagination and consciousness of the Arab people.

Our thesis will address itself to this idea and will seek to find out what chance it has of commanding the loyalty of the Arab people and
what role it will play in their destiny.

In view of the fact that Arab North Africa (Algeria, Tunis, and Morocco) faces problems of a different order and has not as yet transcended the colonial stage, little attention will be devoted to it in this paper. Similarly, the more recent events in the Near East will not be touched upon because they are too close to be judiciously appraised. The thesis, therefore, will not be carried beyond the early 1950's.
CHAPTER I
THE ARAB WORLD

With the preaching of the Moslem faith in the Arabian Peninsula at the beginning of the seventh century, a process of expansion began which was destined to lead to one of the most spectacular human conquests the world has ever seen. Shortly after the death of the prophet Muhammed, the forces of the new faith emerging from the heart of the Peninsula pressed forward in every direction open to a land advance.¹

This expansion was the result of many factors both external and internal. Externally, the two old empires, the Persian and the Byzantium, that used to dominate what is known now as the Middle East, had reached at the time of the Arab conquests a stage of disintegration and decay due to their struggle over the domination of that area, creating a political and military vacuum there.

Internally, behind the conquest there was the expansion of the Arab nation driven by the pressure of overpopulation to seek an outlet in the neighbouring lands. This expansion was not a sudden and new phenomenon as might first appear, but it was one of the series of migrations which carried the Arabs time and again into the Fertile Crescent and beyond. For centuries before the rise of Islam, Arab tribes had poured or penetrated into that area.

However, the role of religion should not be underestimated as some modern scholars have done. Its importance in the conquests, which cannot be denied, lies in the psychological change of the people who were not used to any kind of discipline and, though willing to be persuaded, had never consented to be commanded. The new faith made them for a time more self-confident and more amenable to control. In the wars of conquest, Islam was the symbol of Arab unity and victory.

In barely one hundred years from the death of Muhammad, the Arab conquerors had built an empire extending from Spain in the west, along the southern shores of the Mediterranean, to central Asia in the east.

The cultural evolution which the Arabs set in motion in the conquered areas was the result of two processes, the one purely religious, the process of Islamisation; the other essentially social, the process of Arabisation which had two aspects—linguistic Arabisation and racial Arabisation.2

It will be noted here that Islamisation, essentially a spiritual force, progressed much further, while Arabisation, involving material displacement, could not always reach the areas conquered by Islamisation. Thus two worlds were created according to the two processes: the Muslim world, which is the larger and which contained the other, the Arab world.

After reaching its high-water mark, the Arab-Islamic Empire entered a stage of disintegration. This stage of weakness and decay had paved the way for many external vigorous attacks. By the eleventh century, 2Antonius, op. cit., p. 15.
a new attack came from the West in the invasion of the Crusaders.

Despite the idealistic aspect of this movement in the history of the Arabs, the Crusaders were essentially an early experiment in expansionist imperialism motivated by material considerations with religion as a psychological catalyst. ³

Meanwhile, a new and more dangerous threat to Islam was arising in the East in the vigorous barbarian invasion of the Mongol. The Mongolian invaders, emerging from Central Asia, swept through Persia, overcoming all resistance, and in 1258 Hulaku captured Bagdad, killed the caliph, and abolished the Abbasid Caliphate. This was a fatal blow to the Islamic Empire which was in a stage of weakness and decay to make any attempt to resist the vigorous newcomers fruitless and impossible.

The Mongolian conquest expanded eastward to Syria and then turned southward to conquer Egypt, but was stopped by the powerful resistance of the Mamluk of Egypt.

After the fall of the Islamic Empire at the hand of the Mongolian conquerors in the thirteenth century, the process of disintegration was completed, and no attempt to recover the shattered Empire was made. The only important power left in the area was the Mamluk sultanate in Cairo, which ruled both Egypt and Syria -- a portion of the later Islamic Empire -- from the thirteenth century until 1517.

"In 1517 the weakened and decayed Mamluk Empire crumbled before the Ottoman assault and for four hundred years Syria and Egypt formed part of the Ottoman Empire. Soon the Barbary States as far as the frontiers of Morocco accepted Ottoman suzerainty, and with the final Ottoman conquest of Iraq from Persia in 1639, almost the whole Arabic-speaking world was under Ottoman rule."

Throughout the four centuries of Ottoman sway, the Arabic-speaking peoples had little in common with their rulers other than religion. The long centuries of Ottoman misrule constitute a gloomy chapter in Arab history. The former great centers of Arab culture—Damascus, Bagdad, Cairo—were reduced to the status of merely provincial administrative seats.

Another factor was introduced to the scene in the Arab world at the end of the eighteenth century—the impact of the West.

With Bonaparte's arrival in Egypt in 1798, a new chapter in the history of the Arab world began. From that time, the disposition of the Middle Eastern territories became a major concern of the Great Powers.

"During the nineteenth century, France, Great Britain, and Russia were all interested in the territories which then formed the eastern portion of the Ottoman Empire and which today are known as the Middle East. The state of British and French relations in the Levant varied in accordance with the temper of the relations between the two on the Continent."

Although the French expedition of 1798 to Egypt constituted the first Western armed attack on the Arab Middle East since the Crusades of the eleventh century, it had more significant consequences in the

4 Lewis, op. cit., p. 160.

whole life of the area than merely military conquest. This event began the period of direct Western intervention in the Arab world with great consequences in the economic, social, and political life.

On the basis of the preceding historical process, we can define the Arab world of today as: a geo-cultural rather than a political entity. The "Arab World" is used to indicate the group of countries in which the great majority of the population has remained impressed within the cultural influences of the dual process of Arabisation and Islamisation generated by the rise and expansion of the Arab-Islamic Empire in the seventh century A.D. Thus defined, the "Arab World" comprises the continuous chain of countries stretching from the Atlantic seaboard in the West, along the southern shores of the Mediterranean, to the Persian border in the East. It includes the North African coast from Morocco to Egypt and the Sudan, the countries of the Fertile Crescent--Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Arab Palestine--and the Arabian Peninsula. 6

This "Arab World" is inhabited by seventy million Arabs. But who are the Arabs? It is not an easy task to define the term Arab in a way that would meet with approval of most of the experts on the Arab World. Ethnic terms are notoriously difficult to define, and Arab is not among the easiest. The term "Arab" has acquired different meanings in different historical periods. According to Professor Lewis, the term was first used in the ninth century B.C. to describe the Bedouin of the north Arabian steppe, and it remained in use for several centuries,

in this sense, among the settled peoples of the neighbouring countries. 7

To the Romans and Greeks the term was applied to the whole Arabian peninsula, including both nomads and settled people. At the beginning of the Islamic conquest, the term had acquired a new meaning; it was used to distinguish the Arabic-speaking ruling class of conquerors from the conquered masses. However, with the process of Arabisation, the term was applied to both conquerors and Arabised conquered.

Thus the Arabs are the product of a fusion of races along the southern shores of the Mediterranean Sea and in the Middle East, which took place during the Middle Ages.

Having considered the various meanings that the term "Arab" acquired in different historical periods, who are the people whom we can call Arabs today? According to Professor H. A. R. Gibb:

"All those are Arabs for whom the central fact of history is the mission of Muhammed and the memory of the Arab Empire, and who in addition cherish the Arabic tongue and its cultural heritage as their common possession."8

It will be noted that Professor Gibb, in his definition, emphasized the religious as well as the cultural factors, while Professor Lewis in his following definition adds a new factor, besides the cultural one, the nationalistic factor. He defines the new usage of the term "Arab" as:

"It is that which regards the Arabic-speaking peoples as a nation or group of sister nations in the European sense, united by a common territory, language and culture and a common aspiration to political independence."9

7 Lewis, op. cit., pp. 16-17.
9 Lewis, op. cit., p. 17.
CHAPTER II

ARAB NATIONALISM

In the Arab World, as in all countries outside Western Europe, modern nationalism has been a product of contact with the West and with modern Western civilization. 1 Nationalism as an organized movement in the name of the Arab peoples first developed in Syria in the latter half of the nineteenth century when the term Syria embraced Lebanon, Palestine, and Transjordan, as well as the contemporary Syrian state. Like European nationalism, Arab national consciousness had its origin in a literary renaissance. The ancient classical language and the poetical and philosophical works written in it were studied; new life and a spirit of romance were breathed into the old traditional subjects; foreign classics were translated, and finally the new knowledge was sifted and collected in great encyclopaedias and dictionaries. 2

It is difficult to ascribe to the several influences at work in the Arab World during the latter half of the nineteenth century their proper share in the Arab literary renaissance and the rise of the Arab movement. Some of the principal factors, however, can be discerned.

The French conquest and occupation of Egypt (1798-1801) was instrumental in transmitting ideas born of the French Revolution and thus in giving rise to an indigenous nationalist class. The French and American missionaries effected the same result in Syria and Lebanon. The missionaries and their pupils were the first who gave a modern education in Arabic, established printing presses for Arabic, published many important books and journals, and united the warring creeds among the Arabs by a common ideal.

"In 1868 the American Protestant missionaries, led by Eli Smith and Cornelius van Dyck, founded a medical faculty at Beirut with Arabic as the language of instruction. They brought to Syria the modern democratic ideas upon which the earliest American tradition is based, and there sought to spread them amongst the liberal-minded youths who flocked to their college. Equally important was the fact that they chose Arabic as the language of instruction in the college, for it thus became the first time a medium of communication for modern scientific knowledge and modern thought. Here, too, a new terminology had to be worked out. In 1875 French Jesuits founded the University of St. Joseph at Beirut, and by establishing a great Arabic printing press and publishing papers, helped to awaken national consciousness and revive a national literature, though the spirit in which the University was managed was alien to modern thought and aimed at assisting French propaganda."

With the appearance of a well-educated and politically-minded class, the scene was set for the rise of Arab nationalism, and the second half of the nineteenth century abounded with symptoms of the new spirit. Secret societies were formed, political groups were organized, and plans were drawn up aiming at the realization of Arab national aspirations.

3 Kohn, A History of Nationalism in the East, p. 269.
4 Antonius, op. cit., pp. 35-61.
The earliest Arab secret society was founded in 1880. Its members were for the most part young men who had been educated at the Syrian Protestant College. They drew up a national program demanding the adoption of Arabic as an official language, the freedom of the press, and the grant of self-government to a united Syria. The society continued its activities for a considerable period, but in the end its members were forced by the vigilance of the Turkish Secret Police to close down their society and to take refuge in Egypt and elsewhere.

The formation of secret societies was followed up by the organization of political parties.

