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**Arab Political Thought on Arab Nationalism and Unity:
The 1980s and the Dialectic of Old and New Paradigms**

YOUSSEF MOHAMED SAWANI

University of Kent at Canterbury

1996

**A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfilment
of the Requirements of the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy**

**In the Faculty of Social Science
University of Kent at Canterbury**

Dedication

To the Memory of My Mother. She had dreamt of the day when I accomplish my academic hopes but unmerciful death kidnapped her from my family in a time long earlier than I would have expected.

May her blessing not escape me and may her soul rest in peace.

My Father has been a major driving force behind all my achievements. Throughout his struggle to support our family he would not compromise what I need no matter how dear the cost was. His enthusiasm towards my education has always been at its height despite the troublesome and difficult circumstances of a peasant's life. I hope that this thesis expresses my affection of a perennial life's mentor.

I Owe My Wife and Children A Great Deal in the Completion of this Thesis. May they Accept This In Partial Settlement of A Huge Debt.

God Bless Them All The Dead and The Living.

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however, thanks and appreciation are due in particular to my supervisor Professor Stephen Chan whose guidance and encouragement made it possible for the task to be accomplished. I appreciate that he always took my work seriously. I also wish to register my thanks to professor Michael Nicholson who helped a great deal at the start of this research.

I am indebted to Arab intellectuals, whom I interviewed in the course of writing this thesis, who lent me moral and intellectual support. The encouragement and advice I received from members of my committee was invaluable. Professor John Groom and Dr. K. Webb have been instrumental towards making the project materialise. The support, advice, encouragement and enthusiasm Dr. Vivienne Jabri showed were vital during the painful process of writing this thesis. I appreciate that she always had interest in my work.

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Abstract

The Arab World has known an Arab nationalist movement since the nineteenth century with its aims being focused firstly on establishing the existence of an Arab nation and secondly that this nation should be politically united in one pan-Arab nation-state. However, whereas many nationalist movements achieved their goal of establishing a nation-state, the Arab world as a whole was one of frustration for the Arab nationalists.

Since the 1967 defeat in the war with Israel and particularly after the deradicalization of Arab politics after the death of Nasser and the rise of Arab petrodollar power, the hold of Arab nationalism on Arab politics has been waning. The event of the Iranian revolution of 1979 had the effect of increasing the power of Islamic fundamentalism in the Arab world. Consequently Pan-Islamism, which pan-Arabism had been able to quieten after the Second World War, returned to compete with Arab nationalism. Since then and especially in the 1980s many would attest to the premise that Arab nationalism was no longer the hegemonic ideology in the Arab world and that *raison d'état* was dictating the course of Arab politics. Intellectuals began to question the validity of the pan-Arab ideal.

The 1980s are marked by a revived assessment of Arab nationalism. There is what may be seen as a new breed of Arab nationalist thought in the writings on Arabism. The idea is no longer viewed in theological tones. Intellectuals and social scientists are examining the Arabist idea not as an ideal but as useful if realistically approached. The research presents and analyzes Arab thought through the contributions of intellectuals in the 1980s. The investigation establishes the continuation of intellectual efforts by Arab nationalists to articulate the pan-Arab idea. The analysis clearly demonstrates and detects the change in the nature of Arab thought as far as Arab nationalism and Arab unity are concerned and as compared to the kind of thought that was considered dead after 1967. Arab nationalist thought and Arab nationalism are being reconstructed and rejuvenated to accommodate the developments in Arab society and politics since 1967. The debates which Arab thought experienced in the 1980s provide evidence that such development was taking place.

The discussion and analysis shows that even though Arab nationalism lost its hegemony over Arab politics, Arab thought has produced an entirely fresh contribution to the ideas of Arab nationalism and Arab unity. The study attempts to qualify previous studies and may play a role in qualifying the death verdict issued upon Arab nationalism. Therefore the study focuses on the debates as far as issues like the Arab nation, Arab unity, Arab state, democracy, and minorities are concerned. The analysis of the debates and contributions, which are largely unknown in the West, determine that a rejuvenation of Arab nationalism is taking place. Arab thought on Arab nationalism and Arab unity is undergoing a dialectic between its old and the newly emerging paradigms.

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A Note on Transliteration

The transliteration apparatus has been kept to the minimum. The only diacritical mark in the transliteration are 'ayns. The 'ayn is indicated by [']. Arabic names as those familiar to the reader in their Anglicized versions are rendered as such and not in transliteration (e.g. Nasser). Names of Arab writers who publish in English are spelt the way they appear in their own publications and therefore discrepancies are available as far as these are concerned. The Arabic article ``al'' usually only appears when reference is first made to the subject in the whole of the research. (e.g. M. 'Abid al-Jabiriy).

Chapter One

Introduction

The Arab World has known an Arab nationalist movement since the nineteenth century with its aims being focused firstly on establishing the existence of an Arab nation, on the contention that its national identity is enshrined in the bonds of language, culture, history and geography, and secondly that this nation should be politically united in one pan-Arab nation-state. After the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire Arab nationalism sought the liberation of the Arabs from European colonialism. Once this aim was achieved realities of Arab politics did not support the vision of identity. Arab nationalists therefore pledged themselves to ending the state of political fragmentation and to building a pan-Arab nation-state that would encompass all Arabs under its banner.

However, whereas many nationalist movements achieved their goal of establishing a nation-state, the Arab world as whole was one of frustration for the Arab nationalists. Isolationist tendencies prevailed, states gave priority to their domestic integration rather than to inter-Arab integration. Despite many attempts at Arab unity disillusionment ensued. The failure of Arab nationalism to materialize a pan-Arab state, even though Arab nationalist ideology exercised an ideological power over Arab politics in the 1950s and the 1960s, has posed a challenge to Arab nationalist thought.

Since independence Arab states have constituted a living

contradiction to the pan-Arabist model. Arab states have been consolidating their sovereignty and existence. Particularistic identities, though not overtly claiming to erode the pan-Arab identity, have been able to compete against the wider Arab identity. Since the 1967 defeat in the war with Israel and particularly after the deradicalisation of Arab politics after the death of Nasser and the rise of Arab petrodollar power, the hold of Arab nationalism on Arab politics has been waning.

The event of the Iranian revolution of 1979 had the effect of increasing the power of Islamic fundamentalism in the Arab world. Consequently pan-Islamism, which pan-Arabism had been able to quieten after the Second World War, returned to compete with Arab nationalism. Since then and especially in the 1980s many would attest to the premise that Arab nationalism was no longer the hegemonic ideology in the Arab world and that *raison d'état* was dictating the course of Arab politics. Intellectuals began to question the validity of the pan-Arab ideal. Although there has been an obvious tendency in the treatment of Arab nationalism to link it inextricably to the pan-Arab aspiration and to view it as "synonymous with a broad Arab unity,"¹ the "failure to distinguish properly between such terms as "unity", "solidarity", and "pan-Arabism", meant that the pan-Arab ideal was proclaimed dead in the 1980s.²

The death verdict was bluntly phrased by F. Ajami in his

¹ Henry Siegman, "Arab Unity and Disunity", The Middle East Journal, vol. 16 (Winter 1962) Number 1, p. 48

² Roger Owen, "Arab Nationalism, Unity and Solidarity", in Talal Asad and Roger Owen(eds), Sociology of Developing Societies: The Middle East, (New York; Monthly Review Press, 1983) p. 16

article 'the End of Pan-Arabism' which appeared in Foreign Affairs. He proclaimed the death of pan-Arabism and the victory of *raison d'etat* in Arab politics after the year 1967 which Ajami defines as having been the Waterloo of Arab nationalism. Since the publication of Ajami's article Western literature on Arab nationalism has been evolving on a continuum of arguments that essentially repeat Ajami's argument but without any obvious further conclusion.

In Arab literature, however, the debate is far from closed on the issue and still open to new contributions. The 1980s are marked by a revived assessment of Arab nationalism. The debates mainly concentrated on the assessment of the Arab idea. There is what may be seen as a new breed of Arab nationalist thought in the writings on Arabism. The idea is no longer viewed in the theological tones that marked the writings of Arab nationalists like al-Husry and 'Aflaq. Intellectuals and social scientists are examining the Arabist idea not as an ideal but as useful if realistically approached.

This research focuses on Arab nationalist thought in the 1980s, a period which saw according to the advocates of the 'End of Arabism' the striking evidence of the death of Arab nationalism. The research proposes to present and analyze Arab thought in the contributions of intellectuals in order to investigate the continuation of intellectual efforts by Arab nationalists to articulate the pan-Arab idea despite the death verdict. The analysis is to demonstrate the change in the nature of Arab thought as far as Arab nationalism and Arab unity are concerned as compared to the kind of thought that was considered

dead after 1967.

1-1: Arab Nationalist Thought: The Need For Reassessment

(i) Literature Review

Roger Owen notes that academic writing about Arab nationalism and Arab unity "has been unusually unsatisfactory." He argues that "little effort is made to understand their developments and to explain their role in Arab politics."³ This is related to what Gale Stokes, writing about two decades ago, saw as the general undeveloped theory of nationalism. Stokes argues that despite the amount of writing on nationalism it is surprising how little is the size of literature that deals with it theoretically. Stokes confirms this general state of literature on the study of nationalism and remarks that "nationalism has never received the kind of intellectual treatment other ideological problems have enjoyed."⁴

During the last years there has been a fresh and an ongoing debate on nationalism. Scholars from all disciplines have embarked on investigating nationalism in a manner that shows how rapidly the field is growing. Attempts have been made by historians, political scientists, social psychologists, anthropologists, students of international relations, linguistics, philosophers and many others to provide theoretical answers to issues that nationalism and ethnicity involve. As John

³ Ibid.

⁴ Gale Stokes, "The Undeveloped Theory of Nationalism" World Politics, 31; no. 1: (1978) p. 150.

Hutchinson and Anthony Smith observe there is a "remarkable growth of rich and penetrating works on every aspect of ethnicity and nationalism in all parts of the world."⁵ However, the remarks made by Stokes are certainly still evident as far as Arab nationalism is concerned.⁶

The previous lack of theorising on nationalism is attributed by P. Alter to the effects extreme nationalism in Europe, as were evident in the Second World War, had on the study of nationalism. Alter argues that because of the extremes of Nazism and Fascism nationalism was equated with "bellicose aggression, the unbridled urge for expansion, and racism." Having experienced the wrongdoing of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy Europeans considered nationalism a morally reprehensible phenomenon.⁷

The development of Arab nationalism as an ideology coincided with the current of this intellectual and political trend in Europe. The European tendency affected the study of Arab nationalism. Eric Davis-Willard draws attention to the effects of this European attitude on the study of Arab nationalism. He comments that

it is obvious that writings on Arab nationalism have been affected by the tendency to view ideology in terms of social pathologies. Arab ideologies are seen as irrational

⁵ John Hutchinson and Anthony Smith(eds), Nationalism, First Edition, (Oxford; Oxford University Press, 1994) p. v.

⁶ The 1980s and the 1990s have witnessed the appearance of a huge body of literature on nationalism and national identity. This reflects the huge debate concerning these issues. It is evident that the resurgence of nationalist movement and national identity in many parts of the world and especially in the ex-Soviet Union and Eastern Europe has led to important debates on nationalism. See John Hutchinson and Anthony Smith (eds), Nationalism, op. cit., p. 3-13.

⁷ P. Alter, Nationalism, First Edition, Translated By Stuart Mc Kinon-Evans (London; Edward Arnold, 1991) p. 27.

and distortive, having transformed Arab history into myth and having twisted the true meaning of Islamic doctrine.

Davis further argues that Western writings on Arab nationalism are descriptive rather than theoretical. These writings are seen by Davis as expressing "oriental historiography which has stressed religio-legal and philological erudition." Studying the approaches of two of the most prominent western scholars of Arab nationalism, E. Kedourie and S. Haim, Davis concludes that "Western writings have failed to link Arab nationalist thought to its larger social environment in any systematic fashion."⁸

This reflects what Aziz Al-Azmeh describes as an old refrain in which Arab nationalism is seen as "an irrational an unnatural force, suggested by demagogues and tyrants to a credulous and primitive demos, which habitually explodes with a primordial energy and is invariably rebuffed by reality." Azmeh argues that another refrain is

struck, and has been constant in negative construals of Arab nationalism since the era of Jamal Abd al-Nasser, that the desire by Arab nationalists for states larger than those presently in existence is in turn somehow unnatural; it is an idle passion at best, a sordid excuse at worst.⁹

Azmeh further notes that "hardly a mention is made, more than inconsequentially and in passing, of the popularity of this desire." " There seems to be no awareness of Arab social and cultural cohesion contained in Arabism." Azmeh traces this attitude to western interests. He explains that "in the recent past, as well as during the Nasserite era requirements of the

⁸ Eric Davis-Willard, "Theory and Method in the Study of Arab Nationalism", Review of Middle East Studies, 3: (1978) p. 26, p. 18.

⁹ Aziz Al-Azmeh, "Nationalism and the Arabs", Arab Studies Quarterly, vol. 17; Numbers, 1, 2, Winter-Spring (1995) pp. 3-5.

moment dictated the reduction of Arab nationalism to only one of its aspects, namely aspirations to unity." Therefore Azmeh puts forward the view that "Arab nationalism has generally been portrayed, in the west, from the narrow perspective of politics of the moment."¹⁰

This nature of Western writing on Arab nationalism is seen by Maxime Rodinson as the composition of a paradigm of Western scholarship concerning the Middle East. Rodinson calls this paradigm "theologocentrism" that attributes all Muslim produced thought as texts of Islamic theology. A wave of writings expresses this attitude in which Arab thoughts and actions are perceived to be the result of Islamic theology. Accordingly nationalism is an alien ideology to the Arabs and it therefore can be only the result of borrowing from the West.¹¹

E. Kedourie and S. Haim's treatments of Arab nationalism are examples of the kind of treatment it received in Western writings. For the most part Arab nationalist ideology is presented as essentially lacking any ability to play the role nationalism had been able to play in European nationalism. Haim and Kedourie systematically "cast doubt upon, if not totally undermine, the notion that either religion, language or common culture and history serve to qualify Arab nationalism as a

¹⁰ Ibid, pp. 3-5.

¹¹ Examples of this may be found in many works on Arab nationalism. In particular the Arabs are seen as intellectually confined to religious theology. see, Edward Rice, Captain Sir Richard Francis Burton, (New York; Charles Scribner's Sons, 1990); David Pryce-Jones, The Closed Circle: An Interpretation of the Arabs, (New York; Harper & Row, 1989); Sandra Mackey, The Saudis, (Boston; Houghton Mifflin Company, 1987); and Raphael Patai, The Arab Mind, (New York; Charles Scribner's Sons, 1973)

genuinely national doctrine."¹²

To move forward in evaluating Western writings on Arab nationalism it is clear that most studies, although narrow, approach it in a variety of ways. Some would treat it by focusing on some of its aspects such as pan-Arabism or its contradiction with Islam and therefore overlook the possibility of a larger overall context. Other studies impose a ready made preoccupation as when looking to the roots of Arab nationalism and its intellectual origins in European ideas or by emphasising the role of Christian missionaries and the role of Christian Arabs in its origin.

Most studies begin with the assumption that Arab nationalist thought originated as a reaction to Turkish nationalism and in the Arab experience with European colonisation. This is very clear in the contributions of Haim and Kedourie as well as many others who were influenced by them. Some Arab writers have echoed the same convictions without any reliance on primary material. Other Arab studies are narrative in nature and in the nationalist tradition are occupied with whether the Arab nation is a historical nation that is much older than all European nations.¹³

¹² Eric Davis-Willard, "Theory and Method", op. cit., p. 19.

¹³ Bassam Tibi, Arab Nationalism: A Critical Enquiry, Second Edition, Translated by M. Farouk-Sluglett and P. Sluglett (London; Macmillan, 1990) p. 8. Examples of Arab writings that echo the European writings are numerous. To name but a few, see, Tariq Ismael, The Arab Left: George Habbash and His Comrades, (New York; Syracuse University Press, 1976), and Elie Chalala, "Arab Nationalism: A Bibliographical Essay", in Tawfiq Farah(ed), Pan-Arabism and Arab Nationalism: The Continuing Debate, (Boulder, London; Westview Press, 1987); Hisham Sharabi, Arab Intellectuals and the West, (Baltimore; Johns Hopkins Press, 1970); Majid Khadduri, Political Trends in the Arab World: The Role of Ideas and Ideals, (London; John Hopkins University Press, 1970); Kemal H. Karpat(ed.), Political and Social Thought in the Contemporary Middle East, (New York; Praeger Publishers; 1982) and Raif Khury, Modern Arab Thought: Channels of the French Revolution to the Arab Middle East, Translated from

This, explains Azmeh, is a basic strand of Arab nationalist discourse. "Like all nationalisms; it has generally asserted that Arabism transcends history and society, that it is a vital force on a par with other colossal forces of nature, that it is an eternal mission, ... " Criticising this trend and what he sees as that of the politics of the moment Azmeh concludes that

both views sacrifice intellectual rigor: the perspective of eternity gives itself up to sentimentalism, the mainspring of the politics of identity, and the perspective of the moment is captive to immediate political lusts. Both regard nations and nationalism metaphysically: They are either accomplished and consummate, or they are chimerical. In either case, they are beyond history and beyond politics.¹⁴

Although much has been written about Arab nationalism the existing literature does little more than confirm the influence of Western political thought on Arab nationalism.¹⁵ Khaled Moh'd al-Dmour while confirming that the literature attributes Arab nationalism to Western thought without specifying the nature of this influence argues that this is

inadequate, both because it lacks information on the full nature of the influence of Western thought, and because Arab nationalist ideology, even though it was influenced by European thought, was in fact quite fundamentally different in important aspects from European theories of nationalism.¹⁶

Arabic by Ihsan Abbas, (Princeton N. J.; Kingston Press, 1983)

¹⁴ Aziz Azmeh, "Nationalism", op. cit., p. 5.

¹⁵ Examples may be seen in the following, Hugh Seton-Watson, Nations & States: An Enquiry into the Origins of Nations and the Politics of Nationalism, (London; Methuen, 1977); Albert Hourani, al-Fikr al-'Arabiyy fiy 'Asr al-Nahda: 1798-1939, Translated into Arabic by Kariym 'Azqawl, Fourth Edition (Beirut; Dar al-Nahar lil Nashr, 1986); Leonard Binder, The Ideological Revolution in the Middle East, (New York; John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1964); S. Haim, Arab Nationalism: An Anthology, (Berkeley; University of California Press, 1964); Elie Kedourie, Arabic Political Memoirs, (London; Cass, 1974).

¹⁶ Khaled Moh'd al-Dmour, "The Influence of The German Romantic Theory of Nationalism on the Ba'th Theory of Arab Nationalism", Unpublished PhD. Dissertation (South Illinois University at Carbondale, 1991) pp. 1-2, p. 20.

Focusing on the Arab nationalism of the Ba'th (rebirth) Party Dmour concludes that "while influenced by German romantic theories of nationalism" the Ba'th contribution to Arab nationalist ideology "was developed in the Arab milieu."¹⁷

Dmour identifies the non-German components of the Ba'th theory of Arab nationalism as including the role it allocates to religion compared to that the German theory has. In the Ba'th theory "Islam was seen as one of the most important parts of the Arab culture." This also applies to the relationship between socialism and nationalism. Dmour explains that in Arab nationalism there is to be found a "combination of nationalism and socialism in a single ideological system."¹⁸ Most studies, Arab or Western, emphasise the European effect. However some Arab writers deny this effect and claim originality for Arab nationalism in the historical development of the Arabs and in the social conditions of the Arabs in the nineteenth century.

This leaves students of Arab nationalism in doubt, from which the existing literature offers no escape. However some studies take a more moderate stand on the issue. Anouar Abdel-Malik points out that Arab thought has its own content and themes that express two main tendencies. First there is the Islamic

¹⁷ Ibid, p. 20.

¹⁸ Ibid, p. 20. The same stand is expressed by A. Duri, The Historical Formation of the Arab Nation, First Edition (London; Croom Helm, 1987); 'Abd al-Ilah Belqaziyy, Ishkaliyyat al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya: Khitab al-Raqhba wa Khitab al-Mumkin (The Problematique of Arab Unity: The Discourse of the Wish and the Discourse of the Possible) First Edition (Casablanca; Afriqiyya al-Sharq, 1991) Arabic Text (Present Author's Translation; Waliyd Qaziyya, "Fikrat al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya fiy Matla' al-Qarn al-'Ishriyyn" (the Idea of Arab Unity in the Beginning of the Twentieth Century), in S. Hammadiy et al, Dirasaat fiy al-Qawmiyya al-'Arabiyya wa al-Wahda, First Edition (Beirut; Markaz Dirasat al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya, 1980) Arabic Text (Present Author's Translation)

tendency whose essence is a call for the revival of Islamic glory and a return to the pure faith in order to reconstruct the past glory. Second is the liberal modernist tendency. This tendency aims at founding a modern Arab society that resembles the West in many ways. Abdel-Malik concludes that arguing for the existence of any exclusive trend is not accurate particularly in that thinkers advocating a liberal modernist trend include a whole range of orientations, from conservative liberalism to Marxism.¹⁹

The Lebanese economist and historian George Corom acknowledges the view that Arab nationalism was affected by European thought with qualification. He argues that to say that Arab nationalism was the work of Christian Arabs and therefore must have been under the effect of Europe is to advance a view that echoes Eurocentrism. This is to portray Christian Arab intellectuals as having been the channel for European thought due to their minority situation. This, argues Corom, disconnects the writings of Christian Arabs from their social, political, economic, and historical contexts. This is because their writings, argues Corom, were in fact less Europeanised than the writings of many Muslims. There was no firm dividing line between Christian and Muslim Arab intellectuals as was evident in the thought of this elite as a whole.²⁰

¹⁹ Anouar Abdel-Malik(ed), Contemporary Arab Political Thought, (London; Zed Books, 1980). Abdel-Malik views are well presented in his two-volume work entitled: Civilisations and Social Theory, First Edition(New York; State University of New York Press, 1981)

²⁰ George Corom, Uwrubba wa al-Mashriq al-'Arabiyy min al-Balqana ila al-Labbnana: Tariykh Hadatha Ghyir Munjaza(Europe and the Arab East From Balqanisation to Lebanisation: A History of An Unaccomplished Modernity) First Edition(Beirut; Dar al-Tali'a, 1990) Arabic Text (Present Author's

Apart from these studies which trace the roots of Arab nationalism and generally agree on treating it as essentially linked to Arab memories of a conceived glorious past, there is another aspect of the literature on Arab nationalism which started to appear when Nasserism and Ba'thism dominated Arab politics. In this direction some studies see Arab nationalism as arising during the process of modernisation in the Arab world. According to this approach Arab nationalism is an ideology that political regimes used to meet the needs introduced by the modernisation of the Arab world in the twentieth century. Arab nationalism was seen as a functional political tool needed to facilitate the transition from the undeveloped to the developed state of the Arabs.

Echoing this approach Tawfiq Farah, for example, concludes that Arab nationalism meets the need of the modernisationists. As an ideology it can be a vital tool in bridging the gap between the secularity that modernisation dictates and the religious nature of Arab political identity. Therefore, Arab nationalism was an ideology that was the result of the secularisation of the elites in order to enable them to avoid being alienated from the masses whose identity is based in religion. Ideology in this sense helps the elites to "build bridges to the traditional and religious masses."²¹

As Islam is commonly viewed by the functionalists as hindering modernisation their views on nationalism are compatible with this orientation. Hence Richard Pfaff considers that

Translation) pp. 174-176.

²¹ Tawfiq Farah (ed), Pan-Arabism, op.cit., p. xii.

nationalism plays the role which Islam is inherently unable to play. Echoing this common theme in modernisation studies of Arab nationalism Pfaff writes that nationalism plays the role of a secular religious structure put side by side with Islam.

He writes:

as the Arab moves away from Islamic traditionalism, he finds moral guidance in the political religion of Arab nationalism ... However, as each particular Arab polity gains an historical depth of its own, as each develops its own peculiar social, economic and political institutions ... the significance of Arab nationalism will surely wane ... the evolution from Islamic community to nation-state will have been completed with Arab nationalism handmaiden to the process.²²

The debate on the death of pan-Arabism referred to earlier is within this modernisation analysis. According to this approach Arab states had no option but to rely on Arab nationalist ideology in their drive for modernisation. But that applies only to the early days of the modernisation process when these states lacked the sufficient legitimacy needed to implement the transition from undeveloped to developed or modern. At that stage of modernisation Arab nationalist ideology was an adequate and indispensable doctrine that had to be adhered to rigorously. As these states consolidated their legitimacy and gained historical depth of their own the need to employ the nationalist doctrine was greatly reduced.

As F. Ajami argues, once the state achieved modernization

²² Richard Pfaff, "The Function of Arab Nationalism", Comparative Politics, vol. 2, Number 2, (January 1970) p. 167. Other works adopting the modernisation/functional approach and explanation of Arab nationalism include: M. Halpern, The Politics of Social Change in the Middle East and North Africa, (Princeton; Princeton University Press, 1963); M. Hudson, Arab Politics: The Search For Legitimacy, (New Haven and London; Yale University Press, 1977); and Bruce Borthwick, Comparative Politics of the Middle East: An Introduction, (Englewood, N.J.; Printice-Hall, 1980)

the ideology of nationalism was replaced by pragmatic issues. Although many scholars, like Ajami, accept this view and notice the flourishing of Islamic fundamentalism in the 1970s and afterwards, they offer no explanation beyond their conclusion that state and society have become modern by the help of Arab nationalist ideology. The modernists are unable to provide an explanation of the persistence of either traditional Islamic fundamentalist ideology or Arab nationalist ideology "except as something deviant."²³

This approach received wide criticism as to its evolutionary notions in viewing nationalism.²⁴ The central point of the critics has been that modernisation theory's view of nationalism is "at best, questionable when applied to the Arab World."²⁵ As Pritchett put it, the functional approach "argues for a legitimizing and transitional role for the idea and ends in a debate about whether the idea of Arab nationalism has died."²⁶

Considered inextricably linked to pan-Arab aspirations Arab nationalism is viewed as an idealist model which founds its call for an all Arab nation-state on Arab-Islamic history. However

²³ Diane Tuller Pritchett, "The Language of Arab Nationalism and Arab Foreign Policy: The Relations of Egypt, Libya and Syria, 1969-1981", Unpublished PhD. Dissertation, (Boston University, 1992) p. 54.

²⁴ For a review of the criticisms, see, A. Smith, Theories of Nationalism, (London; Gerald Duckworth & Company Limited, 1971) pp. 45-57 and Diane Tuller Pritchett, "The Language of Arab Nationalism", op. cit., pp. 50-55. However when it comes to Arab Nationalism Pfaff argues that it is only "both a valuable and necessary referent for the emerging "New Man" of the Arab world". This is because, he explains the "quest of the Arab national movement for a community with a political dimension is a false quest." Richard Pfaff, "The Function of", op. cit., pp.158-159.

²⁵ D. T. Pritchett, "The Language of Arab Nationalism", op. cit., p. 54

²⁶ Ibid, p. 58.

this history is thought to argue against the existence of any one Arab state at any time. Moreover, Arab nationalism's concept of an Arab identity is thought to contradict the mosaic nature of Arab society. The contradiction is brought forward since there has never been "a society like Arab society ... so divided, fragmented, and polarized in reality."²⁷ Arab identity is a myth that is seen as inconsistent with the aim of realising yet another myth, Arab unity. Hence Western studies have tended to use the term 'the Arab World' or further still 'the Middle East' in order to indicate the heterogenous nature of the region.²⁸ The failure of Arab nationalism is linked to this mosaic nature of Arab society which makes the Arabs unable to "respond to the

²⁷ Shlomo Avineri, "Beyond Saddam: the Arab Trauma", Dissent, 38, no.1, (Spring 1991) pp. 150-151.

²⁸ Arab nationalists use the term "the Arab homeland". They argue that this term indicates the unity of the Arabs in contrast to the term "the Arab world" which emphasises its being a world and therefore implying heterogeneous nature and multi-ethnicity. There is in Western literature a persistent use of the term the "Middle East". This term is linked to the development of strategic thought and it was first introduced and used by the American naval captain Alfred Mahan. Arab nationalists and indeed many Arab social scientists object to this term since it relates to the conception that the area is a mosaic of peoples and cultural and national communities. They consider it as not denoting a name that meets the particularism and nature of the Arab region. In Western studies the Middle East appears as an area of a multitude of nationalities, ethnic groups, religions, languages, and peoples and nations. Therefore this term ignores the unity of the Arab people and includes in the definition non-Arab states like Turkey, Iran, and Israel and excludes Arab countries like Mauritania, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, and sometimes Libya and Sudan.

Arab writers attribute this attitude in Western and Israeli studies to their rejection of Arab nationalism and the call for Arab unity. Ali E. Hillal Dessouki and Jamiyl Mattar, al-Nizaam al-Iqliymiy al-'Arabiyy: Dirasa fiy al-'Alaqaat al-Siyyasiyya al-'Arabiyya (The Arab Regional System: A Study in Arab Political Relations) Fifth Edition (Beirut; Markaz Dirasat al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya, 1986) Arabic Text (Present Authors Translation) pp. 29-35, and A. Bazzaz, "al-Istiqlaal al-Fikriy lil Ummam" (The Intellectual Independence of Nations) Al-'Arabiyy, vol.44 (July 1962) Reprinted in Muhammad Al-Rumiyhiy(ed), Araa wa Dirasaat fiy al-Fikr al-Qawmiy al-'Arabiyy (Views and Studies in Arab Nationalist Thought) (Kuwait; Al-'Arabiyy, 1985) Arabic Text (Present Author's Translation) pp. 12-15.

modern idea of nationalism."²⁹

Studies began to concentrate on the mosaic portrait of Arab society and highlight the issue of minorities. Considerable attention was paid to the conflict between political Islam and the conceived contradiction between Islamic doctrine and Arab nationalist ideology and indeed nationalism as a whole. In this respect, the state of Arab political disunity was used to discredit and pronounce dead Arab nationalism. It is presented as entirely linked to personalities whose death meant the subsequent death of their ideas or the ideology they might have employed.

Discrediting any rationale that may be latent in the idea of Arab unity, studies tended to emphasise the supposition that nationalism should lead to political unity if ever it was to deserve its definition. This is again an indication of the tendency to view nationalist movements and indeed Arab nationalism in terms of the European model. The only viable alternative to Arab nationalism is seen in state nationalism. Particularistic nationalism, it is argued, is the true reflection of the Western bringing of the winds of nationalism into the region. If Arab nationalism is ever to play a role other than modernisation a frequent implication is that it is reduced to a response to Zionism.³⁰ Arab nationalism is sometimes reduced to being a force for hardening Arab solidarity on the Palestinian

²⁹ As'ad Abukhalil, "A New Arab Ideology: The Rejuvenation of Arab Nationalism", The Middle East Journal, vol.46, no.1, Winter (1992) pp. 22-36.

³⁰ This is for example the view of the Israeli Scholar Yehoshua Porath in his book, In Search For Arab Unity: 1930-1945, (London; Frank Cass, 1986) Porath goes further than that in explaining the thoughts of Arab nationalists and their actions by the reference to the Palestinian issue.

issue even though the history of Arab nationalism is much older than the Palestinian issue.³¹

These approaches basically concentrate on the failure of the Arabs to achieve political unity and, therefore, fail to understand the fundamentals of Arab nationalism. The approaches most common in Western, Israeli, and some Arab literature treat Arab nationalism and condemn it by using the European nationalist experience as a methodological yard stick. This assigns primacy to the European model and considers it a global ideal type of nationalism that ought to be applied anywhere despite the differences in circumstances. Accordingly "Arab nationalism is found to be lacking in its ability to play a progressive role in the social and political development of the Arab World."³²

Since the end of the 1970s which witnessed the obvious Arab political disunity there has not been in the West a noticeable interest in the study of Arab nationalism and Arab nationalist thought. This may be attributed to the prevalence of the (end of ideology) thesis which again shows the dominance of Western oriented perceptions and methodologies in the treatment of all aspects of Arab nationalism. All in all Arab nationalism was declared dead as an idea and a political movement. It is clear that Arab nationalism is presented as a romantic ideology essentially linked to the memories of a conceived glorious Arab past that is questionable. If this expresses the idealist approach to Arab nationalism, at the functional level it is

³¹ P. Alter, Nationalism, op. cit., considers Arab nationalism in this view. He even considers pan-Arabism as suffering "the stigma of being only a veil for hegemonic ambitions.", p. 152.

³² Erick Davis-Willard, "Theory and Practice", op. cit., p. 18.

considered to have died since it fulfilled its role as a modernising ideology.

(ii) Hypothesis and Aims of the Study

This study assumes that to make such conclusions is to overlook the fact that Arab nationalist thought and Arab nationalism are being reconstructed and rejuvenated to accommodate the developments in Arab society and politics since 1967. The debates which Arab thought experienced in the 1980s provide evidence that such development was taking place. Hence this study focuses on the contributions of Arab intellectuals and social scientists in the 1980s which as will be demonstrated establish this premise of development in Arab nationalist thought.

The importance of the study and analysis of Arab thought on Arab nationalism and Arab unity in the 1980s can be explained in the light of the "End of pan-Arabism" thesis. Whereas this thesis affirms that by the 1970s Arab nationalism was dead, this research, in contrast, seeks to show that even though Arab nationalism lost its hegemony over Arab politics, Arab thought produced an entirely fresh contribution to the ideas of Arab nationalism and Arab unity that defy the death verdict. The contributions are vitally significant and peculiar since they were produced right after the very same period portrayed to have witnessed the death of Arab nationalism.

Furthermore, these contributions, which are the subject of this research, involve a fundamentally significant intellectual meaning and content. They were made by Arab intellectuals, a

large number of whom remain devoted Arab nationalists, amidst a hostile and challenging environment wherein issues were determined by anti-Arab nationalist trends and policies. They testify to the desire and ability of Arab nationalist thought and Arab thought in general to produce its own models and affirm its distinctiveness. For Arab nationalists who participated in these debates the argument is that Arab nationalist thought is as able as ever to struggle for its existence. They are eager to establish that it represents a viable alternative in its Arab context particularly after the rise of political Islam.

The research also brings into the discussion an entirely new dimension of Arab thought and its nationalist variant. Whereas Arab nationalist thought before the 1980s was the domain of Arab easterners, Mashriqi Arabs, the period of investigation bore the evolution and development of a major Maghribi (Arab west) contribution to issues of Arab nationalism and Arab unity. Although previous studies of Arab nationalism focused on the Mashriqi mainstream Arab nationalist thought due to its ideological, political and epistemological hegemony, the Maghribi trend has not been researched. Consequently Arab nationalist ideology was depicted as romantic and the idea of Arab unity mythical. This view of Arab nationalism may be apprehended since it is based on Arab nationalist thought up to 1967. But to accept the conclusions put forward on these bases would amount to accepting the premise that ideologies and thoughts are frozen at certain points of time and do not allow for the logic of evolution.

This study attempts to qualify other previous studies of a

judgemental nature and may play a role in qualifying the death verdict issued upon Arab nationalism. This is to be attempted by presenting and analysing new contributions and their ideational system. Therefore the study will focus on the debates as far as issues like the Arab nation, Arab unity, Arab state, democracy, and minorities are concerned. The question as constructed here has not been subject to any previous major investigation. This work is based on a discussion of the subject from an Arab perspective. The principal rationale underlying this research lies in its effort to portray and analyze the un-researched Arab thought of the 1980s regarding Arab nationalism and Arab unity.

Particular emphasis is put on the contributions of social scientists and the contributions of Maghribi intellectuals that broke the hegemony of Mashriqi Arab intellectuals well researched before the 1980s. The basic premise that justifies the choice of the contributions analyzed is that they are unknown in languages other than Arabic. They are fundamentally different from what is known in the West about Arab nationalism. Therefore, the death verdict cannot indiscriminately be applied to them.

1-2: Significance of the Study

The question of establishing its history and content, and whether Arab nationalism died both as an ideology and political force, remains one of the very contested issues among students of Arab politics. This study presents and analyzes contributions that have poured into the tide of Arab nationalist thought. The concentration on utilizing concepts that prevailed in Arab debates in the 1980s is a major departure from the existing

literature on Arab nationalism.

The 1980s as a period of investigation is significant in many ways. Though the period witnessed the victory of, as F. Ajami maintained, *raison d'état*, it also witnessed the current of doubt in Arab thought and politics. Attempts were made, intellectually and politically, to redirect Arab nationalism and consolidate particularism or regionalism. The 1980s also saw the establishment of many political unions among a number of Arab states, as well as the foundation of three Arab regional cooperation entities, the Gulf Cooperation Council, The Arab Maghrib Union, and the short lived Arab Cooperation Council. The oil power of the Arabs decreased or vanished amidst a process of reconstructing the Arab regional system.

On the intellectual and ideological level the 1980s were marked by a growing participation of Arab social scientists and the demise of the role played by ideologues in determining the direction and the content of the debates Arab thought was undergoing. Particular emphasis in these debates is given to the evolution of a new breed of Arab nationalist and unitary thought which could be identified as realistic compared with the romanticism of Arab nationalism which earlier may have justified the death prognosis.

The contributions which the study presents are essentially unknown in the West despite the fact that they represent new thinking of Arab intellectuals about such issues as the Arab nation and Arab nationalism. This would help in understanding developments in Arab thought and therefore avoid the trap of the 'End of Arabism' thesis and the responses it triggered. The study

discusses the contributions of the 1980s in order to understand how they deal with the issue of the relationship between pan-Arabism and the Arab nation on the one hand, and particularistic identities and states on the other.

Of further importance are the contributions these debates make regarding questions like minorities and democracy. These debates are analyzed to determine whether a rejuvenation of Arab nationalism is taking place and whether Arab thought on Arab nationalism and Arab unity is undergoing a dialectic between its old and the newly emerging paradigms. The research aims to establish whether these contributions deserve to be considered in terms other than those argued by the advocates of the death of Arabism.

1-3: Methodology

The research is basically carried out through a qualitative approach to Arab thought on Arab nationalism and Arab unity in the 1980s. Contributions are assessed, critically analyzed and compared as to what they argue for regarding the issues of this investigation. Although attention is paid to writings by Arabs living abroad prominence is assigned to those in Arabic and written by intellectuals in Lebanon, Egypt and Morocco. These countries have been chosen for ease of academic access, because of their Mediterranean locations and histories of Western influence and because of their geographical locations in the main sub-regions of the Arab world.³³

³³ Although the intention was to conduct field work in those three countries the author was not able to visit Lebanon. Therefore all field work was restricted to Egypt and Morocco.

In addition, Egypt during a considerable time of its contemporary history approached the idea of Arabism as part of state policy. Indeed Arab nationalist ideology owed much of its content and political movement to Nasserism. Lebanon's scholarly affiliation with the idea, amidst political fragmentation, provides another level of comparison. Egypt and Lebanon have known their own brands of particularistic nationalism. Whereas in Egypt Arabism gained the upper hand during the Nasserite era, in Lebanon competition and contradiction have marked the debate between Arabism and Lebanism politically and intellectually. In this context, Lebanon still experiences the continuation of this phenomenon as a feature of Lebanese politics.

Egypt after the mid 1970s witnessed the reemergence of Egyptian nationalism in a way which the Sadaat regime sought to utilize in an attempt to upset all Arabist forces which opposed his peace accords with Israel. As a matter of fact the policies of Sadaat's Egypt were at the core of the split in the Arab World and therefore were used to help prove the arguments behind the 'End of Arabism' thesis. Morocco has not been associated with Arab nationalism on the political level. However studies would stress that in Morocco and indeed in the Maghrib context Arabism is inseparable from Islam and this was particularly true during the struggle against European domination.