However, the effective political life of the Arab Nationalist Movement began after the "Young Turks" revolution of 1908. Arab nationalists were greatly encouraged by the Turkish Revolution and its ideas of liberty and equality within the Empire. The grant of a constitution to the Ottoman Empire in 1908 was at first marked by signs of cooperation and fraternization between Arabs and Turks. Thus, in September, 1908 the "Arab-Ottoman Brotherhood" society was formed in Istanbul of young Turks and Arab nationalist elements. The object of this society was to unite all the races and national elements within the Empire to protect the new liberal constitution. Once firmly established in power, however, the young Turks proceeded to destroy the hopes of all non-Turkish groups within the Empire by embarking on a program of ruthless Turkification. The Arabs soon realized that a

partnership between the two races on bases of equality was neither practicable nor genuinely desired by the Young Turks. Their belief was strengthened by the ban which the Young Turks placed on all non-Turkish societies. Consequently, the Arab nationalists were forced to employ underground methods to overthrow the new tyranny of the Young Turks that was in no sense less ruthless than the old Ottoman tyranny. Two important secret societies came into being. Both were the product of the growth of Arab national feeling, but each had a different plan of action. The young Arab society of al-Fatat, founded in Paris (1911), aimed at achieving complete independence for all Arab countries. Its members were mostly young Arab intellectuals. The other society, al-Ahd (The Covenant), was composed of young Arab officers who were serving in the Ottoman Army and aimed at establishing a united Arab-Turkish Kingdom in which the Arab portion might enjoy some measure of autonomy. At first the two societies were not aware of each other's existence, but later on they united in their support of the Arab revolt of 1916. With the outbreak of the First World War, the first period of the Arab nationalist movement came to an end. The chief characteristics of the Arab national movement during its first preparatory period were its literary foundations, its predominantly cultural and spiritual character, its aspirations for autonomy, and, in general, its fairly positive nature.

6 Zurayk, op. cit., p. 208.
The Second Period: Struggle for Independence

The Arab national movement entered into a new phase when the Ottoman Empire decided to join the central powers in World War I. At the outbreak of the War, two courses of action were open to the Arab nationalist: one was to support the Turks loyally in their war effort while insisting upon self-government as a reward for their loyalty and cooperation; and the other was to rise in revolt against the Ottoman authorities and to seek independence by allying themselves to the enemies of Turkey after obtaining guarantees in respect to their political future.\(^7\)

As early as 1914, the Amir Abdullah, the second son of Husayn Sharif of Mecca, had asked the British in Cairo whether British support would be forthcoming for an Arab revolt against the Turks. Since British policy was still one of friendship for Turkey, the answer was in the negative. When Turkey finally entered the war on the side of the Central Powers, the whole situation in the Near East was changed drastically. The attitude of Sharif Husayn and the Arab nationalist became a matter of immediate concern to the Allies, especially to Great Britain. It became important for the British to win the support of Sharif Husayn, not only because it would help war operations in the Arab countries, but also because the Ottoman Caliph had proclaimed a Holy War of all Moslems against the Allies. The Turks, on their side, wanted the approval of the Sharif of Mecca of this proclamation in

\(^7\)Antonius, op. cit., pp. 149-164.
order to make it more effective; for the same reason it was equally important to the British that the Sharif's approval should be withheld. Negotiations were continued for some time. The Sharif's endorsement of the Holy War was in fact never given. 8

The Arab Nationalists in Syria and Mesopotamia, with whom the Sharif was in contact, were themselves highly suspicious and distrustful of Allied aims in the Middle East as they were opposed to the Turks, and it was these doubts which led them to demand from the British certain assurances for the future of the Arab World before committing themselves further. The Arab demands and the British assurances were contained in an exchange of letters between the Sharif and Sir Henry McMahon, then British High Commissioner for Egypt and the Sudan. The main Arab demand was as follows:

"Great Britain recognises the independence of the Arab countries which are bounded: on the north, by the line Mersin-Adana to parallel 37° N. and thence along the line Birejik-Urfa-Mardin-Midiat-Jazirat (ibn Umar)--Amadia to the Persian frontier; on the east, by the Persian frontier down to the Persian Gulf; on the south, by the Indian Ocean (with the exclusion of Aden whose status will remain as at present); on the west, by the Red Sea and the Mediterranean Sea back to Mersin." 9

To this Sir Henry replied:

"The districts of Mersin and Alexandretta and portions of Syria lying to the west of the districts of Damascus, Homs, Hama, and Aleppo, can not be said to be purely Arab, and must on that account be excepted from the proposed delimitation.


Subject to that modification, and without prejudice to the treaties concluded between us and certain Arab chiefs, we accept that delimitation.

As for the regions lying within the proposed frontiers, in which Great Britain is free to act without detriment to the interests of her ally France, I am authorized to give you the following pledges on behalf of the Government of Great Britain, and to reply as follows to your note:

That, subject to the modifications stated above, Great Britain is prepared to recognize and uphold the independence of the Arabs in all the regions lying within the frontiers proposed by the Sharif of Mecca....

That when circumstances permit, Great Britain will help the Arabs with her advice and assist them in the establishment of governments to suit those diverse regions;

That as regards the two vilayets of Baghdad and Bossa, the Arabs recognize that the fact of Great Britain's established position and interests there will call for the setting up of special administrative arrangements to protect those regions from foreign aggression, to promote the welfare of their inhabitants, and to safeguard our mutual economic interests. 10

The exclusion of the districts of Mersin-Adana was accepted by the Sharif, but not that of the vilayets of Aleppo and Beirut, and consideration of this point was left open.

"...we no longer insist on the inclusion of the districts of Mersin and Adana in the Arab Kingdom. As for the vilayets of Aleppo and Beirut and their western maritime coasts, these are purely Arab provinces in which the Moslem is undistinguishable from the Christian, for they are both the descendants of one forefather...."11

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10 Sir Henry McMahon's Second Note to the Sharif Husayn, Cairo, October 24, 1915.
See Antonius, op. cit., Appendix A, pp. 419-420.

11 The Sharif Husayn's Third Note to Sir Henry McMahon, Mecca, November 5, 1915.
See Antonius, op. cit., Appendix A, p. 421.
Following the Husayn-McMahon correspondence, the Arab revolt was started in June, 1916. Many Western writers try to minimize the importance of the part played by the Arab revolt in facilitating an Allied victory in the Middle East. However, the benefits for the Allied cause which accrued as a result of the Arab Revolt have been attested to by those in a position to know. Their testimony is already a part of the objective record of the war's history. No less an authority than General Wavell has declared that:

"...the value of the Arab revolt to the British commander was great, since it diverted considerable Turkish reinforcements and supplies to the Hijaz, and protected the right flank of the British armies in their advance through Palestine. Further, it put an end to German propaganda in southwestern Arabia and removed any danger of the establishment of a German submarine base in the Red Sea."12

With the success of the Revolt and the Allies' victory in the War, Arab hopes were high indeed. It seemed as though their dreams for a united independent Arab State were about to be fulfilled. These dreams were soon to be frustrated, however. The peace settlement reached at the end of the First World War was a great blow to Arab nationalist aspirations. Only the Hijaz, the most backward of the Arab provinces which had belonged to the Ottoman Empire, was given complete and unconditional independence. The other provinces were placed under European control. Britain was given the mandate for Iraq, Palestine, and Transjordan, while France was given the mandate for Syria and Lebanon. The results of the peace settlement had an impact on the Arab mind which cannot be overestimated. It was more than the frustration of a

fond hope; it was also betrayal by a friend, and breach of faith by someone who had been looked up to as a model to emulate.

The peace settlement was an arrangement which satisfied the Western powers but fell short of what the Arab nationalists had hoped for. The Arab nationalists were embittered by the whole arrangement and began their struggle to throw off European domination. Consequently, the period between the two World Wars witnessed a concentration of Arab energy upon the attainment of independence. One Arab country after another fought for self-mastery. The history of these years, constituting the second period of the Arab national movement, is a sad story of bloodshed and sacrifice. A whole generation was born and nurtured within the resultant atmosphere of suffering, insecurity, and defiance of imposed authority. Nevertheless, the wars of independence of this period were not in vain. By the middle of the century, some eight Arab States had attained their independence. Six of them have become members of the United Nations.

In the light of this concise historical sketch of the Arab movement, Arab nationalism can be defined as:

"The movement which fuses the aspirations of the Arabic-speaking peoples for liberation from their own economic and social backwardness and from Western domination into a comprehensive vision of revival and modernization of the ancient Arab Empire by the union of all the Arabs from the Atlantic to the Indian Ocean."13

In the light of this definition, it is possible to summarize the assumptions and aims of the movement. Arab nationalism is based upon

a community of sentiment. The general content of that sentiment is the pride in the historic mission of Islam, in the achievement of the Arab Empire, and in the cultural tradition enshrined in Arabic literature.\textsuperscript{14}

The basic assumptions of the movement are: 1) First, that an Arab nation can be created of all who share the Arabic language and cultural heritage. Second, that this Arab nation ought to form a single independent political entity, both in the interests of the nation itself and in those of the world. Third, that the creation of such a political unit presupposes the development among the members of the Arab nation of a consciousness, not simply that they are members of it, but that membership should determine their political decisions and loyalties.\textsuperscript{15}

The aims of Arab nationalism are to preserve and enrich the Arab culture; to enable the Arabs to live in the modern world with other peoples, and to operate within the Arab world without unnecessary breaking with the past.

Politically, Arab nationalism aims at the independence of the Arab lands; the establishment of some degree of unity; the encouragement of national consciousness; and the reorganization of the social and economic structures of the nation by means of controlled and discriminating westernization. The aspiration for independence and unity has been the common ground on which Arab nationalists of every school meet; they elicit more popular enthusiasm than any other purpose which,
by the nature of the case, can have but partial appeal. The Arabs’ aspiration for independence is a natural and logical phenomenon. It is the only defense and the only reasonable aspiration they could have in a world dominated by the nationalist ideas. What they desired had been desired by the civilized world before them, and has been formulated by the West into a sacred creed and taught to the Arabs in Western history, literature, and political doctrine.

However, the attainment of independence after World War II brought back to the foreground the object of unity which had been relegated to the background by an earlier generation, and rendered the pursuit of this hitherto suspended purpose imperative. It is the purpose of our next chapter to examine critically the idea of Arab unity and the schemes advanced by Arab nationalists for its achievement.

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CHAPTER III

SCHEMES OF ARAB UNITY

The unity of the Arabs, like that of most national groups, is predicated upon ties of kinship, a common language, common historical memories, and a common way of life. In spite of some factors of disension and discord in the Arab World today, the elements of this reality in the Arab unity movement cannot be underestimated and overlooked.

Unity, as N. Izzeddin says, "...is the basic underlying norm in the life of the Arab peoples; their division into separate entities is a transient phase of recent intrusion."

The infant movement of Arab unity suffered its serious setback after the first World War and the consequent peace settlement. After the Arab revolt and Faysal's entry to Damascus--the old glorious capital of the Ummayads--the Arabs thought that their long-cherished aim

1 Issawi, Charles, "The Basis of Arab Unity," International Affairs, January, 1955, p. 36. Also Zurayk, C., in "The National and International Relations of the Arab States." Zurayk said: "The Arab countries possess a cultural and spiritual unity that is clear and unmistakable, though popular writers in the west are apt to overemphasize their apparent diversity and to overlook the potent ties that unite them. Indeed, the linguistic, cultural, and historical ties that bind the Arabs give the entire Arab World distinct and special characteristics," Near Eastern Culture and Society, ed. Cuyler Young, Princeton University Press, 1951, p. 205.

of an Arab State would be realized. But instead of a great kingdom that would comprise the Fertile Crescent and the Arabian Peninsula, for which they had hoped, they were forced to accept a settlement which divided the Fertile Crescent among the Great Powers.

Thus the Arab revolt had failed to achieve its goal of independence and unity. This failure, however, was the result of both internal and external factors.

Internally, the movement was considered premature, as the majority of the people, except for the elite and the enlightened, were unprepared and inarticulate. The movement had not yet penetrated into their consciousness, but hovered on the fringes of their life.\(^3\)

Externally, the movement failed to take into consideration the factor of power politics, and overlooked British and French imperialistic ambitions in the Arab Middle East.

The ideal of unity did not progress as well as the nationalists had first envisioned. This was mainly because the struggle for independence was greatly impeded by the 1919 settlement. The blow to Arab unity, however, was more damaging than the temporary withholding of independence. The barriers with which Britain and France divided the Arab World at that moment were new and artificial, but they tended to become real with the passage of time. In each new Arab State attention was focused on the question of independence and the immediate problem of its own relation with the mandatory power.\(^4\)

\(^3\) Izzeddin, op. cit., p. 317.

The new tendency of regionalism was considered by Arab nationalists as a real threat to their ultimate aim of Arab unity. It was feared that the localized struggle for independence might supplant the idea of Arab unity.

Regionalism might go too far and become too rooted an idea. The people of some regions might lose hold of the common Arab ties. An exaggerated regionalism would be disastrous; for no Arab region can ever attain alone sufficient manpower or economic strength essentially necessary for its own defense. The Arab World would sink, by its own action, into the condition for which the Western powers are blamed—that of a group of rival little states, unable to unite and powerless to resist the pressure of the outer world.  

This danger of localism could not be overlooked by Arab nationalists who tried to combine their efforts to fight this new threat. This could be noted in the "Arab Covenant" drawn by the Arab delegates at the Islamic Congress convening in Jerusalem in December, 1931.


6 Gibb, H. A. R., "The Islamic Congress at Jerusalem in December 1931," Survey of International Affairs, 1934, p. 107. The delegates from the Arabic-speaking countries seized this opportunity to hold an "Arab Congress" and formulate an "Arab Covenant." Articles one and two of this Covenant run as follows:

1. The Arab lands are a complete and indivisible whole, and the divisions of whatever nature to which they have been subjected are not approved nor recognized by the Arab nation.

2. All efforts in every Arab country are to be directed towards the single goal of their complete independence, in their entirety and unified; and every idea which aims at limitation to work for local and regional politics must be fought against.
The Arab Covenant emphasized the idea of unity among the Arab nations and discredited the tendency of regionalism.

However, there are Arab writers who believe that some aspects of regionalism do not contradict the idea of Arab unity, provided that together with their localized efforts, their aim should ultimately be directed towards the well-being of the Arab World as a whole. It is argued that in strengthening and developing the powers of the local unit to the utmost, local nationalism would contribute to the strength and power of the greater Arab State of the future. But even though regionalism was developing in the Arab World after the first World War, nevertheless the various Arab states were bound to be drawn closer by a number of forces operating both from within and from without. The revolution in transportation and communication drew every part of the Arab domain closer together. The communication of ideas led to the growth of common interests. The printing press of Cairo supplied reading matter to the whole Arab World and fostered common ways of thinking and writing.

At the same time, the nations of the outside world were being aligned in powerful groups, and the fate of small nations seemed precarious.

Moreover, in their struggle for independence, though carried on locally, the Arabs found a unifying force in their hatred of the

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8 Round Table, Arab Nationalism and the War, September, 1941, p. 703.
occupying powers.

In the first decade following the first World War and the fragmentation of the Arab World, it seemed that Arab unity was a lost cause. The desire for unity, however, persisted. And during the next decade events moved toward bringing the Arabs—states and people—closer together. A vague form of unity of purpose and direction began to take shape. On the popular non-official level, the trend took the form of cultural activities and cooperation. On the official level, the trend expressed itself in the form of treaties of friendship concluded between several Arab states. 10 A treaty of Arab Brotherhood and Alliance was signed in April, 1936 between Iraq and Saudi Arabia. Adherence to this treaty, which Yaman joined in the following year, was open to any independent Arab state. In the same year in May, 1936, Saudi Arabia and Egypt signed a similar treaty. 11

These signs of cooperation were reflected in the international scene when the first formal international recognition of a community of Arab states was seen in the participation of all the Arab governments in the Palestine Conference in London in 1939. 12

At the outbreak of the second World War the Arab nationalists, though in agreement as to their national aspirations, were divided with

10 Izzeddin, op. cit., p. 319.

11 The texts of these treaties to be found in "Documents and Treaties in the Arab World," (in Arabic) published by the Syrian Daily "al-Ayyam" 1936.

regard to their allegiance to either of the two warring camps. One group was opposed to supporting the two dominating powers in the Arab World, namely, France and Great Britain. It counted on an ultimate Axis victory, and thought that the solution of the Arab question lay in taking sides with the Axis powers. The other group opposed Fascist ideologies and foresaw grave dangers to the Arabs from an Axis penetration in the Middle East.

Upon the collapse of France in June, 1940, the international situation in the Middle East was considerably altered. By this time, the Allied disasters and the isolation of Britain had shaken the confidence of the Middle Eastern politicians in Britain's ability to survive.

It was under these circumstances, and with a view to bolstering its own position and the prestige of those elements among the Arabs

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Different explanations were given as to the attitude of the Arabs towards the Allies in the second World War. Dorothy Thompson said: "...World War II appeared in the Near East as it did in the Far East to be an opportunity to get rid of European masters while they were again engaged in a struggle with their former foe. Some Arab leaders were even disposed to cooperate with the Germans to that end, not because they were pro-German, but because they were anti-British and anti-French, and against the whole postwar decisions..." E. Latham, (ed.), *Crisis in the Middle East*, The H. W. Wilson Company, New York, 1952, p. 15.

On the other hand: "From motives of conviction on the part of some, of policy or fear on the part of others, the free Arab countries had thrown their weight on the side of the Allies," Round Table, *Arab Nationalism and the War*, p. 706.

14 Ibid., p. 760.


that were more favorably inclined to the Allied cause, that the British
government came out in formal support of the Arab aspiration for "a
greater degree of unity."  

Foreign Secretary Eden, on May 29, 1941, said:

"This country has a tradition of friendship with the Arabs, a
friendship that has been proved by deed, not words alone. We
have countless well-wishers among them, as they have many friends
here. Some days ago I said in the House of Commons that His
Majesty's Government had great sympathy with the Syrian aspiration
for independence. I should like to repeat that now. But I would
go further. The Arab World has made great strides since the
settlement reached at the end of the last war, and many Arab
thinkers desire for the Arab people a greater degree of unity than
they now enjoy.

In reaching out towards this unity they hope for our support.
No such appeal from our friends should go unanswered. It seems
to me both natural and right that the cultural and economic ties
between the Arab countries and the political ties, too, should be
strengthened. His Majesty's Government for their part will give
full support to any scheme that commands general approval."  

The British Foreign Secretary's statement on Arab unity aroused
great interest in the Arab world, but the weakness of Britain's military
position naturally inhibited the Arabs from taking any action at that
time. Besides, no definite scheme for unity had then been worked out
by the Arab leaders themselves, that was capable of general Arab sup-
port.

Mr. Eden mentioned this fact in the House of Commons on February
24, 1943 when he said:  

17Khadduri, "Towards an Arab Union," p. 91.
18The (London) Times, May 30, 1941. Also Khadduri, "Independent Iraq."
19Quoted in Khadduri, "Towards an Arab Union," p. 92.
"As I have already made plain, the British Government would view with sympathy any movement among the Arabs to promote economic, cultural, or political unity, but clearly the initiative in any scheme would have to come from the Arabs themselves. So far as I am aware, no such scheme which commands general approval has yet been worked out."

There was, to be sure, a variety of schemes for the unification of the Arab lands which, however, found partial or feeble support. And all of them hurtled against one obstacle or another.

These obstacles stemmed from a complex of tangible and intangible problems resulting from the existence of racial and religious minorities and dynastic differences. These difficulties were further complicated by the varied cultural standards among the Arab countries, as well as the cleavages resulting from class differences which existed within each of them. 20

The line of thinking of many Arabs had been foremost in the direction of a unitary Arab State, but the difficulties inherent in such a concept moved some of them to consider, but only as an alternative, the principle of federation. There were other Arabs, however, who believed that neither concept was feasible at the time, and that only proposals for a confederation were likely to yield anything tangible.

There was also some division of opinion as to the extent of the area which was to be unified. Some were for a smaller area with very close ties, others for a loose arrangement embracing a larger area.

Still others thought of a tightly unified smaller area within a large
confederated area. There was a complexity of motives behind all these
ideas. The people who advanced them were torn between genuine national
feeling, personal interest, reasons of state, and dynastic ambitions.
Among those who advocated Arab unity for personal interests was King
Abdullah, the late king of Jordan, who, more than any other man, aspired
to leadership in the Arab World.

After the departure from Syria of Feisal, the brother of Abdullah,
the latter moved northward from Hejaz with a view to attacking the
French in Syria and revenging his brother's expulsion from that
country. This action was prevented by Great Britain, and Abdullah
was offered and accepted the government, subject to mandatory control,
of the region east of the Jordan, or Transjordan. From that day, he
persistently nurtured the idea of gathering under the Hashemites as
much of the Arab Fertile Crescent as possible. In the sudden defeat of
France in 1940, and the consequent weakening of its position in Syria,

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21 In considering a practical scheme for Arab unity, Professor H. A. R.
Gibb said: "The solution, as they see it now, is federation. Federa-
tion has four aspects: cultural, that all the inhabitants of all Arab
lands shall share in a common type of education, in joint institutions
for science and learning, and in all other forms of cultural activity;
economic, that the governments of all Arab lands shall deliberately
foster mutual economic relations and discourage and discard if possible
all that would set up economic barriers between them; military, that all
Arab lands in Asia should have not merely a military alliance but an
Arab army organized under a joint general staff; and political, that in
all problems of foreign policy and other matters of joint interests they
shall act as one unit." Ireland, P. W., (ed.) The Near East, p. 98.