Nevertheless, in Morocco today particularistic nationalism is coupled with Islamic overtones. This makes an examination of contributions from Morocco carry a significant weight. Furthermore, the 1980s witnessed a clear interest of Moroccan intellectuals in issues related to Arab nationalism and Arab

unity. The contributions of Moroccan intellectuals are distinct in many aspects. They reflect the effect of borrowing from European thought concepts and methodologies that are used to provide a new reading of Arab history, culture and reality. The fact that Moroccan intellectuals are more open to European contemporary debates gives their contributions the ability to utilise these in discussing Arab issues in light of developments in philosophical and social science more than do their Arab east counterparts.

The field work is based on interviews and intensive research in prominent libraries in Cairo and Rabat. The important task of the field trips was to conduct interviews with a number of intellectuals and academics in the two field work locations. Each chapter provides a summary of approaches in Western literature, proceeds to a general disquisition of Arab approaches, and then concentrates on the debate within the three countries.

1-4: Organisation of the Study

In Chapter Two, 'The Evolution of Arab Nationalism', the focus is on analysing the intellectual history of Arab nationalism. The chapter analyses and explains the historical context of the evolution of Arab nationalism. The different factors that may have led to the evolution of Arab nationalism are evaluated while discussing the environment in which the idea was born. As an intellectual history it examines how Arab nationalist ideology developed and how the thoughts of one generation or author influenced another. The chapter reviews the referents and intellectual antecedents of Arab nationalist

ideology as well as the ideas that competed with it.

The focus of identity of early Arab nationalism is also discussed to determine whether it was Islamic or secular, particularistic or regional, or pan-Arab. The chapter also provides a general portrait of the developments of key concepts of the ideology itself. Of interest are issues like the changing conceptual boundaries and political implications of the nation itself. This is done by drawing on the writings of its leading articulators. This, however, is undertaken without isolating the intellectual content of the ideology from the activity and movement associated with it.

Therefore attention is given to the relationship between the ideology of Arab nationalism and the political movements of the Ba'th Party, Nasserism, and the Arab Nationalists Movement as well as the experiments towards Arab political unification. The chapter concludes with remarks that relate to the debates that followed the 1967 Arab defeat in the war with Israel and up to the 1980s when the pan-Arab ideal was considered dead.

Chapter Three, 'Arab Nationalism and the Idea of a United Arab Nation', is an evaluation of the concept of a united Arab nation with its single nation-state, which is very central in Arab nationalism. This is done in the form of a critical study of Arab nationalism and its specific component of pan-Arabism i.e. the concept of building a single nation-state that includes all Arabs under its banner.

The discussion explores, defines, and analyzes the ideological premises of Arab nationalism as expressed in concepts of the Arab nation, Arab identity, and Arab unity. These premises

were the result of the period between the end of the Second World War and the defeat of 1967. Therefore, they expressed Arab nationalism in its greatest moments of political power and intellectual fertility. Attention is also given to analysing the arguments behind particularistic identities and minorities and examining Arab nationalist thought's response to the challenge these posed.

The concentration is on the debates that Arab thought had regarding the issues and presents material that is essentially in Arabic that hitherto had not been known in other languages. The evaluation of these contributions and the ideological premises of Arab nationalist ideology presented in chapter two is very important in pinpointing the major issues that compose the content of the debates till the 1980s. The discussion then focuses on providing a critique of these premises as presented. The criticisms traditional Arab nationalist thought received are distinct in at least two features. First they deal with Arab nationalism in a manner that is entirely different from the eulogists' point of view. The Arab intellectuals who made these criticisms are attempting the reconstruction of Arab nationalist thought. Second, these criticisms are an evidence of the emergence of a new trend of Arab thought and indeed Arab nationalist thought.

The critique is based on the premise that traditional Arab nationalist thought suffers from ideological, conceptual and epistemological deficiencies. The critique concentrates on the theoretical loopholes of Arab nationalism, in its traditional paradigm, as far as issues of identity, culture and state are

concerned. The discussion aims at establishing that the traditional premises are being questioned to a greater rather than lesser degree. They are no longer universally accepted at their face value.

The issues dominating these critiques will be utilised as methodological concepts and background for analysing the significance of the contributions of the 1980s. The critique is employed to make a comparison between the traditional ideas and how they were viewed in the 1980s. This provides a background to the analysis in chapter four which concerns itself with determining the nature of the new paradigm and the content of the dialectical relationship it has with the old one.

Chapter Four, 'Arab Nationalist Thought in the 1980s: The Dialectic of Old and New Paradigms', presents and analyses the contributions of a number of Arab intellectuals in Egypt, Lebanon and Morocco. Concepts of the Arab nation, Islam, secularism, minorities, and democracy are evaluated. The aim is to establish the existence of new approaches to these issues offering a new conceptualisation that corresponds to the realities of Arab society, history, and the need to view Arab nationalism on a realistic basis.

While the discussion starts with outlining the main theses of the old paradigm, it is essentially a comparison between these and the new contributions. The discussion seeks to establish that Arab nationalist thought in the 1980s was undergoing a process of renewal and restructuring. The major task is to establish the main features of the new paradigm and trace any residue of the old one

Chapter Five, 'Arab Nationalism and the Arab State System', takes further the discussion of the dialectical relationship between the old and the emerging paradigm. It deals with the question of the particularistic territorial Arab state as debated in the contributions of Arab thought in the 1980s. Traditional Arab nationalist views towards the state system since it emerged are discussed. The discussion evaluates the effects the consolidation of the Arab state system has had on the development of new approaches within Arab nationalist thought towards the relationship between the aim of Arab unity and political fragmentation.

The analysis traces the change of attitudes Arab nationalist thought has had towards the state in general and the Arab state system in particular. The bulk of the discussion is devoted to analysing contributions of Arab intellectuals in the 1980s. The aim is to establish whether a new approach is clearly evident in the contributions discussed that may justify the claim that they represent a markedly new paradigm that is more realistic than the traditional one.

In Chapter Six, 'Arab Nationalist Thought: The Premises of the New Paradigm', the analysis starts by outlining the developments the Arab world witnessed in the 1980s. These are seen as the underlying factors behind the emergence of the new paradigm. The effects these developments had on the intellectuals whose contributions are the subject of this study are evaluated. This is accomplished through an analysis of the contributions of Arab intellectuals towards the issues of Arab nationalism, Arabism, Islam, secularism, minorities and democracy.

The essential and fundamental premises of the new paradigm are underlined. By analysing the premises of the new paradigm the chapter concentrates on establishing that in the 1980s Arab thought had a new understanding of issues of Arab nationalism and Arab unity. The Chapter draws on the discussion and the analysis provided in the five chapters. It outlines the findings of the research and address itself to establishing the nature of Arab nationalist thought in the 1980s in comparison to traditional Arab nationalist thought.

The Conclusion is a summary of the findings of the research. It sets out the main features that support the main argument behind the hypothesis of the study. The conclusion also employs the arguments outlined in the body of the previous chapters to suggest further areas of research.

Chapter Two

The Evolution of Arab Nationalism

To understand and grasp the roots of Arab nationalist thought and the movement related to Arab nationalism, there is a need to go into its history. This is necessary to provide a background to evaluating the circumstances that witnessed the birth of Arab nationalism. In addition an historical review of the sort proposed here would serve the purpose of understanding the debates concerning the issue of the research.

As scholars do not agree on a determined history of the evolution of Arab nationalist thought and Arab nationalism, the aim here is to deal with the issue by tracing the content of Arab nationalism of modern Arabs who differ from their ancestors in their nationalist ideology. Attention is then given to the evolution of Arab nationalist thought and its variety of manifestations up to the point where an Arab nationalist ideology is manifest.¹

2-1: The Arabs and the Ottoman Empire

The Arabs came under Ottoman rule in the sixteenth century (1516-1556) when the Turks spread their control over the lands of the Fertile Crescent, Egypt and later on North Africa. The Islamic concept of nation, bound by religion (umma) was prevalent at that time and this played a vital role in the success of the

¹ For an assessment of these debates see Mahmoud Haddad, "The Rise of Arab Nationalism Reconsidered" International Journal of Middle East Studies, 12(1994) pp. 202-216.

Turks in uniting Muslim peoples under their banner. The Arabs and indeed other Muslims accepted Ottoman rule as that of fellow Muslims. The Arabs accepted the domination of the Ottoman Empire since it came after a long period of fragmentation and with the hope that it would serve the interests of Islam.

The Ottomans in their early days were very efficient rulers and they maintained for the Empire a favourable international position. The Empire was, in the eyes of its subjects, an Islamic one that checked the greed of Christian Europe and a state in which, theoretically at least, all Muslims were equal subjects. The concept of nation enhanced its Islamic substance that does not imply ethnic or linguistic nationalism. Other concepts like, homeland and Arab were limited to their narrow meanings. The word 'Arab' was used to differentiate between the Turks and Arabs but not in any nationalistic sense.²

However, Ottoman rule deteriorated as the later sultans were involved in corruption and the government became centralized and running counter to public interests.³ Foreign interests and influence were felt at all levels with the introduction of foreign concessions and intrusion in the affairs of the Empire. On the other hand, while the Ottomans presented their government in an Islamic fashion, there was an ever growing realisation on

² Anis Saiygh, Tatuwr al-Mafhum al-Qawmiy 'ind al-'Arab (The Development of Arab Nationalist Concept), (Beirut; Dar al-Tali'a, 1961) Arabic Text (Present Author's Translation) p. 45.

³ From the end of the seventeenth century the Ottoman Empire began a process of weakness; pressures from European powers, esp. the Austrian and Russian empires, coupled with rising nationalism in the Balkans escalated its decline. Hans Kohn, "Nationalism and Imperialism", in Ruth Nanda Ashnen(ed), Mid-East: World-Centre: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow, (New York; Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1956) p. 286.

the part of many peoples, and indeed the Arabs, that this was only superficial.

The Ottoman rule was marked by an attempt to seal off their subjects from any ideas that would jeopardise their hegemony. This was strongly the case as far as the Arab provinces were concerned. Not only did the Ottomans deprive the Arabs of their place as the guardians of Islam, but they also stripped them of any right to govern themselves. Arabic, which however remained the language of theology, lost its prominence and the Arabs became second class subjects in their own land.⁴

(i) The Encounter with the West:

Despite the fact that the Ottoman Empire was heavily involved in contacts with Europe, it kept its Arab provinces at arms length from what was taking place outside its boundaries. Hence, there was no realisation on the part of the Arabs of how far behind they were from other civilisations. They maintained their traditional view that the world of Islam was the most glorious of all worlds.

However, the close of the eighteenth century brought about dramatic developments that paved the way for the realisation that the world of Islam was highly stagnant. The extent to which this was primarily a result of direct contact with the West is an issue of controversy among investigators of the subject. Some would maintain that this realisation preceded the Napoleonic invasion of Egypt (1798) and was a result of the literary Arab renaissance, "nahda", of the nineteenth century and the works of

⁴ Anis Saiygh, Tatuwr al-Mafhum, op. cit., pp. 48-54.

Christian missionaries and their schools in the Arab East from 1748.

However a close examination of the effects of the Napoleonic invasion and subsequent occupation of Egypt would place the argument in favour of those who give it prominence. The French invasion of Egypt ignited the process of direct cultural contact between the Arabs and Europe in modern times. It also opened the gates for European intervention in the Arab world and brought the interests of other European major powers to the politics of the region.⁵ This played a significant role in bringing to the minds of the Arabs the shock of how wide was the gap that existed between them and Europe. The Napoleonic invasion of Egypt led the Arabs to discover the painful truth of how distorted their world, when compared to the real world, was.⁶

The impact of this experience was vital in the emergence of the West as the greatest challenge ever faced by Muslim society which had only a traditional religious structure to employ in the encounter. Not only was the challenge a technological one but it also included very strong intellectual and political elements and implications. These intellectual and political components had several consequences and impacts on the traditional way of life of the Arabs.⁷

The interaction of these elements and the reaction they

⁵ K. S. Al-Husry, Origins of Modern Arab Political Thought, (New York; Caravan Books, 1980) p. 3, p. 6.

⁶ F. Ajami, The Arab Predicament: Arab Political Thought and Practice Since 1967, (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 1992) p. 56.

⁷ Shlomo Avineri, "Arab Nationalism", in Eugene Kamenka(ed), Nationalism: The Nature and Evolution of an Idea, (London; Edward Arnold, 1976) pp. 101-122.

provoked, in the desire of the Arabs to catch up with Europe, was the corner stone and the basis for Arab political thinking in the nineteenth century.⁸ The manifestation of this desire was the flourishing of the writings of some intellectuals. They sought to defend and revitalize Islam to enable it to resist the inroads of the infidels i. e. Christian Europe. Intellectuals tried to find an answer to the very question of why Europe progressed and Muslims stagnated, and what were the appropriate measures to overcome the gap. They tried to find a combination between Islam and what they considered acceptable of modernity.⁹

(ii) The Birth of Arab Nationalist Thought

Recapitulating on what is said earlier, it is possible to see the origins of Arab nationalist thought in the crisis that Islam faced in the nineteenth century. Islam encountered a Western assault in the form of a military attack as well as a criticism of its value system. The response was a sincere attempt to defend the faith and salvage it.¹⁰ This gave birth to a political, social and intellectual movement in the Arab world.¹¹ But to attribute the birth of Arab nationalist thought solely to the effects of contacts with Europe would overemphasize these

⁸ K. Al-Husry, Origins of Modern Arab, op. cit., p. 3.

⁹ F. Ajami, The Arab Predicament, op. cit., pp. 54-55.

¹⁰ S. Haim(ed), Arab Nationalism: An Anthology, (Berkeley; University of California Press. 1964) p. 6.

¹¹ Majiyd Khaduwriy, al-Itijahaat al-Siyyasiyya fiy al-'Alam al-'Arabiyy: Duwr al-Afkaar wa al-Muthul al-'Uliyya fiy al-Siyyasa (Political Trends in the Arab World: The Role of Ideas and Ideals in Politics) (Beirut; al-Dar al-Mutahida lil Nashr, 1985) Arabic Text (Present Author's Translation) pp. 19-20.

effects and underestimate the active role of indigenous factors.

This refers to the developments that took place in the region long before contacts with Europe. The region witnessed an Islamic revival that began with movements like the 'Wahhabiyy' reform movement.¹² The reforms of M. Ali (1805-1848) in Egypt had considerable effects on the region.¹³ These movements do not, according to S. Haim, stand the test of nationalism. Haim classifies the Wahhabiyy movement as a religious puritanist movement whereas she considers M. Ali's attempts at creating an Arab empire as an expression of the ambitions of an opportunist.¹⁴ Nevertheless, they were in fact independent movements that sought the liberation of some Arab provinces from the Ottomans.

Hourani provides an explanation that would classify these movements as an expression of Arab feeling but not of Arab

¹² The Wahhabiyy movement was the work of Muhammad Ibn 'Abdulwahhab (1703-1791) in the Arabian Peninsula to revive Islam. It stressed the vitality of going back to the early Islam of the Prophet and his first successors. Though this movement had no Arab nationalist ideology it was a rejection of Ottoman rule. It was a revolution led by Arabs to deny the Ottomans what it considered as Arab natural rights. Also by stressing the old ways of Islam it lent itself an Arab character.

It is important to note that the Wahhabiyy movement and its call for religious revival had the effect of instigating similar movements; of these mention can be made of:

* The movement of M. Shukaniyy in Yemen (1756-1834)

* The movement of M. AL-Alusiyy in Iraq (1802-1854)

* The movement of M. AL-Sanusiy in Libya (1785-1859).

Anuwar al-Jundiyy, al-Fikr al-'Arabiyy al-Mu'asir fiyy Ma'rakat al-Taqhriryb wa al-Taba'iyya al-Thaqafiyya (Contemporary Arab Thought in the Battle of Westernisation and Cultural Dependency), First Edition (Cairo; Maktabat al-Angluw al-Masriyya, n. d.) Arabic Text (Present Authors Translation) pp. 29-33.

¹³ M. Ali engineered the modernisation of Egypt and attempted to widen his domain at the cost of the Ottomans. He invaded Asia Minor in 1840 but was defeated at the hands of European powers. Alan Palmer, The Decline and Fall of the Ottoman Empire, (London; John Murry, 1992) pp. 61-62, pp. 107-109.

¹⁴ S. Haim (ed), Arab Nationalism, op. cit., pp. 3-4.

nationalism. According to Hourani's analysis, the Wahhabiys were a movement that tried to restore Islam in its purist form, and that meant a revival of the memories of the Arab period in Islamic history. M. Ali's empire was Arab in terms of geography and Hourani cites that Ibrahiym Pasha, son of M. Ali, was reported to have said that he was an Arab seeking the establishment of an Arab state and the maintenance of Arab nationalism and political existence.¹⁵

However the movements of the Wahhabiyy and M. Ali were not supplementary to each other. On the contrary, they were engaged in mutual hostilities and M. Ali proceeded to inflict a heavy defeat on the Wahhabiys in military confrontations upon the request of the Ottoman sultan.¹⁶ The trend, however, was mainly of Islamic character and fundamentalist in tone. This can be understood by the fact that fundamentalism (Salafiyyah or the ways of ancestors) mixed with Sunni suffism (mysticism) was the only living trend of Islam at that time. But the failure of this Salafiyyah in checking the enemies of Islam paved the way for the reform movement. This was in essence a movement of reformist compromise, aimed at countering the Western challenge and the state of internal decay.¹⁷

The conclusion that may be drawn from the debate would not help in deciding upon the nationalist character of these

¹⁵ Albert Hourani, al-Fikr al-'Arabiyy fiy 'Asr al-Nahda (Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age) Fourth Edition (Beirut; Dar al-Nahar lil Nashr, 1986) Arabic Text (Present Author's Translation) pp. 312-313.

¹⁶ F. Sayegh, Arab Unity, Hope, and Fulfilment. (New York; The New Devin Company, 1958) pp. 24-25.

¹⁷ A. Alnasrari, Arab Nationalism, Oil, and the Political Economy of Dependency. (New York; Greenwood Press, 1991) pp. 7-9.

developments. However, the advent of political concepts into the Arab region as a result of Western influence was not an easy and spontaneous process. Furthermore, prior to the West's intrusion into the region, there had been a consciousness among the Arabs of some form of identity and affiliation among them. This trend can be found in the insistence upon the importance of introducing new sciences and imitating Europe.¹⁸ This is obvious in M. Ali's attempts at modernization and the revival of Islam and later on in intellectual contributions that gave prominence to the revival of Arab thought as a vital component of Islamic thought. Writings lent an obvious attention to the issue of Arabism. Islam was no longer 'real' because it had been corrupted by the Turks and hence was de-Arabised (lost its Arab essence) in the process.¹⁹

Therefore, while reform was directed towards the revival of Islam, the call for the restoration of the pure religion involved the tendency toward a revival of Arab Islam. Thus writers like, M. 'Abduh and Al-Afghaniy, for instance, can not be considered as Arab nationalists but those who participated in introducing Arabism.²⁰ By the turn of the century the Islamic reform movement was spreading in the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire. This movement was in defence of what some writers called the "injured self-view" and in the course of its development it played a significant role in the early foundation and formulation of Arab

¹⁸ K. Al-Husry, Origins of Modern Arab, op. cit., p. 129.

¹⁹ 'Abdullah 'Abdulda'iy, "al-Idyulujiyya al-Qawmiyya al-'Arabiyya: Tatuwruba wa Duwruba wa Afaaqiyha" (Arab Nationalist Ideology: Its Development, Role, and Prospects" Shoun Arabiyya (Arab Affairs) vol. 61, (1990) Arabic Text (Present Author's Translation) p. 81.

²⁰ K. Al-Husry, Origins of Modern Arab, op. cit., pp. 116-118.

nationalism.²¹

(iii) The Impact of the Nineteenth Century Literary
Renaissance

The impact of the nineteenth century literary renaissance or 'nahda' on the evolution and content of Arab nationalism is a major source of controversy in the debate among scholars who investigated Arab nationalism. Of interest also, is the role played by Arab Christians, mainly Lebanese, in the making of Arab nationalism considering their active participation in the literary revival.²² As explained above, the trend of criticising the Ottoman government coupled with the encounter with Europe resulted in the Islamic revivalism described earlier. This trend expressed itself in different ways: the Salafiyyah response as in the Wahhabi movement, and the Westernisation and compromise approach of R. al-Tahtawiy, and K. al-Tunisiy.²³ The obvious consequence was a new stress on Arabism of some sort. This in turn found expression in a literary-linguistic and cultural renaissance 'nahda' in the nineteenth century.

The renaissance was marked by the call for concentration on

²¹ William Cleveland, "Sources of Arab Nationalism: An Overview", in M. Curtis(ed), The Middle East Reader, (New Brunswick, New Jersey USA and Oxford UK; Transaction Books, 1986) p. 3.

²² R. Khalidi, "The Introduction", in R. Khalidi et al(eds), The Origins of Arab Nationalism, First Edition (New York; Columbia University Press, 1991) p. xii.

²³ Sa'iyd Muraad, "Usuws al-Hadatha fiy al-Fikr al-Qawmiy: al-Hadatha fiy al-Fikr al-'Arabi al-Hadiyth'" (Bases of Modernity in Nationalist Thought: Modernity in Modern Arab Thought), in Ma'an Ziyada (ed), Buhuwth fiy al-Fikr al-Qawmiy al-'Arabi (Reserches in Nationalist Thought) vol. 2. 1, First Edition (Beirut; Ma'had al-Inmaa al-'Arabi, 1985) Arabic Text (Present Author's Translation) pp. 282-283.

the learning and teaching of Arabic and its promotion, and revival of classical Arabic literature.²⁴ The nahda gathered momentum in the 1870s and 1880s. Even though this renaissance can, in some aspects, be linked to the modernisation policies of M. Ali, its unique characters are the work of a catalogue of factors. As stated above the figuring of different issues that can be linked to Arabism in the developments examined since the beginning of the nineteenth century, should be understood in the making of this nahda. However, the establishment of literary, scientific and cultural societies played the most important role in making the renaissance.²⁵ These societies stressed the goals of nahda and put its waggon on the rails.

The arrival of Christian missionaries with their schools and presses considerably helped in enhancing the role of nahda.²⁶ Nevertheless it is important to point out that the missionaries did not instigate the process. Even though the Levant had received missionaries and their schools since the seventeenth century, their activities remained confined to religious matters.²⁷ Therefore when they arrived again in the nineteenth century they relied on the help of indigenous people. They employed some Arabs as translators and teachers in their schools. Till the 1870's their presses had no active role in promoting the

²⁴ Mahmuwd S. Mansiy, Harakat al-Yaqada al-'Arabiyya fiy al-Sharq al-Asiyawiy (The Movement of Arab Awakening in the Asian East), First Edition, (Cairo; Dar al-Fikr al-'Arabiyy, 1972) Arabic Text (Present Author's Translation) p. 49.

²⁵ A. Duri, The Historical Formation of the Arab Nation, (London; Croom Helm, 1987) pp. 147-149.

²⁶ A. Alnasrawi, Arab Nationalism, op. cit., p. 27.

²⁷ Mahmuwd S. Mansiy, Harakat al-Yaqada, op. cit., p. 44.

use of Arabic or the revival of Arabic heritage.²⁸

But the arrival of American Protestants in 1820 initiated a competition between the missionaries.²⁹ Arabic became a major concern of missionaries and combined with the efforts of scholars concerned with renaissance, this had the unintended but vital consequence of "revitalising a national culture"³⁰ The nineteenth century witnessed this renaissance in the works of a number of pioneers who held its banner. Mention can be made of Butrus al-Bustaniy (1819-1883) and I. A. Yazijiy (1847-1906) who wrote books, published journals and papers and established national (i.e. Arab) schools.

These pioneers called for borrowing from Europe to achieve progress. Yazijiy, in particular, was outspoken in his call for the revival of the Arab heritage and called for the awakening of the Arab nation. Their contribution can be estimated through the study of the societies that sprang up in that time. Of importance are societies founded in Cairo, and Syria: (The Society of Refinement (founded in 1845); the first Arab cultural society which dealt with topics of language and literature and the issue of patriotism; the Beirut Society of Science and Arts (founded 1847); The Oriental Society (founded 1850); The Syrian Scientific Society (founded 1857), and the Society of Education (founded 1868).

These societies were mainly interested in the promotion of science, the reform of the education system and the study of

²⁸ A. Duri, The Historical Formation, op. cit., p. 152.

²⁹ Mahmuwd S. Mansiy, Harakat al-Yaqada, op. cit., p. 45.

³⁰ A. Alnasrawi, Arab Nationalism, op. cit., p. 27.

Arabic. They stressed the need to revive some aspects of Arab heritage and in that an induction of nationalist feeling may be seen. Although some studies would underplay any relationship of this sort, a correlation between the two is theoretically logical. Whenever national feeling faced a threat there arose a need for a revival of national heritage and vice versa. The rediscovery of heritage would induce national feeling and crystallise it.³¹

The attack on cultural symbols brings forward the need to enhance and protect identity.³² For the Arabs Arabic has been at the centre of their cultural heritage and sense of community. Its revival was seen as the appropriate measure to protect the identity of the Arabs. The discovery of the national heritage, which was the major feature of nahda, involved the struggle against the hegemony of the Turks and, thus, was an inducing factor behind the early beginnings of Arab nationalist thought. However, the literary nahda and the works of its societies would not form an Arab nationalist ideology of any kind. Its effects can be described as putting a more Arabist ingredient to the movement that preceded it. It strengthened the call for a distinct position for the Arabs *vis-à-vis* the Turks as well as the Europeans.

As the nineteenth century was closing and the next century

³¹ Nuriy H. al-Qaiysiy, "al-Fikr al-Qawmiy wa Ihyya al-Turath" (Nationalist Thought and the Revival of Heritage), in Saalih al-'Ali et al. Tatuwr al-Fikr al-Qawmiy al-'Arabiyy (The Development of Arab Nationalist Thought) (Seminar Papers) First Edition (Beirut; Markaz Dirasat al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya, 1986) Arabic Text (Present Author's Translation) pp. 84-87.

³² William Bloom, Personal Identity, National Identity, and International Relations, (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 1993) p. 146.

was approaching, the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire were witnessing the growth of a national consciousness. This feeling was a response to the worsening of their conditions under Ottoman suzerainty and the penetration of Europe. The early years of the twentieth century were marked by the tightening of the grip of the central government, corruption and all illnesses associated with bad and dictatorial government. The reign of 'Abdulhamiyd (1876-1909) was marked by these illnesses and its relation with its subjects deteriorated.

The backward and authoritarian nature of 'Abdulhamiyd's regime was resented everywhere in the Empire. The Arabs in particular were outspoken in their opposition. This may be at least partly attributed to the impact contacts with Europe had in introducing new ideas and ideals to the Arabs and the role played by the Islamic revivalist movement.³³ The nature of these developments and the direct link they had with the evolution of Arab nationalism in the twentieth century will be the subject of the investigation below.

2-2: Turkish Nationalism and Arab Nationalism

(i) The Islamic and Arab Policies of 'Abdulhamiyd: The Failure of Appeasement

Sultan 'Abdulhamiyd's answer to problems of internal decay and external challenge was in maintaining absolute rule. The pan-Islamic idea of an Islamic League was the hallmark of his initiative to check both his internal enemies and the European

³³ A. Alnasrawi, Arab Nationalism, op. cit., pp. 25-26.

menace.³⁴ In the Arab provinces 'Abdulhamiyd took some steps in favour of the Arabs hoping that they would lend him their support.³⁵ The steps taken by 'Abdulhamiyd were met with favour in the Arab provinces. A sense of Ottomanism that sought the preservation of the Empire as a means to face the European challenge was felt in the Arab provinces.

The existence of such Ottomanism may be attributed to the feeling among the Arabs that the Empire was the only device available to confront the increasing European invasion. However, this is not to say that all Arabs accepted this as an indispensable fact. Arab attitudes towards the Ottoman order were fragmented. In countries like Egypt and the North African provinces, where Western invasion was a fact of the time, the stress was on Islamic ties while in other countries, like in the Arab East, the emphasis was on Arabism coupled with Islam. That meant preserving the Ottoman Empire in a way that would increase their share in the government of their provinces without breaking away from the Empire.³⁶

The attempts the Sultan made towards conciliating Arab feelings were outweighed by the centralisation policy he adopted. Resentment and opposition were increasing everywhere. The resentment was stronger among Christian Arabs who saw in the Islamic policies of 'Abdulhamiyd a new threat to their already inferior position under Turkish rule. The mushrooming of what is known as the Arab Societies heralded a new era in the development

³⁴ A. Duri, The Historical Formation, op. cit., p. 184.

³⁵ Mahmuwd S. Mansiy, Harakat al-Yaqada, op. cit., p. 66.

³⁶ A. Duri, The Historical Formation, op. cit., pp. 183-184.

of Arab nationalist thought. These were secret societies that aimed at reform and, in some cases, independence in the Arab province.

Although the Beirut Society was established by Christian Arabs, its members soon realised that the success of their efforts would only be accomplished if they had the help and participation of the Muslim Arabs. The society's membership, hence, was to become of Christian and Muslim composition. This trend was later on evident in all societies that were founded in different Arab provinces and the Arab Muslims took the lead.³⁷

(ii) The Young Turks and Arab Nationalism

The Sultan's attempts were losing strength and in 1908 the Young Turks revolted demanding the restoration of parliamentary government. Their party, the Committee for Union and Progress (CUP), exercised power indirectly through the sultan and his ministers under the threat of the army. Parliamentary elections were held and 'Abdulhamiyd's orchestrated counter revolution was suppressed promptly. Eventually the CUP ousted the Sultan on 29 April 1909 and it became the actual government.³⁸

The CUP embarked on a programme of reform and the proclamation of the constitution was met with appreciation among the Arabs. The Arabs saw this as an opportunity for a more favourable status. These hopes were, however, short lived.³⁹ The

³⁷ Mahmuwd S. Mansiy, Harakat al-Yaqada, op. cit., pp. 70-74.

³⁸ A. Duri, The Historical Formation, op. cit., pp. 215-216.

³⁹ N. Izzeddin, The Arab World: Past, Present, and Future, (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1953) p. 92.

CUP initiated a policy of Turkification (tattriyk, i.e. the attempt to convert all national groups into Turks). In the Arab provinces they adopted policies of degrading and humiliating the Arabs and their dignity particularly in its cultural components.⁴⁰

The policies of the CUP were a manifestation of the emergence of Turkish nationalism which underplayed religion and called for the superiority of the Turks.⁴¹ Consequently, the Young Turks Revolution was a landmark in Turkish-Arab relations which underwent a radical change after the CUP's emphasis on Turkification. Initially the Arabs had great hopes in the Revolution. They were willing even to postpone if not abandon any demand for independence.⁴² But the interlude was a brief one followed by utter disillusionment.⁴³ The Turkification policy was paramount as early as the elections of late 1908. There were only 60 Arab members of the parliament in comparison to 140 Turks out of the 250 seat parliament, and the Arabs saw themselves as the major victims of new policies.

These feelings became more widespread after the humiliating defeats the Empire received at the hands of the Italians who

⁴⁰ Z. N. Zein, Nushuw al-Qawmiyya al-'Arabiyya m'a Dirasa Tariykhiyya fiy al-'Alaqaat al-'Arabiyya al-Turkiyya (The Emergence of Arab Nationalism: With A Historical Study of Arab Turkish Relations) Fourth Edition (Beirut; Dar al-Nahar lil Nashr, 1986) Arabic Text (Present Author's Translation) pp. 88-90.

⁴¹ A. Alnasrawi, Arab Nationalism, op. cit., p. 28.

⁴² Suliyman Musa, al-Haraka al-'Arabiyya: Masiyrat al-Marhala al-Uwlaa lil Nahda al-'Arabiyya al-Hadiytha (1908-1924) (The Arab Movement: The Development of the First Stage of the Arab Modern Renaissance (1908-1924) First Edition (Beirut; Dar al-Nahar lil Nashr, 1970) Arabic Text (Present Author's Translation) pp. 24-28.

⁴³ G. Lenczowski, The Middle East in World Affairs, (Ithaca and London; Cornell University Press, 1980) p. 58.

invaded Libya in 1911 and in the Balkan War of 1912-13 which paved the way for an increasing sense of despair.⁴⁴ As the Ottoman Empire was on the verge of dissolution, tensions arose in Turkish-Arab relations leading to a dramatic change in its direction with the Arab opposition to the CUP. Zein N. Zein traces Arab opposition to what he calls the suspicion the Arabs had towards the intentions of the Young Turks that expressed itself in Turkish nationalism. Zein also cites historical evidence to support the hypothesis that Turkification policies were perceived by the Arabs as a real danger to their existence and a direct attempt to subjugate them.

This affected the course of Arab nationalist thought and resulted in a reaction of a national character that gave birth to new thinking. The search for new methods of improving the position of the Arabs within the framework of the changing circumstances was behind the breed of a number of Arab societies that devoted its activities to defending Arabs' rights.⁴⁵

(iii) The Thought of the Arab Societies

The Arab societies (those like al-Fattaat, al-Qahtaniyya, al-'Ahd, The Literary Club and The Decentralisation Party) were born after 1909 to indicate the sense of despair and loss of hope the Arabs felt after the Turkification policy of the CUP.⁴⁶ But

⁴⁴ E. Tauber, The Emergence of Arab Movements, First Edition (London; Frank Cass, 1993) pp. 57-58.

⁴⁵ Z. N. Zein, Nushuw al-Qawmiyya, op. cit., pp. 86-90.

⁴⁶ For an extensive and elaborate assessment of the Arab societies, see E. Tauber, The Emergence of Arab, op. cit., pp. 61-241; Tauber rejects the widely held idea that these societies, in general, were advocating the goal of a single Arab national movement. (cf. A. Duri, The Historical Formation,

were these societies advocating Arab nationalism as understood now? Did they call for independence or secession from the Ottoman Empire? Had they embraced a nationalist ideology that would set them apart from previous trends concerning relations between the Arabs and the Turks?

There is no sound evidence to support the claim that these societies propagated a clear cut nationalist ideology. Even though scholars agree on the role these societies played in expressing an Arab movement of some kind that emphasised reform and equality, the societies' main contribution was their advocacy of Arabic.⁴⁷ The kind of thought they produced was essentially bound by two major currents: the Islamic tie between the Arabs and the Turks, and the Arabs yearning for a fair share in a wished-for democratic Ottoman state. Their foremost ambitions were the implementation of reforms and autonomy for the Arabs within the framework of the state.⁴⁸

The demands of these societies were confined to the spheres of administrative decentralisation, restoration of Arabic as the language of government and education in the Arab provinces, and did not go so far as independence demands. Even the First Arab Congress (Paris 1913) which was meant to coordinate the activities of these societies was not, on any account, to go

op. cit., pp. 219-226; and G. Lenczowski, The Middle East, op. cit., pp. 58-59; and George Antonius, Yaqadat al-'Arab: Tariykh Harakat al-'Arab al-Qawmiyya (The Arab Awakening) Sixth Edition, Translated into Arabic by Nasser al-Diyn al-Asad and Ihsaan 'Abaas, (Beirut; Dar al-'Ilm lil Malaaiyyin, 1980) Arabic Text (Present Author's Translation) pp. 149-163, pp. 183-198. Antonius was the first to represent these societies in the manner E. Tauber rejects.

⁴⁷ A. Duri, The Historical Formation, op. cit., p. 219.

⁴⁸ Mahmuwd S. Mansiy, Harakat al-Yaqada, op. cit., pp. 86-87.

beyond demands for decentralisation. It is worth noting that its political programme was a "programme for Ottoman Arabs."⁴⁹

In the Paris Congress the participants made no reference to the right of the Arabs for the formation of a nation-state. George Tarabiyshiy explains this retreat from taking the concept of nation to its full meaning of separation as to fear of European imperialism. This resulted in abbreviating the concept of nation to mere cultural rights instead of political one.⁵⁰ Another development that would lend support to this argument is that the Ottoman Administrative Decentralisation Party (founded in Cairo 1912) which was an umbrella for the majority of the societies was, as its name suggests, only a reform oriented party that expressed its ideas in the political programme of the Paris Arab conference mentioned above.⁵¹

Despite the effects the CUP policies had on the establishment of these societies, the Arab movement would still advocate local administrative autonomy instead of independence. Maxime Rodinson provides an explanation of this phenomenon in that "solidarity with the Turks as Muslims and as victims of European domination remained a factor even during the struggle against the Turks".⁵² A. Alnasrawi sees this in the nature of the

⁴⁹ Suliyman Musa, al-Haraka al-'Arabiyya, op. cit., pp. 26-38.

⁵⁰ George Tarabiyshiy, al-Duwla al-Qutriyya wa al-Nazariyya al-Qawmiyya (Particularistic State and Nationalist Theory) First Edition, (Beirut; Dar al-Tali'a, 1982) Arabic Text (Present Author's Translation) pp. 59-62.

⁵¹ Muhammad 'Amarah, al-'Uruwba fi al-'Asr al-Hadiyth (Arabism in the Modern Age) Third Edition (Beirut; Dar al-Wahda, 1981) Arabic Text (Present Author's Translation) p. 272; William Cleveland, "Sources of Arab Nationalism" op. cit. p. 5; Cleveland argues that the establishment of the Decentralisation Party expressed an Arab desire for accommodation.

⁵² Cited in A. Alnasrawi, Arab Nationalism, op. cit., p. 29.

leadership of the societies and the Arab movement in general. This leadership originated almost exclusively from an élitist background "who believed that their own economic and social interests would be best served by retaining less rigid structural affiliation with the imperial authorities."⁵³

Whatever the explanation may be, the conclusion that may be drawn is that these societies, the movement they created and the kind of thought they produced lacked a clear cut pan-Arab ideology. According to E. Tauber, there existed at least three major trends in the societies' thought: Arabism, Syrianism and Lebanism. The existence of these orientations would suggest that Arabism was not the only theme.⁵⁴ Elaborating on the analysis provided by E. Tauber, it is not possible to regard the Arab opposition against the policies of Turkification as heralding an Arab nationalist movement and ideology. This opposition had different motives and causes of dismay: they ranged from Arab-Islamic, sectarian to particularism.⁵⁵

Another striking feature inherent in the thoughts of the societies was the geographic scope and boundaries of the Arab nation itself. The boundaries of the would-be state were confined to the Arab East (the Fertile Crescent) and did not include Egypt or Arab North Africa.⁵⁶ This may find explanation in the

⁵³ Ibid.

The view that Arab nationalism was generally a movement of an elite is shared by many scholars. For a discussion of this analysis, see, C. E. Dawn, "The Origins of Arab Nationalism", in R. Khalidi et al(eds), The Origins of Arab, op. cit., pp. 3-29.

⁵⁴ E. Tauber, The Emergence of Arab, op. cit., pp. 246-53.

⁵⁵ A. Duri, The Historical Formation, op. cit., p. 334.