For these various schemes of Arab unity, see the following books in
Problems of the Arab World, p. 183; and Yusuf Haykal, Towards Arab
Unity, p. 32. Also (in English) Musa Alami, "The Lesson of Palestine,"
Footnotes 22 and 23: See next page.
he detected a valuable opportunity. This inspired him to feverish activity.

In July, 1940 Abdullah sent two notes to the British Government expressing the aspiration of Syria and Transjordan to be reunited into one state. Because of the uncertainty of the military situation, the British Government considered this plan premature.24

King Abdullah was unsatisfied, but decided to relieve the British Government of further embarrassment since the outcome of the war was still in doubt. Accordingly, he preferred to delay consideration of the whole problem to a more opportune moment. It was then, in May, 1941, that Foreign Secretary Eden declared that the British would support a plan for Arab unity. This prompted King Abdullah to invite Mr. Oliver Lyttelton, Minister of State in the Near East, to visit him at Amman, the Transjordan capital.

The visit took place in September, 1941, where both views on Arab affairs were exchanged. King Abdullah pointed out that Transjordan had proved to be loyal to the Allied cause. Therefore, it should be given every opportunity and support to achieve full Syrian unity.

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22 Hourani, A., Syria and Lebanon, Royal Institute of International Affairs, Oxford University Press, 1946, p. 55.
Also Memoirs of King Abdullah of Transjordan, Philosophical Library, 1950, pp. 190-192.

23 Hourani, ibid., p. 55.

namely, to reunite Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, and Transjordan. 25

While King Abdullah obtained no positive help from Britain, he was nevertheless given assurances that his personal endeavors toward Syrian unity would not be obstructed. 26 He needed to show that the plan was backed by public opinion. On March 5 and 6, 1942 a number of Arab veterans assembled in Amman and passed a resolution embodying a scheme for Arab unity. 27 Realizing that the British Government would not approve any scheme of unity unless it satisfied the desire of the people, King Abdullah presented two plans. The first scheme called for the merger of Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, and Transjordan into a unitary state with its capital in Damascus. Abdullah would become the king of this greater unitary state. With Syria united, it would then become possible to join Syria and Iraq in a federal state, and the door would be left open for the other Arab states to join the federal state if they so desired. The second scheme differed from the first only by

25 Khadduri, op. cit., p. 142.

King Abdullah’s plan was known as Greater Syria. A. Hourani, in his book Syria and Lebanon, defined this term as follows: "In the past it has often been used to refer to the whole area stretching from the Taurus Mountains in the north to the Sinai peninsula in the south, and from the Mediterranean Sea on the west to the Syrian Desert on the east." P. 4.

Considering the possibility of union in this area, Hitti wrote: "Not only the geographical but the historical considerations are favorable to a union. These considerations center on the consciousness of a common heritage, linguistic and cultural, and the awareness of a common glorious past...", Annual Report of the American Historical Association, Vol. III, p. 153.

26 Ibid., p. 142.

providing for a federal state inside Greater Syria rather than a unitary one. 28

King Abdullah's proposal is of great importance in view of the fact that it represents, with emendation, the sentiments of Arab nationalists. It is similar to the plan submitted in 1943 by Nuri as-Said, the Iraqi Prime Minister, to the British Minister of State in Cairo, Mr. R. Casey. 29 This plan, better known in the Arab World as the "Blue Book," consists of a "Note on Arab independence and unity with particular reference to Palestine." Nuri as-Said's proposals may be summarized as follows:

"1. Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, and Transjordan to be reunited to constitute one state.
2. The people of that state to decide its form of government, whether they have a monarchical or republican regime, or whether it be a unitary or federal state.
3. An Arab League to have a permanent Council nominated by the member states and presided over by one of the rulers of the states, to be chosen in a manner acceptable to the states concerned.
4. The Arab Council to be responsible for: (a) defense, (b) foreign affairs, (c) currency, (d) communications, (e) customs, and (f) protection of minority rights.

Abdullah based his claim to the throne of Syria upon the following considerations: (1) the promise to that effect accorded him by Mr. Churchill in 1921, then Secretary of State for the colonies; (2) through accession from his father he claimed the right to govern this area; (3) his legal status in Transjordan which is considered as an integral part of Greater Syria; (4) the desire of the Syrian people for the constitutional monarchy form of government as witnessed by the resolutions of the Syrian convention of March 8, 1920. (See Appendix Four in Memoirs of King Abdullah of Transjordan, p. 263.)

29 Khadduri, Independent Iraq, Royal Institute of International Affairs, Oxford University Press, 1951, p. 252.
6. The Jews in Palestine to have semi-autonomy, and the rights to their own rural and urban district administrations including schools, health institutes, and police, subject to general supervision to the Syrian state and under international guarantee.

7. Jerusalem, a city of which members of all religions must have free access for pilgrimage and worship, to have a special commission composed of the three theocratic religions to ensure this result."\(^{30}\)

Early in 1943 Nuri as-Said assumed the leading role among Arab politicians working for unity. His plan was enthusiastically received among Arab nationalists in Syria and Iraq because:

"The people of these two countries had most understanding of Arab nationalism and Arab unity, and most enthusiasm for and belief in them... We find also that the history of the Fertile Crescent from the first Islamic period was based on unity and the cohesion of its parts, and that unity is the basis of its continued existence. Partition is imposed on it externally."\(^{31}\)

The coming of Egypt into the sphere of Arab politics completely altered the scheme of Arab unity proposed by Transjordan and Iraq.\(^{32}\) Egypt, which formerly pursued an independent nationalism of her own, realized that it would be advantageous if she led a bloc of several Arab states in the postwar period.\(^{33}\) The Egyptian Government might have been encouraged by Great Britain to take the leadership of Arab unity movement, but the new circumstances of the War must have made the Egyptian politicians realize that economically and culturally, as


\(^{32}\)Khadduri, *The Scheme of Fertile Crescent Unity*, p. 140.

well as politically, it would be of benefit to Egypt to cooperate with the Arab countries.  

Realizing the importance that Egypt could attain by assuming the leadership for Arab unity, Nahas Pasha, the Egyptian Prime Minister, held a series of conversations on Arab unity with Arab leaders. Representatives of Syria, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and Yemen participated in these conversations, which lasted from August until November, 1943.

In April, 1944 the Egyptian Government made arrangements for the meeting of a Preparatory Committee to be attended by the Arab countries that participated in the initial conversations of 1943. On September 25, 1944 Nahas Pasha opened the meeting at the Antoniades Palace in Alexandria. Before the meeting it was felt that an Arab conference without a Palestinian delegate would be "a contradiction in terms." An invitation was accordingly extended to Palestine to send a representative. Musa al-Alami was chosen to present the Palestine Case before the Preparatory Committee.

In his opening speech, Nahas Pasha declared that the delegates were first to be asked to outline their views on the scheme of Arab unity that were reached during the preliminary conversations. The Committee was then to proceed to work out a general scheme which could

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34 Khadduri, *The Arab League as a Regional Arrangement*, p. 763.
35 Khadduri, *Towards an Arab Union*, p. 96.
be acceptable to all.37

The Preparatory Committee held eight meetings from September 25 until October 7, 1944.38

In considering a scheme for Arab unity acceptable to all, the committee realized that full union, with a central executive authority, was impossible for the moment. Only Syria stood for full-fledged Arab unity, while Iraq and Transjordan advocated union on a federal basis. Lebanon asserted her independence but pledged cooperation with the other Arab countries. Saudi Arabia and Yemen reluctantly agreed to join a loose association of independent Arab states. Egypt, who took the role of the mediator, did not advocate any definite plan of unity, but Nahas Pasha declared that his government was prepared to accept a plan approved by all.39

The Greater Syria plan, which was advocated earlier by King Abdullah, was fully and frankly discussed at the sixth meeting of the Preparatory Committee. The Syrian and Transjordan delegates unhesitatingly welcomed the proposal. Transjordan accepted the plan only on condition that King Abdullah would be the King of the new state, while Syria supported the project but preferred to maintain her republican regime. Lebanon was not ready to join such a union, and Palestine's position was complicated by the Zionist claims. Thus the Greater Syria

37Khadduri, Independent Iraq, p. 254.
39Khadduri, Independent Iraq, pp. 254-255.
The Mexican scheme was received with mixed feelings by the Preparatory Committee and dismissed as premature in the existing circumstances.\textsuperscript{40}

The last session of the Committee was devoted to the promulgation of the Alexandria Protocol which summarized the unified objectives of the conferees. The protocol was signed by all the delegates, except for the representatives of Saudi Arabia and the Yaman, who did not have the prerequisite authority. Later they signed the protocol—Saudi Arabia on January 3, 1945 and Yaman on February 5, 1945.\textsuperscript{41}

The preamble of the Alexandria Protocol stressed the desire of the conferring states "...to strengthen and consolidate the ties which bind all Arab countries and to direct them towards the welfare of the Arab world; to improve its conditions; ensure its future; and realize its hopes and aspirations." They recognized the strong desire for unity emanating from the people, for the preamble admits that the drawing together of the Arab states was "...in response to Arab opinion in all Arab Countries...."\textsuperscript{42}

The Alexandria Protocol consists of five items, the first of which provides for the creation of a League of Arab States.

"A League will be formed of the independent Arab states which consent to join the League. It will have a Council which will be known as the Council of the League of Arab States, in which all participating states will be presented on an equal footing."

\textsuperscript{40}Khadduri, \textit{Independent Iraq}, p. 255.

\textsuperscript{41}Ahmad Musa, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 13.

\textsuperscript{42}The Text of the Alexandria Protocol was published in al-Ahram (Arabic daily of Cairo) on Oct. 8, 1944. A translation to the text is to be found in \textit{The Arab League in Perspective} by Cecil A. Hourani, published by The Arab Office, Wardman Park, Washington, D.C., 1947. Also in the Department of State Bulletin, May 18, 1947, p. 966.
The council would execute agreements reached by the states among themselves. The decisions of this council were to be binding upon those states which accepted them, except in cases where conflict had arisen between two member states, which would then have to accept the council's decisions. The use of force in settling disputes between member states was to be forbidden. The protocol laid down that a member state would have the right to make agreements with other states in or out of the League, so long as such agreements were not contrary to the text or the spirit of the League's constitution. However, the protocol made the important provision that "...in no case will the adoption of a foreign policy which may be prejudicial to the policy of the League or of an individual member state be allowed."

Item two of the protocol provided for close cooperation between member states on economic, cultural, and social problems, and recommended the setting up of commissions of experts in each field to elaborate a program of joint action.

The third item of the protocol recognized that the formation of the Arab League represents only one step toward unification. It states that "...while expressing its satisfaction in such a happy step, the Committee hopes that the Arab states will be able in the future to consolidate that step by other steps."

The last two items of the protocol deal with the two special resolutions: the first reaffirmed the independence of Lebanon in its present frontiers, while the other makes the problem of Palestine once and for all the responsibility of the whole Arab world.
It should be noted that in spite of its substitution later by the actual Pact of the Arab League, the Alexandria Protocol will continue to play an important role in the movement of Arab unity. Its importance lies in the fact that it was a strongly popular document, appealing constantly to "public opinion throughout the Arab World," "the Arab peoples," and "the Arab Nation." It recognized that the proposed League was only a first step towards a closer union. It envisaged a common orientation of the Arab countries towards the outside world. They were to face in one direction only, and not to diverge in their foreign policy.

CHAPTER IV
THE ARAB LEAGUE AND ARAB UNITY

The Alexandria Protocol provided for the establishment of a subcommittee to prepare the draft pact of the League. The subcommittee held sixteen meetings (February 14 to March 3, 1945) and prepared a draft pact which was more elaborate but did not differ essentially in substance from the Protocol. The draft pact was to be submitted to the Preparatory Committee which met at a general Arab Conference in Cairo on March 17, 1945. The general Arab Conference discussed the project submitted by the subcommittee and at the last meeting on March 22, 1945 the delegates of Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, and Transjordan signed the pact of the Arab League. Saudi Arabia signed the pact in the same month, while Yemen signed it later, on May 5, 1945.

Under Article 20 the pact was to come into force fifteen days after the Secretary-General had received the instrument of ratification from four states. On May 11, 1945 the League legally came into existence after Egypt, Iraq, Transjordan, and Saudi Arabia had deposited their ratifications.

2 Ibid., p. 15.
3 Ibid., p. 16.
The Pact of the Arab League consists of twenty articles and three annexes.

Article one specifies the membership to the League. It states: "The League of Arab states is composed of the independent Arab states which have signed the Pact. Any independent Arab state has the right to become a member of the League." This article accordingly bars the membership of non-Arabic Near Eastern countries.

Article two deals with the purposes of the League. "The object of the League shall be "...to strengthen the ties between the participant states, to coordinate their political programs in such a way as to effect real collaboration between them, to preserve their independence and sovereignty, and to consider in general the affairs and interests of the Arab countries." Besides this political object, a further one shall be "...the close collaboration of the participant states, in accordance with the regime and conditions prevailing in each state in the following matters: (1) Economic and financial affairs; (2) communications; (3) cultural affairs; (4) matters relating to nationality, passports, and visas; (5) matters relating to social questions; (6) matters relating to public health."


5 In accordance with this article Libya joined the League after the proclamation of her independence on December 24, 1951.
Article four provides for the establishment of a special committee to deal with each of the questions listed in article two. The member states should be represented in these committees.

Article three deals with the instruments of the League. "The League shall possess a council composed of the representatives of the member states of the League, each state shall have a single vote, irrespective of the number of its representatives." The council is the final authority of the League in all matters and it "...shall be the council's task to decide upon the means by which the League is to cooperate with international bodies, in order to guarantee security and peace and regulate economic and social relations." This article makes the Arab League, as far as its relation with the United Nations is concerned, a regional organization in accordance with Chapter Eight of the San Francisco Charter.

Article five bars resort to forcible measures between the member states. It gives the council the power to mediate differences and declares binding any verdict by the majority of the council. Article six treats of the circumstances that may necessitate the convocation of the council for an extraordinary session. It lists these circumstances as aggression or threat of aggression. Article seven, which is considered a weak one, makes unanimous decisions binding on all, while majority decisions are binding on those who vote in favor of the decision. Article eight binds a member of the League to respect the systems of government of other members, and to abstain from any action calculated to change these established systems. This article presumably
is intended to militate against King Abdullah's project of Greater Syria. However, article nine permits the member states to establish closer relations among themselves if they so desire. This article has a significant importance among those who advocate Arab unity as it leaves the door open for closer union among the Arab states. Cairo is declared to be the permanent seat of the League, according to article ten. The council may, however, assemble at any other place it may desire. Article eleven provides for the regular semiannual sessions of the council: one in March and the other in October. The call for an extraordinary session must be approved by at least two members.

Article twelve deals with the Secretariat and the staff of the League. The Secretary-General is appointed by a two-thirds majority vote of the council.

Article thirteen requires the Secretary-General to prepare the budget of the League. Article fourteen extends diplomatic immunities to the whole Secretariat and the members of the council. Article fifteen deals with the relation of the presidency of the council among its members. Article sixteen binds majority decisions on the members of the League on procedural matters. Article seventeen requires all members of the League to deposit copies of unilateral treaties with the Secretariat of the League. Article eighteen provides for withdrawal

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Procedural matters are defined as: (a) questions relating to personnel; (b) adoption of the budget of the League; (c) establishment of the administrative regulations for the council, the committee, and the Secretariat-General; (d) decisions to adjourn the sessions.
of a member state by notifying the council one year before such with- 
drawal is to go into effect. This article was criticized by Arab 
nationalists as it makes it possible for the member states to withdraw 
and, therefore, constitutes a weakness of the League. This provision 
did not exist in the Alexandria Protocol and was inserted at the in-sis-
tence of Lebanon. The same article provides also for the expulsion 
of a member state which fails to fulfill its obligations under this 
Pact. Article nineteen declares that amendments to the Pact would be 
effective if passed by a two-thirds majority, but if a state does not 
accept such an amendment, it may withdraw from the League. Article 
twenty declares the Pact to be operative fifteen days after the 
Secretary-General has received the instruments of ratification from 
four states.

The first annex of the Pact deals with Palestine. It states: 
"The nations signatory of the Pact are of the opinion that, considering 
the special circumstances of Palestine, the council of the League 
should take charge of the selection of an Arab representative from 
Palestine to take part in its work." The second annex provides for 
the cooperation of the League with Arab countries that have not yet 
achieved independence (referring to North Africa) and enjoins the 
council to work on their behalf. The third annex appointed Abd-al-
Rahman Azzam to the post of Secretary-General of the Arab League.

According to Arab nationalists, the Pact of the Arab League is a 
weak document. Although the Pact follows the general principles laid 
down by the Alexandria Protocol, it was in some respects a less strong
document. The Pact safeguards more carefully and more specifically the sovereignty and independence of the member states, while the Protocol had envisaged a progressively increasing surrender of sovereignty.

The Pact omits the clause of the first item of the Protocol which stated that "...in no case will the adoption of a foreign policy which may be prejudicial to the policy of the League or an individual member state be allowed." The Pact, in article eight, specifically binds each member state not to interfere in the systems of government of the other member states, while the Protocol had no such provision.

Although there is a general agreement among Arab nationalists that a kind of unity is necessary among the Arab nations, there is no complete agreement as to whether the Arab League is the best method of achieving this aim. Arab nationalists who believe in the necessity of an Arab federation or even a unitary Arab state argue that by preserving intact the sovereignty of the member states, the League tends to preserve special interests and to crystallize into permanent form the present political divisions. Moreover, by providing a loose form of unity, the League may tend to satisfy many Arabs that the goal has been reached, putting an end to their efforts to achieve a stronger form of unity.

Representing this point of view, Musa al-Alami says:

"It is true that we attempted to achieve a kind of cooperation and grouping together by forming this League as a step toward unity. But the attempt failed, the evils of partition remained, and the Arabs continued to meet and to disagree. More than that, they split into two rival camps, and the League was unable to remove the causes of rivalry--it was, indeed, itself
one of the causes. This was because its charter was based on the preservation of the status quo, which is based on partition and on the strengthening of the little states... Thus it is impossible to reach real unity along the path of evolution in the League..."  

Other Arab nationalists argue that the inclusion of all the independent Arab states in the League, and its consequent international status, compensates for the disadvantages in its inherent weakness. Moreover, they argue that although the League does not realize the ideal of Arab unity, it does two things which, apart from their immediate benefit, will help to bring about a closer union in time: first, it reaffirms and symbolizes the oneness of the Arab World against the separatist forces created into it by the 1919 settlement; and second, it establishes a machinery for common action.

However, it is generally agreed that:

".....the Arab League is rather a stage in a series of developments which is by no means ended.... It may be regarded as the first important step in the dual process of Arab unification and liberation since the Arab Revolt of 1916. It is to some extent, indeed, a continuation of that unfulfilled revolution."  

It should be noted that after the signing of the Pact, the Arab League appeared a weaker instrument than that which Muri as-Said's federative plan had envisaged. The Arab League is not a federal union,

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7 Alami, Musa, The Middle East Journal, p. 389.
8 Atiyah, E., An Arab Tells His Story, p. 224.

Mejla Izzi, in her book Arab World, considers the Arab League as: "The Arab League is to be understood as an expression of the evolution within Arab society towards unity, an evolution in line with world trends towards integration and unification," p. 327.
since the latter is composed of several states with a central govern-
ment possessing power not only over the member states, but also over
their citizens, and to which, from the international point of view, the
conduct of all foreign relations is confided. 10

It is obvious that the Arab League does not possess such power and
authority. The independence and sovereignty of each member state, as
expressly stated in the preamble of the Pact, are safeguarded and any
member state can withdraw from the League if it so desires.

According to Oppenheim, "the Arab League may be said to possess
the legal nature of a confederation. Such a union is composed of inde-
pendent states, held together for the maintenance of their external and
internal independence by international treaty. The member states agree
to forego part of their liberty of action in favor of an organ of the
union whose power would extend only over the member states. In con-
trast to a federation, the confederated states do not constitute an
international personality, since the member states remain full sovereign
states and separate international persons." 11

As the Pact makes it possible for the member states to establish
closer cooperation and stronger bonds among themselves, the Arab
League may be compared with the Germanic Confederation which was formed
by the Vienna Powers in 1815. The Arab countries aspire, as was the
fate of the Germanic Confederation, to achieve further unity by turning

10 Oppenheim, L., "International Law," Lauterpacht, H. L., (Ed.),
11 Ibid., p. 159.
the League into a sort of Arab federation. 12

Since its establishment, the Arab League has been seized with basic problems pertaining to Arab independence and unity.