⁵⁶ F. Sayegh, Arab Unity, op. cit., pp. 78-79.

proposition that the pioneers of the Arab societies were Christian Arabs who essentially sought an end to their minority position in the Ottoman Empire. This is not to suggest, as A. Hourani explains, that their thinking was not all void of Arab elements. They emphasised the Arabic language and history. However, most Christian Arab writers were hesitant to extend this trend to its political conclusion fearing that Arab nationalism might lead to another form of Islamic oppression. They chose to mix Arab nationalism with a concept of Lebanism or Syrianism while dreaming of an eventual Arab nation, albeit on a secular basis.⁵⁷

The main theme of this movement was centred around the call for reform and the democratisation of the Ottoman Empire. In the process, the movement came to betoken a revolution of some sort. It was a peoples' oriented process in which the concept of a nation was developing and slowly gaining political significance.⁵⁸ It is evident that before the First World War there existed indications of an Arab political identity. This identity expressed itself in the writings of some intellectuals and in the establishment of organisations and societies of political reform and Arab rights. Three trends dominating the political and intellectual scene of the period can be identified: Islamism, Ottomanism and a developing awareness of Arab cultural distinctiveness.⁵⁹

The Young Turks pushed the Arabs into developing their

⁵⁷ Albert Hourani, al-Fikr al-'Arabiyy, op. cit., pp. 331-332.

⁵⁸ Eugene Kamenka(ed), Nationalism, op. cit., p. 12.

⁵⁹ William Cleveland, "Sources of Arab" op. cit., p. 3.

Arabism to become a visible trend after 1908. This is not to imply that this trend meant a full-fledged nationalism. Rather, it was a kind of proto-nationalism that involved an emphasis on Arab elements of identity but not the desire to separate from the Turks.⁶⁰ In view of this analysis of the current of thought dominating the period of the societies, Arabism was a movement of opposition to Turkification policies. The Young Turks gave the Arab nationalists greater reasons than those during the reign of 'Abdulhamiyd to be very outspoken.⁶¹

The main characteristics of Arab nationalist thought prior to the First World War were the existence of overlapping Arab and Islamic identities and the absence of ideology despite the idea of an Arab nation. The current of thought that marked the period lacked any developed ideology of nationalism.⁶² Even though some writers, such as, Afghaniy, 'Abduh and Kawakibiy advocated ideas relevant to and can be seen as containing a strong tendency towards nationalism, they nevertheless, did not call for the establishment of a distinct Arab state. The reformers attempted to solve the problem of borrowing from Europe while preserving Islam and defending it against Europe. This gave birth to an

⁶⁰ R. Khalidi, "Ottomanism and Arabism in Syria Before 1914: A Reassessment", in R. Khalidi et al(eds), The Origins of Arab, op. cit., p. 51.

⁶¹ C. E. Dawn, "The Origins of Arab Nationalism", op. cit. p. 16.

⁶² Al-Saiyyd Yasiyn, Tahliyl Madmun al-Fikr al-Qawmiy al-'Arabiyy: Dirasa Istitla'iyya (A Content Analysis of Arab Nationalist Thought: An Exploratory Study) First Edition (Beirut; Markaz Dirasat al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya, 1980) Arabic Text (Present Author's Translation). A summary of the findings of this study is found in al-Saiyyd Yasiyn, "Tahliyl Madmun Kitabaat al-Fikr al-Qawmiy al-'Arabiyy: Taqriyr Mulakhas" (A Content Analysis of Arab Nationalist Thought: A Summary of the Findings), in Waliyd Qaziyha et al, al-Qawmiyya al-'Arabiyya fiy al-Fikr wa al-Mumarasa(Arab Nationalism: Thought and Practice) (Seminar Papers) Third Edition (Beirut; Markaz Dirasat al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya, 1984) Arabic Text (Present Author's Translation) pp. 84-98.

intellectual problem that bewildered the imagination of the following generations who sought a way out of this puzzle.⁶³ These questions and the attempts at answering them form the outlook of the entire period after the First World War to which the next pages will be devoted.

2-3: The First World War and Arab Nationalism

The period before the First World War saw the currents of three main trends of thought among Arab intellectuals and politicians. A religious trend was holding to the ideal of an Islamic Caliphate in order to rebuild Islam's glory. A liberal tendency was calling for nationalist secular responses to the woes of the Arabs. It stressed the ethnic and linguistic components of unity.⁶⁴ The liberal nationalist trend coupled with the nationalist progressive trend eventually paved the way for the growth of a nationalist secular tendency that was, for example, expressed in the writings of N. 'Azuwriy.

In his book, 'Yaqadat al-Umma al-'Arabiyya' (the Revival of the Arab Nation), 'Azuwriy distinguished the concept of an Arab nation from previous traditional Islamic views and firmly established it within the nationalist ideal. He argued that

⁶³ Waliyd Nazmiy, "Malaamih min al-Fikr al-'Arabiyy fiy 'Asr al-Yaqada wa 'Alaqatuhu bi Fikrat al-Qawmiyya al-'Arabiyya" (The Outlook of Arab Thought in the Renaissance and its Relation with Arab Nationalism Idea), in S. Hammadiy et al, Dirasaat fiy al-Qawmiyya al-'Arabiyya wa al-Wahda (Studies in Arab Nationalism and Unity) (Seminar Papers) First Edition (Beirut; Markaz Dirasat al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya, 1984) Arabic Text (Present Author's Translation) pp. 122-127.

⁶⁴ Halim Barakat, al-Mujtam' al-'Arabiyy al-Mu'asir: Bahth Istitla'iy Ijtima'iy (Contemporary Arab Society: An Exploratory Sociological Research) Second Edition (Beirut; Markaz Dirasat al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya, 1985) Arabic Text (Present Author's Translation) pp. 399-405.

nothing is more liberal than the League of the Arab Home Land, it seeks, for the benefits of Islam and the Arab nation, first and foremost the separation of religious authority from civil authority and the establishment of an Arab empire.⁶⁵

However, as Hourani explains, the existence of these trends did not mount to the birth of an independence movement nor were these trends bringing forward independence in one form or another.⁶⁶ The event of the First World War intensified the debates among these trends. It left the Arabs with the difficult task of deciding which side they would choose to support.⁶⁷

The War put the Arabs at a very critical juncture wherein they had to tackle issues of great importance with the prospects of losing every thing or achieving something as yet unclear. The decision of Turkey to enter the war on the side of the Central Powers and the approach Britain made towards the Arabs promising their independence if they fought against Turkey helped strengthen the nationalist tendency. Although there remained some opinion favouring the support of Turkey against the Allies, the Arab Societies which represented the Arab nationalist movement of the time chose independence with the implications of fighting against Turkey.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ N. 'Azuwriy, Yaqadat al-Umma al-'Arabiyya (the Revival of the Arab Nation) Translated into Arabic by Ahmed Melhim, (Beirut; Al-Muasasa al-'Arabiyya lil-Dirasaat wa al-Nashr, n. d.) Arabic Text (Present Author's Translation) p. 219.

⁶⁶ Albert Hourani, al-Fikr al-'Arabiyy, op. cit., p. 342.

⁶⁷ Halim Barakat, al-Mujtama' al-'Arabiyy, op. cit., p. 407.

⁶⁸ Albert Hourani, al-Fikr al-'Arabiyy, o p. cit., pp. 343-345.

(i) The Arab Revolt (1916) and Arab Nationalism ⁶⁹

The appeasement of Turks was losing momentum and waned particularly after the collapse of the talks between the CUP government and the Societies that followed the Paris Arab Congress of 1913. The case against the Turks was intense after the Turks responded to Arab gestures of conciliation with a heavy hand.⁷⁰ Shariyf Husiyn, a descendant of the Prophet, the head of the Hashimite dynasty and the governor of the Hijaz, was at odds with the government of the Young Turks who were plotting against him.⁷¹ Husiyn was seeking ways to save his dynasty. On the other hand he had good relations with Britain which was looking for a suitable Arab leadership with high prestige, among the Arabs, to help in its war against the Ottoman Empire, particularly after the sultan proclaimed a war of jiyhad against the Allies.

The Arab nationalists sought Husiyn's leadership with its sound religious legitimacy. They entered into discussions with Husiyn on waging an Arab rebellion against the Turks and the ways

⁶⁹ In western studies the incident of the Arab uprising against the Turks is referred to as that of revolt. The connotation the word revolt carries is clear in serving the purpose of undermining the significance of this historical event. This is probably to echo Lawrence who consistently argued that the whole affair was a British made one while the Arabs had no significant role to play. In Arab studies, however the incident is seen as representing the great Arab revolution against the Turks and therefore reflecting the honour of the Arab nation. Although not sharing any of the two contending arguments, the term revolt or rebellion is used throughout this research only because the English reader is familiar with it.

⁷⁰ A. Duri, The Historical Formation, op. cit., p. 314.

⁷¹ E. Tauber, The Arab Movements of World War I, First Edition (London; Frank and Cass, 1993) p. 69.

of establishing an Arab kingdom as the nucleus of the future pan-Arab state. The Arab nationalists presented to Shariyf Husiyn a plan, known as the Damascus Protocol, outlining their views on the future Arab state, and marking its boundaries.⁷² This is not to suggest, however, that all the Arabs were supporting the leadership of Shariyf Husiyn nor were they united in understanding the meaning of independence.⁷³ Local leaders saw in his ambitions only its tribal ingredients.⁷⁴ However, the encouragement Husiyn received from the British facilitated the recognition of his leadership.

Husiyn entered in correspondence, known as the (Husseini-Mc Mahon Correspondence), with Sir Henry McMahon, the British High Commissioner in Egypt, on the issue of forming an alliance between the Arabs and Britain during the war. The basis of the alliance was that the Arabs would rise against Turkey and that Britain would guarantee the establishment of an independent Arab kingdom, with Husiyn its king, after the end of the war.⁷⁵ Despite the ambiguities of the British pledges Husiyn and his supporters decided to raise the flag of rebellion against Turkey in a development that marked a clear break away from the

⁷² Mahmuwd S. Mansiy, Harakat al-Yaqada, op. cit., pp. 241-250.

⁷³ Z. N. Zein, Arab Turkish Relations and the Emergence of Arab Nationalism, First Edition (Beirut; Khayats, 1958) pp. 105-106.

⁷⁴ M. al-Najjaar, "Fikr al-Thuwra al-'Arabiyya 1916 wa Istiqlaal al-'Arab"(The Thought of the Arab Revolution of 1916 and the Independence of the Arabs) Al-Mustaqbal Al-Arabi(The Arab Future) No 81 (November 1985) Arabic Text (Present Author's Translation) p. 147.

⁷⁵ P. Mansfield, "Arab Political Movements", in P. Mansfield (ed), The Middle East: A Political and Economic Survey, Fourth Edition (London; Oxford University Press, 1973) p. 66.

traditional view of maintaining links with the Ottoman Empire.⁷⁶

The Shariyf-led Arab Rebellion of 1916-1918 is seen by many authors as the first Arab rising against the Turks.⁷⁷ But this is only true as far as its success is concerned. E. Tauber provides historical evidence to prove that even during the First World War rebellions took place against the Turks. Tauber agrees that the Arab Rebellion of 1916 was the only one that reached the stage of materialisation but that would not justify the neglect of other movements, especially in Syria, Iraq, and Lebanon which were overshadowed by the Rebellion.⁷⁸ Although Tauber's approach is one showing the fragility and disunity of the Arab movement and the multiplicity of identities among it, his analysis is a clear suggestion that the struggle against the Turks was spreading in the Arab provinces of the East and that the Arab Revolt of 1916 was not a British conspiracy.

The Rebellion epitomised a break between the Arab nationalists and Turkey and played a significant role in enhancing their position.⁷⁹ The Rebellion marked a step that left behind utopian designs and secret organisation to enter the spheres of actual politics and war.⁸⁰ It is striking, as A. Duri notes, that the Arab movement had to wait for the occurrence of an external factor, the First World War, to move toward adopting

⁷⁶ E. Tauber, The Arab Movements, op. cit., p. 10.

⁷⁷ Suliiyman Musa, al-Haraka al-'Arabiyya, op. cit., pp. 24-28.

⁷⁸ E. Tauber, The Arab Movements, op. cit., pp. 10-34, provides an extensive analysis of these movements.

⁷⁹ Majiyd Khaduwriy, al-Itijahaat al-Siyyasiyya, op. cit., pp. 33-34.

⁸⁰ Suliiyman Musa, al-Haraka al-'Arabiyya, op. cit., p. 270.

this new thinking and method in seeking independence from the Turks. This clearly shows how weak and incoherent the nationalist trend had been. It found in the War the justification of Arab nationalism in a way that would not contradict Islam.⁸¹

(ii) The Thought of the Revolt: Islamism or Arabism

The nationalist content of the Arab Revolt and its identity is a subject of scholarly controversy.⁸² Arab historians and nationalist thinkers consider the Arab Revolt to have been a true Arab one. They look at it as a historic landmark in the development of Arab nationalist thought and its movement. They emphasise the vital role played by the Revolt in furthering the Arabs' hopes for revival and national emancipation.⁸³ Some Western authors saw the Rebellion as a consequence of the world politics of the First World War in which major powers played the decisive role that overshadowed any significance regional or local factors could have had. They emphasize the fact that the Rebellion was financed and supported by Britain. This view concludes that an Arab role in the Revolt is an exaggeration that reflects no solid national dimension but a political opportunism

⁸¹ A. Duri, The Historical Formation, op. cit., p. 314.

⁸² See, Albert Hourani, "The Arab Awakening Forty Years After", in Derk Hopwood(ed), Studies in Arab History: The Antonius Lectures, 1978-87, (London; Macmillan in Association with St. Anthony's College, Oxford and World of Islam Festival Trust, 1990) p. 28. Cited in Aziz al-Azmeh, "Nationalism and the Arabs", Arab Studies Quarterly, vol. 17, Numbers 1, 2, Winter-Spring 1995, pp. 5-7.

⁸³ Waliyd Qaziya, "Fikrat al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya fiy Matla' al-Qarn al-'Ishriyyin"(the Idea of Arab Unity in the Beginning of the Twentieth Century), in S. Hammadiy etal, Dirasaat fiy al-Qawmiyya al-'Arabiyya wa al-Wahda(Studies in Arab Nationalism and Unity) (Beirut; Markaz Dirasat al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya, 1984) Arabic Text (Present Author's Translation) p. 228.

that Shariyf Husiyn deployed to fit his personal ambitions.⁸⁴

These controversies about the nature of the Arab Revolt raise the question of the nationalist content of the Revolt. Arguing that Arab nationalists of 1917 were men who reluctantly became nationalists, Azmeh suggests that " the Arab revolt of 1917 does not belong to the register of previous or contemporary Arab nationalism ... it was Arab only in the narrow ethnological, pre-nationalist sense." The Arab revolt therefore was "an Islamic rebellion, undertaken in the name of, not the Arabs, but a Meccan Caliphate under the Sharif Husayan Ben Ali, who was later to be declared caliph."⁸⁵

William Cleveland, who extensively researched Arab nationalism, emphasises the Islamic content of the Arab Revolt during its first stages. He argued that the protection and the revival of Islam was the essential thesis of the Revolt. Cleveland concludes that initially the terminology used in the 'al-Qibbla' (the organ of the revolt between 1916-1924) would not permit the labelling of the Revolt as Arabist in character.⁸⁶

There is to be found no implication that the Revolt was carried out primarily as a nationalist reaction to the Turks. The terminology used reflected transitional concepts which were an amalgamation of religious and nationalist ideals with an eventual reliance on Islamic ideology. However, Cleveland is assured of

⁸⁴ J. Kostiner, "the Hashmite Tribal Confederacy of the Arab Revolt, 1916-17", in Edward Ingram(ed), National and International Politics in the Middle East, (London; Frank Cass, 1986) p. 127.

⁸⁵ Aziz Azmeh, "Nationalism", op. cit., p. 7.

⁸⁶ William Cleveland, "the Role of Islam as Political Ideology in the First World War", in Edward Ingram(ed), National and International Politics, op. cit., pp. 91-92.

the clear nationalist orientation of the thought produced in the al-Qibbla in the last stages of the War. References were made to the nature of the struggle between the Arabs and the Turks whose policies of Turkification were presented as underlying factors to the case of the Revolt.⁸⁷

This view is also held by S. Haim who considers the Revolt to have had a nationalist Arabist orientation only two years after its proclamation when Shariyf Husiyn started looking to himself as king of the Arabs.⁸⁸ The same conclusion is made by Hans Kohn who cites a passage from the speech made by Husiyn in which he stressed the bond of Arabs' nationality in spite of their religious differences.⁸⁹ This obvious shift from the Islamic impulse to the nationalist impulse calls for enquiry. Why had this shift taken place? Shariyf Husiyn emphasised the Islamic character of his action in order to justify it before the eyes of Muslims. He accused the CUP of betraying Islam and the Muslims while making equal claims on behalf of the Arabs who were willing to acknowledge the nationalist reasoning as the only legitimate alternative.

Another explanation may be sought in the effects the repressive policies adopted by the Turks had on the Arabs. These policies impelled the Shariyf to respond to the grief they caused as well as to meet the desires and aspirations of Arab

⁸⁷ Ibid, pp. 91-92.

⁸⁸ S. Haim, Arab Nationalism, op. cit., pp. 34-35.

⁸⁹ Hans Kohn, A History of Nationalism in the East, First Edition (London; G. Routledge & Sons LTD, 1929) p. 284.

nationalists.⁹⁰ A. Duri attempts to resolve the controversy. He explains that even though the proclamations issued by Husiyn emphasised both Islamism and Arabism that was no source of contradiction but interdependence. The proclamations

had an Arab-Islamic attitude, for they set forth the interdependence between Arabism and Islam. In the faith they see a source of strength for the Arab nation and support for Arab nationalism. Similarly, in the Arab national awakening they see a source of power for Islam and a means for returning to the sacred law.⁹¹

The focus on Islamism or Arabism in the thought of the Revolt reflects the changing circumstances and the reaction each stage of the Revolt implied. The call for Arabism and Islamism was an expression of the state of transition which marked the thought of the period. The call for Arabism and Islamism simultaneously was an expression of their compatibility. It is clear that the developments that affected the course of the Hashimites action were detrimental to deciding the occurrence of both ideas. Although the independence of the Hijaz was in the forefront of the Revolt aims, the British encouragement and the delegation the Shariyf had from the nationalists of the Societies were decisive in creating among the Hashimites a sense and a belief that they were leading an Arab movement. Hence the complementarity of the aim of securing the independence of the Hijaz and creating a larger Arab state as the ultimate goal.

Despite the Shariyf's aim of dynastic hegemony at the expense of other dynasties the Revolt had unmistakable nationalist aims that went beyond the attainment of the

⁹⁰ E. Tauber, The Arab Movements, op. cit., p. 251, p. 97. See also, Mahmuwd S. Mansiy, Harakat al-Yaqada, op. cit., p. 250.

⁹¹ A. Duri, The Historical Formation, op. cit., p. 307.

independence of the Hijaz. However, The Shariyf did not clearly show an attachment to secular-ethnic Arab nationalism. Nevertheless Husiyn's admission of the Damascus Protocol, which set forth the objectives and territorial aims of the Arab movement, was an indication of the importance he attached to the nationalist trend.⁹²

The Revolt was a vital point on the path of the development of Arab nationalist thought that is appreciated by the Arab nationalists. The Ba'th Party, for example, gives the Revolt (Revolution) a prominent place in the history of the struggle for Arab unity and liberation. It saw the Revolt giving the Arab movement two of its principal aims, freedom and unity.⁹³ However its nationalist idea was vague and incomplete and this meant an independent nationalist ideology was absent. Nevertheless, the Revolt was a vital development which marked the transition from an Ottoman Middle East to a post-Ottoman one, from a world attached to the idea of an Islamic caliphate to a world that had to restructure itself under the effects of occupation and political systems of European origin.

The War and the Revolt resulted in the defeat of Turkey and it brought Turkish rule in the Arab lands to an end. But the most important result was that the Arabs fell under European domination and the cause of Arab nationalism was betrayed.⁹⁴ The

⁹² J. Kostiner, "the Hashmite Tribal Confederacy", op. cit., pp. 127-129.

⁹³ M. al-Najjaar, "Fikr al-Thuwra al-'Arabiyya", op. cit., p. 147. See also, E. Chalala "Arab Nationalism: A Bibliographical Essay", in Tawfic Farah (ed), Pan-Arabism and Arab Nationalism: the Continuing Debate, (Boulder, London; Westview Press, 1987) pp. 18-52.

⁹⁴ Z. N. Zein, Arab Turkish Relations, op. cit., p. 140.

Sykes-Picot Agreement, that made for the partition of the Arab lands between Britain and France, and the Balfour Declaration, which promised the world Jewry a homeland in Palestine, were seen by the Arabs as strong evidence of how their allies were now turning a blind eye to the cause of Arab nationalism and independence.⁹⁵ These issues would have a strong impact on the making and the content of Arab nationalist thought in the inter-war period.

2-4: Arab Nationalism in the Inter-War Period: From Frustration To Romanticism

By the end of the First World War it was evident that Arab aims of independence and unity were greatly weakened.⁹⁶ The Arab world was occupied by British and French forces. Arab nationalism, therefore, was entering a new phase marking it with pessimism and frustration and a loss of faith in the promises made by the Allies. This led to Arab nationalism becoming a movement with anti-Western and anti-imperialist characters.⁹⁷

(i) The Development of Ideology

The inter-war period witnessed the end of those organisations and societies which sprang before 1914. This was

⁹⁵ For a brief idea regarding the Sykes-Picot agreement and the Balfour Declaration see, L. Snyder, Macro-Nationalisms: A History of the Pan-Movements, First Edition (London; Greenwood Press, 1984) p. 271.

⁹⁶ M. Shuraydi, "Pan-Arabism: A Theory and Practice", in Hani A. Faris(ed), Arab Nationalism and the Future of the Arab World, First Edition (Belmont, Mass.; Association of Arab American University Graduates Inc., 1987) pp. 96-97.

⁹⁷ Z. N. Zein, Nushuw al-Qawmiyya, op. cit., p. 126, pp. 140-141.

an indication that the new circumstances created by the War no longer supported the existence of such organisations. The British and French occupation resulted in a direct confrontation with their imperialism. The confrontation was widening and including all the Arab lands particularly during the 1930s. This period witnessed the large scale struggle in Palestine which served as a stimulus to Arab resistance to foreign rule in general.⁹⁸ It seemed that Arab nationalism was negative in its conception during the inter-war period. This is the result of the preceding period wherein there were concepts and ideals around the nationalist centre but an absence of a general theory of national awakening.

Therefore, the nationalists faced the new circumstances as divided as they previously were. The occupation and the boundaries imposed by the mandate system contributed to this confusion of ideas.⁹⁹ The period saw a competition between the religious and the liberal trends. The religious trend was stronger in the Western part of the Arab World while the liberal trend was stronger in the Eastern part, though it had to argue against local and particularistic tendencies which the mandate system was encouraging.¹⁰⁰

The general trend, however, was now a manifestation of the political and cultural identity of the Arabs as expressed by those who rejected particularism or Islamism in favour of a

⁹⁸ Saiyyd Yasiyn, Tahliyl Madmun, op. cit., pp. 71-74.

⁹⁹ William Cleveland, "the Role of Islam", op. cit., p. 6.

¹⁰⁰ Halim Barakat, al-Mujtama' al-'Arabiy, op. cit., pp. 418-421.

secular Arab nationalism.¹⁰¹ The writings of S. Husry are a good example of Arab nationalist thought of the period. He made a strong case for the idea of an Arab nation through emphasising the secular ingredients of the Arab cultural heritage. It is worth noting that from this point Husry and Arab nationalists in general used the term 'Arab nation' to include not only the Arab part of Asia but extended it to include the whole of the Arabic-speaking North Africa.¹⁰²

(ii) Arab Nationalism: Unity, Identity and Secularism

The nationalists were emphasising the role of language and a common past to prove that a single Arab state was the best form of uniting the Arabs. This reflected a strong ideological tendency that sought the crystallisation of the intellectual contents of nationalism into what might form an Arab nationalist ideology. Although secularism was the label of this kind of theorising, a divorce between Islam and nationalism was not conceived. Islam was considered vital to the nationalist view.¹⁰³ Hourani attributes this secularism to the attempt by its advocates to deprive France of its weapon against the Arabs. He also explains it in the existence of religious minorities, Arab Christians or non-Arab Muslims, and the need to find a common national platform upon which all Arabs could participate in the fight against the Zionist programme which posed a threat to all

¹⁰¹ William Cleveland, "the Role of Islam", op. cit., p. 8.

¹⁰² Bassam Tibi, Arab Nationalism: A Critical Enquiry, Second Edition, Translated by M. Farouk-Sluglett and P. Sluglett, (London; Macmillan, 1990) p. 122.

¹⁰³ Saiyyd Yasiyn, Tahliyl Madmun, op. cit., pp.99-100.

Palestinians, Muslims and Christians alike.

However, total secularism was not to appeal to the Arabs and the majority of the intellectuals who dealt with the issue chose to stress Islam and nationalism simultaneously. This meant that Islam was seen as a civilisation. As Hourani explained, the view that Arab nationalism was a necessary step towards reviving Islam gave way to the idea that Islam was the creator of the Arab nation and the container of its culture. The main concern of the nationalists was to keep alive the aim of Arab unity. Unity was threatened by ideas of particularistic nationalism as Syrian, Lebanese and Iraqi nationalisms which had some encouragement from the occupying powers.¹⁰⁴

Nevertheless, Arabism was the major political ideal to gain widespread approval and appreciation.¹⁰⁵ But this would not imply that an elaborate design was available to bring about any form of Arab unity. Nationalist thought was still theorising about the existence of Arab national unity and the right for political unity. As F. Sayegh explains, the desire for unity was seen as a natural outcome of social and cultural unity. The attainment of independence was seen as the prerequisite for unity. That this was an oversimplification did not alarm the Arab nationalists who overlooked the centrifugal forces which were a characteristic of the Arab society. They relied on idealistic motives while ignoring the realistic aspects of Arab unity.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ Albert Hourani, al-Fikr al-'Arabiyy, op. cit., pp.352-367.

¹⁰⁵ E. Kedourie, "Pan-Arabism and British Policy" in, Walter Laqueur(ed), The Middle East in Transition, (Freeport, New York; Books for Libraries Press, 1971) p.100.

¹⁰⁶ F. Sayegh, Arab Unity, op. cit., pp. 81-83.

The failure of the Arab Revolt in realising an Arab state led the nationalists to stress the existence of an Arab nation even though it lacked a nation-state. Bassam Tibi attributes the First World War the decisive effect which led to this state of thinking. He points to a dramatic change in Arab nationalist thought. Tibi sees this in the shift from the French ideal and Francophile concept of the nation to the German one. Tibi explains that as the nation was not attainable without a state, according to the French, the German concept of the nation was more appealing.

Since in the German model, the nation is a cultural community, the German model of an underdeveloped nation, a nation without a state, was to fit the Arab experience. The borrowing of the German concept of the nineteenth century played a vital role in marking the nationalist literature with a romantic militant nationalism. Tibi attributes to Husry the establishment of the tradition of a populist Germanophile Arab nationalism. "His nationalism was not mystificatory, fanatic or fascist but he laid the foundations for the kind of fanatical nationalism."¹⁰⁷

In the 1930s the nationalist intellectuals were engaged in arguing for Arab identity and Arab nationalism against particularistic nationalisms. This generation of Arabists produced an ideology based upon the principle of an Arab nation through emphasising the factors of language, culture and common history. The imposition of the war settlements created a new condition in which unity was no longer available. Hence the previous demand for the preservation of the existing unity gave

¹⁰⁷ Bassam Tibi, Arab Nationalism, op. cit., pp. 116-118.

way to the desire for the restoration of such unity. In this juncture the idea of Arab unity was born and thereafter it became an essential element of Arab nationalism. The concept of an Arab nation was met with widespread acknowledgement. The basic thesis of this concept was that the nation-state was the logical expression of nationhood.¹⁰⁸

Nationalist thinkers advocated this concept and made it a theme of their intellectual contributions. The Lebanese historian-pan-Arabist Constantine Zurayq stressed the importance of having what he termed a nationalist philosophy. He argued that unless the Arabs had an inclusive nationalist philosophy any attempt at organising themselves in a nation-state would be inadmissible. Although Zurayq assigned prominence to this philosophy and to the spiritual components of the Arabs reality proved that these factors are not enough to lift the Arabs from their backward position. Therefore his main concern became to advocate liberal ideas of organisation, rationalism science and technology.¹⁰⁹

It was Husry, however, who produced a clear cut theory encompassing all aspects and premises of nationalism.¹¹⁰ The mandate system and Jewish immigration to Palestine played an important role in marking this nationalist concept with a revolutionary anti-imperialist stamp. There was strong emphasis on the glories and heroism of the Arabs but this was, however,

¹⁰⁸ F. Sayegh, Arab Unity, op. cit., pp.73-80.

¹⁰⁹ Constantine Zurayq, al-Wa'iy al-Qawmiy (Nationalist Conscious)(Beirut; Dar al-Makshuwf, 1939) pp. 8-9.

¹¹⁰ Albert Hourani, al-Fikr al-'Arabiyy, op. cit., pp. 368-372.

halted by the event of the Second World War.¹¹¹

2-5: Arab Nationalism During the Second World War

When the Second world War broke out, the Arabs were somehow hesitant to support the Allies. The imposition of the Sykes-Picot agreement and the Balfour Declaration was seen by the Arabs as a betrayal of their aims by the Allies. The struggle against British and French occupation further undermined any belief that an Allied victory would be the best way to guarantee the achievement of the nationalist goals.¹¹²

Arab opinion adopted a wait-and-see attitude while expressing some degree of sympathy with the Axis. As the British war strategy was to revive British interests in the region, Britain was alarmed at the prospect of the Arabs taking an anti-Allies stand. This dictated the adoption of a policy that would attract the Arabs and win them for the cause of the Allies.¹¹³

Britain announced its support for the idea of Arab unity.¹¹⁴ This policy was designed in anticipation of the goals set forward by Arab nationalists.

On the political level the nationalists were concentrating their efforts on achieving an Arab federal state that would encompass the whole of the Fertile Crescent.¹¹⁵ Faced with the

¹¹¹ P. Sluglett and Marion Farouk-Sluglett(eds), The Times Guide to the Middle East, Second Edition (London; Times Books, 1993) pp.12-13.

¹¹² G. Antonius, Yaqadat al-'Arab, op. cit., p. 35. J. Marlow, Arab Nationalism and British Imperialism: A Study in World Politics, First Edition (London; The Cresset Press, 1961) p. 39.

¹¹³ Maxime Rodinson, The Arabs, Translated by Arthur Goldhammer, (Chicago; the University of Chicago Press, 1981) p. 99.

¹¹⁴ Charles Cromeans, The Arabs and the World, (New York, London; Frederick A. Praeger Publisher, 1963) pp. 128-129.

¹¹⁵ E. Kedourie, "Pan-Arabism", op. cit., p. 102.

reality of the European occupation the Arab nationalists had to reconsider the situation. They had to work out their ideas and plans to allow for the effective mobilisation of all forces at their disposal to confront the European assault.¹¹⁶

On the intellectual level the Arab nationalists were superseding both Islamic and socialist thought. Intellectuals went to explain the correlation between Islam and Arab nationalism. Constantine Zurayq, for instance, rejected any hint of the existence of a contradiction between Arab nationalism and any religion, not to mention Islam. Zurayq went as far to consider the Prophet the true builder of Arab civilisation, the uniter of the Arab people and the man of creed who inspires all Arabs.¹¹⁷

The Lebanese Edmund Rabbat, took this thesis even further by saying that Islam was a national religion. Even though he saw nationalism in linguistic and cultural terms, he adopted the view that Islam was the essence of political unity. Zurayq and Rabbat were not thinking in terms of Islam as a mere religious creed. They emphasised the spiritual and ethical value of Islam. It was the Iraqi 'Abdulrahman al-Bazzaz, however, who sought to establish an inseparable link between Islam and Arab nationalism and employed his intellectual abilities to defend the compatibility of both creeds. Bazzaz emphasises that Islam and Arab nationalism have the same content. This is to view Islam as the national religion of all Arabs. Bazzaz's attempt at

¹¹⁶ Halim Barakat, The Arab World: Society, Culture, and State, First Edition (Berkeley: Los Angeles; University of California Press, 1993), p. 251.

¹¹⁷ Constantine Zurayq, al-Wa'iy al-Qawmiy, op. cit.

reconciling Arab nationalism with Islam therefore, became the most obvious attempt by a Muslim Arab intellectual.¹¹⁸

The more secular view of Arab nationalism, as has been stated above, was the work of Husry who defended the separation between politics and religion. Husry saw nationalism based on a linguistic concept of the Arab. An Arab was whoever spoke Arabic. He argued that any full fledged national emancipation and evolution incorporating language would necessarily lead to the transformation of a people into a nation and the nation into a united state.¹¹⁹ Therefore The period in question witnessed the appearance of a nationalism which based national identity on the linguistic bond along with a cultural appraisal of Islam.¹²⁰

(i) The Spread of Arab Nationalism

Albert Hourani marks the year 1939 as the landmark of the spread of Arab nationalism. Nevertheless, Hourani does not suggest that Arab nationalism was the only trend. Arab nationalism was closely linked to the idea of an Islamic Umma to the point that the nationalism of Christian Arabs was not empty of some elements of an association with Islam as a civilisation. To this Hourani adds the existence of particularistic nationalism such as the call for Syrian unity even though it was included in the call for the pan-Arab unity.¹²¹

¹¹⁸ Majiyd Khaduwriy, al-Itijahaat al-Siyyasiyya, op. cit., pp. 194-195.

¹¹⁹ Ibid, p. 194-212. Albert Hourani, al-Fikr al-'Arabiy, op. cit., p. 308.

¹²⁰ Tariq Ismael, The Arab Left: Habbash and His Commrades (New York; Syracuse University Press, 1976) pp. 10-12.

¹²¹ Albert Hourani, al-Fikr al-'Arabiy, op. cit., pp. 407-409.

The fact that this Arab nationalism was the product of secular liberalism and Islamic reformism paved the way, explains Hourani, for the advancement of secular nationalism. The nationalism of this phase did not stress the need for social reform nor for economic development as these were thought to be left unattended until independence was secured.¹²² This reflected a gap in the ideology of Arab nationalism. According to Alnasrawi, this gap is evident in the indifference towards economics which marked the thought of the prominent writers like Husry. According to Husry, economic forces are of no importance to the nationalist idea and its evolution. Bazzaz also made similar arguments which denied the vitality of economic forces in uniting the Arabs. Alnasrawi attributes this to the effects of foreign domination which made the creation of an Arab nation-state the major concern of Arab nationalists.¹²³

The ideology formulated was to make room for this situation by using the past glories of the Arabs to justify the dreams of the present and the future. Arab nationalism was becoming an ideology that essentially sought to provide a theory of the Arab nation. This theory was a mixture of the urgency of the circumstances and the fact that "from the European theories of the nation the Arabs borrowed the idea of defending and extolling a common language and history, on which they have placed greater stress than on territorial ties."¹²⁴ This concept emphasises the history of the nation. This led to what Maxime Rodinson depicts

¹²² Ibid, pp. 409-412.

¹²³ A. Alnasrawi, Arab Nationalism, op. cit., pp. 41-42.

¹²⁴ Maxime Rodinson, The Arabs, op. cit., pp. 105-106.

as creating a "sacred history which exalts the great deeds of the Arab people in the past." History was interpreted to support the pan-Arab goal of creating a single united Arab nation-state. This resembled a romantic vision that saw in the nation the embodiment of the most supreme and sacred value.¹²⁵

2-6: Arab Nationalism: Independence and Post-Independence

(i) The Arab State System: A New Challenge To Pan-Arabism

After the end of the Second World War nationalist thought was once again expressing great pessimism and frustration. Independence did not satisfy the aspirations of Arab nationalists in creating the hoped-for pan-Arab state. The creation of a large number of states was to consolidate fragmentation.¹²⁶ The creation of Arab states brought a new challenge wherein Arab nationalism had to compete against the now-emerging state-nationalism. Consequently Arab nationalism had to encompass the ideas of political unity, anti-imperialism and to accommodate the need for provisions for social and political reform.¹²⁷

The ideological debate focused on questions of nation and its relationship with the problem of governance and the issue of economic development and social welfare.¹²⁸ The major task was to seek ways of materialising the pan-Arab ideal. Different designs for Arab unity were introduced to serve the purpose of proving

¹²⁵ Ibid, pp. 105-106.

¹²⁶ Halim Barakat, al-Mujtama' al-'Arabiyy, op. cit., p. 430.

¹²⁷ Z. N. Zein, Nushuw al-Qawmiyya, op. cit., p. 142.

¹²⁸ Albert Hourani, al-Fikr al-'Arabiyy, op. cit., p. 419.

the practicality of Arab nationalism and assert the validity of its ideology. This resulted in an intellectual production that tried to maintain reasoning for Arab unity in constitutional terms.¹²⁹

The establishment of the League of the Arab States in 1945 was a sign of hope amidst frustration and disappointment.¹³⁰ But the fact that the League was only an organisation of independent states made it fall short of the ideological aspirations of Arab nationalism. In the League state-nationalism became definite and institutionalised.¹³¹ The fact that particularistic identities have now become enshrined in the Arab state system dealt a heavy blow to Arab unity aspirations. From that Arab nationalist thought became involved in efforts to respond to the challenge posed by the state system.

(ii) The Palestine Problem: Arab Nationalism Consolidated

When the state of Israel was established Arab nationalist thought embarked on a debate on how to face the problem of having an alien state that drove out the Palestinian Arabs.¹³² The debate was focused on finding the appropriate measures for confronting Israel.¹³³ The Palestinian problem and the defeat of the armies

¹²⁹ Saiyyd Yasiyn, Tahliyl Madmun, op. cit., pp. 109-110.

¹³⁰ Albert Hourani, A History of the Arab Peoples, First Edition (London; Faber and Faber, 1991) p. 355.

¹³¹ Charles Cremeans, The Arabs, op. cit., p. 129.

¹³² Muhammad Jabir al-Ansariy, Tahwlaat al-Fikr wa al-Siyasa fiy al-Sharq al-'Arabiyy(1930-1970), (Developments of Thought and Politics in the Arab East (1930-1970)First Edition(Kuwait; al-Majlis al-Wataniy lil Thaqafa wa al-Fuwnuwn wa al-Adaab, 1980) Arabic Text (Present Author's Translation) p. 107.

¹³³ Albert Hourani, al-Fikr al-'Arabiyy, op. cit., pp. 423-424.

of the Arab states in the war with Israel in 1948 had considerable effect on Arab nationalism. Arab nationalism was transformed from a movement emphasising the past glories of the Arab nation into a movement with its ideology centred on the failures of the present. Ideology became an expression of the aspiration and the desire for reform.¹³⁴

A wave of writings on the effects of the defeat on the Arab world was evident. Prominent among these was Constantine Zurayq's book which he devoted to discussing the meaning of the Palestinian problem and the defeat inflicted upon the Arabs by Israel, (*Ma'na al-Nakba, the Meaning of Disaster*).¹³⁵ In this book Zurayq saw the cause of the Arab failure to win the war against Israel and restore the Palestinians' rights in the absence of a true Arab nation.¹³⁶ This was a call for changing the life of the Arabs and their way of thinking as the main prerequisite to creating a united Arab state that would be able to win the battle for the nation. The defeat and the effects it had led to radical developments in Arab politics and Arab nationalism.

2-7: The Radicalisation of Arab Nationalism

The stage after the war of 1948 was characterised by the reformulation of Arab nationalist theory. The Arab nationalist discourse following the war of 1948 was moving towards a radical

¹³⁴ Tariq Ismael, The Arab Left, op. cit., pp. 12-14.