The first political problem that the League had to face was the Franco-Syrian-Lebanese dispute. 13 The French authorities in Syria and Lebanon were conducting negotiations with two Arab Republics in April, 1945 for conclusion of treaties that would give France a privileged position in the Levant. Both the Syrian and the Lebanese Governments rejected the French proposal for such a treaty. The position assumed by the two small states was greatly strengthened through their recognition as fully independent states by Great Britain, the United States, and the Soviet Union. 14 As a measure of threat and intimidation, the French saw fit to strengthen their forces in the Levant and French troops landed in Beirut. 15 The Syrian and Lebanese Governments were alarmed by French action and requested the convocation of the council of the Arab League. 16

12 Khadduri, The Arab League as a Regional Arrangement, p. 770.
13 On September 28, 1941 the independence of Syria was proclaimed by General Catroux following the entry of the forces of Free France and Britain to Syria and Lebanon. The independence of Lebanon was proclaimed on November 26, 1941. However, after these declarations, French forces remained in Syria and Lebanon waiting for the outcome of the war and its consequences on the status of Syria and Lebanon.
14 Great Britain recognized the independence of Syria in October, 1941 and that of Lebanon in December, 1941. The United States recognized their independence in September, 1944 and the U.S.S.R. in July, 1944.
15 Izzeddin, op. cit., p. 163.
The relations between France and the Levant States took a turn for the worse, fighting broke out on a large scale, and the French, for the second time in their career as a mandatory power, subjected Damascus to heavy bombardment. Meanwhile, the council of the Arab League was called to convene in an emergency session for June 4, 1945.

The deterioration of the situation in the Levant nearly precipitated a crisis between Great Britain and France. On May 31, 1945 Prime Minister Churchill informed General de Gaulle that in the interest of the Middle East security he had ordered the chief commander of the Middle East to interfere in the violent conflict and prevent the future shedding of blood. To avoid collision between British and French troops, de Gaulle was asked to order the French troops to cease fire at once. Under these circumstances, the French authorities had no alternative but to accept the British ultimatum.

In a sense, the meeting of the council of the Arab League was an anticlimax in the Levant dispute. However, it is important because it represented the first act of cooperation between the Arab states in their new organization. The council of the Arab League met four times during June, from June 5 to 8, 1945, and adopted a resolution demanding the total evacuation of foreign troops from Syria and Lebanon.

17 The first time was in 1925 when the Syrian revolt broke out.
18 It should be noted that the League came legally into force on May 11, 1945. The League had to deal with this political problem after a few weeks of its legal existence.
19 Izzeddin, op. cit., p. 163.
It should be noted that the Franco-Syrian-Lebanese crisis passed, owing to the support given to the Levant states by the Great Powers when the case was taken up by the United Nations, and thus the Arab League was spared the effort to face the crisis alone against France.  

Hardly had the Syrian crisis passed when the Arab League was confronted with another issue that revealed the dynastic rivalry among the member states. The Greater Syria issue, which was advocated by King Abdullah before the establishment of the League, was again stimulated in 1946. Having achieved independence for his country, King Abdullah, who never gave up his Greater Syria project, made a specific reference to the plan in an official address to his legislative chamber in November, 1946. The formal announcement of King Abdullah's Greater Syria scheme as the official policy of his government aroused the opposition of both Syria and Lebanon and revived the controversy in a more acute manner. The reaction of the Lebanese was immediate. On November 13, 1946 Lebanon's Foreign Minister, addressing the chamber of deputies, made it clear that Lebanon had joined the Arab League on condition that her independence and her existing boundaries should be maintained. 

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21 On May 14, 1946 Transjordan was proclaimed an independent monarchical state. On May 25, 1946 Abdullah was formally proclaimed the first King of the Hashimi Kingdom of Transjordan.

22 Extracts from King Abdullah's speech to be found in a book entitled *Greater Syria*, edited by a number of Syrians, Damascus, 1947, p. 14. (in Arabic).

denounced King Abdullah's plan as being inconsistent with the policy which prompted Lebanon to join the Arab League. 24 Syria's reaction to King Abdullah's plan was violent, too. Syria's opposition was not based against the idea of strong unity between the Arab states. It should be recalled that Syria stood strongly for full Arab union with a strong centralized government during the preliminary talk for the establishment of the Arab League. Moreover, Syria did not object to the idea of Greater Syria, in principle, when the subject was raised in the Preparatory Committee. The Syrian objection was directed against the person of King Abdullah, and the Greater Syria scheme was attacked on the ground that it was British-inspired. Thus the Syrian and Lebanese object to a union that would indirectly bind them to treaty with Great Britain, which they particularly criticize. 25 Moreover, the Syrian and Lebanese attacked the constitution of Transjordan and the unlimited powers of King Abdullah. 26


Considering the factors behind Lebanon's attitude toward the Greater Syria scheme, George Lenczowski, in "The Middle East in World Politics," said: "Lebanon's relations with her Arab neighbours continued to be conditioned by two factors: (1) her essentially Arab character as a nation, and (2) the preponderance of the Christian element in her population. While the first factor pushed Lebanon into cooperation with the Arab states through the instrumentality of the Arab League..., the second acted as a brake on the pro-Arab tendencies and dictated to the little republic a cautious course that would permit her to maintain her independence and individuality. It was this second facet of Lebanese policy which led her consistently to oppose the Greater Syria schemes..., as well as to insist on the retention of full sovereignty by the members of the Arab League." P. 250.

25 After the declaration of Transjordan's independence, an Anglo-Transjordan Treaty was concluded which secured some privileges for Britain in Transjordan.

26 Greater Syria, Damascus, 1947, p. 54.
The matter was finally raised at the council of the Arab League by the Syrian delegation. In order to solve the controversy, it was affirmed that the mention of Greater Syria did not imply an infringement on the independence of any particular member state. The council once more confirmed the obligation of every member state to respect the sovereignty of the others. 27

The Greater Syria controversy reflected the dynastic rivalry among the member states of the Arab League, as Saudi Arabia and Egypt stood firmly by the side of Syria and Lebanon in opposing King Abdullah's ambitious plan, while Iraq, the other Hashimite kingdom, was favoring Transjordan's claims.

King Abdullah's failure to achieve his Greater Syria scheme and the opposition that he faced from the member states of the Arab League, except Iraq, prompted him to approach the latter for achieving closer relations between the two Hashimite kingdoms in order to strengthen their position in the Arab League.

Conversations between Iraq and Transjordan, to achieve this end, began early in 1946 and culminated in the conclusion of a "Treaty of Alliance and Brotherhood" between the two Hashimite kingdoms. 28 The Treaty provided for a close alliance and eternal brotherhood between the two parties. The preamble stated that the security, cooperation,

27 Greater Syria, p. 54.

28 This Treaty came into force on June 10, 1947. The text is to be found in The Middle East Journal, October, 1947, pp. 449-451.
and complete mutual understanding on matters affecting the interests of the two countries were the purpose of the treaty.

Since its establishment, the Arab League has made the Palestine question the responsibility of all the member states. Annex I of the Pact of the League was devoted to the Palestine question. Referring to the Covenant of the League of Nations and the Treaty of Lausanne—the former made provisions for a regime based upon recognition of her independence in which the latter proclaimed that her future was to be settled by the parties concerned—Annex I of the Pact concluded that Palestine should be independent.

The immediate goals of the League concerning Palestine at that time were: to stop mass immigration of Jews to Palestine; to preserve Palestinian land by prohibiting the selling of land to Zionists, and to boycott the Zionists' production. These objectives were discussed at the council's meeting of the Arab League in Bludan, Syria, June, 1946. At the end of the meeting, the council's decisions provided for: the establishment of a special committee to be called the Palestine Committee to supervise all activities relating to Palestine; a Penal Actions against selling of lands to Zionists; the establishment of a special fund for Palestine; and an organized and extended propaganda. 29

These resolutions were followed by an Arab States' memorandum sent to the British and American Governments to protest the report of the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry which had been sent to investigate the Palestine problem. 30

29 For text of these recommendations see the (London) Times, June 14, 1946.
30 For text of the report see the New York Times, May 1, 1946.
Britain, which could not find a solution for the Palestine question that would be accepted by both Arabs and Zionists, requested the calling of a special session of the General Assembly on April 2, 1947 to consider the problem. The General Assembly set up a special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP) which recommended to the Assembly the Partition of Palestine into a Jewish and an Arab state with an economic union between them.

The council of the Arab League convened at Alley, Lebanon, on October 6, 1947 to consider the Palestine situation in the light of the recommendation of the U. N. Committee and the British announcement of its plan to withdraw from Palestine by May 15, 1948.

At the last meeting the council announced its resolutions concerning Palestine, the most important of which were:

"...in view of the British declaration of its intention to evacuate Palestine and in view of the terrorist organization and Zionist forces which threaten the security of Palestine Arabs, it is recommended that military precautions be taken on the boundaries of Palestine by adjacent states, provided those states make arrangements for the participation of other states.

It is recommended that actual help, both materially and morally, be given Palestine Arabs to strengthen their defense and that each Arab state set aside funds for that purpose and that a special committee be appointed to supervise the funds."31

Hardly had the League ended its meetings when it was called again for a special session to study the situation after the U. N. had adopted the partition plan on November 29. The council met again for three days and announced that the League would supply (1) arms and

31 The resolution, composed of three parts, may be found in the New York Times, October 7, 1947.
subsidies to irregulars; (2) regular armies to help out while Britain was still in Palestine, but which would take action when the British evacuated; (3) raising of $4,000,000 by the member states for the irregular army. 32

The League's hopes that the volunteer army would be able to occupy Palestine were shattered by the events preceding the termination of the mandate. Streams of Arab refugees left their homes as a result of Zionist terrorism and sought shelter in neighbouring Arab states. Public opinion rose to a high pitch in the Arab World against their governments' non-intervention. Under the pressure of mounting public opinion, the Arab regular forces moved into Palestine at dawn on May 15, 1948.

Thus the Palestinian war started on May 15, 1948 and the first phase lasted twenty-seven days, until June 11. This was followed by a truce of one month. The second phase of fighting, which began on July 8, lasted eleven days until July 19, 1948 and was ended with the League's failure to prevent the establishment of the State of Israel and the liberation of Palestine. The League was never able to organize a general war to liberate Palestine and its military and diplomatic efforts were defeated. The very nature of the internal structure of the League made such a task impossible; it possessed neither the administrative machinery nor the necessary powers to coordinate and control the various armies of the member states.

Moreover, the Palestine question was a serious problem that the Arab League had to deal with. It should be mentioned in this respect that the Arabs had been at a disadvantage owing to their ignorance of international politics and the general overall weakness of their positions as a result of years of misrule and oppression.

The general condition of weakness of the Arab states and their dependence on the big powers put the League from the outset in a situation that could hardly be considered very hopeful.

It is true that there was a great deal of solidarity, or show of solidarity, in the initial stages of the Palestine conflict; but soon the dynastic rivalry prevented the League from taking any concerted action in the struggle with Israel. 33

It was impossible, owing to the dynastic rivalry, to reach an agreement for a united command. King Abdullah announced that he would be the Commander-in-Chief, but neither the Egyptians nor the Syrians accepted him as such. As a result, there was no coordinated Arab strategy, and the movements of the Arab forces were as much dictated by the political rivalries inside the Arab League as by military consideration. 34

In the meantime, discord was even more rife on the question of the status of the future Palestine state. King Abdullah, supported by Iraq, which had no immediate interests in Palestine save the larger interest of resisting Zionist claims, advocated the annexation of

33 Khadduri, Independent Iraq, pp. 258-259.

Palestine to Transjordan as a first step in the realization of the Greater Syria plan. But the opposition of the other Arab states forced King Abdullah to agree to the Arab League resolution (April, 1948) that the fate of Palestine, after her liberation, should be decided by the Palestinians themselves. 35 When the Arab states failed to save Palestine, King Abdullah considered the Arab League council's resolution no longer binding and he revised his aims for the annexation of the Arab part of Palestine. Thus, when the "Arab Government of All Palestine" was formed at Crozza at the instance of the Arab League, all the Arab states, with Abdullah's exception, recognised it. Moreover, in a move against the expressed desire of all the other Arab states, King Abdullah had proclaimed himself King of Jerusalem in the latter part of 1948. A meeting of the Arab League had been called at the time and he had been threatened with expulsion. 36

The Arab states which had recognized the government of All Arab Palestine could not accept King Abdullah's action. He had consented to drop the issue of annexation for the time being, but never did accept the Crozza government which he had looked upon as a puppet of Egypt.

The climax of the sequence of events that almost brought a rupture within the League was the decision of King Abdullah to add to his kingdom his occupied part of Palestine. The formal act of unity took place

when Jordan's Parliament voted the unification of Arab Palestine and Transjordan into the single kingdom of Hashimite Jordan. This action was a defiance of the League council's decision of April, 1948 concerning the future of Palestine.

The council of the Arab League met on June 12 to decide upon the necessary punitive measures to be applied against Jordan. Refusing to attend the meeting, Jordan offered no compromise on the issue of annexation. Trying to avoid a rupture among the member states, Iraq suggested that the issue should be referred to the Political Committee which would discuss and recommend but could not decide.

The Political Committee, in its resolution, emphasized that all matters concerning Palestine would be dependent upon the acceptance of all Arab League states and until such time as there could be a final Palestine settlement. The resolution recognized Jordan's position in Palestine as a trustee which she should relinquish in case an Arab Palestine in some form should be restored in the future.

This settlement was considered as a long-term postponement of the issue at that time.

The outcome of events in Palestine and the developing consequences of the League's action in that respect have exposed the intrinsic weaknesses of the League system.

38 Ibid., June 13, 1950.
40 Ibid., June 15, 1950.
The League's failure to save Palestine had a deep reaction among the Arab peoples. They lost confidence in their rulers and felt that the League could not afford security to the Arabs in the face of a new Israeli push. The political instability in the Arab World after the Palestine crisis was best revealed in the events that took place in Syria in 1949. In that year Syria witnessed three successive military coup d'etats.

After the League's disaster in Palestine, the Arabs of the Fertile Crescent, aware that they were directly exposed to the danger of a renewed Zionist aggression and the incapability of the League to stop such an aggression, began once more to look into the possibility of a closer unity in the Fertile Crescent within the framework of the Arab League.

Since the Greater Syria plan advocated by King Abdullah failed to rally a strong support among the Syrians, Iraq decided to come to the fore to lead such a movement.

The opportune moment to achieve a Syrian-Iraqi unity offered itself after the first Syrian coup d'état and the defeat of Quatli regime which was in opposition to such a union. On April 1, 1948 the Iraqi Prime Minister Muri as-Said, who for long had played with the idea of a Fertile Crescent unity, began to approach Husni al-Zaim.

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41 The first was Husni al-Zaim's coup d'état, March 30, 1949; the second was Hinnawi's coup d'état, August 14, 1949; and the third was Shishakli's coup d'état, December 19, 1949.

42 Under Article 9 of the Pact it was possible for the member states to have closer ties than are provided by the Pact.

43 Khadduri, The Scheme of Fertile Crescent Unity, p. 156.
the leader of the first Syrian coup d'etat, for the possibility of a Syrian-Iraqi union. Zaim's reply to such a gesture was encouraging. He made it clear that Syria was desirous of a unity with Iraq and requested Iraq to conclude immediately a defensive military agreement with Syria. These moves impelled Egypt and Saudi Arabia, which were against a Syrian-Iraqi union, to swift action. Saudi Arabia and Egypt, which until that time did not recognize Zaim's regime, promised formal recognition and immediate financial support if Zaim would maintain Syria's republican regime. Anxious to secure formal diplomatic recognition, Zaim accepted the Saudi-Arabian and Egyptian offer and rejected any closer political union with Iraq.


Considering Zaim's cooperation with the Hashimite Kingdoms, George Lenczowski, in *The Middle East in World Affairs*, said: "Ideological and practical considerations pushed him toward the cooperation with Iraq and Jordan advocated by Pan-Arab groups. There was also a compelling need to accept their military aid and at the time of the armistice negotiations with Israel. Such aid was likely to strengthen Syria's position and guarantee her protection against the threat of an Israeli invasion. Furthermore, if Zaim's pledges for reform were not to remain an empty word, they had to be backed up by some quick steps toward economic recovery.... Iraq and Jordan were Syria's two principal customers.... Therefore, expansion of trade with them would be a basic factor in Syria's economic recovery." Pp. 252-253.

Also Kimche, *op. cit.*, pp. 310-311.

45 *ibid.*, p. 157.

Also Kimche, *op. cit.*, p. 311.
However, the second Syrian coup of Hinnawi offered Iraq another opportunity to resume negotiations for a Syrian-Iraqi union. Hinnawi's coup was supported by the Peoples' Party which advocated a Syrian-Iraqi union.

With the support of the Peoples' Party, Hinnawi renewed Zaim's policy of friendship with Egypt and Saudi Arabia and reopened negotiations with Iraq for a closer political union.46

Although the Peoples' Party, which supported closer unity with Iraq, became the largest single party in the Constituent Assembly in the election of November, 1949, there were some elements who opposed such a unity. The Republican Bloc and the Ba'th Party, which opposed a Syrian-Iraqi union, made secret contacts with a number of army officers who, though having cooperated with Hinnawi to get rid of Zaim, did not accept his policy of union with Iraq. The leader of this secret move was Adib al-Shishakly who threw off Hinnawi's regime by another coup d'état on December 19, 1949. Thus the whole army, under a new command, changed its policy on the question of unity with Iraq.47

Shishakly's coup put Syria in a paradoxical situation. While the army and its supporters in the Constituent Assembly were opposed to Syrian-Iraqi union, the Peoples' Party, the only large party in the Assembly, remained committed to ultimate union with Iraq and openly opposed Shishakly.48

47Knadduri, The Scheme of Fertile Crescent Unity, pp. 163-164.
48Kimche, op. cit., p. 315.
However, with the interference of the army, the project of Syrian-Iraqi union was put aside. It should be noted that although opposition to such a project came from some of the political circles in Syria, nevertheless this opposition was backed and supported by Saudi Arabia and Egypt.

By this time, Egypt had announced her intention of initiating a proposal for a collective security pact. 49

The "Treaty of Joint Defense and Economic Cooperation," proposed by Egypt, was adopted in June, 1950 by Egypt, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Syria, and Yemen. Iraq withheld her signature for technical reasons, as has been explained at the time. 50

This Treaty came into force on August 23, 1952 following the signature of Iraq on February 2, 1951 and that of Jordan on February 16, 1952. 51

The Treaty reproduced to some extent the legal pattern of NATO. Under Article 2 the Treaty provided for an automatic collective security system: in case of aggression, the member states would come to the aid of the victim and would take all available measures, including the use


Considering Egypt's attitude, Khadduri, in The Scheme of Fertile Crescent Unity, said: "The Egyptian proposal of an Arab collective security pact, to be signed by all the Arab League states in order to protect them from Zionist danger, was in fact designed to disrupt the Syria-Iraqi unity scheme which was advocated by Syrians who sought security from Zionism through such unity." P. 166.


51 For text see The Middle East Journal, Spring, 1952, pp. 238-240. The Treaty consists of 13 articles and a military annex. It is valid for ten years.
of armed force, to repel the aggression. Article 6 provided for the establishment of a Joint Defense Council, composed of the Foreign and Defense Ministers of the participating states. Article 8 provided for the establishment of an Economic Council, consisting of the Ministers of Economic Affairs, to organize and coordinate the inter-Arab economics. Article 10 stated that the contradictory states would not undertake to conclude any international agreements which might be contradictory to the provisions of this Treaty, nor to act in a way which might be contrary to its aims.

It should be noted that the conclusion of this Treaty among the member states of the Arab League was in response to the desire among the Arab peoples for a stronger unity than provided in the Pact of the Arab League. Evidently the failure of Arab unity as delineated by the League has become apparent to everyone concerned. The desire for an effective Arab unity together with the quest for security, owing to the present situation of the Arab World, has induced the member states of the Arab League to seek closer and stronger union.

Before the "Treaty of Joint Defense and Economic Cooperation" came into force, Mazim al-Kudsi, the Syrian Prime Minister, submitted to the Political Committee of the Arab League in January, 1951, a memorandum in which he urged a closer union among the Arab states. Al-Kudsi's plan, which pointed to the ineffectiveness of the Arab League in its present form and the peoples impatience with its slow

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ways and unsubstantial results, stressed the urgent need for an effective Arab union. 53 The Prime Minister of Syria proposed a federation or a union that would include all the member states of the League. The union would have a common foreign and defense policy, together with a unified economy.

In his memorandum, al-Kudsi stressed the urgency of the situation and the threat of Zionism which constitutes a more imminent danger than any other. Al-Kudsi's proposal, though it did not materialize, was one of the basic factors that hastened the coming into force of the "Treaty of Joint Defense and Economic Cooperation."

Having been established with the main purpose of forming a bloc of Arab states strong enough to withstand outside pressure, the League's immediate concern was directed toward the political issues.

However, on the social, economic, and cultural plane, the Arab League laid down more ambitious programmes which, if they could be carried out, would have more far-reaching significance in achieving Arab solidarity than its political activities. 54

In the economic and social fields actual achievements are few, but a groundwork has been laid which may well bear fruit in the future. The special committees of the League 55 have been working on an ambitious programme for the extension of regional commerce and the unification of

53 Isseddin, op. cit., pp. 334-335.

54 Khadduri, Independent Iraq, p. 259.

Article 2 of the Pact of the Arab League provided for economic, social, and cultural cooperation.