¹³⁵ Constantine Zurayq, Ma'na al-Nakba, (Beirut; Dar al-'Ilm lil Malaaiyyin, 1948)

¹³⁶ Albert Hourani, al-Fikr al-'Arabiyy, op. cit., p. 423.

stand.¹³⁷ The failure of the Arab regimes and the psychological effects of the 1948 defeat opened the doors for the active role of new social forces. These new forces were concerned with the problems and issues linked to social change and therefore the establishment of a new order. The stress was on realising social justice and putting the blame on the shoulders of the existing regimes.¹³⁸

The modernising policies of the Arab states and developments in the sectors of education, commerce and industry and the expansion of the bureaucracy facilitated the growth and the infiltration of political institutions and the armies by a middle class generation.¹³⁹ These developments brought the military into politics with old regimes being replaced by army officers with nationalist orientations. Military regimes took over in Egypt, Syria and Iraq in a development that initiated similar changes in many Arab countries. The nature and the history of these changes are not of direct relevance to this study. Suffice it to say that the most important outcome was the inauguration of a new phase of Arab nationalism. Arab nationalism in essence was represented by three major movements: the Ba'th, the Arab Nationalists Movement, and Nasserism.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁷ Tariq Ismael, The Arab Left, op. cit., pp. 12-14.

¹³⁸ For a discussion of the role of strain in the rise of Arab Nationalism see, Paul Ernest Salem, "Modern Arab Ideology and Ideological Movements: The Role of Social and Cultural Strain", Unpublished PhD. Dissertation, (Harvard University, 1987) pp. 122-131.

¹³⁹ Saiyyd Yasiyn, Tahliyl Madmun, op. cit., pp. 110-113. A. Alnasrawi, Arab Nationalism, op. cit., p. 33.

¹⁴⁰ Saiyyd Yasiyn, Tahliyl Madmun, op. cit., pp. 111-122.

(i) The Ba'th Party

The Ba'th, or rebirth, Party came into existence in the 1940s. It was established by some Syrian students for whom their prominent figure and ideologist was Michael 'Aflaq.¹⁴¹ Although the establishment of the Ba'th precedes the radicalisation of Arab nationalism, it gained importance only after it established itself in the military and therefore participated significantly in the radical trend.¹⁴² 'Aflaq, sought to provide a full-fledged Arab nationalist ideology. He argued that the existence of an Arab nation or the attributes of Arab nationalism was not a sufficient formula.

The Ba'thists acknowledged the contributions of those intellectuals like Husry who sought the validation of the idea of an Arab nation to which they added the concept of a historic mission.¹⁴³ An Arab nation was entrusted in the Ba'th ideology with an eternal mission in serving not only national aims but of humanity at large. This was compatible with the emphasis they put on secularism and on the nationalist interpretation of Islam as an Arab civilisation.¹⁴⁴ But the important contribution of the Ba'th was in the attention it paid to issues of economic life and modernisation. This meant giving Arab nationalism a social content through the three principles it devised as the basic aims of the Arab nation. These principles were: wahda, hurriyya,

¹⁴¹ Bassam Tibi, Arab Nationalism, op. cit., p. 199.

¹⁴² Saiyyd Yasiyn, Tahliyl Madmun, op. cit., p. 111.

¹⁴³ Abdullah Abduldaïym, "al-Idyulujiyya", op. cit., pp. 83-85.

¹⁴⁴ Hanna Batatu, "the Pan-Arab Experience of Syria's Ba'th Party", in Hani A. Faris(ed), Arab Nationalism, op. cit., pp. 61-63.

ishtirakiyya, unity, freedom and socialism.¹⁴⁵

Bassam Tibi considers the inclusion of socialism in the Ba'th ideology to have been a significant departure from Husry's theory of Arab nationalism. In the addition of socialism, or Arab socialism, 'Aflaq "sought a synthesis between nationalism and socialism within an all-Arab state."¹⁴⁶ Another contribution of the Ba'th can be seen in the introduction of the concept of the masses, to mean the people. The masses were entrusted with the major role in realising the goal of Arab unity. Although there were different interpretations of the nature of the masses, this was a new concept that Arab nationalism was acquiring as a sign of its radicalisation.¹⁴⁷

Nasiyf Nasar in his study of the contemporary concepts of nation in modern and contemporary Arab thought points to what he considers as a general weakness characterising the Ba'th's definition of the nation. Nasar attributes this to the effort by the Ba'th theoreticians to accommodate the need for political national unity as a basic component of the Arab national existence. If the aim of the Ba'thists is to create the united Arab nation-state and not the validation of Arab national existence, the Ba'th ideology, as Nasar explains, is not seeking only the transformation of the Arab nation from one situation to another. It also gives prominence to the vitality of the formative nature of the single state in its relationship with the

¹⁴⁵ Sir James Craig, "Changes in Arab Nationalism: Outsiders View" Arab Affairs, vol.1, no.11 (Summer 1990) p. 5.

¹⁴⁶ Bassam Tibi, Arab Nationalism, op. cit., p. 199.

¹⁴⁷ Saiyyd Yasiyn, Tahliyl Madmun, op. cit., pp. 135-136.

existence of the Arab nation itself.¹⁴⁸

The Ba'th is fluctuating between the theoretical reasoning that distinguishes national existence from its nation-state and the theoretical reasoning that sees in the concept of nation an embodiment of the state. Nasar explained the inability of the Ba'th ideology to answer the basic question of determining the form of existence that a group or community, seen as a nation, enjoys while not having its own nation-state.¹⁴⁹

(ii) The Arab Nationalists Movement

The Arab Nationalists Movement (ANM) was established by a group of students who were studying at the American University of Beirut in the early 1950s. Ideologically the ANM differs only slightly from the ideas and reasoning provided by Husry. The ANM shared with Ba'th the induction of socialist ideas to Arab nationalist ideology.¹⁵⁰ The ANM rejected the idea that Arab nationalism was a product of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and did not accept that nationalism, in general, was a modern phenomenon. Instead the ANM held that nationalism was an expression of God's will. However, the ANM was unable to provide historical evidence to support this claim nor to show why nationalism and the concept of nation appeared only in the nineteenth century despite the availability of God's will prior

¹⁴⁸ Nasiryf Nasar, Tasuwuraat al-Umma al-Mu'asira: Dirasa Tahliylyyya li Mafahiyym al-Umma fiy al-Fikr al-'Arabiy al-Hadiyth wa al-Mu'asir (Contemporary Concepts of Nation in Modern and Contemporary Arab Thought) Second Edition (Beirut; Ammuwaj, 1994) Arabic Text (Present Author's Translation) pp. 304-306.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid, pp. 304-306.

¹⁵⁰ Bassam Tibi, Arab Nationalism, op. cit., pp. 199-203.

to that.¹⁵¹

The ANM witnessed a dramatic change of direction in the 1960s. The change was the result of an ideological debate within the ANM itself. The debate was on whether to embrace Marxism and the principle of class struggle or to keep an attachment to the liberal values and traditions which originally inspired the founding members. The debate was a clear indication of the crisis the ANM was undergoing. The result was that the movement split into right and left wing groups with serious implications for its future existence.¹⁵² The ANM flourished when it sided with Nasser under whose shadow it survived until 1967. After the defeat with Israel the ANM actual existence as an Arab nationalist movement ended and it reemerged with Palestinian outlook under the banner of the radical Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine.¹⁵³

(iii) Nasserism

The rise of Gamal Abdul Nasser to power in Egypt after the 1952 revolution marked the reorientation of Egyptian nationalism and heralded a new phase in the development of Arab nationalism. Nasserism (the thoughts of Nasser and the policies of his regime) signalled the end of "the pan-Arabism of the kings" and "the beginning of the pan-Arab populism."¹⁵⁴ It injected Arab

¹⁵¹ Ma'an Ziyada, "Taqwiyim Tajrubat Harakat al-Qawmiyyin al-'Arab fiy Marhalatuha al-Uwla"(An Evaluation of the Experience of the Arab Nationalist Movement in its First Stage), in Waliyd Qazyha etal, al-Qawmiyya al-'Arabiyya, op. cit., pp. 330-331.

¹⁵² Saiyyd Yasiyn, Tahliyl Madmun, op. cit., pp. 158-160.

¹⁵³ Halim Barakat, The Arab World, op. cit., p. 166.

¹⁵⁴ Bassam Tibi, Arab Nationalism, op. cit., p. 22.

nationalism with new blood and gave it a new dynamism.¹⁵⁵ Nasser and Nasserism lent Arab nationalism its popular tone.

Nasser became the propagator of pan-Arabism using a language that the masses would understand and not relying on theoretical articulations of the idea.¹⁵⁶ In defining the Arab nation, Nasser believed that the Arab nation was not in need of validation or theoretical proofing. The nation was seen as reality and a fact of common sense. He saw it based on the common past and future of the Arabs, Arab language which provides for a common mentality, and a psychological and social component that supported a common aim.

Marliyn Nasr identifies the major characteristics of the Nasserite concept of the Arab nation as a historical and cultural bond in its objective dimension and a bond of struggle in its subjective dimension. What signifies the Nasserite concept of the Arab nation is, according to Nasr, that while holding the idea of a unitary nation, one nation and one nationalism, Nasserism accommodates the significance of particular states and their peoples which compose the Arab nation. Nasserism acknowledges the fact of having different peoples within the Arab nation and their importance in enriching the Arab nation. However, Nasr notices the sheer absence within Nasserism of any reference to the idea of an Arab united state.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁵ Shaukat Ali, Pan-Movements in the Third World, (Lahore; Publishers United Ltd, 1976), pp. 68-69.

¹⁵⁶ Halim Barakat, The Arab World, op. cit., p. 166.

¹⁵⁷ Marliyn Nasr, al-Tasuwur al-Qawmiy al-'Arabiyy fiy Fikr Gamal 'Abdul Nasser (1952-1970): Dirasa fiy 'Ilm al-Mufradaat wa al-Dalala (Arab Nationalist Concept in the Thought of Nasser) First Edition (Beirut; Markaz Dirasat al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya, 1981) Arabic Text (Present Author's Translation) pp. 376-

This can be explained at least partially, as Nasr provides, by the fact that Arab political thought in general and Arab nationalist thought in particular lacks any theory of the state or any elaborate theorising about it.¹⁵⁸ This theoretical deficiency is interpreted by the Egyptian sociologist Sa'd al-Diyn Ibrahiym as the result of the preoccupation of the nationalist thought with Arab unity which outweighed the importance of the question of the state. Ibrahiym makes the point even clearer by noting that Arabic language dictionaries do not contain any reference or definition of state, or society for that matter, which can be near any definition of the concept in modern social sciences.¹⁵⁹

The Lebanese scholar Radwan al-Saiyyd attributes this to the fact that the sequence of political concepts making up the equation of Islamic thought would not permit the inclusion of any thing similar to the modern nation-state. Whereas Islamic thought starts with the community and ends with leadership via justice, the European model gives prominence to the individual and freedom and then moves to the state. The result is that Islamic thought emphasises leadership at the expense of the state and its institutions.¹⁶⁰

384.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid, pp. 376-384.

¹⁵⁹ Sa'd al-Diyn Ibrahiym(ed), al-Mujtama' wa al-Duwla fi al-Watan al-'Arabiyy(State and Society in the Arab World) First Edition (Beirut; Markaz Dirasat al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya, 1988) Arabic Text (Present Author's Translation) pp. 76-78.

¹⁶⁰ Radwan al-Saiyyd, al-Umma wa al-Jama'a wa al-Sulta: Dirasaat fi al-Fikr al-'Arabiyy al-Islamiyy(Nation, Community and Authority: Studies in Arab-Islamic Thought) First Edition(Beirut; Dar Iqraa, 1984) Arabic Text (Author's Translation) p. 91.

However, the Nasserite neglect of the idea of the state seems to be, as Nasr explains, that Nasserism considered the state of Arab unity to be embodied in an Egyptian state built in accordance with the idea of the Arab nation. Egypt and the Arab nation support each other and they integrate into one entity that would form the nucleus of Arab unity. As for the place of Islam in Arab nationalism, Nasserism stopped at interpreting religion as having a spirit that was compatible with the aims of the Arabs and by emphasising the primacy of the national over the religious. Nasserism considered the nation to be the subject of modernisation, development and independence well based in the realms of democracy, secularism and socialism.¹⁶¹

2-8 Arab Nationalism: Ideological Discourse and Political Reality

(i) Arab Unity: A Hope Frustrated

Nasserism became the major force in the Arab world and its leader Nasser became the hero of Arab nationalism, especially after the Suez crisis.¹⁶² Nassim Rajwan described Nasserite Arab nationalism as "a living force, not to be justified theoretically by marshalling historical or sociological facts, but to be embodied in an all embracing creed."¹⁶³ Therefore, the power of Nasserism led to the creation of the first Arab unity in modern times. The Union between Egypt and Syria was proclaimed in 1958

¹⁶¹ Marliyn Nasr, al-Taswar al-Qawmiy al-'Arabiyy, op. cit., pp. 380-384.

¹⁶² Albert Hourani, A History of, op. cit., pp. 365-368.

¹⁶³ Nissim Rejwan, "Arab Nationalism: In Search of an Ideology", in Walter Laqueur(ed), The Middle East, op. cit., p. 146.

in a single state. However, the unity put Arab nationalist ideology in a critical test and it made clear the factors that impeded the implementation of its social dimension as in the slogan: freedom and socialism. Arab nationalist ideology in its Nasserite and Ba'thist forms failed the test of political maturity when the union collapsed in 1961.¹⁶⁴ This put in question the ideology of Arab nationalism and paved the way for a relatively long debate on issues of Arab nationalist thought and identity in general.¹⁶⁵

The period after the collapse of the union between Egypt and Syria saw a fierce struggle between Nasserism and the Ba'th. The issue at stake was the leadership of the pan-Arab movement.¹⁶⁶ The defeat of Egypt, Syria and Jordan in the war against Israel in 1967 had very severe effects on Arab nationalist ideology. It was detrimental in moderating the hegemonic position of both Nasserism and Ba'thism. Arab nationalist thought witnessed a period of self-criticism which meant the revival and the come back of thought and intellectuals after the politicians failed in their attempts to lead and be victorious.¹⁶⁷ The wave of self-criticism was an expression of the need to reconsider Arab nationalist ideology and indeed the Arab way of life and mentality.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁴ Abdullah Abduldaïym, "al-Idyulujiyya", op. cit., pp. 83-89.

¹⁶⁵ Saiyyd Yasiyn, Tahliyl Madmun, op. cit., p. 157.

¹⁶⁶ For an extensive treatment of this competition see M. Kerr, The Arab Cold War: Gamal Abd Al-Nasir and His Rivals, 1958-1970, Third Edition (New York; Oxford University Press, 1971)

¹⁶⁷ Bassam Tibi, Arab Nationalism, op. cit., p. 206, p. 23.

¹⁶⁸ Abdullah Abduldaïym, "al-Idyulujiyya", op. cit., p. 89.

It is important to note that prior to the defeat of 1967 some Arab intellectuals warned of the consequences of the Arab way of life and organisation. As early as 1963 Constantine Zurayq made a sincere appeal that Arabs should adopt rationality, science and modern methods of organisation if they wanted to rid themselves of their backwardness.¹⁶⁹ Reasserting his views Zurayq published a book to which he gave a title similar to a one he published in 1948. The book (*Ma'na al-Nakba Mujadadan: The Meaning of Disaster Yet Again*) identified the causes of the defeat in the nature of Arab culture and society. He argued that unless the Arabs equipped themselves with rationalism and science they would still be bound by defeat. Arab culture and society are determined by reaction and mythology. The Arab is still led by poetic and false conceptions and unless these are done away with the Arabs have no hope of securing victory and building their own nationhood.¹⁷⁰

(ii) The 1970s and the Critics of Arab Nationalism

The death of Nasser and the changes that followed the ascendance of Sadaat to power in Egypt were decisive in the occurrence of a fundamental shift in Egyptian politics and Arab policies of the Egyptian state. They paved the way for the dominance of a different set of political concepts that

¹⁶⁹ Constantine Zurayq, *Hatha al-'Asr al-Mutafajir* (This Explosive Age), (Beirut; Dar al-'Ilm lil Malaa'iyyin, 1963) Arabic Text (Present Author's Translation) pp. 10-16.

¹⁷⁰ Constantine Zurayq, *Ma'na al-Nakba Mujadadan* (The Meaning of Disaster Yet Again) (Beirut; Dar al-'Ilm lil Malaa'iyyin, 1967) Arabic Text (Present Author's Translation) pp. 7-17.

contrasted with those dominating the Arab world before.¹⁷¹ The process led to the evolution of tendencies critical of Arab nationalism and its ideology.

Many critics emphasised doubts concerning the value and essence of Arab nationalism. Among these were the advocates of the Marxist trend which argued that nationalism obscured and made void the class factor; and an Islamic trend which saw Arabism in contradiction to Islam. Other trends maintained that nationalism was a mystic ideology that elevated the concept of unity to the position of a comprehensive but an indefinite principle that lacked any boundary. The criticising trend also included some of the intellectuals who were propagating the Arab ideal. They considered nationalist thought as an attribute of the past because it rejected the Arab state system and by this it belonged to the phase of dream, the dream of the past. Some of the Arab nationalist thinkers attempted to provide an inclusive Arab nationalist theory that would comprehend the facts and basic dictates of the unification experience that human history provided.¹⁷²

The oil boom that followed the 1973 war with Israel had the effect of raising to the position of power conservative Arab regimes like those in Saudi Arabia and the Arab Gulf states.¹⁷³

¹⁷¹ Saiyyd Yasiyn, Tahliyl Madmun, op. cit., p. 160.

¹⁷² This is essentially the thesis of the Lebanese sociologist Nadiym al-Biytar. See his, Min al-Tajzia ila al-Wahda: al-Qawaniyn al-Asasiyya li Tajarub al-Tariykh al-Wahdawiyya (From Fragmentation to Unity: The Fundamental Rules of Historical Unification Experiments) Fifth Edition (Beirut; Markaz Dirasat al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya, 1986) Arabic Text (Present Author's Translation)

¹⁷³ M. A. Shuraydi, "Pan-Arabism", op. cit., p. 111.

This contributed significantly to the dividing of the Arab world between the rich and the poor. The division had the effect of giving prominence to local concerns and the supremacy of state to state relations and *raison d'état*. These developments impinged upon the nationalist thought through the prevalence of issues linked to pan-Arab identity and particularistic identities, regionalism and the major issue of the validity of the pan-Arab nationalist concept itself. The result was the retreat of populist Arabism and its popular components in the face of cooperation and coordination between the sovereign Arab states despite ideological differences.¹⁷⁴ At a constitutional level, attempts at forging forms of unity flourished throughout the 1970s and well into the 1980s.¹⁷⁵

The 1970s were a critical period in the development of Arab nationalism. When Egypt made peace with Israel and signed in 1978 the Camp David Accord the Arab World was again united in its rejection of the deal and went as far as to suspend Egypt's membership in the League of the Arab States. The League moved its headquarters from Cairo to Tunisia as a sign of the disapproval of Egypt's change of heart towards the struggle with Israel.¹⁷⁶ M. Shuraydi characterizes the 1970s as the period of reactionism in Arab politics. He considers it as heralding the eradication of Nasserism and the termination of radical Arab politics and the

¹⁷⁴ Saiyyd Yasiyn, Tahliyl Madmun, op. cit., p.1 62, pp. 188-189.

¹⁷⁵ Muhammad Shiyya, Jadaliyat al-Tafattut wa al-Wahda fiy al-Mashriq al-'Arabiyy(1970-1990)(The Dialectic of Unity and Fragmentation in the Arab East) First Edition (Beirut; Ma'had al-Inmaa al-'Arabiyy, 1991) Arabic Text (Present Author's Translation) p. 122.

¹⁷⁶ Peter Mansfield, A History of the Middle East, (London; Viking Penguin, 1991) p. 302.

massacre of the "old dreams of the pan-Arabist movement." However, Shuraydi does not see these developments as an indication of the death of Arab nationalism. On the contrary he argues that these developments underscored the view that Arab nationalism in this period faced an urgent need of reform.¹⁷⁷

(iii) "The End of pan-Arabism" and the Reopening of the
Debate on Arab Nationalism

F. Ajami's article entitled 'the End of pan-Arabism' heralded a new era in the debate on Arab nationalism. Ajami proclaimed that Arab nationalism was "a myth nearing its end if it is not already a thing of the past." He saw the pan-Arabism retreat as having started with the 1967 defeat which "marked the Waterloo of pan-Arabism" and that the "October War was the event that would enable reason of state to challenge the then feeble but still venerated pretensions of pan-Arabism." Ajami concludes his analysis by issuing a death verdict to the ideology of Arab nationalism.¹⁷⁸

The article was a response to a one written by W. Khalidi in the previous issue of *Foreign Affairs*.¹⁷⁹ Ajami's article led to the renewal of the debate. L. Snyder supported the death thesis by concluding that pan-Arabism is a myth and that to speak

¹⁷⁷ M. A. Shuraydi, "Pan-Arabism", op. cit., pp. 111-113.

¹⁷⁸ F. Ajami, "the End of Pan-Arabism", in Tawfic Farah (ed), Pan-Arabism, op. cit., pp. 96-114. Other articles that proclaim the death of pan-Arabism include Abdul Monem al-Mashat, "Stress and Disintegration in the Arab World", in Tawfic Farah (ed) Pan-Arabism, op. cit., pp. 165-176. Najim Berzigan, "Islam and Arab Nationalism", Middle East Review, 11(Winter 1978/1979) pp. 38-44.

¹⁷⁹ Walid Khalidi, "Thinking the Unthinkable: A Sovereign Palestinian State", Foreign Affairs, 56(July 1978) pp. 695-713.

of "one Arab nation is a contradiction to the reality of conflicts and rivalism."¹⁸⁰ Bassam Tibi accepts Ajami's thesis with some qualification. He depicts Arab nationalism as a myth but maintains that this can be conceived only in "as much as it was oriented toward the utopia of a united Arab state."¹⁸¹ Some writers were light handed in their judgement on Arab nationalism. Carl Liedner argued that "Arab nationalism in a truncated form wanders like Pirandello's actors, in search of something, in this case a leader... yet the idea is not dead; it still possesses force and it is possible that it can be resurrected at some later time..."¹⁸²

However, the strongest response to Ajami's thesis came from Hasan Nafa who rejected the death prognosis. In Ajami's analysis Nafa noted the confusion between the idea and its implementation and maintained that Ajami confused ideology and its political movement.¹⁸³ Nafa affirmed that pan-Arabism is an idea or ideology and a political movement at the same time. The claim put forward by Ajami that *raison d'etat* was the basic and fundamental tenet of the Arab system was a misunderstanding of the Arab system which Nafa considers to be essentially a pan-Arab system.¹⁸⁴

E. Chalala saw the death thesis as very problematic. He

¹⁸⁰ L. Snyder, Macro-Nationalism, op. cit., p. 158.

¹⁸¹ Bassam Tibi, Arab Nationalism, op. cit., p. 25.

¹⁸² Carl Leiden, "Arab Nationalism Today", Middle East Review, vol. 11 no. 2, (Winter 1978/79) pp. 34-44.

¹⁸³ Hasan Nafa, "Arab Nationalism: A Response to Ajami's Thesis on the "End of Pan-Arabism", in Tawfic Farah(ed), Pan-Arabism, op. cit., pp. 133-151.

¹⁸⁴ Hasan Nafa, Interview with the Author, Cairo; 29.4.1995

questioned the content of the thesis by asking what specifically is dead according to Ajami? Is it the nationalist ideology with its goal of uniting the Arabs or is it the pragmatic definition of Arab nationalism which "may provide a consensus of common domination from which Arab policy makers are expected not to deviate?"¹⁸⁵ Chalala concludes his argument by saying that whatever the definition that Ajami may ascribe to, Arab nationalism proves to be wounded but not dead. This is because Arab nationalism contains cultural, linguistic, historical and religious components that defy the death thesis.¹⁸⁶

The underlying problem with the death prognosis is that it does not take into account that

the death of ideology, and pan-Arabism in particular, has been announced time and time again. Similar statements had been made during the 1948 Arab-Israeli war, after the 1961 break-up of the Egyptian-Syrian union, repeated after the 1967 war, after the death of Nasser, during Sadat's visit to Jerusalem and most recently, after Saddam Hussein's Kuwait fiasco.¹⁸⁷

Thomas Mayer supports this analysis in that statements about the death of pan-Arabism

are made in time of crisis or divisions in the Arab world and should not necessarily be taken as proof that pan-Arabism is dead. As history records, periods when statements announcing or predicting the end of pan-Arabism appeared, also witnessed an increase in pan-Arab activity.¹⁸⁸

M. Shuraydi takes the same stand by affirming that if the

¹⁸⁵ E. Chalala, "Arab Nationalism", op. cit., p.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid, pp.

¹⁸⁷ Diane Tueller Pritchett, "The Language of Arab Nationalism and Arab Foreign Policy: the Relations of Egypt, Libya and Syria, 1969-1981", Unpublished PhD. Dissertation, (Boston University, 1992) p. 12.

¹⁸⁸ Thomas Mayer, "The End of Pan-Arabism", Middle East Review, 16 (Summer 1984) pp. 31-36 cited in Diane Tueller Pritchett, "The Language of Arab Nationalism", op. cit., p. 12.

pan-Arab ideal is in need of further articulation it has not "become a hollow claim."¹⁸⁹ Shuraydi agrees with Halim Barakat that

the failure of those seeking political unity to achieve their goal so far has not been caused by the ideals they set for themselves, but by their inability to devise the necessary rational structures and strategies. (That is) the problem lies, not in the ideal itself, but in the gap or imbalance between this goal and actions designed to achieve unity.¹⁹⁰

Giacomo Luciani and Gassan Salame issued the same verdict in stating that "the ideal and the call for the Arab nation refuses to die."¹⁹¹ This argument found empirical support in a study about the attitudes of Arab public opinion towards Arab unity. The study carried out in ten Arab countries which represent the majority of the population of the Arab World made it clear that ideas of Arab nationalism, Arab nation, and Arab unity are very popular among the Arabs though with less romantic orientation.¹⁹²

The fact that Arab cooperation and coordination in all aspects is increasing is seen by J. Craig as a vital proof that Arab nationalism is not dead even though it tends to more "balance and maturity and moderation."¹⁹³ The event of the Iranian revolution of 1979 and its attempt to export the Islamic

¹⁸⁹ M. A. Shuraydi, "Pan-Arabism", op. cit., p. 112.

¹⁹⁰ Halim Barakat, The Arab World, op. cit., p. 4.

¹⁹¹ G. Luciani and G. Salame(eds), The Politics of Arab Integration, (London; Croom Helm, 1988) p. 1.

¹⁹² Sa'd Diyn Ibrahiym, "Qiyas Itijahaat al-Raiy al-'Aam al-'Arabiyy Nahuww al-Wahda: 'Ard lil Dirasa al-Maiydaniyya"(the Measurement of the Attitudes of Arab Public Opinion Towards Unity: A Presentation of the Empirical Study", in Waliyd Qaziya etal, al-Qawmiyya al-'Arabiyya, op. cit., pp. 191-195.

¹⁹³ Sir J. Craig, "Changes in Arab Nationalism", op. cit., p. 9. It is important to note that all Egyptian and Moroccan intellectuals interviewed by the author agree on their rejection of the death verdict.

revolution to the Arabs and the rapid growth of Islamic revivalism lent vitality and urgency to questions related to the nature of nationalism in the Arab world, Islamic or Arab nationalism or a combination of both. In addition, the sheer division between the haves and the havenots lent vitality to issues like equality, equity and freedom.¹⁹⁴

The debate was renewed about the relationship between Arab nationalism and state nationalism and regionalism.¹⁹⁵ The formation of a number of regional cooperation entities in the Arab World like the Gulf Cooperation Council and the Arab Maghrib Union opened the door for an active debate concerning issues like the Arab nation-state, the particularistic territorial state, the Arab nation, the legitimacy of the state system, and Arab unity or integration.¹⁹⁶ In the 1980s the debate on Arab nationalism attracted new comers and participants with a new wave of writings. Of particular importance is the contributions made by intellectuals and social scientists whose contributions significantly moved the idea of Arab nationalism and unity away from the ideological milieu and tried to reconstruct it in a new context and with a new content.¹⁹⁷ These debates will be the focus of the next chapters.

¹⁹⁴ Abdul -Monem Al-Mashat, "Stress and Disintegration", op. cit., pp. 5-6.

¹⁹⁵ The discussions of the issues related to ideas of unity and localism are presented in, 'Abd al-Ilah Belqaziyyz, Ishkaliyyat al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya: Khitab al-Raghba wa Khitab al-Mumkin (The Problematique of Arab Unity: The Discourse of the Wish and the Discourse of the Possible) First Edition(Casablanca; Afriqiyya al-Sharq, 1991) pp. 36-41.

¹⁹⁶ Muhammad Shiyya, Jadaliyat al-Tafattut, op. cit., p. 123.

¹⁹⁷ G. Luciani and G. Salame(eds), The Politics of Arab, op. cit., pp. 28-29.

Chapter Three

Arab Nationalism and the Idea of a United Arab Nation

3-1: Arab Nationalism: A Compendium of Ideological Premises

From the analysis of the intellectual history of Arab nationalist ideology presented in the previous chapter it is clear that Arab nationalism had originated during a historical process. That process was the interaction of three major factors: Ottoman centralism and the policies of Turkification; the encounter of the Arabs with Europe and the Arabs' experience of European colonialism which resulted in the fragmentation of the Arab World into a number of sovereign states. These factors led to the birth of Arab nationalism and the movement associated with it with its aim of uniting the Arabs in a single state. The centralisation and Turkification policies of the Young Turks had the result of exploding the tensions between the Arabs and the Turks and paving the way for the spread of Arab nationalist consciousness.

These factors had the effect of undermining the importance of the religious link that had long made the Arabs accept Turkish rule under the banner of the Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman Empire relied heavily on the Islamic concept of the Umma in building its legitimacy. The Arabs found themselves obliged to compromise

their national aspirations for independence and demanded respect of their Arab identity based on the distinctiveness of their culture and their language. Hence they called for a degree of autonomy within the existing structure of the Ottoman Empire (decentralisation).

However, two factors played a major role in transforming this shy demand into a political movement that sought an eventual breakaway from the Empire. The harsh suppression that Arab nationalists received coupled with the failure of the two parties to reach a compromise settlement pushed the Arab nationalist movement to demand the separation of the Arabs. European colonialism was the other vital factor in consolidating this movement. The issue of dealing with the 'sick man of Europe' was at the centre of European powers' policies. These policies exploited the forces within the Ottoman Empire, minorities and ethnic communities, to further weaken and eventually destroy the structure of the Ottoman Empire.

Therefore, European powers, particularly Britain and France, developed contacts with forces within the Arab provinces with aims of a nationalist nature. This was fairly evident in British encouragement, support, and finance of the Arab Revolt of 1916 and the French and Russian endorsement and encouragement of ethnic and religious minorities in the Fertile Crescent. The whole process led to the final breakaway of the Arabs from Ottoman rule. It had only to wait until the Turks abolished the Caliphate system in 1924. When the Turks adopted secularism in political and social organisation a cultural separation between the two took place.

The Arab World then became under the direct rule of European colonial powers. The fact that Arab nationalists felt a great discrepancy between the Europe they envisaged (as during Arab nahda) and the real European rule they now experienced was vital in consolidating Arab nationalism. Arab nationalism became a movement of liberation. The fragmentation of the Arabs, as planned and implemented according to the Sykes-Picot Agreement, and the Balfour Declaration were vital in leading the Arabist idea into a new path. The fragmentation of the Arab world made the Arabists seek the achievement of unity which was to become the corner stone of the nationalist doctrine.¹

Without repeating the history of Arab nationalism, the period between the end of the Second World War and the Arabs' defeat in the War with Israel in 1967 is the richest in the stages of Arab nationalism. It marked the growth of the Arab nationalist ideology. The significance attached to this period is an area of agreement among many scholars of Arab nationalism.² This period saw the coming to power of (esp. in Egypt and Syria) regimes that propagated Arab nationalism and took it as their official ideology. The period also witnessed the establishment of political movements and parties (e.g. the Ba'th Party and the Arab Nationalists Movement) that adhered to Arab nationalism and

¹ 'Abd Ilah Belqaziyyz, Ishkaliyyat al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya: Khitab al-Raqhba wa Khitab al-Mumkin (The Problematique of Arab Unity: the Discourse of the Wish and the Discourse of the Possible) First Edition (Casablanca; Afriqiyya al-Sharq, 1991) pp. 14-16.

² See for example, Saiyyd Yasiyn, Tahliyl Madmun al-Fikr al-Qawmiyy al-'Arabiyy: Dirasa Istitla'iyya (Arab Nationalist Thought: A Content Analysis) First Edition (Beirut; Markaz Dirasat al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya, 1980) pp. 160-162.

called for Arab unity.

More importantly, however, Arab nationalist thought produced its major texts which reflected its ideology in the same period. This period then showed Arab nationalism in its greatest moments of political power and intellectual and ideological fertility. As the previous chapter has shown, it is during the period up to 1967 that the major theoretical premises of contemporary Arab nationalist thought are to be found. These ideological premises are outlined below:-

(i) The Arab Nation

Arab nationalist thought conceives of the peoples living from Morocco on the Atlantic to the Yemen on the Indian Ocean as one nation. The Arab nation is conceived as being united by bonds of language, history and culture. Arabist thought is dominated by this concept of the Umma as the only logical content of the history of the Arabs. As the previous chapter would have shown, Arab nationalists may not agree on a definite historical point where this Umma was borne. However "there is always one constant element: the notion of an Arab nation."³

(a) The Concept of the Umma

As seen in the previous chapter Arab nationalist thought was echoing the German theory of nationalism with the supremacy it accords language as the reason for the idea of the nation. It is significant to note, as George Tarabiyshiy demonstrates, that

³ Sa'id Bensa'id, "al-Watan and al-Umma in Contemporary Arab Use", in Gassan Salame(ed), The Foundation of the Arab State, First Edition (London; Croom Helm, 1987) p. 166.

Arab nationalist thought elaborating on the German model makes "nation and language as one logical statement of identification to the extent of making them equals and identical."⁴ Although some would consider the Arabs as a nation in being the Arab Umma is conceived of as a living entity that has all the credentials that would qualify it for a nation's status.

As the Moroccan intellectual Sa'id Bensa'id observes, the concept of an Arab nation is the major contribution of Arabist thought. It is the theorising about the reality of this nation and its distinctive features that makes the bulk of the Ba'th ideology and the most prominent concept within the Arab nationalist ideology of Nasserism.⁵ Building a theory of Arab nationalism based on linguistic characteristics and on a conceived common history of the Arabs was the major concern of some prominent Arab nationalist theoreticians. Husry, as mentioned in the preceding chapter, affirms that "Language creates the spirit of the nation and history is its memory and feelings."⁶

However, some Arab nationalists, as M. 'Abid al-Jabiriy explains, tried to qualify this theory of Arab nationalism by

⁴ George Tarabiyshiy, al-Duwla al-Outriyya wa al-Nazariyya al-Qawmiyya (Particualristic State and Nationalist Theory) First Edition (Beirut; Dar al-Tali'a, 1982) p. 118.

⁵ Sa'id Bensa'id, al-Idyulujiyya wa al-Hadatha: Qiraat fiy al-Fikr al-'Arabiy al-Mu'asir (Ideology and Modernity: Readings in Contemporary Arab Thought) First Edition (Casablanca; al-Markaz al-Thaqafiy al-'Arabiy, 1987) Arabic Text (Present Author's Translation) pp. 107-109.

⁶ S. Husry, Araa wa Ahaadiyth fiy al-Wataniyya wa al-Qawmiyya (Reflections on Patriotism and Nationalism) (Beirut; Markaz Dirasat al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya, 1985) Arabic Text (Present Author's Translation) p. 206.

making an intellectual separation between what they saw as the "national existence" of the Arabs and the "nationalist theory." According to Jabiriy, this was an attempt at reconstituting the theory and reasoning of Arab nationalism. Instead of relying on language and history, this school maintained that the Arab national existence is based on language-history. This is utilised as a convincing power that could produce feelings and substitute for history with fantastic and passionate rhetoric.⁷ During the 1950s the slogans of the Ba'th party presented the Arabs as a nation that resembled a personified passionate cultural entity. All the problems of political fragmentation and the particularistic tendencies were considered temporary symptoms of an illness. All illnesses would be eradicated once unity was at hand.⁸

But this emphasis on the centrality of language and culture still obliged Arab nationalists to deal with an issue of no less centrality. This refers to the appropriate place of Islam in the making of this Arab nation of language-history. Arab nationalism reflected an ambiguous and complicated relationship with Islam. This could be attributed to the absence of a confrontation with religious institutions of the kind that took place in Europe. Even though some secular aspects were emphasised in countering the Ottoman Empire there was not a conflict between Islam and

⁷ M. 'Abid al-Jabiriy, al-Khitab al-'Arabiy al-Mu'asir: Dirasa Tahliylyyya Naqdiyya (Contemporary Arab Discourse: An Analytical Critical Study) Third Edition (Beirut; Markaz Dirasat al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya, 1988) Arabic Text (Present Author's Translation) pp. 101-103.

⁸ M. 'Abid Jabiriy, Interview with the Author, Casablanca; 2.4.1996

Arab nationalism. Arab nationalists did not call for a separation between Arabism and Islam. On the contrary Islam was seen in the Maghrib countries, for example, as being the content of Arabism. Arab nationalism has been attempting to reach some sort of a compromise between Islamic tendencies and loyalties amongst the majority of the Arabs and the Arabist tendencies and loyalties amongst the Arab Christians.⁹

In an attempt to spread loyalty to its doctrines among Muslims and Christians, Arab nationalism was hesitating between an adherence to Islam or an appraisal of secularism.¹⁰ These two forces generate "a sense of identification that cuts across boundaries and supersedes, on the ideological level, local considerations."¹¹ Nevertheless, Islam maintained its importance in Arab nationalism even though it came to refer to Islām not as a theology but as national Arab asset and cultural achievement.¹²

⁹ 'Abudlrahman Muniyf, "al-Qawmiyya, al-Hauwiyya, wa al-Thawra al-'Arabiyya" (Nationalism, Identity and the Arab Revolution) in, Isma'iyl Sabriy Abdullah etal, Dirasaat fiy al-Haraka al-Taqadumiyya al-'Arabiyya (Studies in Arab Progressive Movement) First Edition (Beirut; Markaz Dirasat al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya, 1987) Arabic Text (Present Author's Translation) p. 79.

¹⁰ Muhammad Shiyya, Jadaliyat al-Tafattut wa al-Wahda fiy al-Mashriq al-'Arabiyy (1970-1990) (The Dialectic of Unity and Fragmentation in the Arab East) First Edition (Beirut; Ma'had al-Innmaa al-'Arabiyy, 1991) p. 142.

¹¹ Iliya Harik, "The Origins of the Arab State System" in Gassan Salame(ed), The Foundation of the Arab, op. cit, p. 20.

¹² This view dominates the Ba'th ideology. See Iliyas Farah "al-Qawmiyya al-'Arabiyya wa al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya min Manzur al-Ba'th" (The Ba'thist View of Arab Nationalism and Arab Unity) in Waliyd Qaziya etal, al-Qawmiyya al-'Arabiyya fiy al-Fikr wa al-Mumarasa (Arab Nationalism: Thought and Practice) (Seminar Papers) First Edition (Beirut; Markaz Dirasat al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya, 1980) Arabic Text (Present Author's Translation) pp. 383-384.

This meant, in the 1950s and 1960s, the nationalisation of Islam and implied the continuance of the attempt at reaching a compromise between Islam and Arabism.