55 These Committees were provided for in Article 4 of the Pact.
communications; the formation of customs and postal unions; the establishment of a common citizenship; and the standardization of legal practices and educational systems.

It is true that these projects have been carefully studied, but very few have reached the state of practical application.

However, there are some who believe that the League can realize many achievements in the non-political fields. Considering this possibility, Charles Malik said:

"But regardless of its political limitations, the Arab League can play a more active role in the economic, cultural, and social life of the Arab World. There is ample room for the coordination of the energies of the various Arab countries in the socio-economic realm, nor is such inter-Arab cooperation as likely to be handicapped by the various internal and external factors of disunity as is the strictly political cooperation."56

It should be noted that some tangible results already have been achieved in the cultural field, where the impress of a common heritage is still strong.57


57 Considering the achievements in this field, J. Schacht, in "Will There Be an Arab Federation?" said: "The most promising line of action would seem to lie for the moment on the cultural rather than on the economic or the formally political plane. To promote and strengthen the cultural ties between the Arab countries is one of the principal aims of the present Arab movement, and the remarkable success which had already been achieved in this field is being seriously exploited and developed by all parties concerned. The new Arab renascence seems destined to provide a sound cultural basis for any future political development," Great Britain and the East, September 25, 1943, p. 19.
A cultural Treaty was adopted by all the member states in 1945. The aims of this treaty were the integration of the educational systems in the Arab countries, the advancement of learning, and the development of a uniform culture based on the Arab heritage and enriched by the achievements of modern knowledge.

The economic, social, and cultural cooperation between the Arab League states, though carried out on a limited scale, are a promising step towards achieving the ultimate goal—Arab Unity.
An indefinite idea, an irresolute course, and an unknown destiny!

Thus so far the Odyssey of the Arab idea— but only so far— for there is yet more to come. Less than half a century old it has not as yet traversed its infant years, and the world—the Arab World in which it moves and has its being—is malleable and changing. Its future is still in the unfathomable depths of Time.

But already apparent— embedded in the very circumstances that attended its birth and growth— are the more or less permanent factors that more than any other thing urge it on (or impede it) in its uncharted path and towards its elusive fate.

Let us seek these factors out.

I. Birth of the Idea: Its Origin

It is clear from Chapter I that the idea of Arab unity is rooted deep in the past, in the forces and processes released by the dynamism of Islam. Islam created the community of feeling, the common view of life, and the one heritage that today uphold and nourish the Arab idea. The idea, however, did not grow out of Islam. In fact, it could not have grown out of it, for the national idea is, to a certain extent, alien to the very premise of Islam. It is much too narrow for the universalism that is Islam.
The impulse came from the outside. Chapter II points to at least three alien forces. The first is the flow of Western ideas in the latter part of the nineteenth century into the then isolated and self-contained Arab Society. This was later to be followed by a Western occupation which gave further impetus to the idea. The second impelling force was the attempt at Turkification that came in the wake of the Young Turk Revolution of 1908. This sharpened the consciousness of a separate and distinct Arab identity. Finally came the intrusion of Zionism into the Arab East and the tragedy of Palestine, which drew the Arabs together more than ever before.

The fact that the Arab idea did not grow out of Islam and is to some extent antagonistic to it, might partly explain why the idea has so far not evoked among many Arabs any undue enthusiasm. The dependence of the idea on outside impulses indicates that its intensity in the future will partly be in more or less direct proportion to the pressure of outer forces. This does not mean that when the idea starts rolling in earnest it will not pick up force under its own momentum and draw upon the more positive inner resources that Islam has unwittingly provided.

II. Growth of the Idea

A. Its Scope and Mobility

The Arab idea has been unusually elastic, and in its movement through the years, changes in it or in relation to it are distinguishable along at least four lines.

1. First, there have been shifts in its centers of gravity.
These have changed roughly as follows:

1830-1914: Syria
1914-1918: The Hashemites in Hejaz
1918-1920: The Hashemites in the Fertile Crescent
1920-1940: This is the period of what might be called the "paralysis" of the idea, when the Fertile Crescent was torn into zones of French and British influence and each Arab area frittered its strength away in individual effort at independence; and when on the surface the idea seemed to have petered out. With the defeat of France in 1940 the idea came into its own again.

a. On the official level
1940-1944: The Hashemites in Jordan and Iraq
1944: Egypt enters the picture for the first time.
1944-1948: Egypt takes the lead.

b. On the popular level
1940-1955: Syria continues to be the most potent source of pure, unadulterated Arabism.

The above should explain why some Arab countries, as those in the Fertile Crescent and Syria in particular, are more enthusiastic about Arab unity, while others like the Egyptians, to
whom the idea meant little or nothing at all before 1944, are at best lukewarm towards it.

2. Secondly, there have been shifts in terms of the social groups or classes which adhered to the idea. Its range of appeal, in fact, has been constantly widening. It started in the late 1900's with a very narrow circle of Syrian intellectuals and notables. In the 1910's the Hashemite rulers, for purposes of their own, embraced it. From then on it became gradually the possession of an increasing number of middle class elements in the Fertile Crescent, particularly in Syria and less so in Iraq, and it is only now that it has begun to seep into the mass levels. In other Arab areas the idea has not yet gained root among the intellectuals, but the continued appeal to the idea of the rulers of Egypt, Iraq, Saudi-Arabia, etc. in their jockeying for position in the Arab World indicates that the idea is sinking deep into the imagination of a large part of the Arab population.

3. Thirdly, there have been shifts in terms of the area which the idea has for its focus. In the late nineteenth century it centered on natural Syria. In the 1910's it laid claim to the entire Fertile Crescent and the Arabian Peninsula. In the 1920's with the destruction of the Hashemite power in the Peninsula the area of the idea contracted again. When its official revival came in the early 1940's, it was still limited to the Fertile Crescent. When, however, it received its first
concrete expression in the Arab League, its area was enlarged to include Egypt and the larger part of the Peninsula. Meanwhile, on the popular level in Natural Syria it came increasingly to be associated with the Greater Arab area extending from the Atlantic Ocean to Iran.

4. Finally, there have been shifts in terms of the political principle upon which the idea was to be built. In this sense, it oscillated between the unitary, federal, and confederal forms of government. Why so far it ended in the loose and unworkable association that is the Arab League is explained by obstacles that faced it and which will be presently considered.

B. Factors Hinder ing the Idea

There are a number of reasons why the Arab idea has not so far gained way in the Arab lands. Different weights could be attributed to these reasons. Among the more salient ones are:

1. The Arabs inhabit a very wide area fragmented geographically by intervening deserts, so that in the past, with absence of easy communication, the Arabs of the different regions were virtually isolated from each other. This meant a severe restriction on the mobility of the Arab idea. Modern means of communication have annihilated distance to such an extent that they form today a positive asset to Arab unity.

2. The fact that the Arab idea had tended to move in the past largely among a narrow circle of the ruling elements has given undue weight to dynastic quarrels in its destiny. In fact,
the idea so far has been the victim of irreconcilable ambitions of Kings, Emirs, and Pashas and their satellites. The apparent decline of this rabble of rulers and the rising consciousness of the masses promise also to negate this disturbing factor in the not too distant future.

3. Probably the greatest obstacle of all is the presence today in the Arab World of other ideas that compete severely for the loyalty of the Arab mind. There is first what we might call the regional idea—Egyptianism, Syrianism, Iraqism, or the like. Such concepts are naturally antagonistic to the Arab idea and detract from its force. These concepts hold undisputed sway in some areas, like Egypt for instance, while they are weaker in other areas, like Syria. There is also another competing idea that is as formidable if not more so. This is the Islamic idea which, with its pervasive and universal view, appeals to an increasing number of North African Arabs. There is also the tribal idea. Many Arabs have not as yet transcended tribal consciousness. Fortunately, however, this consciousness is rapidly wearing out. Finally, there is the Communist idea—an outer force—that has nevertheless made a deep dent among a number of intellectuals, particularly in Iraq. It is evident that the advance of the Arab idea in the future will be in inverse proportion to the growth or decline of these competing ideas.
4. Another obstacle is presented by the varied stages of political and cultural development of the various Arab countries. Politically, some Arab countries are colonies, others protectorates, others independent. Of the independent ones, some are republics, the others kingdoms. Some are patriarchal, others modern. Culturally also there has been wide divergence. Some countries have been subjected to Western influence, others not. For some areas this influence has been potent, in others weak. In some it has been of the British brand, in others of the French brand. The result of all this is a situation where in one Arab country, like Egypt, you have urbanization, the beginnings of industrialism, the acceptance of a secular view of the state, whereas in another Arab country, like Saudi Arabia, the social organization is still tribal and Islamic self-sufficiency is still affirmed.

5. Another very important factor which acts in both directions is the interference of foreign powers in the process of Arab development. The most notable examples are, of course, the fragmentation of the Fertile Crescent after World War I and the Zionist Wedge after World War II which separated the Arabs of Africa from the Arabs of Asia.

6. Finally, there are a number of other obstacles—as for instance the religious fissure as between Shii or Suni, or Moslem or Christian; or the racial fissure as between Kurd and Arab, or Berber and Arab.
Despite all these blocs, there yet remains a consciousness of a common identity, and a sense of a common destiny. Otherwise such a thing as the Arab League would have been incomprehensible.

III. First Fruition of the Idea: The Arab League

Two observations about the Arab League will be sufficient.

It deserves no more.

A. That in the short-range view it has been a political setback to the idea of Arab unity because its purpose was to preserve the status quo, that is to say, to preserve division. It aimed not as much at bringing the Arabs together as at perpetuating the power of the Kings and Emirs who were its members. It gave the Arabs an illusion of a unity and diverted them from a more creative path.

B. However, from a long-term view, by laying the groundwork, at least, for closer cultural and social cooperation, the Arab League Covenant has unwittingly worked towards undermining, the hard way, the very power structure that it sought to preserve.

IV. Future of the Idea

There are various possibilities of development. Either the idea will not progress at all, bogging down somewhere, or it will forge ahead. If it does, it might take various forms--possibly the form of closer cooperation between the various Arab governments. But this will not mean much tangibly because different rulers will always mean different interests. Another possibility is a military
conquest by one Arab country of another, or the fusion of several Arab countries. This means an Arab idea limited in its concept and in its scope because no one Arab country is militarily able to conquer all the rest. There is also the possibility, though now remote, of an Arab mass movement with branches in all Arab countries slowly rising to power and giving perhaps the only creative expression of the true Arab idea.

Which way things will turn out depends not only upon internal Arab forces and the ability of the Arab idea to transcend all its obstacles, but also on the developments in the rest of the world--on the movements of Zionism, Communism, and the West, for the Arabs do not exist in isolation, but more so than any other nation are in the midst of the World stage.
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