This hesitation characterised Arab nationalist thought up to the 1980s. Particularly important behind this stance were the resurgence of Islamic fundamentalist groups and the effects of the Iranian revolution on Arab politics.¹³ The rise in the power of the oil-rich Arab states and its attempts at gaining the leading position in the Arab region gave the religious movements an incentive using the support and finance they received from countries like Saudi Arabia. As George Corom explains, Saudi Arabia used Islamic movements, like the Muslim Brotherhood, to "impose a sweeping hegemony at the expenses of republican Arab countries, nationalism and the new socialism that practised hegemony over her [Saudi Arabia] between the 1950s and the 1970s."¹⁴ How Arab nationalist thought responded to this challenge and the ambiguity of the relationship with Islam will be the subject of the discussion later on.

(b) Particularistic Identities

As has been argued above Arab nationalism rests on the idea of a single Arab nation. This nation has a united national identity that was the melting pot of factors of language, culture

¹³ Halim Barakat, The Arab World: Society, Culture and State, First Edition (Berkeley; Los Angeles; London; University of California Press, 1993) pp. 138-139.

¹⁴ George Corom, Uwruuba wa al-Mashriq al-'Arabiyy Min al-Balqana ila al-Labnana: Tariykh Hadatha Ghyir Munjaza (Europe and the Arab East From Balkanisation to Lebanisation: A History of An Unaccomplished Modernity) First Edition (Beirut; Dar al-Tali'a, 1990) pp. 205-208.

and history. This doctrine rejects the existence of identities that are confined to a defined territory of a certain Arab state. However, after Arab states gained their independence the question of particularistic identities found its political expression. Some went as far as providing a reasoning for the existence of separate nations such as Lebanese, Egyptian or Tunisian nations. In Lebanon there was a call for a Lebanese nationalism that despite acknowledging the need for cooperation between Lebanon and the rest of the Arab world emphasises the distinctness of Lebanese nationalism.¹⁵

The same applies to the idea of Egyptian nationalism in the writings of some intellectuals who denied any importance to whatever came after the Pharaohnic civilisation such as Arabisation. The late Egyptian famous writer, Taha Husiyn (paradoxically enough known as the dean of Arab literature) in his early writings emphasised the link between Egypt and Europe and overlooked its Arabism. In Tunisia attempts were made at building a distinct Tunisian identity. Tunisia's ex-president Habiyyb Burqiyba insisted on the existence of a Tunisian personality that preserved itself even against the process of Arabisation.¹⁶

¹⁵ Halim Barakat, al-Mujtama' al-'Arabiyy al-Mu'asir: Bahth Istitla'iy Ijtima'iy (Contemporary Arab Society: An Exploratory Sociological Research) Second Edition (Beirut; Markaz Dirasat al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya, 1985) Arabic text (Present Author's Translation) p. 40.

¹⁶ Ibid, pp. 41-43. The debate on the Arabism of Egypt was very intense in the late seventies with intellectuals arguing for and against its Arabism. See a record of this debate in Sa'd Diyn Ibrahiym, Masr wa al-'Uruwba wa Thauwrat Yuwliyuww (Egypt, Arabism and the July Revolution) Second Edition (Cairo; Dar al-Mustaqbal al-'Arabiyy, 1983) Arabic Text (Present Author's Translation)

A major part of Arab nationalist discourse in the 1940s and the 1950s was assigned the task of refuting the basis of particularistic identities, especially with reference to Egypt and Lebanon. An example of this occupation with the question is that Husry wrote a whole book on the subject.¹⁷ Arab nationalist thought also rejected claims for the existence of regional identities, like the Greater Syrian nationalism advocated by the Syrian Nationalist Socialist Party.¹⁸ Arab nationalist thought was void of any attempt at understanding the issue of particularistic identities till the middle of the 1960s. The collapse of the union between Egypt and Syria (1961) and the 1967 defeat had the effect of pushing the Arab nationalist tide away from the centre of Arab politics. This brought about a change in the doctrinal position toward particularistic identities. However, many Arab nationalists still adhered to doctrinal orthodoxy and refused to accept the existence of any other national identity that would compete with or balance Arab nationalist Identity.

A number of factors highlighted the need for a more realistic view. Important among these were the developments that followed the 1967 defeat and the division of the Arab states between the haves and the havenots. The oil boom after 1973 and the failure of attempts of Arab unity were vital in pressing for an understanding of particularism. Many Arab writers argued for the importance of recognising this particularism. Though a devout

¹⁷ S. Husry, al-'Uruwba Biyna Du'atuha wa Mu'ariduha (Arabism: It's Proponents and Opponents) Husry Collected Works (Beirut; Markaz Dirasat al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya, 1985)

¹⁸ Halim Barakat, al-Mujtama' al-'Arabiyy, op. cit., p. 44.



pan-Arabist Constantine Zurayq admitted the fact that the Arabs must recognise their multiplicity. He accepts that particularism is a natural component of Arab life past and present. He argues that even a cause as good as Arab unity should not erode other identities. On the contrary, explains Zurayq, these identities should be given the chance to flourish and progress so that the multiplicity inherent in Arab society may give fruit and be enriched by particularisms.¹⁹

Some would see it the essence of the region's social and political order. Arab states were presented not only as "old societies but also old states."²⁰ Arab nationalist thought in an attempt to reach a compromise on Arab identity and particularistic identities employed the concept of a personality system as a device that would provide it with the solution. In an article entitled "al-Shakhsiyya al-'Arabiyya: al-Nasaq al-Raiyyis wa al-Ansaq al-Far'iyya" (Arab Personality: the Macro System and the Sub-systems), the Egyptian sociologist, Saiyyd Yasiyn identified an Arab personality based on history, language, and common cultural heritage. Particularistic or regional personalities are also seen a fact of Arab society. These are the expression of the differences in the social and economic evolution of Arab countries. Yasiyn saw no conflict between the two systems of identifications. The all-Arab personality is the macro system that encompasses the sub-systems without either of

¹⁹ Constantine Zurayq, Nahnuw wa al-Mustaqbal (We and the Future) (Beirut; Dar al-'Ilm lil Malaa'iyyin, 1980) Arabic Text (Present Author's Translation) pp. 221-223.

²⁰ Iliya Harik, "The Origins of the Arab", op. cit., p.21.

the two being closed to the other.²¹

A similar approach, though of a different conclusion, is that of the Tunisian sociologist Hisham Djait. He acknowledges the existence of an Arab-Islamic personality as the major source of identification in the Arab World. But he endorses the importance of the role of the particularistic territorial state in confirming particularistic identity. Djait confirms that the contemporary Arab world is living evidence of the process of consolidating the national phenomenon. But this national phenomenon is that of the particularistic territorial Arab states.²²

Although Djait is reflecting on the Tunisian experience, as he makes clear throughout the text, he can go as far as depicting the concept of an Arab nation as a mere wilful act of raping history. He thinks that an Arab nation is not existing and that reality proves only an Arab Islamic personality and the particularistic personalities. Djait calls upon Arab political thinkers to leave aside both personalities altogether, and to abandon the ideology that calls for Arab unity on the basis of having an Arab nation. He asks Arab thinkers to acknowledge the true national factor "associated with the state" and give proper

²¹ Saiyyd Yasiyn, "al-Shakhsiyya al-'Arabiyya: al-Nasaq al-Raiyyis wa al-Ansaq al-Far'iyya" (Arab Personality: Macro System and Sub-systems) Al-Mustaqbal Al-Arabi, vol.3 (September 1978) Arabic Text (Present Author's Translation) pp. 145-147.

²² Hisham Djait, al-Shakhsiyya al-'Arabiyya al-Islamiyya wa al-Masiyr al-'Arabi (Arab Islamic Personality and Arab Destiny) Second Edition, Translated into Arabic by al-Munjiy al-Saiyydiy, (Beirut; Dar al-Tali'a, 1990) Arabic Text (Present Author's Translation) pp. 70-75.

place to the issues of economy and politics.²³

These conflicting or overlapping positions are the content of the debate on the issue of particularistic identities. This dominated Arab political thought in general and Arab nationalist thought in particular. Arab nationalist thought had to find answers to the challenges this issue brought before it. Till the 1980s Arab nationalist thought did not reach a conclusion. How did Arab nationalist thought in the 1980s attempt to address this issue? This will be discussed in the next chapter.

(c) Minorities

According to the Egyptian sociologist, Sa'd Diyn Ibrahiym minorities (ethnic or religious) are a main feature of the Arab World. Ibrahiym estimates that 15% of the population of the area is composed of minority groups. These minorities include groups that speak Arabic but do not identify with Arab nationalist feelings (e.g. the Maronites in Lebanon), groups that do not speak Arabic but are identified as Arabs (e.g. in Somalia, the Sudan and North Africa) and groups that neither speak Arabic nor identify themselves with the Arabs (e.g. the Kurds, the Berber and the Sudanese tribes in the south).²⁴

To these may be added the non-Arab groups the oil boom has brought to the countries of the Gulf as immigrants from non-Arab countries. Studies refer to the fact that about 42% of the

²³ Ibid, pp. 49-51.

²⁴ Sa'd Diyn Ibrahiym, "Nahuww Dirasa Susiyulujiyya lil Wahda: al-Aqaliyyaat fiy al-'Alam al-'Arabiy" (Towards A Sociological Study of Unity: Minorities in the Arab Homeland) Qadaiyya 'Arabiyya (Arab Issues) Year 3, vol.3-6 (February-July 1976) Arabic Text (Present Author's Translation) pp. 5-24.

population of these countries are not Arabs.²⁵ Another feature of the Arab world is the division of the majority Muslims along the lines of Islamic sects of Suni Islam and Shi'a Islam. The religious multiplicity of the Arab East where a considerable part of the population are Christian Arabs adds to the importance of minorities in the Arab World.²⁶ How did Arab nationalist thought deal with the issue of minorities? How did it attempt to reconcile plurality and unity?

Since its inception Arab nationalism recognised the social fact of minorities while stressing its humanist nature. As chapter two has shown, Arab nationalism was, at some point, identified with Christian Arabs. They saw in the nationalist idea a way out of their minority position under the millet system of the Ottoman empire. However, Arab nationalist thought reflected very little on the issue. It dealt with minorities only in a manner that would avoid dealing with the problem as if there should not be a problem of this kind in the Arab world.²⁷ This view was justified either by reference to Islamic tolerance of minorities, or by insisting on the national and humanist nature of Arab nationalism and the attempt at providing the secular vision of this nationalism however ambiguous it was.²⁸

²⁵ Halim Barakat, al-Mujtama' al-'Arabiy, op. cit., pp. 48-49.

²⁶ Muhammad Shiyya, Jadaliyat al-Tafattut, op. cit., pp. 52-56.

²⁷ Ahmed al-Juba'iy, "Utruwhaat Auwaliyya Huwla Tajdiyð al-Fikr al-Qawmiy" (Preliminary Theses on the Renewal of Nationalist Thought) Al-Mustaqbal Al-Arabi, vol.163 (September 1992) Arabic Text (Present Author's Translation) p. 93.

²⁸ Saiyyd Yasiyn, Tahliyl Madmun, op. cit., pp. 145-146.

The attempt by Arab nationalist thought to play down the importance of minorities was not in accord with the facts of ethnic and religious plurality of the Arab World as depicted above. The ethnic minorities are individually relatively small in numbers to the extent that the Arab world may be seen as homogeneous. But the fact that some minorities tend to be concentrated in particular Arab countries and in certain geographical parts of some countries makes the issue more complicated than seemed to Arab nationalists.²⁹ It remains to be seen how Arab nationalist thought in the period of investigation responded to this issue. Was its answer to this challenge a distinctive contribution to Arab nationalist ideology? This will receive attention later in chapter four.

(ii) The Concept Of Arab Identity

As chapter two argued the assertion of Arabs' distinct identity is a central concept of Arab nationalist ideology. The essence of the idea of the Arab nation is, according to Arab nationalist thought, the existence throughout history of an Arab identity. This identity is the result of the interaction of the elements of shared characteristics among the Arabs. Arab nationalism makes this conceived identity the essential justification and the logic for Arab unity as the political

²⁹ Sa'd Diyn Ibrahiym, al-Mujtama' wa al-Duwla fiy al-Watan al-'Arabiy (Society and State in the Arab Homeland) First Edition (Beirut; Markaz Dirasat al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya, 1988) Arabic Text (Present Author's Translation) pp. 241-244. Ibrahiym provides an analysis of minorities and compiles tables on linguistic, religious (Islamic and other) minorities in the middle of the 1980s.

expression of the existence of the Arab nation.³⁰ It is mainly on the basis of Arabic and a united Arab culture that an Arab identity is defined.

(a) **The Primacy of Arabic: One Language-One Nation**

Although Arab nationalism stresses the primacy of Arabic in differentiating the Arabs as a nation, that was primarily a reflection of its effort at countering the policies of Turkification. But this emphasis on the primacy of Arabic became a corner stone of Arab nationalism as it went to develop ideologically. Arab nationalists like Husry relied heavily on the linguistic factor in designing the Arabist ideology. In fact Husry went to the extent of ignoring other factors like that of economics and geography in the making of Arab national identity. Husry considered Arabic to be the spirit of the nation. The same kind of argumentation is to be found in the contributions of all Arab nationalism theoreticians. They agree on the primacy and centrality of Arabic in the making of the Arab nation and Arab identity.³¹

When faced with the difficulties in achieving the goal of Arab unity Arab nationalists did not see the reason in the deficiency inherent in the concept of an Arab identity. They tended to ignore or underestimate the multiplicity of identities that characterise the Arab. Arab nationalist thought saw the

³⁰ 'Abd Ilah Belqaziyyz, Ishkaliyyat al-Wahda, op. cit., pp. 51-52.

³¹ A. al-Duri, "Huwla al-Tatwur al-Tariykhiy lil Umma al-'Arabiyya" (On The Historical Evolution of the Arab Nation), in Waliyd Qaziyyha etal, al-Qawmiyya al-'Arabiyya, op. cit., pp. 221-227.

failure to achieve unity not in the multitude of identities, such as Islamic identity, particularistic identities and ethnic identities, but rather in the lack of independence of the Arab countries. Later on after independence the causes were seen in the absence of political regimes that shared an adherence to Arab nationalism. When the 1950s and the 1960s witnessed the rising to political power of such regimes like that of Nasser in Egypt and the Ba'thist regimes in Syria and Iraq, Arab nationalist thought still stressed the absence of a pan-Arab party that would propagate and achieve Arab unity (despite the fact that such a party, the Ba'th, existed and gained political power in Syria and Iraq).³²

Arab unity still remained a remote possibility and Arab nationalist thought was still focusing on the concept of an Arab identity based on the linguistic factor. Obviously Arabic was a reference to classical written Arabic. But that would not accommodate the considerable gap between classical Arabic and the Arabic spoken with a variety of dialects in the Arab world.³³ Arab nationalists faced the challenge related to the gap between written and spoken Arabic and more seriously the call for some dialects to be upgraded to the level of a national language as the case with some proponents of Egyptian nationalism.³⁴ But their position would still emphasise the unity of Arabic as the

³² Nadiym Biytar, Huwduwd al-Hauwiyya al-Qawmiyya: Naqd 'Aam (The Limits of National Identity: A General Critique) First Edition (Beirut; Dar al-Wahda, 1982) Arabic Text (Present Author's Translation) pp. 303-304.

³³ Halim Barakat, al-Mujtama' al-'Arabiyy, op. cit., p. 36.

³⁴ Saiyyd Yasiyn, Tahliyl Madmun, op. cit., pp. 96-98.

first and foremost component of Arab identity. That characterised Arab nationalist thought till the 1980s. Given this position it is important to discover how the contributions of Arab nationalist thought in the 1980s would tackle this issue of language-identity-nation.

(b) Cultural Nationalism: A United Arab Culture

The concept of a united Arab culture is another basic component of Arab nationalism's theory of Arab identity. As a result of having a single language Arab nationalist thought sees the Arabs as sharing all aspects of a united culture that cuts across boundaries. The Arabs have a common shared way of life, value orientations, beliefs, norms and customs and traditions.³⁵ Arab nationalist ideology can only see conformity in all cultural aspects that give the Arabs their national distinctiveness.

As the intellectual history of Arab nationalism outlined in chapter two showed, Arab nationalism employed this concept of a united Arab culture from its early stages. It was a way of countering Turkish attempts to deny the Arabs their identity. This concept was employed to give the call for the separation from the Ottoman Empire a legitimising tool in opposition to Ottoman use of Islamic identity. Ever since the concept of a united Arab culture maintained its position at the back bone of Arab nationalism up to the period of investigation.³⁶

Husry, for example, saw the possibility of achieving Arab

³⁵ George Tarabiyshiy, al-Duwla al-Outriyya, op. cit., pp. 131-132.

³⁶ An example can be seen in, A. Duri, "Huwla al-Tatwur", op. cit., pp. 221-227.

political unity in maintaining and consolidating this cultural unity. He believed that: "the unification of culture is one of the most important factors of preparing for all other forms of unification. I say: give me the unity of culture and I guarantee you whatever else of forms of unity."³⁷ A. Duri also said that

Arab nationalism is a cultural nationalism that relies on the cultural components of the Arab nation. The [concept of] Arab nation had formed around language, Arabisation, cultural heritage, and the historical role of the Arabs.³⁸

The tendency to concentrate on the unity of Arab culture can be explained by the borrowing from the German romantic theory of nationalism, in particular the prominence it assigns to the cultural factors over the political factors of nationalism. The development of this Arab cultural nationalism was to reflect the response Arab nationalist thought had to provide in its attempt to explain the fragmentation of the Arab world after the Second World War. The ideology had to account for the creation of separate Arab states that did not correspond with the Arabist model of a united Arab state. The cultural tendency of Arab nationalism was an attempt at recreating the past which is interpreted as that of a glorious and united Arab nation.

But realities were a living verdict on the defeat of this perceived history. Arab nationalist thought retired from the political aspects of nationalism and concentrated its efforts on building a cultural brand of nationalism. Its aim, as with other cultural nationalism, became the "moral regeneration of the

³⁷ Cited in George Tarabiyshiy, al-Duwla al-Outriyya, op. cit., p. 64.

³⁸ A. Duri, Al-Budhuwrr al-Tarikhiyya lil Qawmiyya al-'Arabiyya, (Beirut; Dar al-'Ilm lil Malaaiyyin, 1960) pp. 87-91.

historic community, or, in other words, the re-creation of their distinctive national civilization."³⁹ The dominance of cultural Arab nationalism resulted in the negligence of Arab nationalist thought to elaborate theoretically on the issue of the state and to abhor political boundaries.⁴⁰ This seemed, in the language of George Tarabiyshiy, like "transforming necessity to virtue." If the Arab is not able to live in a united Arab state then all the Arab land becomes his homeland since the united Arab culture is able to transcend political boundaries.⁴¹

Arab nationalist thought draws on the idea of cultural nationalism in which

the spirit of community that obtains in a cultural nation is founded upon seemingly objective criteria such as common heritage and language, a distinct area of settlement, religion, customs, and history, and does not need to be mediated by a national state or other political form.⁴²

Arab nationalism shares the general tendency of cultural nationalism to assign a sacred value to the concept of nation. This seems to be a static concept of a united culture that defies change. Cultural Arab nationalism had entered into endless debates and controversies concerning Arab culture itself.

Of importance was the debate on the place of Islam in the

³⁹ John Hutchinson, "Cultural Nationalism and Moral Regeneration", in John Hutchinson and Anthony Smith(eds), Nationalism, First Edition (Oxford; New York; Oxford University Press, 1994) pp. 122-124.

⁴⁰ Examples of this tendency, or, deficiency, could be seen in the attempt at denying any relationship between state and nation as made by Arab nationalist thinkers like Husry. This will be dealt with some detail in 3-2 below.

⁴¹ George Tarabiyshiy, al-Duwla al-Outriyya, op. cit., p. 70.

⁴² Peter Alter, Nationalism, Translated by Stuart McKinnon-Evans, First Edition (London; Edward Arnold, 1989) p. 14.

making of this culture. Some Arab nationalists would see Islam as the main component of Arab culture seeing it as an Arab-Islamic culture. Others would see an Arab culture as dating back to the periods before the advent of Islam in the Arabian peninsula and beyond it.⁴³ However mainstream Arab nationalist thought until the 1980s would employ the traditional reliance on compromise that marks Arab thought in general since its modern encounter with Europe.⁴⁴ The conclusion it reaches is that Arab culture encompasses Islam which is seen as the historical accomplishment of the Arab nation.⁴⁵ This debate was not only the character of Arab nationalist thought but contemporary Arab thought in general.⁴⁶ It would be interesting to see how Arab nationalist thought in the 1980s debated the issue of a united Arab culture within the general framework of Arab thought's debate on Arab nationalism and unity.

(iii) Arab Unity

The goal of uniting the Arabs in one single state has been a driving force behind Arab nationalism. The issues of Arab

⁴³ For a brief discussion see Halim Barakat, The Arab World, op. cit., pp. 36-38.

⁴⁴ According to Muhammad Jabir Ansariy, Arab thought is an expression of intellectual attempts at reconciling Arab Islamic heritage and western values. See his, Tahuwlaat al-Fikr wa al-Siyyasa fiy al-Sharq al-'Arabiyy (1930-1970), First Edition (Kuwait; al-Majlis al-Wataniyy lil Thaqafa wa al-Fuwnuwn wa al-Adaab, 1980)

⁴⁵ Saiyyd Yasiyn, Tahliyl Madmun, op. cit., pp. 100-102.

⁴⁶ 'Ali Umliy, al-Islahiyya al-'Arabiyya wa al-Duwla al-Wataniyya (Arab Reformism and the National State) First Edition (Casablanca; al-Markaz al-Thaqafiy al-'Arabiyy, 1985) Arabic Text (Present Author's Translation) pp. 13-29.

unity, its reasoning, its benefits for the Arabs, and the handicaps it faces form the bulk of this ideology.⁴⁷ Arab unity is assigned the greatest value. Arab nationalist thought considers Arab unity as a necessity that ought to be achieved if the Arab nation is to preserve its national identity. There is a continuous effort at defining this concept and defending it. The late Egyptian president Nasser confirmed that:

the Arab nation no longer needs to prove the reality of unity amongst its peoples. Arab unity has left this stage behind to become the fact of Arab existence *par excellence*. Suffice that the Arab nation owns a unity of language that produces unity of thought and reason, that the Arab nation owns the unity of history that produces unity of conscience and sentiment, and enough that the Arab nation owns unity of hope that produces unity of future and destiny.⁴⁸

This emotional intellectual argumentation reflects the general outlook of Arab nationalist writings. The text quoted above combines the three main factors, language, culture, and history, that Arab nationalist ideology employs. It is a statement on the importance Arab nationalist thought attaches to these factors as the proof of Arab national status. How did Arab nationalist thought become occupied with the idea of Arab unity? How did it explain the discrepancy between the ideal and reality? This is the focus of the discussion below.

(a) Pan -Arabism: One Nation-One State

The history of Arab nationalism since after the Second World

⁴⁷ Saiyyd Yasiyn, Tahliyl Madmun, op. cit., pp. 54-60, pp. 89-95, pp. 133-143, pp. 175-186.

⁴⁸ Gamal 'Abdul Nasser, Falsafat al-Thauwra wa al-Miythaq wa Barnamaj Thalathiyn Maris (Philosophy of the Revolution, the National Charter and the Programme of 30th March) (Tripoli; Dar Maktabat al-Fikr, n. d.) Arabic Text (Present Author's Translation) p. 170.

War, and the many ill fated experiments at Arab political unity, could be summed up in the prevalence of a dream. The dream and quest for Arab unity and the challenge the reality of Arab politics represented are basic features of contemporary Arab history. As the chapter on the evolution of Arab nationalism showed, the idea of uniting the Arabs was the product of Arab nationalist thought of the early twentieth century. However the idea was then suffering from ambiguities concerning its geographical scope and extent. The unclear boundaries of the proposed Arab state were an expression of the nature of Arab nationalism at that historical juncture.

Arab nationalism suffered from ideological uncertainties as it was born during a process of breaking away from the Ottoman Empire. That was reflected in the hesitant position Arab nationalist thought took as far as issues of Islamic, particularistic, and regional loyalties were concerned. However important these developments were, they did not give the idea of Arab unity the pan-Arab character it later on developed. The idea was reflecting the critical juncture Arab nationalism was going through. The colonisation of the Arab world by the European powers and its expansion after the Second World War had enormous effects on the idea of unity. It was vital and instrumental in giving the idea its pan-Arab character.⁴⁹ The call for Arab unity was a defensive tool that Arab nationalists used in an attempt at eradicating the political fragmentation the area suffered at the hands of European colonial powers. Unity, which the Arabs

⁴⁹ 'Abd Ilah Belqaziyyz, Ishkaliyyat al-Wahda, op. cit., pp. 14-16.

enjoyed some degree of under the Ottoman Empire, was by now no longer present. Therefore the achievement of unity was seen as a counter-colonial goal.

Yasiyn's work provides enough evidence to support the argument presented here. His study demonstrates that before the First World War Arab nationalist thought expressed only a limited concern with the external factors as impeding Arab unity (only 15% of the samples analyzed). By contrast external factors (colonialism) were highlighted during the inter-war period (29% of the research sample) as the most obvious handicaps to Arab unity. European powers (essentially Britain) were blamed as being responsible for the political fragmentation of the Arabs.⁵⁰ The fact that the Arab East was experiencing political fragmentation more than were other parts of the Arab World confined the call for unity to its limited geographical scope. Arab nationalists called for the restoration of the Fertile Crescent's unity against colonial fragmentation. However, the call for Arab unity was to encompass all the Arab World. The struggle for independence, the Palestinian problem, and the establishment of Pan Arab political parties were essential for this development.⁵¹

Prominent among the pan-Arab political parties was the 'League for National [i.e. Arab] Action'. The League was established in 1933 by a group of Syrian and Lebanese intellectuals. Prominent among them was Z. al-Arsuziy who was its ideologue. The League disseminated literature emphasising the

⁵⁰ Saiyyd Yasiyn, Tahliyl Madmun, op. cit., pp. 44-54, pp. 92-93.

⁵¹ 'Abd Ilah Belqaziyz, Interview with the Author, Rabat; 4.4.1996

connection between independence and Arab unity.⁵² The Ba'th party owes its Arab nationalist ideology to the founders of the League of National Action. It is to the Ba'th that the Arab nationalist ideology in general and the idea of Arab unity in particular is to be credited. As has been demonstrated in chapter two, Arab nationalist ideology was to become from the 1950s onwards the intellectual domain of the Ba'th and Nasserism. It is in the Ba'thist and Nasserite ideologies that the idea of Arab unity was to develop in its Arab ideal.

The establishment of the League of the Arab States in 1945 was closely linked with the idea of Arab unity. Arab nationalist thought is characterised by debates on the nature of the League itself, the role British interests had in its establishment, and the gap between state-oriented factors and pan-Arab factors in its charter.⁵³ These debates conflict in their estimations on the relationship between the League and the idea of Arab unity.⁵⁴ These debates are not of concern here as they go beyond the scope of this research. However, the League of the Arab States played an important role as an institutional framework for the Arab system of states. The League succeeded in implementing many pan-

⁵² 'Abd Ilah Belqaziyyz, Ishkaliyyat al-Wahda, op. cit., pp. 19-20.

⁵³ See, for example, the collection of papers presented in a seminar on the Arab League published in 'Ali Muhafadah etal, Jami'at al-Duwal al-'Arabiyya: al-Waqi' wa al-Tumuuh (The League of Arab States: Reality and Hope) (Seminar Papers) First Edition (Beirut; Markaz Dirasat al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya, 1989) Arabic Text (Author's Translation)

⁵⁴ Ali E. Hillal Dessouki, "Miythaaq al-Jami'a al-'Arabiyya biyna al-Qutriyya wa al-Qawmiyya" (The Charter of the Arab League Between Particularism and Nationalism), in 'Ali Muhafadah etal, Jami'at al-Duwal al-'Arabiyya, op. cit., pp. 77-95.

Arab projects and remained the only viable framework for the idea of Arab unity.⁵⁵ Arab nationalists occupied as they were with the concept of an Arab nation, saw the achievement of the pan-Arab state as the political embodiment of national identity.

(b) Pan-Arab State or Particularistic Territorial State

One clear characteristic of Arab political writings in general and Arab nationalist thought in particular is the limited space state occupies in its inquiry. Sa'd Diyn Ibrahiym sees this as the case with Arab political thought until the abolishment of the Caliphate system in 1924. After that he identifies an interest with the state but only in repeating the traditional Islamic concept of state as authority, echoing western literature on state, and some attempts at compromising these two traditions.⁵⁶ Only with some exceptions, Arab studies about state are very limited.⁵⁷ This phenomenon can be explained, partially at least, by the animosity many Arab nationalists have towards the Arab state system. This is particularly obvious in the works of Arab nationalists in the Arab East. They felt that the states of the region were a part of the colonial settlements after the First World War and as an imperial device to blow up the idea of

⁵⁵ Jamiyl Mattar, "al-Tajarub al-Wahdawiyya al-Wadifiyya: al-Jami'a al-'Arabiyya" (Functional Unification Experiments: the Arab League), in Waliyd Qaziya et al, al-Qawmiyya al-'Arabiyya, op. cit., pp. 485-495.

⁵⁶ Sa'd Diyn Ibrahiym, al-Mujtama' wa al-Duwla, op. cit., pp. 85-101.

⁵⁷ Charles Butterworth, al-Duwla wa al-Sulta fiy al-Fikr al-Siyyasiy al-'Arabi (State and Authority in Arab Political Thought) Translated to Arabic by M. A. Shuman, First Edition (London; Dar al-Saqi, 1990) Arabic Text (Present Author's Translation) pp. 5-6.

a united Arab state.⁵⁸

The view in the Arab West, Maghrib, is considerably different. Writers in the Maghrib view positively the states of their region. They credit these states with national legitimacy that they acquired during the struggle for independence.⁵⁹ They do not share with writers of the Arab east their animosity towards their states and their writings remained a minority.⁶⁰ Contributions of writers from the Maghrib, however, have increased in margin and importance since the mid 1970s. These contributions will be given appropriate consideration in 3-2 below.

In the Arab east where the mainstream Arab nationalist thought originated this hostile attitude towards the state resulted in what may be seen as an intellectual or epistemological poverty of Arab nationalist thought as far as the state is concerned.⁶¹ The insistence of Arab nationalist thought to deny Arab states any legitimacy is a basic feature of it.⁶²

⁵⁸ Elbaki Hermassi, al-Duwla wa al-Mujtama' fiy al-Maghrib al-'Arabiyy (Society and State in the Arab Maghrib) First Edition (Beirut; Markaz Dirasat al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya, 1987) Arabic Text (Present Author's Translation) p. 38.

⁵⁹ This is the view shared by all Moroccan intellectuals interviewed by the author of this research.

⁶⁰ Elbaki Hermassi, "State Building and Regime Performance in the Greater Maghreb", in Gassan Salame (ed), The Foundation of the Arab, op. cit., pp. 75-77.

⁶¹ M. 'Abid Jabiriy interview with the author; Kamal Abdullatif, Interview with the author (Rabat; 8.4.1996).

⁶² Mas'ud Daher, "al-Qawmiyy wa al-Qutriyy fiy al-Fikr al-'Arabiyy 'ala Mashaarif al-Tis'iyyaat" (the Particularistic and the National in Arab Thought at the Door Step of the 1990s) Al-Wahda, (Unity) vol.75 (December 1990) Arabic Text (Present Author's Translation) p. 16.

Pan-Arabism is then the desire to establish a united Arab state that would do away with all these states. Arab nationalism considers this hoped-for pan-Arab state as the only legitimate form of political organisation. The true and natural state is "the national state whose authority is coterminous with the nation."⁶³

Another aspect of Arab nationalist thought is the conceptual ambivalence in the use of terminology that describes the Arab states, (in Arabic: al-duwla al-qutriyya). Sovereign Arab states are labelled by Arab nationalists by using terms like: territorial state, domestic state, and regional state. These references are common in Arab nationalist writings since the end of the Second World War.⁶⁴ This ambivalence is particularly evident in coining a term to define this phenomenon and the pointless quibble about terms. The quibble is evidence of the centrality of the pan-Arab state in Arab nationalism. It also shows the effect of borrowing the concept of the nation-state on developing an Arab theory of nationalism.⁶⁵

⁶³ Iliya Harik, "the Origins of the Arab", op. cit., p. 20.

⁶⁴ Examples are numerous: see George Tarabiyshiy, al-Duwla al-Outriyya, op. cit., in which the term territorial is used throughout. Bassam Tibi, "Redefining the Arab and Arabism in the Aftermath of the Gulf Crisis", in Dan Tschirgi(ed), The Arab World Today, (Boulder and London; Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1994) p. 136.

⁶⁵ In order to avoid this it is proposed here to use the term "Particularistic Territorial State" in reference to Arab sovereign states. This term is coined because it contains three essentially bound characteristics of these states: first, it meets the need to acknowledge that each Arab sovereign entity is a state; second, the adjective: particularistic identifies them as insisting on certain characteristics in contrast to the idea of pan-Arab state and the word territorial refers to the fact they practice jurisdiction over a particular territory in contrast to the territorial boundaries of the Arab homeland that

If Arab nationalism has no tolerance for the particularistic territorial state, then what is the form of this proposed pan-Arab state? The question is justified on the grounds that as being the ideal of Arab nationalism, the pan-Arab state must have a clear political form of organisation and a plan to achieve it. The question about the organisation of this hoped-for state also finds justification in the fact of Arab political realities. The gap between hope and reality has remained unbridgeable since the struggle to achieve independence. In the words of Hisham Sharabi, "today's sovereign and independent Arab states are the living refutation of the goal of Arab nationalism and unity."⁶⁶ The gap between dream and reality calls for an examination into the design of the pan-Arab state.

The contribution of Kawakibiy in calling for an Arab caliphate was a landmark in the development of Arab nationalism. Kawakibiy called for an Arab state and for the Arab independence from the yolk of the Turks. He envisaged an Arab state defined in federalist terms. The Arab Congress in Paris, 1913, however, marked a retreat from complete Arab independence and called for the political decentralisation of the Ottoman Empire. Tarabiyshiy saw in this what he described as a selective compromising interpretation of nationalism. Tarabiyshiy considers the call for granting the Arabs limited rights within the Ottoman Empire an

Arab nationalism employs.

⁶⁶ Hisham Sharabi, "Unity, Disunity, and the Fragmentation in the Arab World", in Edward Said and Fuad Suleiman(eds), The Arabs Today: Alternatives for Tomorrow, First Edition (Ohio; Forum Association Inc., 1973) p. 137.

attempt to substitute cultural identity for nationalism.⁶⁷

The call for a united Arab state remained unclear before Husry made his contribution. Husry was determined in separating Islamic unity from Arab unity. He made every effort to theorise the idea of uniting the Arabs from the Atlantic to the Gulf. He saw in the call for a pan-Arab state an organic relationship between nation and state. He thought that such a relationship imposes the need for the realisation of a united Arab-state.⁶⁸ The bulk of Arab nationalist thought is echoing Husry's kind of argumentation.⁶⁹ As to what form this pan-Arab state should take, Arab nationalist thought insisted before 1945 on the idea of a united federal Arab state. This was clear in the writings of Arab nationalists who attributed all the good to this form of political organisation.

However, Arab nationalist thought was void of any detailed and defined strategy and stopped short of defining what it meant. This was reflected in the many proposed unities between Arab states in the 1940s. Among these were projects to unite Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Syria, and Jordan which was proposed in 1937; to unite Syria, Jordan, and Palestine in a greater Syria in 1941; and the Fertile Crescent project of uniting Syria, Jordan, Lebanon and Palestine. The establishment of the League of the Arab States in 1945 and the failure of the unification projects to materialise led to a debate on the issue of the constitutional

⁶⁷ George Tarabiyshiy, al-Duwla al-Qutriyya, op. cit., p. 62.

⁶⁸ Saiyyd Yasiyn, Tahliyl Madmun, op. cit., p. 104, p. 77.

⁶⁹ Sa'id Bensa'id, "Al-Watan and Al-Umma", op. cit., pp. 164-166.

framework of Arab unity. The debate concerned the preference to either the unionist (indimajiyya) or the federalist options for the Arab nation-state. The debate was on whether to opt for the first or the second. The first, unionist, option was seen as compatible with the dream of a united Arab state. But the collapse of the Egyptian-Syrian unity (1958-1961) delivered a blow to this idea.

The federalist option, however, was a point of agreement among Arab nationalists.⁷⁰ The establishment of the League of the Arab States was seen by many Arab nationalists as a development hindering the prospects for Arab unity. Arab nationalist thought saw the League as a confederation of Arab states that would lend legitimacy to the particularistic territorial states. At best the League was seen as a project that would only express cooperation at face value. 'Aflaq, for instance, saw the idea of confederation as beneficial only to colonialism and "a mistaken and harmful conception of unity legitimising and consolidating fragmentation and developing and widening the factors of difference between the Arab countries."⁷¹ This shows the effects of the theoretical rejection of the particularistic territorial states. It expresses an ideology that "negates the existing Arab nation-states."⁷²

However, the short lived Egyptian-Syrian unity obliged Arab nationalist thought to consider the shortcomings of its approach

⁷⁰ Saiyyd Yasiyn, Tahliyl Madmun, op. cit., pp. 103-104, pp. 134-135.

⁷¹ Cited in, Saiyyd Yasiyn, Tahliyl Madmun, op. cit., p. 135.

⁷² Bassam Tibi, "Redefining the Arab", op. cit., p. 136.

to unity. Arab nationalist thought after 1961 had to recognise the need for an evolutionary step-by-step approach to Arab unity.⁷³ The net result of this was that Arab nationalists kept the belief that the federalist model was the best option but with an obvious tendency to recognise realities. The difficulties inherent in the call for federation reflected the weight of the realities of Arab politics and the strengthening of the identity of particularistic territorial states.⁷⁴

However there remained some Arab nationalists who still labelled these states as alien creations. States were seen as a phenomenon made in Europe and in collision with "grass-roots political culture (based on a 'pan' concept."⁷⁵ The same applies to the issue of uniting a number of Arab countries within certain geographical areas of the Arab World. Arab nationalists are divided on this issue. Some Arab writers would see the establishment of such politically united geographical regions, or sub-regions, as a step towards the end goal of Arab unity. Some would reject it as impediments to Arab unity.⁷⁶

These debates are focal issues of Arab nationalist thought. Evaluating the contributions and the ideological premises of Arab nationalist thought before the 1980s is vital in determining its nature. The rest of this chapter will, therefore, turn its attention at providing a critique of traditional, classical Arab

⁷³ 'Abd Ilah Belqaziyyz, Interview with the author.

⁷⁴ Saiyyd Yasiyn, Tahliyl Madmun, op. cit., p. 165, p. 179.

⁷⁵ Bahgat Korany "Alien and Besieged Yet Here to Stay: the Contradiction of the Arab Territorial State", in Gassan Salame(ed), The Foundation of the Arab, op. cit., p. 48.

⁷⁶ Saiyyd Yasiyn, Tahliyl Madmun, op. cit., p. 140.

nationalist thought. The critique provided in 3-2 below will serve as a background to the issues that will be raised in chapter four and as a methodological tool to be applied in analysing Arab nationalist thought in the 1980s.

3-2: Traditional Arab Nationalist Thought: A Critique

After the 1967 defeat in the war with Israel, Arab thought witnessed the growth of a new trend that strongly criticised all aspects of Arab life. This critical trend blamed the Arab way of life and Arab thought for all woes of Arab politics and held it responsible for the defeat. Particular emphasis was put on the deficiencies in Arab nationalist thought. The critics saw Arab thought in general and nationalist thought in particular as essentially not living up to the realities of Arab society. The critics concentrated their attack on Arab nationalist thought as presented in the works of its main theoreticians. Arab nationalist thought up to 1967 was seen by the critics of the 1970s and the 1980s as suffering from great deficiencies, theoretical loopholes, and epistemological and ideological problems.

The critics whilst emphasising these characteristics of Arab nationalist thought were seeking the restructuring of this thought. They attempted to rid Arab nationalist thought of its deficiencies in order to respond to the crisis of Arab politics. However most of their arguments did not provide coherent alternatives as disagreements remained evident. Although much of the criticism presented here dates to the 1980s, all of it is concerned with Arab nationalist thought up to 1967. The

contributions discussed below are basically of criticism and not of solutions to the problems they identified as characterising Arab nationalist thought up to 1967. The issues which formed the content of these criticisms were to become the subject of the new contributions of the 1980s. What is presented here are the issues that were the focus of the critical trend in the 1970s and the 1980s.

Although the 1967 defeat seemed to have put the Nasserite and other Arab nationalist regimes and their brand of Arab nationalism on trial, many Arab intellectuals did not look into the issue in that way. Rather the critics saw the problem as lying in Arab thought and Arab way of life and society. The Moroccan scholar 'Abdullah Laroui, in a book that appeared first in French in 1967 and was translated into Arabic after the 1967 defeat, criticised the realities of Arab life and politics and ideology. Laroui put forward new questions that dealt with issues of historical depth and sought to transcend appearances. Laroui's study was an indictment of Arab ideology and culture which he considered needed to rid itself of many aspects of its content in order to live up to the challenges of modernity.⁷⁷

The call for modernity was the essence of the contribution of Zurayq. He has been occupied with issues related to rationalism and modernity as early as 1939 when he published his

⁷⁷ 'Abdullah Laroui, al-Idyulujiyya al-'Arabiyya al-Mu'asira (Contemporary Arab Ideology) Third Edition, Translated into Arabic by M. 'Itaniy (Beirut; Dar al-Haqiqa, 1979) Arabic Text (Present Author's Translation). See also, Adyyib Nassuwr, al-Naksa wa al-Khata (The Setback and the Misconception) First Edition (Beirut; Dar al-Kaatib al-'Arabiyy, 1969) Arabic Text (Present Author's Translation) pp. 31-40.

book, al-Wa'iy al-Qawmiy.⁷⁸ Zurayq complains that the Arabs still lack the modern requirements of a modern future. Unless a certain degree of progress, cohesion and rationality is achieved Arab nationalism would not be able to realise its goals.⁷⁹ Zurayq believes that all what Arabs need is a rational revolution and rationalism that they ought to borrow from the European model. Rationalism is the only relevant tool by which the Arabs may realise how backward they are and therefore liable to self-criticism.⁸⁰ Zurayq's call is driven by his sincere desire that the Arabs may lead themselves into a new life. He envisages this new life as that based on confronting

whatever may obstruct its way of the chains of both past and present or dreams of the future that are solely based upon wishful thinking or imagination. These are unable to find the path of conscious rational or true science.⁸¹

The wave of criticism was gathering momentum with the participation of intellectuals of different ideological orientations. A group of intellectuals called for a breakaway with all Arab past, heritage and tradition. They saw the maladies of the Arabs as taking root in the way they approached issues of

⁷⁸ Constantine Zurayq, al-Wa'iy al-Qawmiy (Nationalist Conscious) (Beirut; Dar al-Makshuwf, 1939) pp. 8-9.

⁷⁹ Constantine Zurayq, Matalib al-Mustaqbal al-'Arabiyy: Humuwm wa Tasauwlaat (The Requirements of Arab Future: Distresses and Inquiries) First Edition (Beirut; Dar al-'Ilm lil Malaa'iyyin, 1983) p. 7.

⁸⁰ Constantine Zurayq, "Fiy Ma'rakat al-Hazara" (in The Battle of Civilisation), in Ahmed Hasan al-Zaiyyat et al, Qiraat fiy al-Fikr al-Qawmiy al-'Arabiyy: al-Kitab al-Thalith: al-Qawmiyya al-'Arabiyya wa al-Islam wa al-Insaniyya, First Edition (Beirut; Markaz Dirasat al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya, 1994) pp. 298-303.

⁸¹ Constantine Zurayq, "Muwqifuna min Tariykhuna" (the View Towards Our History), in Ahmed Hasan Al-Zaiyyat et al, Qiraat fiy al-Fikr al-Qawmiy al-'Arabiyy op. cit., p. 85.

modern life. The Arabs, according to these intellectuals, were not capable of adjusting to the modern age because they were still attached to their past glories and their traditions. The net result was that the present day Arab was living in the atomic age but with a mentality of the middle ages. This kind of criticism first appeared in a magazine, Mawaqif (Standpoints), which a group of intellectuals led by the Syrian poet and intellectual 'Ali Ahmed Sa'iyd, whose pen name was Adonis, launched in Beirut in 1968. Adonis and his colleagues made an attack on virtually every thing Arab. Nothing would escape their attack: Islam, Arabic language, the record of radical Arab regimes and the Arab in his individual capacity.

The clear answer to the Arab dilemma which they propagated was very strong and controversial as well as touching upon the very core of Arab culture. The Arabs "must confront (our) heritage, (our) tradition; (we) must slay the past (if we want) to liberate the present."⁸² Described by F. Ajami as "one of the most impressive and controversial pieces in Arabic political writing in recent times" a book written by the Syrian thinker Sadiq al-'Azm (al-Naqd al Dhatiy Ba'd al-Haziyma, Self-Criticism after Defeat), expressed the ideas and thoughts of these critics.⁸³ The manner in which the book dealt with Arab issues was described by M. Kerr as "the most scathing of all indictment of Arab society and culture."⁸⁴

⁸² F. Ajami, The Arab Predicament: Arab Thought and Practice Since 1967 (London; Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 32-35.

⁸³ Ibid, p. 37.

⁸⁴ Malcolm Kerr, The Arab Cold War: Gamal Abd Al-Nasser and His Rivals (1958-1970), Third Edition (New York; Oxford

'Azm sought to find the real causes of the military defeat not in strategy but in the state of Arab society. He found Arab society full of political and social practices incompatible with the modern age. Religion and particularly Islam was seen by 'Azm as hindering any prospect of progress and as responsible for the fatalism that made it possible for the Arab to escape individual responsibility. Depicting Arab conceptions of politics as illogical, 'Azm turns his attention to radical Arab regimes and their brand of politics and nationalism. 'Azm heavily criticised and indicted them for making popular myths about politics and revolution. He saw them as lacking any sense of revolution or progress and only producing rhetoric which served no goal of the Arabs.⁸⁵

'Azm showed that all these problems were in fact connected to the Arab view of themselves and their failure to abandon their past. 'Azm had no doubts that all aspects of Arab life must be abandoned. But what was his alternative if all aspects of Arab life, heritage, religion and culture were to be overthrown? 'Azm's answer springs from a Marxist approach that has a very strong contempt for tradition. He considers that only the total destruction of tradition would lead to the creation of a brighter future. These two processes are inseparable: if the first task is not accomplished then the achievement of the future is entirely impossible and any attempt to ignore this would end in futility.

The same kind of argumentation was repeated by 'Azm in a

University Press, 1971) p. 135.

⁸⁵ F. Ajami, The Arab Predicament, op. cit., pp. 38-44.

book entitled, 'Naqd al-Fikr al-Diniy (A Criticism of Religious Thought). In this book he rejected any form of religious thought as it epitomised metaphysical thought and mysticism. Religion is metaphysics that "justified the *de facto* social, economic and political situations and has always been the greatest ever fortified castle that stood in the way of those who make efforts at revolutionary change." 'Azm rejected heritage because it considered "all the fundamental facts and knowledge that relate to human life as being revealed once and for all at a particular moment in history ... therefore, the believers are always looking to the back and past."⁸⁶

The same line of thought was also followed by Adonis who, by utilising his abilities as a poet, looked into some aspects of the Arab literary heritage. Adonis's views are best expressed in a book entitled, 'al-Thabit wa al-Mutahawwil: Bahth fiy al-Ibbda' wa al-Ittiba' 'Ind al-'Arab' (the Permanent and the Changing: A Study of Arab Conformity and Creativity, 3 vols.). Adonis saw the ills of the Arabs as the result of the confrontation and struggle between the culture of the past with its insistence on conformity and the culture of change. He presented a critical study of Arab thought in politics, political movements, and all cultural products of Islam.

Adonis concluded that all these aspects provide evidence to portray Arab culture as a culture of conformity and tradition. Arab culture expresses nostalgia with the past, metaphysics, separation between discourse and content and a contradiction with

⁸⁶ Sadiq 'Azm, Naqd al-Fikr al-Diniy (Criticism of Religious Thought) Beirut; Dar al-Tali'a, 1969) Arabic Text (Present Author's Translation) pp. 22-23.

modernity. This kind of culture is the real cause behind the Arab being incompetent and "the personality of the Arab as the case with his culture is bound by the past."⁸⁷ Adonis concentrated his effort on the struggle between the values of the past and the values of future change. He called for the rejection of heritage and called for secularism.⁸⁸

This trend is to a certain degree ignored in Western literature about the Arab World. Issa J. Boullata writes of the lack of Western attention to Arab intellectuals who are "grappling with the idea of modernity, with the Arab desire for societal change to bring about social justice."⁸⁹ Studies failed to notice the struggle between the culture of conformity and the new radical trend as represented by intellectuals and writers like Adonis, 'Azm, and Laroui. This is particularly clear in the case of the small number of studies that deal with how Arabs perceive themselves and what they think about their contemporary life.

This trend has been very important in the development of critical thinking in Arab culture and intellectual life. It is as yet early to say that this trend has won the battle against its enemy. But it is evident from the size and number of contributions that pour into its stream and from the

⁸⁷ 'Ali Ahmed Sa'iyd (Adonis), al-Thabit wa al-Mutahawwil: Bahth fiy al-Ibbda' wa al-Ittiba' 'Ind al-'Arab (The Permanent and the Changing: A Study of Arab Conformity and Creativity), 3 vols., (Beirut; Dar al-'Uwda, 1974) Arabic Text (Present Author's Translation) vol.1., p. 31.

⁸⁸ Ibid, p. 24.

⁸⁹ Issa J. Boullata, Trends and Issues in Contemporary Arab Thought, First Edition (New York; State University of New York Press, 1990) p. ix.

participation of a new generation of intellectuals and social scientists that the case for a new thinking is winning over new recruits and gathering new momentum. As far as Arab nationalist thought is concerned, and in light of the contribution which will be presented below, it is evident that the radical trend has borne some fruit. This is true, at least, as far as the dialectic between the old and the new paradigms of Arab nationalist thought is concerned. This dialectic will be the subject of analysis later on in this research.⁹⁰

(i) A Nostalgia with the Past

Arab nationalist thought outlined in the previous chapter and in this one, is greatly attached to the past history of the Arabs. Arab nationalist thought reads into Arab history a fine and glorious past wherein the Arabs were a united nation with a united political entity. The disunity and fragmentation of this Arab nation is seen as the result of conspiracies and a manifestation of the acts of a foreign will. This nostalgia with a projected past has been a focus for participants in the criticising trend. They consider such claims run counter to historical facts and of being a major handicap to an understanding of the political realities of the Arabs today.

The concept of an Arab nation only disunited against its will is seen as wishful thinking. The Tunisian writer Hisham Bugammrah depicts Arab nationalist thought as "defining itself, in most instances, by referring to history and heritage." This

⁹⁰ See the discussion in chapter five and chapter six of this research.

nostalgia with the past renders Arab nationalist thought out of touch with the critical issues of Arab society and reduces it to a mere attempt to

concentrate on literatures that are backward, rhetorical and glorifying since it does not found itself on the genuine actual heritage of the masses, that live reality, but on things that are supposed and said to represent Arab glory.⁹¹

Driven by this nostalgia with the past Arab nationalist thought opted for a concept that defined the nation as an entity or as "structure that had been accomplished and completed in the past." The Arab nation suffered betrayal at the hands of circumstances and was "let down by Gods because it went astray and consequently run over by decay which, however, hit its superficial form leaving intact its core which if remembered, or if souls are reminded of it, would resurrect itself."⁹²

This definition may find its source in the strong desire by Arab nationalists to provide the Arabist movement with arguments it could utilise against the Turks and European colonialism. This can be seen as providing Arab nationalism with a concept of a liberating function by mobilising the masses. However Arab nationalism still expressed

a wilful projection that substitutes ego for object, desire for reality, and ignoring facts and objectivity ... it is a utopian and romantic project that thinks of the aim only from a position of dream not a position of reality, needs, and capabilities.⁹³

⁹¹ Hisham Bugammrah, intervention in the round-table discussion "Naqd al-Fikr al-Qawmiy" (Criticism of Arab Nationalist Thought) Al-Wahda, vol.7, (April 1985) p. 74.

⁹² Ahmed al-Juba'iy, "Utruwhaat Auwaliyya", op. cit., p. 90.

⁹³ 'Abd Ilah Belqaziyyz, Ishkaliyyat al-Wahda. op. cit., p. 55.

This emphasis on the umma and Arab identity as historically accomplished reality confined Arab nationalist thought to history and heritage and the attempt to retrieve them. But this attempt neglected "the political and social dimensions and the present historical nature of the issue." Therefore it received a great blow at the hands of reality. However, as Belqaziyyz argues, this conceptualisation of identity and nation is not only based on a reading into a past but also produces its own historicism. It argues for an "historic reality that is located in a certain time and place. But this time is unhistorical." It is not open to historical probability or bound by a formation process that applies to the national phenomenon. This indicates that Arab nationalist thought attempted to make the past equal the present in a way that "history is stopped or frozen to be substituted by an absolute time."⁹⁴

M. 'Abid Jabiriy attributes this attachment to a projected glorious past to the nature of Arab thought in general and its nationalist discourse in particular. He sees the problem latent in the structure of Arab nationalist discourse. Jabiriy points to the romanticism of Arab nationalist thought when it "practices politics not as a discourse of actual reality but as a discourse searching for another reality." Jabiriy diagnoses the major problem in ignoring the actual reality of the Arabs and "not calling for its change or reform through analysing it but by ignoring it to provide an alternative either in the 'reality' of

⁹⁴ 'Abd al-Ilah Belqaziyyz, al-Qawmiyya wa al-'Ilmaniyya: al-Idyulujiyya wa al-Tariykh (Nationalism and Secularism: Ideology and History) First Edition (Rabat; Dar al-Kalaam, 1989) Arabic Text (Present Author's Translation) p. 10, pp. 16-17.

an Arab Islamic glorious past or in the 'reality' present that is European."⁹⁵

Jabiriy considers that the insistence on Arab political unity could be explained by this attachment to the past. Political unity is seen by Arab nationalists as

part of the heritage, part of the content of Arab thought in itself. It is a possibility that 'materialised' in the past, and was the principle of progress in the past and an indication of it. Therefore, it is a fundamental of progress and a prerequisite for it.

Jabiriy thinks that this kind of theorising gives ideology the prominent position;

the cultural, or let us say the ideological, encompasses the political and shapes it to make it part of the intellectual reality the Arabs live in and considers it a precondition for the realisation of another material reality (economic or social).

The issue, concludes Jabiriy, relates to "the way the Arabs read their history, this is part of their culture, and in this history which they read a single state lies the cause."⁹⁶

The effects of this strong attachment with the projected past and the reading into the history of an eternal nation had been enormous on the development of Arab nationalist theory. "The task of Arab nationalism's theory became the proving of this continuity and this eternity." The result is that Arab nationalist philosophy has no apprehension of "particularism, differences, divisions, and contradictions, and puts it remote from conscience. The consequence is obstruction of the need for

⁹⁵ M. 'Abid Jabiriy, al-Khitab al-'Arabiyy, op. cit., p. 59.

⁹⁶ M. 'Abid Jabiriy, Ishkaliyyaat al-Fikr al-'Arabiyy al-Mu'asir (The Problematique of Contemporary Arab Thought), (Beirut; Markaz Dirasat al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya, 1989) Arabic Text (Present Author's Translation) p. 79.

a search for appropriate solutions."⁹⁷

Arab nationalist thought in its occupation with the Arab past made great and endless efforts at explaining this history. An abundance of historical material was presented in order to found the ideal of Arab unity on a historical experience read through a nationalist projection. However, what critics point to is that this reading into history is a kind of selective history. It is a vision that attempts to justify the ideal on the basis of selective evidence that does not fit the scientific requirements of historical research.

This is clear in that Arab nationalist thought did not assign proper importance to the developments of Arab national existence. Among these is the lack of understanding of the changes that affected the concept of the Arabs as a people and a community. It is obvious that the Arabs' situation after the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire only relatively resembles their situation when they built their state under the banner of Islam. Arab nationalist thought is selective in providing historical material to prove Arab nationalism even though the ethnic composition of the contemporary Arabs is different from the Arabs of the earlier Islamic age. They are today composed of Arabised populations more than they are original Arabs especially that modern Arab states have caused a great shock to Arab identity which is suffering from a crisis.⁹⁸

⁹⁷ Burhan Ghalliyun, al-Mihna al-'Arabiyya: al-Duwla Did al-Umma (The Arab Dilemma: State Against Nation) First Edition (Beirut; Markaz Dirasat al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya, 1993) Arabic Text (Present Author's Translation) p. 192.

⁹⁸ Ibid, pp. 192-194. Ghalliyun argues that Arab nationalist thought is selective in its reading of Arab history to justify

The new thinking refutes a major premise of Arab nationalist thought. The fact that the Arabs had lived in a situation of political unity of their own only in a very remote historical period is a very powerful argument in the case against claims of historical Arab unity. This ideological reading of history was a naïve conceptualisation of nationalist formation. As such it deprived Arab nationalist movements of "understanding the deep changes and circumstances that impinged upon the Arab national existence without which understanding this existence or changing it would not be possible."⁹⁹

Ghalliyun cites historical evidence to support this argument and concludes that even if this historical unity and concept of the umma is accepted as a historical fact, which it is not, the present day realities belie this conceptualisation. He blames this concept of the umma as being responsible for all the deficiencies in Arab nationalist theory. He charges Arab nationalist thought with providing a "false concept of the nation." This conceived Arab nation "only exists in the mind, and completely rules out the real community which is fragmented and being infiltrated by every day divisions and new traumas."¹⁰⁰

Traditional Arab nationalist thought is faced with questions

the idea of an Arab nation. He argues that history could also be presented to argue for the opposite. This view is shared by many Arab writers who claim that Arab history is marked by the lack of any Arab single united state. Furthermore Ghalliyun argues that the present Arab reality attest to the need to abandon this selective history and understand the changes that Arab national existence has gone through which differentiate it from the Arab society of the Islamic state.

⁹⁹ Ibid, p. 192

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, pp. 202-203.

that relate to the realities of Arab politics and society. Any attempt at understanding these issues must acknowledge the fact that the Arabs of present time are a very complicated societal phenomenon. The Arabs of the day are "composed of a number of peoples and communities which are relatively distinct on their own."¹⁰¹ The existence of a multiplicity of minorities makes the picture look more complicated than traditional Arab nationalist thought would think. This is the main argument of the new criticising trend. This new trend does not, however, reject the idea of an Arab nation nor does it refuse to accept the need for Arab unity. Instead it calls for an understanding of "the nature of the sociological and hence the political base upon which Arab unity movements attempted to establish projects of political unity, with failure up to now; the reason being the fragmentary societal structure."¹⁰²

(ii) A Discourse of Probabilities

Traditional Arab nationalist thought therefore based its ideal of Arab unity on a projection of Arab history in which it saw a politically united Arab nation. It does so on the assumption of "a nationalist intellectual paradigm that is based upon concepts of identity and common history and language."¹⁰³ The

¹⁰¹ Ibid, p. 93.

¹⁰² Muhammad Jabir al-Ansariy, Takuwiyun al-'Arab al-Siyasiy wa Maghza al-Duwla al-Outriyya: Madkhal ila I'adat Fahm al-Waqi' al-'Arabiyy (Arab Political Formation and the Implication of the Particularistic State) First Edition (Beirut; Markaz Dirasat al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya, 1994) Arabic Text (Present Author's Translation) p. 182.

¹⁰³ Kamal 'Abdullatiyf, Mafahiyyum Multabisa fiy al-Fikr al-'Arabiyy al-Mu'asir (Confused Concepts in Contemporary Arab

result is that "it builds its vision without proper attention to living history with its contradictions and reality."¹⁰⁴ This pre-occupation with providing the call for unity with legitimacy is not concerned with the tasks of how to realise this ideal. It is a form of wishful thinking. By insisting on achieving political unity Arab nationalist thought "attached itself to a whole host of waitings like waiting for a revolutionary unionist state, waiting for the revolution of the masses, and waiting for the failure of the particularistic state."¹⁰⁵

M. 'Abid Jabiriy thinks that by this inclination towards probabilities Arab nationalist thought is suffering from a great epistemological problem. He sees it a discourse of "intellectual probabilities i.e. a discourse of 'meta' Arab present reality."¹⁰⁶ Analysing Arab thought epistemologically, Jabiriy sees the correlation Arab nationalist thought advocates between the realisation of unity, socialism and freedom as evidence of this problem. It shows an inability to build a nationalist theory that would explain reality and not merely confine itself to the sphere of probabilities. Jabiriy argues that the conditional correlation between unity, socialism and freedom is not susceptible to a single coherent theoretical structure. The relationship that Arab nationalist thought "builds between these probabilities, or between it and reality, remains only confined to the sphere of

Thought) First Edition (Beirut; Dar al-Tal'ia, 1992) Arabic Text (Present Author's Translation) p. 92.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, p. 92.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, p. 93.

¹⁰⁶ M. 'Abid Jabiriy, al-Khitab al-'Arabiyy, op. cit., p. 132.

the world of probabilities no matter how it is camouflaged in the frame of logical necessity."¹⁰⁷

Jabiriy explains this "meta-reality" of the "discourse of probabilities" in that it occupies itself with the possible or probable situation in the Arab world after the current undesired situation of disunity ends. Therefore, the idea of, for example, making the realisation of socialism conditional upon the realisation of unity, or *vice versa* is seen by Jabiriy as "making a probable a condition for yet another probable and the relation, therefore, would necessarily be that of a probable relationship."¹⁰⁸ Jabiriy goes into some detail in explaining this problem and he cites some evidence from recent Arab history in the 1950s and the 1960s. He recalls that even though Arab nationalist discourse practised an ideological hegemony in the Arab region for a considerable time it was not able to build a nationalist theory and remained imprisoned in an impossible equation. That equation proved to be a deadlock as neither unity, nor socialism nor freedom were achieved.

Moreover, Jabiriy concludes that these concepts of unity, socialism and freedom were attributed a multiple and contradictory combination of values. The final result was to let Arab nationalist thought and its discourse fall in unsolvable contradictions and become a discourse of antimonies.¹⁰⁹ But Arab nationalist thought is an ideology that seeks the achievement of possible outcomes and, therefore, is naturally inclined towards

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, p. 132.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, p. 134.

¹⁰⁹ M. 'Abid Jabiriy, Interview with the author.

designing a view that builds its conclusions on the premises of a defined introduction. Arab nationalist thought is not acting in a way that is not customary to all ideologies and this explains its emphasis on what people like Jabiriy see as probabilities.

However Jabiriy, even though acknowledging that a revolutionary ideology such as Arab nationalism is aimed at achieving the possible or the probable, argues that it is the nature of this probable which matters. Jabiriy considers the probable to be fit for ideological aims only if it "is permitted by objective circumstances"; and what makes a certain probability acceptable is that it "responds more to reality and follows its direction."¹¹⁰ Apart from relying on probabilities Arab nationalist thought is seen by Jabiriy to be lacking an understanding of reality. Therefore it has not been capable of transforming reality in order to materialise its aims which still are probable.¹¹¹

Jabiriy does not detail enough evidence to support his argument as he confines his study not to "ideological classification ... not ideological analysis of ideas and trends but the epistemological criticism of discourse." Jabiriy's analysis is affected by the use of a set of concepts that belong to different philosophies or methodologies. He makes use of Marxist, Freudian, Althusserian and Foucaultian concepts. He uses these conceptual tools in contexts that he himself admits are not

¹¹⁰ M. 'Abid Jabiriy, al-Khitab al-'Arabiyy, op. cit. p. 134.

¹¹¹ M. 'Abid Jabiriy, interview with the author.

bound by their original referential frameworks.¹¹² Jabiriy's contribution in the critical trend of Arab nationalist thought is more interested in epistemology than in ideology. It is concerned not with "what a text says but how it says it."¹¹³ Accordingly his kind of argument is not treated here as a contribution to Arab nationalist thought *per se*. The significance of Jabiriy's effort can be seen as an attempt at understanding the mind that produced Arab nationalist thought. Therefore it is representative of the new trend in Arab thought where the emphasis is said to be on reason and not on tradition.

(iii) The Metaphysics of Identity

As has been argued in the previous chapter and earlier on in this chapter Arab nationalism strongly emphasises the concept of Arab identity and Arab culture. Arab identity is seen by traditional Arab nationalist thought as the centre of gravity for the Arabs. It is perceived to have kept itself intact throughout the ages and stood up against all foreign attempts to liquidate it. In keeping with the German theory of romantic nationalism Arab nationalists attached the highest value to identity and this was clear in the automatic link they saw between identity and the realisation of political unity.

The Lebanese sociologist Nadiym Biytar in a book which he entirely devoted to the question of identity saw in the attachment to the concept of identity a major weakness of Arab nationalist ideology. He criticises the concept of identity as

¹¹² M. 'Aid Jabiriy, al-Khitab al-'Arabiyy, op. cit., p. 12.

¹¹³ Ibid, p. 10.

being of a metaphysical nature. For Biytar identity is a concept based on a scientific fallacy especially when it envisages political unity entrenched in a nation that enjoys one language.¹¹⁴ Biytar argues that history proves that most languages used now were not the creation of the nations or peoples who speak it. These languages were used by different peoples and their use extended from one people to another. Furthermore Biytar explains that some peoples abandoned their languages and used languages other than their own. The conclusion Biytar draws is that to establish a link between language and a stable national identity is a scientific fallacy. To argue this fallacy would mean that language which is the 'spirit of one people' could be abandoned and replaced by another language. To argue that a people willingly abandons its spirit would be incompatible with this kind of conceptualisation.¹¹⁵

Languages, explains Biytar, develop and to say that every nation has its own psychology would amount to employing rigid and static essences and represent only rhetorical and not scientific explanations. Biytar considers the nationalist hypothesis that language is the spirit and soul of the nation a metaphysical concept that lacks evidence. Citing the example of the Italian language Biytar concludes that Italian language did not create Italian nationalist history. Rather he sees that Italian language was the creation and the result of the Italian national history. The conclusion from his analysis is that languages do not create or make history or nationalism but history and nationalism made

¹¹⁴ Nadiym Biytar, Huwduwd al-Hauwiyya, op. cit., 298.

¹¹⁵ Ibid, pp. 298-300.

national languages.¹¹⁶

Many Arab nationalist concepts and ideas that Biytar indicts as responsible for the destruction of the attempts at unity in the Arab world receive his sentence because they are linked to the concept of identity. He gives examples of these as in the method Arab nationalist thought considered for the achievement of unity, and putting political liberation as a pre-condition for political unity. He particularly believes that the absence of unity is the work of this concept. This concept is a metaphysical one, setting out conditions as though it were carrying a unitary content, and imposing itself in a unitary leap towards the united pan-Arab state.¹¹⁷

This metaphysical tendency is condemned by Biytar as it renders Arab nationalist thought "not to know how to approach and study realities and social and historical phenomena."¹¹⁸ This leads it into "inventing a *a priori* general theories which always remain infertile" because it "substitute a general ideal for the real subject which ought to be explained." This metaphysics, argues Biytar, is "unable to produce an efficient analysis since, for it, realities and phenomena are nonexistent." Biytar explains this insufficiency by assuming that metaphysics "instead of realities and phenomena and what they reveal, or what regularities or conformities dominate them, imposes the external ideal into these realities as though realities had no objective

¹¹⁶ Ibid, pp. 300-301.

¹¹⁷ Ibid, pp. 303-304.

¹¹⁸ Nadiym Biytar, "al-Fikr al-Wahdawiyy: Naqd 'Aam" (Unitary Thought: A General Critique) Al-Wahda, vol.7 (1985) Arabic Text (Present Author's Translation) pp. 9-14.

existence." Therefore, Arab nationalist thought is seen by Biytar as metaphysical philosophy that ignores history and negates the effects it has on identity.¹¹⁹

Biytar is adamant in his indictment of Arab nationalist thought which he denounces for "making perceptions that do not represent reality, and working from these perceptions, instead of opting for reality." The hallmark of this abstract thought is explicitly "divorced from objective reality and its rules ... its producer can say what he wants, what he perceives or what haunts him from the realm of fallacies; all he needs is rhetoric, fine phrases, and an intense fertile imagination." This metaphysics is, according to Biytar, liable to be blamed for the failure of Arab nationalist movement in achieving nationalist goals. Arab nationalist ideology ignored reality and misapprehended the phenomena that could not be "explained in the framework of the metaphysical or messianic model."¹²⁰

Biytar is not concerned, however, with the issue of multiple identities in the Arab World. His main concern is to prove that the concept of identity itself is an inappropriate conceptual device to support or argue for Arab unity. Although Biytar is outspoken in his condemnation of the inanity he sees in the concept of identity, he is interested in the issue of Arab unity, using an approach that relies on what he calls "the unitary thesis." Biytar argues that Arab nationalist thought has failed to take into account the existence of "unitary rules" which can be applied to any national unity scheme. Unless these rules,

¹¹⁹ Ibid, pp. 9-14.

¹²⁰ Ibid, pp. 9-14.

which Biytar imputes to different historical national unification as in Italy, Germany and the United States, were utilised Arab nationalism remains metaphysical.¹²¹

This approach, to which Biytar devotes most of his writings, introduces a new understanding of Arab nationalism and unity which detaches it from the concepts common in Arab nationalist thought. Biytar deducts a theory from experiments of unification in Europe and the United States. He argues that Arab nationalist thought needs this theory of the "unitary thesis" in order to realise the goal of Arab unity. This may be seen as an attempt by Biytar to distance Arab nationalism from the ethics of unity and to link it to what may be seen as the sociology of unity as he sees evident in the unitary rules.¹²²

The contribution of Biytar is distinct in its concentration on political factors such as the role of the base-territory and the charismatic leadership and outside threats to a nation in achieving its unity. He does not assign any importance to language or culture in national formation or unification. When he does so he only see language and culture as secondary factors that can only be activated if the fundamental factors are at work.¹²³ However important and distinct his contributions are they are not of concern now but will be dealt with in some detail later on.

¹²¹ Nadiym Biytar, Min al-Tajzia ila al-Wahda: al-Qawaniyn al-Asasiyya li Tajarub al-Tariykh al-Wahdawiyya (Fundamental Rules of Historical Unifications) Fifth Edition (Beirut; Markaz Dirasat al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya, 1986) pp. 13-14.

¹²² Ibid, pp. 13-14.

¹²³ Ibid, pp. 13-14.

If Biytar looks into this in generalised terms, the Lebanese writer Iliyas Murqus attempts to provide a specific critique that takes the issue of the centrality of Arabic language as an example of the metaphysical nature of Arab nationalist thought. He considers the emphasis on Arabic as assigning it a "magical role in uniting the Arabs, politically, economically, and socially."¹²⁴ The imputation of a sacred place to Arabic implies that the Arab nation is "a kind of an essence and therefore is distancing it from the idea of formation or evolution."¹²⁵ Murqus's analysis is echoing the idea held by many Arab Marxists, that the Arabs have not yet reached the nationhood status and that they are a nation-in-becoming or in formation. Murqus and other Arab Marxists still adhere to this concept. Murqus criticises Arab nationalist thought for "confining the idea of formation to Arabisation, i.e. the idea of spreading Arabic and its adoption by the peoples who lived in the historical Arab homeland."¹²⁶

The same applies to the tendency to connect culture to language whereas Murqus considers "culture not connected to language alone but also to production, relation of man to nature and the human spirit which is not exhausted in language and differences."¹²⁷ It is clear that Murqus is adopting a Marxist analysis that considers language and culture as outcomes of the

¹²⁴ Iliyas Murqus, "Intervention in the round-table discussion" *Naqd al-Fikr al-Qawmiy* "Al-Wahda", vol.7 (April 1985) p. 64.

¹²⁵ Ibid, p. 64.

¹²⁶ Ibid, p. 64.

¹²⁷ Ibid, p. 64.

mode of production. Therefore he sees the adoption of language and culture as the nuclei of the Arab nation as inadmissible unless this nation had common economical interests. Otherwise, it remains a superficial and metaphysical idea or at best a nation-in-becoming. This argument is widely criticised in Arab nationalist circles. Arab nationalists emphasise the importance and historical role of Arabisation and that culture and language are inseparable. The Egyptian writer Muhammad A. Khalafallah criticises Murqus for considering language "a mere tool of communication" while language is "a cultural container of the nation or people; a device that distinguishes between a nation or people and the other."¹²⁸ Khalafallah sees no point in arguing the contrary since "the boundaries of the nation-state are linguistic."¹²⁹

The Egyptian writer Saffuwat Hatim confirms what other critics saw in Arab nationalist thought of a metaphysical nature. He locates this nature in "theses of unity, fate, nation, and essence."¹³⁰ This metaphysical content is no clearer, according to Hatim, than in the hypothesis and supposition that the Arab nation "will resurrect itself to recapture its past essence and to live anew."¹³¹ This hypothesis led Arab nationalists to assume that "unity is beyond doubt and definite." Hatim argues that

¹²⁸ Muhammad A. Khalafallah, Intervention in the round-table discussion "Naqd al-Fikr al-Qawmiy" Al-Wahda, vol.7 (April 1985) p. 67.

¹²⁹ Ibid, p. 67.

¹³⁰ Saffuwat Hatim, Intervention in the round-table discussion "Naqd al-Fikr al-Qawmiy" Al-Wahda, vol.7 (April 1985) p. 72.

¹³¹ Ibid, p. 72.

unity is not bound by fate or wishful thinking but is "a wilful act not decided by determinism or dictated by destiny." As such unity is within the human sphere where there is no "superior force that undertakes this human action." The kind of thought that relies on any force but human will is metaphysical "offering no direct and wilful method of realising Arab unity."¹³²

To the Moroccan intellectual, Belqaziyyz, Arab nationalist thought is not only imprisoned with this concept of identity. Despite the existence of linguistic, cultural, and religious components which kept the feeling of unity alive among the Arabs the problem is that "the talk about identity is, in fact, a talk about the absolute, about factors which are beyond time."¹³³ These factors are not sufficient as a base for Arab unity or as structural components of it. The call for Arab unity can not be based on the cultural-linguistic factors of identity. Arab unity, argues Belqaziyyz is essentially justified by the present and future interests of the Arabs. Therefore Arab identity is not and should not be seen as a readily available fact "that materialised in the past history but as a project that its realisation is sought in the present and in the future."¹³⁴

Belqaziyyz rejects the idea that identity is not more than "what had descended from the past of cultural factors and other factors of civilization. Any talk about it would be no more than

¹³² Ibid, p. 72.

¹³³ 'Abd Ilah Belqaziyyz, Ishkaliyyat al-Wahda, op. cit., p. 52.

¹³⁴ Ibid, p. 52.

a fall into the trap of a symmetry concept."¹³⁵ This trap leads to ignoring the dynamics of history and its change as "times would be seen similar and identical in a continuous single and identical movement." Belqaziyz argues that the admission of the identity concept into Arab nationalist ideology is an admission of a "confiscation of the historicity of history." Belqaziyz concludes that this aggravates the problem of past orientation in Arab nationalism. The establishment of the idea of unity on an identity and its reproduction as a static system is "establishing the overall Arabist project on past factors." In this projection identity is a "past fact that, unaffected by change, extends into present." This renders the Arabist political design "a past-based construct."¹³⁶

This argument is similar to that presented by Biytar who considers the Arabist concept of national identity destructive of any prospect of "new Arab future for it cancels any radical renewal of the past or the present."¹³⁷ Biytar argues that to establish Arab identity on the basis of a pre-supposed existence of its components would be a violation of scientific rationality. Biytar criticises the articulation of Arab identity and the presentation of an Arab "spirit" rooted in the pre-Islamic period of Arab history, bedouin Arab history, and/or in a peculiar genius of Arabic as an inadmissible inanity. This articulation of these rational constituents, argues Biytar, is to make them "incapable of expressing a modern civilisational rationale or of

¹³⁵ Ibid, p. 52.

¹³⁶ Ibid, pp. 52-53.

¹³⁷ Nadiym Biytar, Huwduwd al-Hauwiyya, op. cit., p. 307.

materialisation in any creative and productive form at the rational level."¹³⁸

Biytar affirms that the new Arab future is beyond the reach of the Arabs unless these metaphysical and irrational fundamentals of Arab reason are done away with and replaced with a new set of "rational and practical fundamentals." These are the conditions Biytar considers vital in liberating Arab nationalist thought and enabling it to play its role in achieving Arab unity. Biytar concludes his indictment of Arab nationalist thought by a call for its reconstruction. He confirms that

If national existence does not impose or determine the state of unity, since there is no such national entity that imposes this state, since unity of national conscience dates back to a single historical background, since fragmentation means the absence of this background and its replacement by a multiplicity of backgrounds that increase in contradiction as time passes by, therefore its continuance means its consolidation as an entry into terminal particularism (fragmentation) which then can not be eradicated by any unitary action.¹³⁹

The Syrian sociologist Burhan Ghalliyun examines the effects of this metaphysical nature on Arab nationalism. He argues that it led to the confiscation of the

modern concept of nation ... and to the Arabs using the historical concept of the nation (umma), which means the foundation of a single political community united by creed and religion, and transporting it into contemporary political Arabic language to denote the process of forming a nation in the modern sense.¹⁴⁰

Another aspect of this metaphysical tendency is related to the treatment of particularistic identities which Arab nationalist thought degrade in favour of an inclusive Arab identity. In

¹³⁸ Ibid, pp. 307-308.

¹³⁹ Ibid, pp. 307-310.

¹⁴⁰ Burhan Ghalliyun, al-Mihna al-'Arabiyya, op. cit., p. 83.

arguing for the aim of achieving the pan-Arab state Arab nationalists rely on the idea that every political identity should meet cultural identity. The emphasis on this is due to the effects the European experience had on Arab nationalism. Ghalliyun thinks that the application of this concept falls short of making clear the distinction between state and nation. He calls for the review of "the European nationalist theory which the Arabs borrowed and from which the Arab nationalist movement derived its concepts, particularly as far as the relationship between nationalism and unity is concerned."¹⁴¹

Ghalliyun does not acknowledge the link this theory establishes between cultural identity and political identity. He sees this as involving mixing up the nation as "a people with distinct language and culture, which is one level of nation, and the nation as a state that encompasses this people."¹⁴² The call for the abandonment of the concept of building up political identity on the basis of cultural identity is very essential since Arab identity is facing the evolution of "particularistic identities that run counter to, contradict, and compete with Arab identity." These particularistic identities are establishing their legitimacy and struggling from a similar ground.¹⁴³

From the debates presented above it is clear that the emphasis assigned to the concept of identity is seen by the

¹⁴¹ Burhan Ghalliyun, "Ma al-'Amal" (What is to Be Done), in A. Duri et al al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya: Tajarubuha wa Tauwagu'atuha (Arab Unity: Its Experiments and Expectations) (Seminar Papers) First Edition (Beirut; Markaz Dirasat al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya, 1989) Arabic Text (Present Author's Translation) p. 1083.

¹⁴² Burhan Ghalliyun, al-Mihna al-'Arabiyya, op. cit., p. 95.

¹⁴³ Burhan Ghalliyun, "Ma al-'Amal", op. cit., p. 1084.

critics as metaphysical and belied by history and contemporary Arab politics. Arab nationalist thought is then deemed to fail to lead the Arab cultural identity to the acquisition of its political identity in a pan-Arab state. The consideration of the umma as a constant, static, and eternal community that transcends history prepared the soil for the dominance of this metaphysical tendency. The metaphysical conceptualisation of identity is a naïve and simplified theorisation of national formation that obscures the historical developments of the Arabs.

To conclude, it is clear that the concept of an Arab identity has received very strong criticism. The writings of many Arab intellectuals refer to it as a metaphysical concept. This concept was also seen as hindering any proper understanding of the historical process and the realities of Arab society. The clear message was that unless it is willing to abandon its metaphysics Arab nationalist thought would remain "a hodgepodge ideology attempting to gather all contradictions and inconsistencies in a compromise."¹⁴⁴

(iv) An Imprisonment With the Pan-State: State and Society

As argued earlier in this chapter, Arab nationalist thought lacks the existence of any considerable discussion of the issue of state as a social and political phenomenon and form of organisation. Contributions to these critical issues have been both minor and recent. However, the issue of state or having a

¹⁴⁴ Turkiy al-Hammad, "Takuwiyun al-Duwla al-Qutriyya: al-Manzuwr al-Wahdawiyy" (The Formation of Particularist State: The Unitary Prospective), in A. Duri et al al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya, op. cit., p. 130.

state that includes all Arabs under its banner is a very central if under argued theme in Arab nationalist thought. In Arab nationalist thought there is what may be seen as an obsession with the pan-Arab state despite the fact that any articulations on the form or organisation of this hoped-for state are absent in the contributions presented so far. This deep occupation with the pan-state is explained by Khaiyr al-Diyn Hasiyb as the result of the experience the Arab nationalist movement and the political regimes attached to it had while being in government. The emphasis on a stronger role for the state led to the "increase of the ability of particularistic Arab authority [state] and the weakness of civil society."¹⁴⁵

Arab nationalist thought is occupied with the problem of a fragmented Arab homeland. It saw political fragmentation of the Arabs as the real handicap of Arab society. This dictated a kind of thought that concentrated on the state and ignored society and the relationship between them. Hence the lack of any articulation about democracy or the rights of minorities. This imprisonment within the pan-state concept is manifest in that the bulk of Arab nationalist thought is about Arab unity and the need to achieve it. This hope and the sense of urgency about it dominates Arab nationalism which seeks its realisation even if at the expense of democracy and equality.¹⁴⁶

The dichotomies of particularistic territorial state\pan-

¹⁴⁵ Khaiyr al-Diyn Hasiyb, "Ta'liyyq" (A Commentary) in Tariq al-Bishriy et al, al-Hiwar al-Qawmiy al-Diniy: Auwraq wa Munagashaat (The Nationalist Religious Dialogue) (Seminar Papers) First Edition (Beirut; Markaz Dirasat al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya, 1989) Arabic Text (Present Author's Translation) p. 278.

¹⁴⁶ 'Abd Ilah Belqaziyy, Interview with the Author.

Arab state, and unity\fragmentation are at the centre of contributions to the issue of Arab past and future political organisation. This meant the neglect of

socio-cultural aspects of Arab unity whereas unity is not a mere project of constitutional gathering of Arab political entities into a federal or confederal entity but a framework and an expression of a movement of social integration.¹⁴⁷

The emphasis on the political aspects puts the state to the fore and pushes society to the periphery. This position cannot, in the words of Belqaziyyz, achieve the aim of "melting the constituents of Arab society that leads to the destruction of causes of political and civil divisions."¹⁴⁸

The Egyptian writer, Isma'iyl Sabriy 'Abdullah, finds the root of this imprisonment within the state in that Arab nationalist thought borrowed indiscriminately from "a capitalist European conception of the relationship between state and nationalism." He traces this misconception to the improper use of the

French term *nationalité* to provide two meanings: the belonging to a 'community of people who have the unity of territory, language, tradition and aspiration as far as this community protects its existence or wants to exist as a nation', and the belonging to a particular state, or what lawyers call nationality.¹⁴⁹

'Abdullah's approach in criticising Arab nationalist thought and its use of the state concept is Marxist-oriented. He rejects

¹⁴⁷ 'Abd Ilah Belqaziyyz, al-Qawmiyya wa al-'Ilmaniyya, op. cit., p. 10.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid, p. 10.

¹⁴⁹ Isma'iyl Sabriy 'Abdullah, "al-Umma al-'Arabiyya: al-Haqiyqa al-'Ilmiyya fiy Muwajahat al-Khalt wa al-Ghalt" (the Arab Nation: the Scientific Fact Against the Wrong and Confusion", in Isma'iyl Sabriy 'Abdullah etal, Dirasaat fiy al-Haraka, op. cit. p. 120.

the principle of associating nationalism and state and calls for an association between nationality and civilisation. He argues that the nation-state is not the expression of the nation but "it is civilisation that is older than the state." This is to argue that language and land are not enough to prove the existence of a nation. 'Abdullah emphasises the role of time which allows the territorially and linguistically united community to build a civilisation in its widest sense. Civilisation transcends the "concept of culture (intellectual production and artistic innovation) to include values, customs, norms of behaviour and feelings that make the common sentiment and the desire to live together."¹⁵⁰

The Egyptian writer, Majdiy Hammad, explains this emphasis and the primacy of state in Arab nationalist thought in the development of the Arab state system. He argues that the Arabs knew the state system as a result of their experience with the colonial state. Arabists saw the realisation of a national state as their aim by liberating the state from European domination. Arab thought about the state was the result of not a relationship between state and society but in the "confrontation with foreign domination."¹⁵¹ This meant that the emphasis on the state was not connected to the "the development in the nature of social and political authority and its structure." The result, as Hammad concludes, is that Arab nationalist thought was deprived of "understanding the historical dialectic of unity and

¹⁵⁰ Ibid, 122, pp. 111-112.

¹⁵¹ Majdiy Hammad, "Muqadimah" (The Introduction), in A. Duri et al, al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya, op. cit., p. 17.

therefore the conflicts, interests and the different desires which any society or political entity contains."¹⁵²

However if this applies to the eastern part of the Arab world, in the western part contributions were closer to understanding history while evaluating the issue of particularistic territorial state. As Muhammad Jabir Ansariy argues

political consciousness in the Maghrib was closer to historical objectivity in its view of the particularistic state. It considered it a national unification process and not a fragmentation contradictory to inclusive unity.¹⁵³

This is to argue that particularistic territorial states in the Maghrib are not seen as the creation of foreign will but that they were attained by the struggle against European colonialism. The building of these states in the Maghrib was seen as a precondition for the call for unity.¹⁵⁴

Some Arab writers are defending the argument that the particularistic territorial states are examples of unification in their own.¹⁵⁵ They were established against a state of societal fragmentation. The establishment of central governments in countries like Saudi Arabia, Libya, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon,

¹⁵² Ibid, p. 17.

¹⁵³ Muhammad Jabir Ansariy, Takuwiyun al-'Arab, op. cit., p. 179.

¹⁵⁴ M. 'Abid Jabiriy, 'Abd Ilah Belqaziyy, Sa'id Bens'id, and Kamal 'Abdullatif, Interviews with the Author.

¹⁵⁵ The arguments of these writers are best articulated in: Turkiy al-Hammad, "Takuwiyun al-Duwla al-Qutriyya", op. cit., pp. 129-158. Antuwn Masarrah, "Fiy Mustaqbal al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya: al-I'tiraaf bi al-Wualaat al-Tahtiyya: 'Amil Tauwhiyd am 'Amil Inqisaam" (On the Future of Arab Unity, Recognising the Sub-Loyalties: A Uniting or Dividing Factor) Al-Majalla Al-'Arabiyya lil 'Uluwm Al-Siyyasiyya (Arab Political Science Review) vol.1. (1986) Arabic Text (Present Author's Translation) pp. 37-54.

Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco was, according to some writers, an important step towards unification in the societal sense. It was unification in that it ended or eased the multiplicities, confrontations and atomic societal fragmentation which most Arab societies were suffering from for centuries.¹⁵⁶

This is the point of emphasis in Jabiriy's theses in which he rejects labelling these states as merely transitional and passing territorial units. This he argues does "not correspond or match the objective and subjective experiences of the majority of Maghribians."¹⁵⁷ Jabiriy affirms that these political entities, no matter how they are detested in the Mashriq, are entirely accepted and acknowledged in the Maghrib. The Maghrib states were not the product of a foreign will. They had been there before the Europeans arrived on the scene. Therefore its building and recalling into contemporary time was seen in the Maghrib as "a defeat of the will of colonialism."¹⁵⁸

Arab nationalist thought is imprisoned within the pan-state. Sovereign Arab states are therefore considered illegitimate political entities that do not correspond to the idea of the Arab nation. This leads to a concentration on this issue rather than making attempts at understanding the historical process that resulted in this political situation. Arab nationalist thought is marked by a strong tendency to provide detailed arguments that

¹⁵⁶ Muhammad Jabir Ansariy, Takuwiyn al-'Arab, op. cit., pp. 102-126. Ansariy provides historical and sociological material to ascertain this view that is divorced from Arab nationalist thought's traditional view of particularistic territorial states.

¹⁵⁷ M. 'Abid Jabiriy, Ishkaliyyaat al-Fikr, op. cit., p. 92.

¹⁵⁸ M. 'Abid Jabiriy, Interview with the Author.

pour into the stream of state related issues. It rejects the state but it is intellectually bound by it. Arab nationalist thought in its endeavour to provide an alternative to these 'nation-states' is sunk in emphasising the state and its predominance again and again in an endless debate.

These issues have received the attention of many Arab thinkers who tried to balance the argument. They consider as duplicitous this tendency which on the one hand rejects Arab states as 'nation-states' denying them nationhood, and on the other calls for a single hoped-for nation-state on the basis of 'experiences' that are open to questioning. This duplicity is seen by Belqaziyyz as limiting the issue to its political aspect. It looks at the issue "as a political issue that can materialise depending on the will of a particularistic state to abandon part of its legitimacy in exchange for union or an integration with another state."¹⁵⁹

Belqaziyyz argues that this approach does not go beyond the fields of the state. Accordingly "the field for the realisation of unity is the state as a society of politics with its elites and decision-makers ..., etc." Belqaziyyz considers this way of establishing unity on the bases of leadership and elite one of precluding any link that ought to exist between society and the state of unity. Belqaziyyz holds this thesis responsible for the poverty of Arab nationalist thought and the lack of any articulation about society while it is the "civil society which

¹⁵⁹ 'Abd Ilah Belqaziyyz, Ishkaliyyat al-Wahda, op. cit., pp. 53-54.

first and foremost, unity concerns."¹⁶⁰

Arab nationalist thought is depriving civil society of its rights and handing them to the state and its elite. This in turn has the effect of "diminishing its enthusiasm for unity." Consequently this results in destroying the important link between unity and democracy. Arab unity disconnected with democracy "will become a despotic action, and this despotic nature will not be eased or changed even though it carries a noble issue such as unity." Traditional Arab nationalist thought is seen by the Moroccan intellectual as incapable of "acknowledging the meaning of such society and its implications since it suffers from internal subjective handicaps particularly the handicap of fearing democracy."¹⁶¹

This centrality of the state would be very clear in any review of published Arab works on Arab nationalism and Arab unity. Such a review would reveal that the majority of contributions with Arab nationalist orientations is in fact centred round the issue of state, particularistic or pan-Arab. Many studies are articulations about the origins, the realities, the legitimacy and the future of the particularistic territorial state.¹⁶² Other studies are dealing with the contradictions and

¹⁶⁰ Ibid, pp. 53-54.

¹⁶¹ Ibid, pp. 53-54.

¹⁶² Examples are too numerous to register. To mention, but a few, the following may be given: Wadah Shararah, Huwla Ba'd Mushkilaat al-Duwla fiy al-Thaqafa wa al-Mujtama' al-'Arabiyyin (Reflections on Some Problems of State in Arab Society and Culture) First Edition (Beirut; Dar al-Hadatha, 1980) Mas'uwd Daher, al-Mashriq al-'Arabi al-Mu'aser: Min al-Badawa ila al-Duwla al-Hadiytha (Contemporary Arab East From Bedouin To Modern State) (Beirut; Ma'had al-Inmaa al-'Arabi, 1986).

the problems facing the particularistic territorial state and the effect they have on achieving the hoped-for pan-Arab state. The rest is devoted to the issues related to this hoped-for pan-Arab state though without any deep articulations of its content, composition, form and the way to achieve it.

The absence of any significant contributions dealing with issues of society and, for that matter, the individual is very striking. It shows how Arab nationalist thought is obsessed with the state phenomenon. This may be explained, partially at least, by the effects of employing the classical theory of nationalism wherein the state is very central to national unification. Burhan Ghalliyun explains this in the effects of European experience on Arab nationalism. This he sees as transforming the nation-state into a global measure and viewing the history of peoples from a European stand. This ignores the particularities of the history of non-European peoples and indeed the peculiarities of European societies itself.¹⁶³

According to Ghalliyun, Arab nationalism suffers from a conceptual deficiency since it relies on the classical concept of the nation. Therefore the admission of this concept into Arab nationalist thought is viewed by Ghalliyun to have been counter productive. It has been used to argue for particularistic identities as much as Arabists sought to utilize it to support the call for Arab unity. Ghalliyun concludes that this meant the failure of the Arab nationalist movement to solve the problematic of practically articulating a correspondence between cultural

¹⁶³ Burhan Ghalliyun, al-Mihna al-'Arabiyya, op. cit., pp. 99-100.

identity and political identity.¹⁶⁴

The contributions of Nadiym Biytar show a more balanced attitude towards the issue of state. His argument is based on sociology and history and he engages himself in issues of society and the individual. Biytar adopts a similar stand when articulating the role of the state in national formation and unification. In a study devoted to analysing what he calls the unitary rules, Biytar argues for the centrality of the state. He employs the arguments presented by Rudolf Rocker that "the nation is not the reason of the state but its result. State created the nation, and not that nation created the state."¹⁶⁵ Biytar acknowledges that this does not imply that wherever a single state is established the outcome would be a single nation. "The one single state does not always lead to the creation of a cultural, linguistic and historical unity, i.e. a single nationalism." He affirms that the state is "necessary for the evolution of this unity and its consolidation."¹⁶⁶

This line of thought is clearer in Biytar's evaluation that the state is the most important factor in realising nationalism. Biytar explains that "state was the base of nation and nationalism formation." Belonging to a single state is a "fundamental factor in the life of every nationalism. We always find the memory of a past state and the aspiration of belonging

¹⁶⁴ Ibid, pp. 198-199, p. 101.

¹⁶⁵ Nadiym Biytar, Min al-Tajzia ila al-Wahda, op. cit., p. 23. Biytar employs the argument of Rudolf Rocker in the book entitled, Nationalism and Culture, Translated by Ray E. Chase, (New York; Covici-Friede, 1937) as cited in Biytar.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid, p. 23.

to a one single state as seen by nationalism of the modern age."¹⁶⁷ When dealing directly with Arab nationalist thought Biytar echoes these arguments. He advises those who seek Arab unity to bear in mind the supremacy of the unity state (pan-state). Biytar sees the Arabist and the unionist as the one who "puts the revolutionary unity state above all; it is the yardstick for every revolutionary action, every revolutionary step, every transformation, every revolutionary tactic..., etc." The real Arabist revolutionary, argues Biytar, "does not measure any thing in the light of pure revolutionary measuring devices but in as much as they provide for the one single state."¹⁶⁸

The above discussion confirms the primacy of the state in Arab nationalist thought. Bassam Tibi summarised this characteristic of Arab nationalist thought in a manner that best describes the situation. Tibi notices the dilemma of Arab nationalism amidst the dichotomy and contradiction it sets between particularistic territorial states and the pan-Arab state. He explains the dilemma in that

Pan-Arab ideology is directed against the exact institution of the nation-state in the Arab world. In the language of pan-Arab ideology, existing Arab states are not described and accepted as nation-states. They have been downgraded and labelled as al-dawla al-qotria (the domestic state). The term Arab nation-state (al-dawla al-qawmia) is reserved for the desired pan-Arab state, whose realisation, it is argued, remains frustrated by alleged Western conspiracies. The pan-Arab ideology, even though it negates the existing Arab nation-states, is imprisoned within the nation-state idea.¹⁶⁹

This occupation with the state concept does not, however,

¹⁶⁷ Ibid, pp. 23-24, p. 66.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid, p. 382.

¹⁶⁹ Bassam Tibi, "Redefining the Arab", op. cit., p. 136.

go beyond the "narrow questions such as those concerning religious legitimacy, the economics of the nationalised sector, or the role played by colonialism in the shaping of the Arab state system."¹⁷⁰ State as presented in Arab nationalist thought is nothing more than authority. This, as Gassan Salame notices, makes Arab nationalist thought void of any adequate analysis of state as an "actor in the society and its relationship with civil society."¹⁷¹ The conclusion that can be drawn is that Arab nationalist thought before the 1980s is deeply sunk in debates and endless discussions about the state. The issues related to state dominate, among others, the contributions of Arab nationalist writers before the 1980s. They express a strong tendency towards state, and the dichotomy of particularistic territorial/pan-Arab state marginalizes a "comprehensive analysis of the pivotal relation between states and civil societies."¹⁷²

The following chapters will present and analyse the contributions of the 1980s. The purpose of the discussions is to see how Arab nationalist thought in the 1980s dealt with the concepts of its ideology and was undergoing a process of renewal. The essential aim is to establish whether these contributions offer enough evidence to support the hypothesis that a new paradigm of Arab nationalist thought is emerging. The discussion in the next chapters will focus on this issue as well as on underlining the premises of the new emerging paradigm.

¹⁷⁰ Gassan Salame, "The Introduction", in Gassan Salame (ed), The Foundation of the Arab, op. cit., p. 15.

¹⁷¹ Ibid, p. 15.

¹⁷² Ibid, p. 2.

Chapter Four

Arab Nationalist Thought in the 1980s: The Dialectic of Old and New Paradigms

The critique of traditional Arab nationalist thought presented in the previous chapter reflects a realisation on the part of Arab intellectuals for a new paradigm. The new paradigm is seen essential so that Arab nationalist thought may cater for the changes the region underwent. This is clearly evident as far as issues of nation, Arabism, minorities and democracy are concerned. Arab nationalist thought began to direct itself into new paths it hitherto had evaded while sunk in its own romanticism. That meant the need for restructuring Arab nationalist thought and the contributions discussed here would reflect a process of intellectual and ideological restructuring. It is clear that a dialectical relationship between the old and the emerging new paradigm is very intense.

4-1: The Essence of the Arab Nation: Unity Amidst Multiplicity

(i) Pan-Arab Identity: Traditional Views Revisited

The question of Arab identity has been central to Arab nationalist thought since its early days. During the confrontation with the Ottoman Empire Arab nationalists opted for a new concept of the nation which justified the breakaway with the Turks. The European idea of the nation and the nationalist

movement in Europe affected a choice that was strengthened by memories of an Arab past in which the Arabs had their own empire. However the idea of an Arab nation underwent many developments and the linguistic concept had many variants. From the basic and simple one that put the emphasis on language as the sole determinant of the Arab identity to the ethnic linguistic concept which expressed the desire to separate the Arabs from the Turks because of ethnic differences.

A language-history approach could be traced to the period after the Second World War. This notion of the Arab nation based its argument on the language and on the common history that bound the Arabs together. As explained in chapter two, this definition was ideally expressed by Husry who said: "language is ... the focal of nationalism and its backbone ... history is like the consciousness of the nation and its memory."¹ The linguistic approach considered that the striving towards building a nation-state would not add significantly to the nation. This concept was evidence of the effects of the German romantic theory of nationalism on the thoughts of Arab nationalists. This continued to be the case until the contributions of Ba'th party and Nasserism. The Ba'th theoreticians and the Nasserite leaders took the goal of achieving political unity as the centre of their theory of Arab nationalism.

The pan-Arab state was considered as the political expression of the nation. This idea that emphasised language, history and state as the basic factors of the nation was adopted

¹ S. Husry, Araa wa Ahaadiyth fiy al-Wataniyya wa al-Qawmiyya, (Beirut; Markaz Dirasaat al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya, 1985) p. 22.

by the mainstream Arab nationalist thought up to the period of our investigation.² Reliance on this concept meant a struggle with other concepts that based the nation on either religion, territory, or a concept of a nation that attempted to establish nations on a regional basis such as that of Greater Syria. The result was intellectual and political battles between ideas of pan-Arabism, particularism, pan-Islamism and regionalism.

All in all the question was how to adapt to the issue of a nation that had no state, and a nation that could not be accomplished without a state, and a state that needed a nation. Arab thought went in endless debates.³ The aim of establishing a pan-Arab state that would make the Arab nation a full-fledged nation was in line with European nation-states. How did the contributions of the 1980s respond to this question of nation?

(ii) The New Debates: Language, History, Multiplicity, State and Sociology

The contributions of the 1980s were many and different. Some new contributions repeated the old ones; some modified the previous ideas by adding new factors to the nation's definition or ignored some of it. These ideas gave prominence in deciding the nation to the complexities of Arab society, history and

² Saiyyd Yasiyn, Tahliyl Madmun al-Fikr al-Qawmiy al-'Arabiyy: Dirasa Istitla'iyya, First Edition (Beirut; Markaz Dirasat al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya, 1980) pp. 107-150.

³ Nasiyf Nasar, Tasuwuraat al-Umma al-Mu'asera: Dirasa Tahliyliyya li Mafahiym al-Umma fiy al-Fikr al-'Arabiyy al-Hadiyth wa al-Mu'asir, Second Edition (Beirut; Dar Ammuwaj, 1994). Nasar traces all concepts of the nation in Arab thought. He provides a general survey of pan-Arab, Islamic, particularistic, and regional concepts of the nation but obviously stops short of dealing with the contributions dealt with here.

politics and therefore attempted to define the Arab nation in line with the developments in sociological research. This is significant since the 1980s experienced a wave of doubt in Arab nationalism, Arab identity and a rise in particularistic politics and political Islam.

One obvious point of departure is that the new contributions do not ignore the issue of multiple identities in the Arab world. Gassan Salame views the Arab world as a multitude of identities that the individual is attached to. These extend on a spectrum that includes tribalism, sectarianism, particularism (state), Arab national identity and Islamic identity.⁴ This makes the issue complex and makes an idea of an Arab nation based solely on one Arab identity an abstract one that realities belie.

This is also the argument of Ali E. Hillal Dessouki who sees the problem of Arab identity and the challenge it faces from within and from other identities a constant problem in the Arab world. Dessouki argues that three levels of identity existed: the individual level where the individual identifies himself with a group with its own value system; identity at this level is psychological and related to the socialisation process. Then forms of organisations or political parties are the level of collective political expression, and lastly the levels of institutionalising identities whether they take religious or legal forms.⁵

⁴ Gassan Salame, "al-Jami'a wa al-Takatulaat al-'Arabiyya" (The League and Arab Blocks), in 'Ali Muhafadah et al, Jami'at al-Duwal al-'Arabiyya: al-Waqi' wa al-Tumuh, (Seminar Papers) First Edition (Beirut; Markaz Dirasat al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya, 1983) p. 771.

⁵ Ali E. Hillal Dessouki, "Ta'qiyb" (A Comment), in 'Ali Muhafadah et al, Jami'at al-Duwal al-'Arabiyya, op. cit., p. 815.

Although this three level identity is not meant to imply the contradictory nature of its substances, Dessouki believes that the institutionalisation of identity does not necessarily confirm the existence of a supportive identity at the grass-root level with the same intensity. The establishment of such institutions might be understood in the attempt to foster an identity. Similarly the failure of political projects at governmental level or the weakness of political organisations expressing some identity would not necessarily imply that the identity they express is weak at the individual level.⁶

Salame and Dessouki agreement about the existence of multiple identities is on its own a development in Arab nationalist thought. Salame goes further to argue that the tendency of identities to institutionalise at different levels changes the nature of the question which prevailed in the last two centuries of Arab history. The question alters from a one about the fundamental identity of the individual to a one that is a material for everyday politics. The question of identity therefore becomes related to self assertion and identity assertion at the expense of the others.

Taken to its extreme Salame's approach would seem to imply that the idea of pan-Arab identity lacks the qualities for institutionalisation. Even though it could be seen as the institution of pan-Arab identity the Arab League is a league of states which represent institutions of another identity competing with the pan-Arab identity:⁷ Dessouki argues for the pan-Arab

⁶ Ibid, p. 815.

⁷ Gassan Salame, "al-Jami'a wa al-Takatulaat", op. cit., p. 773.

identity even though it lacks an institution or that the institution that may be seen to express it is not efficient. Here the argument is supportive of the existence of an Arab nation based on an Arab identity.⁸

The ideas put forward by Salame and Dessouki argue that to spring from Arab identity without properly acknowledging any competing ideas is to ignore reality. Founding the nation on identity contradicts the historical facts which vividly makes the question of identity very complex. This complexity is clear at the broad Arab level. The social, cultural, ethnic, religious, and economic realities in each Arab state clearly carries more contradictions. These contradictions make it difficult for pan-Arab unification based on the idea of an Arab nation and leave most Arab states with problems related to national integration. This led Salame to question the validity of insisting on the existence of an Arab nation and its unification in a single nation state. He amply asks why other ways of integration could not be considered? Why is integration seen only in light of pre existing theological terms of a single nation which must have a single state? ⁹

This indicates that Arab intellectuals are looking for new theories that could explain the diversity or multiplicity of identities. This is very significant because the belief in an Arab nation does not obscure the existence of centrifugal

⁸ Ali E. Hillal Dessouki, "Ta'qiyb", op. cit., p. 815.

⁹ Gassan Salame, " 'Auwaiq al-Waqi' al-'Arabiyy al-Qutriyy" (Handicaps of Arab Particularistic Reality) in A. Duri et al, al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya: Tajarubaha wa Tawaqu'atuha, (Seminar Papers) First Edition (Markaz Dirasat al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya, 1989) p. 476.

divisions. This is supported by studies that show the multiplicity of identities in the Arab world.¹⁰ This is a phenomenon that the European concept of the nation may not help to explain as the Arabs are made of peoples and many communities or groups that are distinct from each other though they share common features and identify with an Arab culture and language.

This multiplicity led George Corom to conclude "how misleading is the shallow portrait of a coherent, homogeneous Arab society with a common personality."¹¹ The historical process and the Arab past before Islam "unveils the existence of strong fragmentary factors which bear witness to the existence of a variety of local peculiarities."¹² This implies that the Arab nation is based on multiplicity and therefore the question of its identity can only be solved if "the Arab society regains the whole of its history."¹³

(iii) The Arab Nation: Old and New Concepts

The contributions of the 1980s attest to the theoretical and intellectual efforts of Arab writers on the subject which traditional Arab nationalist thought clearly lacked. The new contributions concentrate on the historical, sociological aspects

¹⁰ These studies in Arabic are a feature of the 1980s and the 1990s. Examples are the studies carried out by Sa'd Diyn Ibrahiym on minorities and the work of Ibn Khaldun Centre for Development in Cairo on Minorities and sects.

¹¹ George Corom, Infijaar al-Mashriq al-'Arabiyy: Min Tamiym Qanaat al-Suwiys ila Ijtiayyah Lubnan, First Edition (Beirut; Dar al-Tali'a, 1987) p. 216.

¹² Ibid, p. 209.

¹³ Ibid, p. 200.

of the nation and identity. It is useful to introduce some of these contributions to show the changes in the nature of Arab nationalist thought.

Perhaps it would be useful in detecting the change to start with the contribution of 'Ismat Saiyf al-Duwla to the debate on the nature of the Arab nation. This is because Saiyf Duwla is one of the old generation of Arab nationalists and was a contemporary of Nasser and 'Aflaq. This helps in evaluating how the changes in the Arab world affected his opinion. Saiyf Duwla bases his idea of the nation on what he sees as the functional role of any social formation or structural unit. Saiyf Duwla argues that any

social formation such as the family, clan, tribe or the nation is found because it fulfils certain functions and its survival is determined by its efficacy ... every structural unit of these was found to undertake the duty of fulfilling and making available certain needs which the preceding could not accomplish.¹⁴

Therefore the nation "fulfils an amount of needs greater than those tribes could fulfill ... The process of forming social units in order to fulfill needs always develops as need arises for new structures to fulfill rising needs." Therefore the nation is only a step on this evolutionary process. Saiyf Duwla argues that "human progress is open to the appearance of yet more advanced and developed social formations. These will be beyond the nation and in response to the growth of needs."¹⁵

Saiyf Duwla assigns importance to

common territory as a necessary factor so a human group forms a nation. Living on a particular territory makes it possible for the realisation that they have common needs that work as an incentive for developing the right

¹⁴ 'Ismat Saiyf al-Duwla, interview with the author, Cairo; 29.4.1995.

¹⁵ Ibid.

structure, here the nation, for the fulfilment of their needs.¹⁶

This is an entirely new approach to the nation that Arab nationalist thought had not known before. Saiyf Duwla does not attribute any significance to factors of language or unity of economic life as these, in his opinion, "are not peculiar to the nation and may be available to human groups like tribes."¹⁷

The Arab nation is not, according to this view, eternal and will not live forever. When the Arab nation as a social structural functional unit "exhausts its capabilities in achieving progress the people will proceed to new relations of identity."¹⁸ Saiyf Duwla investigates Arab history since Islam and points to the year 622 when "the Arab nation began to form in the womb of the first society (people) made by the civilisational Islamic revolution; it was borne in it and was accomplished as an Arab nation."¹⁹

Then the Arab nation is the work of Islam. Accordingly it would not have been formed had it not been for

the coincidence of two factors in the same historical period: Islam as a civilisational revolution capable of creativity and progress, and the peoples which had not developed into nations and therefore it was possible for it to be developed and recreated.²⁰

That however does not imply the consistency of this with the

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ 'Ismat Saiyf Duwla, 'An al-'Uruwba wa al-Islam (On Arabism and Islam) Second Edition (Tunis; al-Buraq lil Nashr, 1990) Arabic Text (Present Author's Translation) p. 15.

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 41.

²⁰ Ibid, p. 45.

concept of the umma in the Islamic sense but it is not just as well an extension of the peoples that melted in its pot.²¹ This kind of theorising about the Arab nation is entirely different from that provided by traditional Arab nationalist thought. Traditional thought argued that the Arab nation had preceded Islam and that the role of Islam was to assign it a new mission.

Saiyf Duwla argues that Islam made the Arabs a nation and the relationship between the two is an organic one.²² This is also to reject the view that Islam is the national religion of the Arabs and their heritage. Saiyf Duwla considers this a total error since the Arab nation had not existed before Islam. Moving on it is clear that Saiyf Duwla does not consider the nation "a linguistic, cultural or historical concept or category. The nation is an objective reality"; it is "a society with a distinct civilisation of a certain people settled on a land of its own and this people was formed through a lengthy common history."²³

Saiyf Duwla also presents a concept of the state based on the same idea of historical functionalism. The state is formed because the coordination of activities in an integrated way needed an organisation. The state here is not an end in itself nor does this evolutionary functional process of state formation stop at achieving the state. It allows for the emergence of yet new forms of organisation. Applied to the pan-Arab ideal Saiyf Duwla's approach recognises that the achievement of a united Arab state is not a condition for the realisation of the Arab nation.

²¹ Ibid, p. 45.

²² Ibid, p. 46.

²³ 'Ismat Saiyf Duwla, interview with the author.

"The nation is a historical and accomplished reality that needs nothing." However the pan-Arab state becomes a necessity for the Arab people since it "puts at their disposal the potential of political, economic and social progress that exceeds these available under the state of fragmentation."²⁴

It can be seen that there is a strong departure from the traditional romantic Arab nationalist thought. The emphasis here is not on the vitality and necessity of the state for the accomplishment of the nation-state but rather on the functions the state could perform for the purpose of organisation. This takes the analysis from the sphere of linguistic cultural nation to that of political nation and from cultural sociology to political sociology. Here the contribution of Nadiym Biytar is significant.

Biytar sociologically defines national identity a "group of general characteristics which distinguish a people or a nation in a particular historical phase."²⁵ Biytar considers the people and the nation as one category and identity as another one. However he traces both of them in history. The characteristics are not permanent. They, as well as identity, are "a product of history and in a continuous process of change."²⁶ This concept of identity is what Biytar calls the sociological concept. He puts it in contrast to what he terms the metaphysical concept of national identity which defines the nation or the people in a

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Nadiym Biytar, Huwduwd al-Hauwiyya al-Qawmiyya: Naqd 'Am, First Edition (Beirut; Dar al-Wahda, 1982) p. 22.

²⁶ Ibid, p. 32, p. 288.

constant static essence isolated from the effects of historical circumstances.²⁷ By applying this concept the nation can be understood in terms of "dynamic factors of history such as ... crises, social and political conflicts and ideological conceptions, etc."²⁸ Thus national identity has a changing nature.

Biytar defines national identity as "a combination of ways of thought, feeling and behaviour which are relatively identical and which have a limited and relative control or domination in a particular historical period."²⁹ How does Biytar explain the Arab case with its unitary and fragmentary dimensions? Biytar takes into account the relationship between the nation and its state.³⁰ He is also eager to emphasise the role played by language in the formation of the Arab nation.³¹ However he questions that the nation is older than the state and doubts the validity of language as the decisive national factor and therefore doubts that a fragmented nation must become politically united.

The state is not the definite outcome of nationalist aspirations nor it is needed to complete national existence. In contrast to the linguistic approach to nationalism Biytar

²⁷ Ibid, p. 13.

²⁸ Ibid, p. 18.

²⁹ Ibid, p. 206.

³⁰ Nadiym Biytar, Juwdhuwr al-Iqlimiyya al-Jadiyda (The Roots of New Particularism) First Edition (Beirut; Ma'had al-Innmaa al-'Arabiyy, 1983) Arabic Text (Author's Translation) p. 19, p. 68.

³¹ Nadiym Biytar, Min al-Tajzia ila al-Wahda: al-Qawaniyn al-Asasiyya li Tajarub al-Tariykh al-Wahdawiyya, Fifth Edition (Beirut; Markaz Dirasat al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya, 1986) pp. 373-374.

considers language the result of a national unification that preceded it. This is to suggest that it is the emergence of the state that explains the national phenomenon. The determinant factor in national formation is the state. This political factor then interacted with other factors such as language or territory in making the nation. Nations as linguistic, cultural and historical units would not have become nations had it not been for the decisive role played by the state.³² Language may well have preceded the state but the state is the determinant and decisive factor that defines the boundaries of language and its use.³³

The same applies to culture. Culture and common history could not be realised into a national being without a state that renders the life of the people a daily experience.

Being subservient to one state ... imposes on the people a common destiny that distinguishes it from other peoples ... It creates organisations and apparatus that make the unity of the people a sensed experience.³⁴

It is clear that Biytar does not allocate any essential values to economics, geography or psychology since they explain the nation, a dynamic changing social and historical category, by employing static factors such as geography.³⁵

But how then does he understand the question of national political unification? How does he view a nation's land when it is divided among many states as in the case of the Arab nation?

³² Nadiym Biytar, Huwduwd al-Hauwiyya, op. cit., pp. 299-300.

³³ Ibid, pp. 66-67.

³⁴ Ibid, pp. 66-67.

³⁵ Ibid, pp. 240-249.

Here problems arise in his model that may contradict his pan-Arab orientation. This is because the state that plays the role of forming the nation is either a unitary state or not. The unitary state is the one he defines as being the corner stone in the national formation process. "The state that created the nation,"³⁶ and the un-unitary state refers to the "sweeping majority of the newly independent countries which made the state first and are now trying to build the nation through the state."³⁷

As the first model is central to the concerns of Biytar the question is how does the unitary state create the nation? It is the same way by which this state becomes a strong and an all encompassing one so it is able to organise the society and control it. But again, how is this kind of state is reached? How is political unity achieved among political units that are independent of each other as the case in the Arab world? Biytar is essentially occupied with this issue. He criticises Arab nationalist thought for not having a theory or approach for unity. He provides a theory that reveals some fundamental rules that govern the process of unity. Unity is not to be achieved unless these objective rules are available along with the subjective factors of human will.³⁸

Having analysed some contributions that deal with the issues

³⁶ Nadiym Biytar, Min al-Tajzia ila al-Wahda: al-Qawaniyn al-Asasiyya li Tajarub al-Tarikh al-Wahdawiyya, Fifth Edition (Beirut; Markaz Dirasat al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya, 1986)p. 23.

³⁷ Ibid, p. 62.

³⁸ Biytar allocates a whole book to the explanation of his "unitary thesis" and the rules that govern the unification "phenomenon" throughout history that may be employed to achieve Arab unity. See his: Min al-Tajzia ila al-Wahda, op. cit., and also his: Huwduwd al-Hawiyya, op. cit., p.113.p. 199, p. 298, p. 303, p. 309.

of identity, nation and state, the discussion now moves on to contributions which attempt to provide a comprehensive approach to these issues. The following contributions of Isma'iyl Sabriy 'Abdullah, Samir Amin and Fawzy Mansour provide an approach that emphasise a civilizational conception of the nation. Isma'iyl Sabriy 'Abdullah is prominent in this approach. Though an old Arab Marxist he attempts to provide an analysis that liberates itself from Stalinist dogma. 'Abdullah believes in an Arab nation and he does not accept the assumption that Arabism has been dead since 1967. He believes that the Arab nation is as alive today as it ever has been.³⁹

The nation in 'Abdullah's opinion is a historical concept that "forms during a long period ... Its circumstances change along the path of history."⁴⁰ What he is trying to demonstrate here is that the nation is not a past-based concept. "Nationalism and the movement of history ... are related ... and either of them may not be understood without reference to the other."⁴¹ The factors of the nation are "different communities or groups settled or moving, which are bound by interests in a definite historical phase which dictates their alliance and affiliation."⁴²

This conception is based on the hypothesis that nation is

³⁹ Isma'iyl Sabriy 'Abdullah, interview with the author, Cairo; 26.4.1995

⁴⁰ Isma'iyl Sabriy 'Abdullah, "al-Umma al-'Arabiyya: al-Haqiqqa al-'Ilmiyya fiy Muwajahat al-Khalt wa al-Ghalt", in Isma'iyl Sabriy 'Abdullah et al, Dirasaat fi al-Haraka al-Tagadumiyya al-'Arabiyya, (Seminar Papers) First Edition (Beirut; Markaz Dirasat al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya, 1987) p. 109.

⁴¹ Ibid, p. 110.

⁴² Ibid, p. 110.

an old phenomenon despite the modern appearance of nationalism. From this 'Abdullah criticises the linguistic approach to the Arab nation. He argues that language cannot become united and complete unless there is "that space on which the nation settles."⁴³ Therefore if language is important for communication, "land and the production and the exchange that takes place on it are the material base for the nation's existence." However it is essential for the realisation of the nation that "enough time is allowed for the united community, in language and land, to build a civilisation in the wider sense." This also includes "values, customs, rules of behaviour and the feelings that make up the common sentiment and therefore the desire to live together."⁴⁴

Nation is then

a community of people who live together on an undivided land, who speak the same tongue and who historically formed a common civilisation and have the desire to live together in order to maintain common interests.⁴⁵

But to talk of common interests does not acknowledge Stalin's concept of it. 'Abdullah considers that Stalin's concept of common economic interests applies only to the actual real interests not the potential ones.⁴⁶ Therefore the Arabs are a nation despite the fragmentation of their interests. This is so because the unity of market is a wilful act and the material interests of the masses "find in unity the greatest opportunity

⁴³ Ibid, p. 111.

⁴⁴ Ibid, p. 111.

⁴⁵ Ibid, p. 112.

⁴⁶ Isma'iyil Sabriy 'Abdullah, interview with the author.

to become a reality."⁴⁷

But if common civilisation means the existence of a nation, does that imply one nation-state? 'Abdullah's answer is negative. He argues that there is no historical determinism that links nation and state. The nation is the product of civilisation. State becomes the form of organising the nation politically only when the majority of the nation believes that "unity under the banner of one nation brings benefits and creates material and none-material interests."⁴⁸ 'Abdullah outlines the idea of the Arab nation as having been formed

through long centuries since the appearance of Islam and the spread of Arabs to regions; during these centuries a common culture and civilisation, based on unity of tongue, were formed. . . . This common system was historically linked to common interests and was the composite fruit of the mixing of the Arabised peoples and their interaction with peoples who did not become Arabised even though some of them were Islamised.⁴⁹

Clearly, this emphasises that Islam was the driving force behind the transformation of the Arabs from having been scattered saharan tribes into a nation. This is an outright rejection of the thesis of an Arab nation in the process of formation which some Arab Marxists still hold. The Arab nation is then an old nation that owes Islam its unity since Islam played the essential role in building the Arab civilisation and preserving Arabic. Turning his attention to the question of Arab unity today 'Abdullah believes that there is no necessity for building a pan-

⁴⁷ Isma'iyl Sabriy 'Abdullah, "al-Umma al-'Arabiyya: al-Haqiqqa", op. cit., p. 122.

⁴⁸ Isma'iyl Sabriy 'Abdullah, interview with the author.

⁴⁹ Isma'iyl Sabriy 'Abdullah, "al-Umma al-'Arabiyya: al-Haqiqqa", op. cit., p. 112.

Arab nation-state. The critical and urgent need now is progress and development. The road to any form of Arab unity must begin with "creating and supporting economic and social forces that conceive unity into their interest."⁵⁰ This gives enough room for the multiplicities evident in the Arab world. And this is in line with the nature of Arab civilisation which "accommodated multiplicities and particularisms."⁵¹

Despite this change of attitudes by Arab Marxists such as 'Abdullah, other Arab Marxists, like Fawzy Mansour and Samir Amin, still argue that the Arab nation is in the process of formation. They believe that even though the Arab nation had been formed in the past it consequently lost itself and it is now going through the process of formation again.⁵² Although they reject the concept of Stalin's common market factor they still echo the same thesis.⁵³ Mansour and Amin argue that there is no Arab nation now even if they provide a different set of explanation. It is clear that Amin and Mansour are concerned with reforming Marxism and hence consider Stalin's concept inappropriate not because it denies the Arabs nationhood but simply because it is not in line with how Marxism ought to be

⁵⁰ Ibid, p. 123.

⁵¹ Isma'iyl Sabriy 'Abdullah, interview with the author.

⁵² Fawzy Mansour and Samir Amin, interviews with the author, Cairo; 1.5.1995.

⁵³ It is interesting to note that Constantine Zurayq, a leading liberal Arabist, adheres to the idea of the Arab nation in becoming. However his thesis is that the Arabs have not yet gone through a process similar to that underwent by Europe. Till the Arabs develop through rationalism, science and modernity they would not maintain their nationhood. See his, "Huwla Huluwl 'Amaliyya lil 'Aqabaat Allatiy Ta'tarid al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya", Qadaiyya Arabiyya, vol. 7, (1980) p. 7.

applied in explaining Arab history.⁵⁴

Fawzy Mansour starts from the idea that the nation is a "historical category" to suggest that a nation can be formed in one of three ways: in the first one a nation forms

around an important natural resource, e.g. a great river. A centralised authority is required for the full exploitation of its possibilities and to impose voluntary or forced cooperation of those whose life depends on this resource, such as Egypt in relation to the Nile river.⁵⁵

In the second way a nation forms "as a result of interaction of sectoral and geographical differentiation and integration process." These are the result of

the application of the principle of the division of labour operating within a politically and socially well defined area under autonomous, as contrasted with independent, capitalism. The classical example is the formation of modern nations in Western Europe.⁵⁶

This approach does not however preclude the importance of what Mansour calls the "predisposing conditions such as the unity of language, settlement on territory and common culture."⁵⁷ But these conditions are not in themselves sufficient to make a nation unless they are activated by the economic factor. And lastly a nation may form "as a result, given sufficient time, of the process of differentiation and integration introduced not by market forces but by rational and well balanced economic and social central planning."⁵⁸ This last way of nation formation is hypothetical but Mansour considers it the relevant model for

⁵⁴ Samir Amin and Fawzy Mansour, interviews with the author.

⁵⁵ Fawzy Mansour, Interview with the author.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

forming an Arab nation. To the extent that none of the three suggested ways was obtained for the Arab world as a whole, it seems incorrect to "speak of a fully formed Arab nation."⁵⁹

But Mansour admits that in the Arab case there exists what he calls the predisposing conditions. That makes the Arabs only a "potential nation."⁶⁰ Since it lacks the economic factor of differentiation and integration the Arab 'nation' remains a "nation in state of formation and this is a transitional phase ... the nationhood status may or may not be achieved."⁶¹ The outcome of this would depend on other factors but mainly the economic factor. Mansour argues that it is uncertain whether this nation in the process of formation will develop "into a fully integrated nation or whether the forces of fragmentation, dispersal or partial regrouping along different lines will have the upper hand."⁶²

However Mansour is hoping that the factors favouring the completion of the process of Arab national formation will win the battle against the opposing factors of foreign hostility to Arab nationhood, the internal factors of weakness like traditionalism and the imbalance in the levels of the development of forces of production in the Arab countries. Hence integration or unification is conducive to balanced and sustained development as well as a necessary condition for the maintenance of independence. But the formation of a nation remains according to

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

Mansour a "class project and this was clear in the first way where a particular class was the beneficiary from water exploitation and also in capitalism where the bourgeoisie class pioneered the formation of the nation."⁶³ Here the problem of the Arabs during the process of forming a nation is the lack of this kind of class that can take up the formation process to its extreme and establish the Arab nation firmly.⁶⁴

Samir Amin shares the views of Mansour. He considers that the nation "may appear in all historical periods. It is not necessarily confined to the capitalist mode of production." The nation may appear if

in addition to the primary conditions of geographic proximities supported by the use of a common language..., a social class has hegemony over the central apparatus of the state and maintains the economic unity of a group of people.⁶⁵

This class, argues Amin, does not have to be the national bourgeoisie capitalist class. Arab unity for example was the work of "a class of traders-warriors and not a class of aristocracy of a feudal type."⁶⁶ This is to reject Stalin's definition of the nation. This is because Amin argues that to accept Stalin's thesis would restrict the phenomenon of nations to European history with the result of rejecting the existence of other nations and therefore nations could not form outside the centre

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid. Mansour's argument is detailed in his book: The Arab World: Nation State and Democracy, First Edition (London; Zed Books, Tokyo; United Nations University, 1992).

⁶⁵ Samir Amin, al-Umma al-'Arabiyya(the Arab Nation) First Edition (Cairo; Maktabat Madbuliy, 1988) Arabic Text (Present Author's Translation) p. 131.

⁶⁶ Ibid, p. 45.

of the world capitalist system.⁶⁷

Amin argues that nations are older than capitalism, as in the cases of Egypt, China and the Arab nation at some stage. Amin agrees in particular with Fawzy Mansour's idea of economic differentiation and integration. However, he thinks that differentiation is not entirely a proper term as differentiation among classes is not integrative but conflictual.⁶⁸ Samir Amin concentrates on the ideological and political aspect according to which he conceives of the nation as having been formed "in circumstances, as in Europe, related to the emergence of capitalism and the emergence of the ideology of bourgeois democracy against feudalism."⁶⁹ The nation in the context of ideological struggle may be understood as "a model for the restructuring of authority in a certain geographic territory and a set of economic capitalist relations." This ideological struggle was manifest in the slogan of the "social contract wherein the nation was not historically inherited but a novel or new concept resulting from the will of the people (the bourgeoisie)."⁷⁰

This is very significant since modern nations "evolved, as an ideology of bourgeois state-nation, around neglecting or marginalising the importance of the past and giving all attention to the ideological aspect i.e. social harmony as a base for

⁶⁷ Ibid, p. 26.

⁶⁸ Samir Amin, Interview with the author.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

modern democracy."⁷¹ Setting his argument in the direction of the Arab issue Amin explains that in experiences other than the one which was at the forefront of producing capitalism and modern bourgeoisie democracy, such as those of the Arabs

the nation as an inherited past took the place of the social harmony or contract in the process of building a modern state based on the capitalist relations of production. Therefore differentiation and integration were not linked with the ideological and political factor, democracy and social harmony.⁷²

According to Amin this was evident in the German and Italian experience where the nation as an "eternal entity, spirit, and coupled with language was employed to maintain and sustain capitalist relations, but with a degree less than the democratic ideology example."⁷³ Here "national unity replaced the bourgeois revolutions to create the appropriate framework of authority in order that market relations flourish and be imposed."⁷⁴ This is to say that the European explanation of nationalism is not fit for the Arab case. Amin argues that if the Arab world

had been a nation, thanks to the central role of the traders-warriors class, that did not last long. The Arab world had been a nation only for a short period of its history and then it lost its national character to become a mosaic of peoples since the thirteenth century and particularly since the sixteenth century.⁷⁵

Amin cites historical evidence to support his idea. He argues that a series of great historical events led to the Arab national decline. These were

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Samir Amin, al-Umma al-'Arabiyya, op. cit., p. 133.

the crusades, the Arab cities loss of the central trade position to the Italian cities, the fall of Baghdad at the hands of Mongols in the thirteenth century, the Ottoman onslaught in the sixteenth century, and the change of trade routes from the Mediterranean Sea to the Atlantic.⁷⁶

These developments led to what Samir Amin considers to have been the loss of the driving force and was behind the Arab nation's decline in its power and its effect on the national formation of the Arabs. He attributes to these developments the result of eventually "the hegemonic class ... became unable to practice hegemony at the national level in uniting the economy and centralising power."⁷⁷

But if this was the case in the past why has the movement of Arab nationalism not been able to repeat the experience and form the Arab nation again? Why could a class not play a similarly decisive role? Amin's answer is that the nature of

polarisation in world capitalism did not create the right circumstances for the formation of nations at the periphery. ... In the peripheries disintegration instead of integration of what would have crystallised into nations took place.⁷⁸

This may be understood in Amin's view from the role of the "peripheral bourgeoisie. Naturally it is attached and strongly linked to the world capitalist system based on polarisation."⁷⁹ Arab nationalism therefore failed in forming an Arab nation because the ruling Arab classes are linked and conspire with the capitalist system and imperialism.⁸⁰

⁷⁶ Ibid, p. 132.

⁷⁷ Ibid, p. 134.

⁷⁸ Samir Amin, Interview with the author.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

The discussion above reveals contributions that are entirely new to Arab nationalist thought. However, there are still Arab writers who hold to the previous concepts and explanations of the Arab nation. Examples of this traditional view can be found in the ideas of Muhammad A. Khalafallah and Majdiy Hammad. Khalafallah still holds to the linguistic definition of the nation stating that "language and the heritage it carries are the fundamental factors of the nation."⁸¹ Even though Khalafallah acknowledges the difference between this concept of the nation and the political realisation of it in a nation-state he confirms that in the case of Arab nationalism it was Arabic which aroused Arab nationalism.⁸²

The same view is to be found in the contribution of Majdiy Hammad who grounds his view in the linguistic tradition. He distinguishes between national existence, nationalist thought or ideology and nationalist movement.⁸³ Hammad argues that "strong links exist among the Arabs such as language" and despite minorities the Arab national identity is prevailing.⁸⁴ Hammad uses the distinction mentioned above to argue that Arabism could not die. He believes that Arab nationalist ideology and Arab nationalist movement may be considered weak. However this is attributed to political factors that followed the 1967 defeat in the war with Israel.⁸⁵

⁸¹ Muhammad A. Khalafallah, interview with the author, Cairo; 23.4.1995.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Majdiy Hammad, interview with the author, Cairo; 30.4.1995.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

Referring to the rise of political Islam Hammad explains that Arab nationalism is not defunct since "what happened after 1967 was a change in the relative weight of these trends and that does not mean the supremacy of any of them at the expense of the others."⁸⁶ Hammad attributes what seemed to be a decline in Arab nationalism to the "loss of efficiency at the level of nationalist ideology and its inability to understand world and regional developments and at the level of political movement that failed to realise the goal of unity."⁸⁷

It seems that Hammad's approach, despite its recognition of multiplicity within the Arab nation, still focuses on the effects of external factors such as imperialism in determining the features of the Arab world. The view that gives primacy to external factors does not give proper weight to the divisions within the Arab world and within each country as well. It does not count for the process of fragmentation at the societal level that reaches the point of atomization. This can be understood in the Arab east in particular where this process of atomization involved ethnicity, religion, the value system and politics. This impedes integration at the particularist territorial state level.

But despite the availability of these views of a traditional nature there is a consensus among the writers and intellectuals interviewed in criticising traditional Arab nationalist thought. The common held view is that traditional thought misjudged the issue of the Arab nation. It underestimated if not totally ignored multiplicity at all levels and was concerned only to

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

emphasise the uniting factors of an Arab nation.⁸⁸ It can not be said that the old paradigm of an Arab nation is entirely dead since the new paradigm still carries some components of the old one. The contributions analysed here reveal a dialectical relationship between the old and the new paradigms as far as the concept of the Arab nation is concerned. The main feature of the new paradigm is its recognition of the multiplicity within the Arab world.

Saiyyd Yasiyn attributes this change of view to the waning of the idea that establishes an automatic link between the nation and the state.⁸⁹ He explains that while the nation is a "sociological concept that establishes national entity on cultural and historical factors" this does not mean a "determinist link between nation and state."⁹⁰ Yasiyn's approach does not exclude the importance of the cultural and historical factors. He argues that these factors should not disguise the "multiplicity involved in this unity."⁹¹ If factors that define the idea of an Arab nation are the outcome of the common Arab history, the "social history ... is distinctive in each Arab country and could not be repeated since it played a vital role in defining distinctive particularistic or regional personalities."⁹²

⁸⁸ The majority of Egyptian and all Moroccan Intellectuals Interviewed agree on this point.

⁸⁹ Saiyyd Yasin, interview with the author, Cairo; 23, 26.4.1995

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

Yasiyn distinguishes according to this view between what he terms "the principal system and subsystems. The different Arab personalities have common features which make for unity while each of them has its own characteristics making for subsystems that do not contradict the system."⁹³ The Arab personality expresses an Arab nation which is founded on "a principal mode of production that evolved and developed in all Arab countries in similar phases and a superstructure with its main components of common historical experience, Arabic language and common cultural heritage."⁹⁴

This does not exclude the existence of "regional or particularistic personalities. On the contrary the supposition that a principal system exists emphasises the existence of these subsystems."⁹⁵ This is not to suggest that these are closed and static structures since they "change according to the change of the mode of production or the changes in the main ingredients of socio-political formation."⁹⁶ Arab personality is a dynamic conception of nation and community. It recognises particularism and multiplicity, argues for the accident of unity at one stage and does not exclude its possibility in another stage. It is a conception that "recognises the abundant multiplicity in the Arab

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Saiyyd Yasiyn, "al-Shakhsiyya al-'Arabiyya: al-Nasaq al-Raiyyis wa al-Ansaq al-Far'iyya" (The Macro System and the Subsystems), in al-Hauwiyya al-'Arabiyya Biyna al-Wahda wa al-Tanauw (Arab Identity Between Unity and Multiplicity) Papers presented at the First Gathering of Tunisian and Egyptian Members of Faculties, 12-17 April 1978 (Tunis; Markaz al-Buhuwth wa al-Dirasaat al-Ijtima'iyya wa al-Iqtisadiyya, 1979) Arabic Text (Present Author's Translation) p. 172.

⁹⁵ Ibid, p. 173.

⁹⁶ Ibid, p. 173.

region and keeps it within the general frame of unity in multiplicity."⁹⁷

From the analysis of the contributions above it is clear that Arab intellectuals differ in evaluating the factors that make the Arab nation a living entity. Those who emphasise the concept of an Arab nation, albeit in rather metaphysical sense, do not give proper attention to local particularism and concentrate on the common markers of the Arabs. Those who argue for multiplicities give prominence to social and cultural factors that make the local particularism and the multiplicity of identities. They view these as supportive of integration. Accordingly cultural multiplicity is a fertilising factor that enriches Arab identity. Despite the recognition of the multiplicity of identity at the ethnic, religious and cultural levels these contributions emphasise the relationship between Arabism and Islam. This relationship is seen in dialectical terms wherein Arabism is not a racial quality and Islam is not a metaphysical quality. This is essentially the view expressed by secularly-oriented Arab intellectuals who, like the Egyptian Copt Ghaliy Shukriy, allocate to Islam a major role in the formation of the Arab nation.⁹⁸

Shukriy argues that there had existed no Arab nation before Islam. Islam "was the decisive factor in the formation of the Arab nation."⁹⁹ This role is not completely peculiar to Islam. Shukriy argues that "Eastern Christianity participated in the

⁹⁷ Ibid, p. 173.

⁹⁸ Ghaliy Shukriy, interview with the author, Cairo; 30.4.1995

⁹⁹ Ibid.

making of the Arab nation ... this is not to say that religion per se, Islam or Christianity, united the Arabs but this is a reference to a cultural role and a civilisational role detached from religion as a theology."¹⁰⁰ Assigning religion a role of ideology is what Shukriy considers appropriate in assessing the role of Islam and Eastern Christianity in forming the Arab nation. He explains this in the role played by Eastern Christianity and early Islam through their principles of justice, equality, dialogue, and rationality.¹⁰¹

But despite the appearance of a new paradigm a general survey of the contributions by Arab intellectuals in the 1980s reveals that concepts like nation, nationalism, and Arab unity have different implications. This was clear in the contributions of a large number of participants at a conference of Arab intellectuals organised by the Centre for Studies of Arab Unity in Beirut on the topic of Arab unity.¹⁰² In the conference differences regarding the concept of nation and on deciding a historical point wherein the Arab nation was formed were very wide.

It could be noted that the literature confuses concepts and terms like watan: homeland, umma: nation, sha'b: people, wataniyya: patriotism, qutriyya: particularism and qawmiyya: nationalism. These are used to denote a variety of meanings. For instance watan from which wataniyya is derived is used to imply particularistic territorial Arab states which are sometimes seen

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² A. Duri et al, al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya, op. cit.

as nation-states, whereas qawmiyya refers to the Arab nation. Despite the agreement that there is an Arab nation the contributions still contain undefined and ambiguous terms such as the Arab peoples, the Arab world, the Arab people, the Arab homeland and the Arab states.¹⁰³

This may very well be seen as an indication of the lack of a cohesive theoretical framework of nation and state and therefore undermines the structure of Arab nationalist ideology. Arab intellectuals have difficulties in defining these concepts. This may be explained in the possible effects of such activity. Clear cut definitions may impose the choice between two alternatives: either in rejecting the concept of an Arab nation and therefore giving credit to particularist nations within the boundaries of each Arab state and assign it the quality of modern nation-states, or remaining loyal to an abstract nation. Choosing either alternative would either give legitimacy to the idea of an Arab world made of human communities that have linguistic and cultural ties or reject the concept of particularistic homeland, watan, and particularistic people, sha'b, in favour of an Arab homeland and an Arab people.

The concept of an Arab nation is a problematic one. Affected by the European concept of the nation Arab intellectuals find the Arab nation something that is beyond material sense. It lacks a form of political unity despite the spread of the view which sees no automatic link between nation and state. This may explain the

¹⁰³ This also applies to the official state level. some Arab states call their national anthem qawmiy implying nationhood while other states call it wataniy implying only their state level. This is also the case with national guards, parliaments (where they exist anyway) and economies.

widely held view in the 1980s that there are levels of identity or the view that argues for the multiplicity of identities. Arab intellectuals when dealing with these issues are faced by the fact that the particularist identity has become institutionalised in a particular state whereas history made a loyalty to the Arab nation. But loyalty to an Arab nation lacks a homeland with defined boundaries and lacks a state. Therefore it is sometimes linked to history, to heritage, to language and nationalist feeling or to economic interests.

There are attempts at resolving this problematic question but with no final success so far in transcending cultural and linguistic criteria. The dilemma of reconciling plurality, multiplicity and unity constitutes the essence of attempts to define Arab identity. If treated in a dialectical sense it may be possible to argue that the Arabs belong together without being the same. The content of Arab identity therefore means that the Arabs have a multiplicity of affiliations or identities and a sense of belonging. Reconciling these identities is still the most challenging task confronting the Arabs. It hinders the effort at unity. It stands as an obstacle to achieving aims which have occupied a central place in their thought since the attempt at nahda, renaissance, in the nineteenth century.

It is clear from the discussion that the new contributions still carry some of the features of the old paradigm. What is meant by a dialectic between paradigms? No paradigm loses the battle completely. The new paradigm however has new features of its own. It is almost free from the simple naïve linguistic, historical or religious concepts of nation. It is substituting

pragmatism for the romanticism and past nostalgia. There is to be found clear indications of the new paradigm in the almost total rejection of the automatic link between nation and state. It is more realistic in understanding the multiplicities in the Arab world. Pragmatism and realism are indeed the main features of the new emerging paradigm of Arab nationalism. This can be further understood in the contributions dealing with issues of minorities and democracy as will be explained below.

4-2: Arabism, Islam and Secularism: The Unsolved Debate

The assessment of the relation between Arabism, secularism and Islam has been central to debates within Arab thought since the beginning of this century. The fact that Arabisation and Islamisation were taking place simultaneously brought the internationalist dimension of Islam and the formation of Arab nationalism together into the debates.¹⁰⁴ Arab nationalist thought driven by its desire to breakaway from the Ottoman Empire stressed that Arabism was compatible with Islam. Arab nationalist thought was influenced by the contributions of Islamic reformists. The reformists argued that Islam was compatible with western ideas and liberal thought. This set the tone for Arab nationalist thought which assumed that Arab nationalism could be reconciled with Islam.

(i) Arabism, Islam or Secularism

Arab nationalists maintained that Arab nationalism was an

¹⁰⁴ Samir Amin, "Ta'liyyq" (A Comment), in A. Duri et al, al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya, op. cit., p. 1041.

appropriate way of liberating and advancing one Muslim nation i.e. the Arab nation. Islam was considered a cultural component of Arabism and a cultural heritage of Muslim and Christian Arabs alike. However this emphasise on Islam as a context of the Arab nation could not mean a clear cut secularism. When secularism was advocated it was only in a very ambiguous terms to avoid upsetting the feelings of the Muslim majority. This was particularly the case with Christian Arab nationalists. Nevertheless, as chapter three shows, the clear call for a secular Arab nationalism was made by the Muslim Husry who saw no place for religion in the formation of the nation.

The trend was to underplay secularism and stress the role of Islam as the civilisation of the Arabs and their culture. The stress on Islam also served the purpose of cementing the struggle against foreign domination. This was particularly true in the case of the Maghrib where Islam and Arabism were inextricably linked.¹⁰⁵ In the Mashriq also the linkage of Arabism and what the Arabs saw in their heritage, which could not be separated from Islam, was instrumental in the struggle as it was during the early Arab nahda of the nineteenth century when the emphasis was on Arab culture and heritage.

The clear indication was that Arab nationalism could not isolate itself from Islam and this continued to be the case till the period of our investigation. Arab nationalism kept alive the secular flavour of Husry and supplemented it by the addition of economic factors.¹⁰⁶ Advocating socialist ideas and the

¹⁰⁵ M. 'Abid Jabiriy, interview with the author.

¹⁰⁶ Saiyyd Yasiyn, Tahliyl Madmun, op. cit., pp. 128-130.

justification of this would-be secularism by reference to Islam meant that this secularism was only a shy one.¹⁰⁷ Therefore traditional Arab nationalist thought while attempting to define the relationship between Islam and nationalism often ended where it started, i. e. with the glorification of Arabism and the neglect of the political aspects of Islam.

Although the inclusion of Islam in Arab nationalism and using it a frame of reference helped regimes such as that of Nasser gain wide popular support and strike against Muslim fundamentalism, the view towards secularism remained essentially ambiguous. The confrontation between Arab nationalist regimes and Muslim fundamentalists in the 1950s and 1960s brought the issue to the fore. The setbacks of Arab nationalism in the 1970s, the failure of development at the state level, the effects of the Iranian Islamic revolution and the civil war in Lebanon reopened the debate on the relationship between Arabism, secularism and Islam and lent it a sense of urgency.¹⁰⁸

The Islamist trend opened fire at the Arabists. They saw the setbacks of Arab nationalists as evidence of the unsuitability of secular ideas. The Arabists had to provide a response and to take into consideration the rising appeal of political Islam or

¹⁰⁷ Fahmiyya Sharaf al-Diyn, "Makaanat al-Diyn wa Athuruh fiy al-Fikr al-Qawmiy al-'Arabiyy al-Mu'asir" (the Position and Role of Religion in Contemporary Arab Nationalist Thought), in Ma'an Ziyada (ed), Buhwath fiy al-Fikr al-Qawmiy al-'Arabiyy: Ishkaliyyaat Nazariyya, vol. 2, First Edition (Beirut; Ma'had al-Innmaa al-'Arabiyy, 1985) p. 322.

¹⁰⁸ For an analysis of these factors see: F. Ajami, The Arab Predicament: Arab Political Thought and Practice Since 1967, (London; Cambridge University Press, 1992) pp. 60-73, and for an Arab nationalist view see: Ali E. Hillal Dessouki and Jamiyl Mattar, al-Nizam al-Iqlimiy al-'Arabiyy: Dirasa fiy al-'Alaqaat al-Siyyasiyya al-'Arabiyya, Fifth Edition (Beirut; Markaz Dirasat al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya, 1986) pp. 53-54, pp. 245-257.

declare the end of secularism and probably Arab nationalism itself. In the circumstances Arab nationalist thought attempted to provide a new approach to the issues at stake. No longer could the issue of secularism, Arabism and Islam be brushed aside by the same old compromise. Arab nationalist thought is required by the Islamists to do justice to the political components of Islam. The issue that hitherto could be obscured by the achievements of Arab nationalism, all history now, has become a political and intellectual challenge.

(ii) The New Debates

The 1980s saw intense debates of the issues of Arabism, secularism and Islam. This serious debate of secularism, explains Aziz al-Azmeh, was not hitherto possible because secularism was not debated as a problematic issue.¹⁰⁹ This is also because secular institutions were not considered as opposing a religious project to transform society. However the rise of forces and, where applicable, institutions hostile to secularism made secularists realise the need to react to the political designs of the Islamists who want to restructure Arab society on the basis of religious fundamentalism.¹¹⁰ The following is a discussion of some of the contributions to the debates. The aim is to see how Arab nationalist thought responded to the new challenge? Has it been able to depart from its previous standpoint or has it bowed to the Islamist pressure? Has there

¹⁰⁹ Aziz al-Azmeh, "al-'Ilmaniyya wa Tahuwlaat al-Mujtama'at al-'Arabiyya" Dirasaat 'Arabiyya, vol. 11\12, (1994) p. 3.

¹¹⁰ Ibid, p. 3.

been any intellectual renewal of Arab nationalist thought towards these issues?

One of the primary sources of the debate on Arabism, secularism and Islam is the conference devoted to these issues organised by the Beirut-based Centre for the Studies of Arab Unity (Markaz Dirasat al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya). The conference was held in 1980 at a time when the Islamists were proud of the example set out by the Iranian Islamic revolution. The pan-Arabists, however, were frustrated at the retreat of Arab nationalism, the rise of particularist and regionalist interests and the divisions in the Arab world.¹¹¹ The conference was indicative of the views of the Islamist and the pan-Arabist trends. It was attended by intellectuals who represented a multitude of ideological orientations and generations. The deliberations of the conference showed the complexities of the issue. The obvious result was a great gap between the views of the participants according to their ideological attachments. The discussion below will give examples of these views.

The Lebanese writer Jusiyyf Mughiyzil considered Arabism older than Islam even though it interacted with it during the first five centuries of their common history. After this period Arabism was affected by many other factors "that come from our history like Christianity and from others like liberalism, socialism and technology etc."¹¹² This view emphasises the

¹¹¹ The papers presented at the conference were published by Markaz Dirasat al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya in a huge book of more than seven hundred pages: Muhammad A. Khalafallah et al, al-Qawmiyya al-'Arabiyya wa al-Islam, (Seminar Papers) Second Edition (Beirut; Markaz Dirasat al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya, 1982)

¹¹² Jusiyyf Mughiyzil, "Ta'liyyq" (A Commentary), in Muhammad A. Khalafallah et al, al-Qawmiyya al-'Arabiyya wa al-Islam, op. cit., p. 131.

relationship between Islam and Arabism while confining it to the realm of heritage. Mughiyzil affirms that Islam is "part of our national heritage which we must preserve and maintain without ignoring other factors."¹¹³ Mughiyzil's approach is a reflection of his concerns as a Christian Lebanese. His view is an attempt to underplay the role of religion and its relationship to Arabism. This is explained by his deep resentment of the consequences of religious and sectarian divisions that led his country to a devastating civil war. He argues that religion should be confined to the realm of heritage and not to loyalties, identities and politics.

The alternative is to secularise society. Secularism is the appropriate formula since it is the system of "religious freedom and human dignity."¹¹⁴ Mughiyzil founds his call for secularism on the premise that it not only guarantees the separation of the spiritual from the temporal but also is a "fundamental condition for the realisation of the unity of society."¹¹⁵ However his approach does not count for the differences in the interpretations of religion. He is not clear on what he means by Islam or Christianity? The ambiguity concerning these is an evidence of the sort of theoretical deficiencies Arab nationalist thought suffers from.

The Lebanese historian Ma'an Ziyada acknowledges the role

¹¹³ Ibid, p. 131.

¹¹⁴ Jusiyf Mughiyzil, "al-Islam wa al-Masihiyya wa al-Qawmiyya al-'Arabiyya wa al-'Ilmaniyya"(Islam, Christianity, Arab Nationalism and Secularism), in Muhammad A. Khalafallah etal, al-Qawmiyya al-'Arabiyya wa al-Islam, op. cit., p. 382.

¹¹⁵ Ibid, p. 384.

played by Islam in forming the Arab nation. "Islam along with Arabic language united the Arab tribes. It melted the Arabised groups in the pot of a united entity bound by Arabism."¹¹⁶ This is to distinguish between Arabism as a historically accomplished social formation and Arab nationalism that seeks the "establishment of a new society. A society that has its legitimacy in the people not in the Islamic Shari'a." Arab nationalism here is seen in secular terms in contrast to an Arabism that was marked by a formative role of Islam.¹¹⁷

The Egyptian writer Muhammad 'Amarah rejects confining Islam to the realm of heritage. He still sees the great potential of Islam. Any restriction of Islam to the position of heritage is to jeopardize its relationship with Arabism. Heritage should be considered "the active and evasive spirit in the mind of the nation; its consciousness and sentiment that guarantee its continuation."¹¹⁸ Any other view would lead to its contradiction with Arab nationalism, a contradiction which is otherwise artificially stimulated. Islam is the protector of the Arab nation against its enemies.¹¹⁹

'Amarah thinks that the confusion surrounding this relationship stems from the failure to distinguish between the meaning of relevant concepts. He argues that the misuse of the

¹¹⁶ Ma'an Ziyada, "Ta'liq"(A commentary), in Muhammad A. Khalafallah etal, al-Qawmiyya al-'Arabiyya wa al-Islam, op. cit., p. 131.

¹¹⁷ Ibid, p. 132.

¹¹⁸ Muhammad 'Amarah, "Ta'liq" (A Commentary), in Muhammad A. Khalafallah etal, al-Qawmiyya al-'Arabiyya wa al-Islam, op. cit., p. 137.

¹¹⁹ Muhammad 'Amarah, "al-Jami'a al-'Arabiyya wa al-Jami'a al-Islamiyya"(The Arab League and the Islamic League), in Muhammad A. Khalafallah etal, al-Qawmiyya al-'Arabiyya wa al-Islam, op. cit., p. 148.

concept of the nation by the Islamists to denote "a concept of Islamic nationalism which refers in the Islamist terminology to the community of Muslims as a nation and nationalism" confuses it with the European concept of the nation.¹²⁰ 'Amarah explains that the concept of Islamic nationalism does not imply "the attribution of the nationalist qualities to the Islamic community as the case with the nation in European thought." Therefore the Arabs are "a distinct nation."¹²¹ 'Amarah explains that the confusion about this relationship is rooted in the Ottoman oppression of the Arabs. Arabists had no option but to underplay the role of Islam while trying to assert their identity against a government that exploited Islam and the pan-Islamist idea to crush their opposition.¹²²

How does this approach view secularism? 'Amarah argues that Islam is the "eternal message of the Arab nation; the Arab nation owes its leading position to Islam and it owes it its thought, customs, traditions and psychological composition that distinguishes it from other nations."¹²³ Obviously this would give no place for secularism. 'Aamrah argues that the adoption of secularism into Arab nationalist thought was incidental. It was an expression of the Arab desire to be independent from the Turks. Secularism was later on stimulated by Christian missionaries and colonial powers and by the westernised

¹²⁰ Ibid, p. 151.

¹²¹ Ibid, p. 151.

¹²² Ibid, p. 162.

¹²³ Ibid, p. 175.

intelligentsia.¹²⁴ Given that secularism was an alien idea to Arab culture it is therefore not appropriate for Arab progress.¹²⁵

This approach is typical of the Islamist trend which does not value the Arab nation out of its Islamic context. The main concern of this trend is to locate the Arab nation within the Islamic concept of the umma. It attempts to reinterpret Islamic history and to inject Arab nationalism with an Islamic content. This view is also expressed, though for a different aim, by the Lebanese Menh al-Sulh.¹²⁶ He sees no separation between Arabism and Islam since "the Arab nation was formed and entered history as it was making Islam. Islam was born and reached its momentum while it was making the Arab nation."¹²⁷ Although Sulh acknowledges the occurrence of separation between Arab nationalism and Islam during the period when Arab nationalism had some secular orientations, he argues that the later emphasis on Islam by Arab nationalist thought left no room for contradiction.¹²⁸

However, the ambiguity is cleared once it is discovered that Sulh's employment of Islam is identical with that of traditional Arab nationalist thought. Sulh views Islam as a cultural heritage

¹²⁴ Ibid, pp. 167-169.

¹²⁵ Muhammad 'Amarah, "al-Islam wa al-Qawmiyya al-'Arabiyya wa al-'Ilmaniyya" (Islam, Arab Nationalism and Secularism), Shoun Arabiyya (Arab Affairs) Year 7, vol. 12 (May 1980) pp. 67-92.

¹²⁶ Menh al-Sulh, "al-Tamaiyuz wa al-Takamul Biyna al-Qawmiyya al-'Arabiyya wa al-Islam" (the Distinctiveness and the Integration of Arab Nationalism and Islam), in Muhammad A. Khalafallah et al, al-Qawmiyya al-'Arabiyya wa al-Islam, op. cit., p. 223.

¹²⁷ Ibid, p. 223.

¹²⁸ Ibid, pp. 216-218.

of the Arabs. Islam becomes void of any political implications. It represents for the Arab nation the "most indispensable component of national culture of every Arab Muslim and none Muslim alike."¹²⁹ This view echoes the concern of Arab nationalists to avoid the sensitivity of religious feeling. However, it still cannot answer the question of political Islam. It underplays secularism and attempts to portray Islam as a revolutionary and progressive culture that accommodates nationalist ideology.¹³⁰

Another view that sees no contradiction between Arabism and Islam is that of the Egyptian Ahmed K. Abulmajd. He suggests that a contradiction should not exist anyway since Arabism and Islam are expressions of two different contents. He explains that nationalism is "an expression of an identification with a nation ... that has common feelings of belonging created by common qualities such as language." Therefore, the nation refers to "a social and psychological incident of historical root."¹³¹ As to Islam, Abulmajd denies the existence of "any obligatory provisions or codes within it that account for social incidents." This is to imply that the inquiry into Islam's stand towards nationalism is an "impossible question that should not be made" because it would be a problematic one.¹³²

Pan-Islamism is "a political call and movement seeking the

¹²⁹ Ibid, p. 223.

¹³⁰ Ibid, p. 223.

¹³¹ Ahmed K. Abulmajd, Hiwar la Muwajaha (A Dialogue Not A Confrontation) Second Edition, (Cairo; Dar al-Shuwruk, 1988) Arabic Text (Present Author's Translation) pp. 145-146.

¹³² Ibid, p. 146.

realisation of religious and civilisational reality of Muslims into a political reality ... so Muslims are organised in a single political association not necessarily implying a single state."¹³³ This is to make a distinction between pan-Arabism and pan-Islamism on the basis of their different political goals. If pan-Arabism aims at establishing a united state of the Arabs this does not contradict the idea of the Islamic umma nor does it inflict any harm on Muslim Arabs' association with it. This is because the internationalism of Islam is not supposed to "lead to the unity of the Islamic umma."¹³⁴

But this raises the question of the relationship again. How does Abulmajd view the relationship between Arabism and Islam? Abulmajd considers Islam "the civilisation of the Arabs", but how does this view the position of Christian Arabs? Abulmajd emphasises that nationalism is "an expression of a being while Islam is an expression of oughtness." Hence, any further discussion of their contradiction or compatibility is meaningless. However Islam provided this nation with "values, principles and ways of life as well as the doctrine itself." Nevertheless, to belong to such a nation is not to impose "the admission of all this civilisational content."¹³⁵ Would this then allow for secularism? Abulmajd is clearer here. He seeks to "drop the call for the secularisation of nationalism." Though he

¹³³ Ibid, p. 147.

¹³⁴ Ibid, p. 147.

¹³⁵ Ahmed K. Abulmajd, "Nahuw Sigha Jadiyda lil 'Alaaqa Biyna al-Qawmiyya al-'Arabiyya wa al-Islam" (Towards a New Formula of the Relationship Between Arab Nationalism and Islam), in Muhammad A. Khalafallah et al, al-Qawmiyya al-'Arabiyya wa al-Islam, op. cit., p. 529.

rejects theocratic rule he does see that as consistent with his rejection of "the separation of religion and the state i.e. not allocating religion any share in social organisation."¹³⁶

Abdulmajid believes that secularism would "create more problems and difficulties than it could solve." He points out to another problem inherent in the implementation of secularism in the Arab world. Since the majority of the Arabs are Muslims the implementation of secularism, though may be appropriate for the Christian minority, would not be neutral towards religions. Secularism would, from a Christian point of view, be compatible with "render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's and unto God that which is God's."¹³⁷ Nevertheless this would lead the Muslims into contradiction with Islam. Therefore the application of this secularist principle would "favour the view of a religious minority at the expense of the majority."¹³⁸

The main thesis of 'Ismat Saiyf Duwla is the difference he sees between Islam and Arabism as referring to two different identities or attachments. Arabism is as an identification with a nation while Islam is an identification with a religious doctrine.¹³⁹ Saiyf Duwla explains that any contradiction between Arabism and Islam is improper. In the Holy Quran, explains Saiyf Duwla, the word umma has many different meanings. To restrict the umma to that of an Islamic nation is a misinterpretation. He explains that the term umma carries within it multiplicity and

¹³⁶ Ibid, p. 530.

¹³⁷ Ibid, p. 531.

¹³⁸ Ibid, p. 531.

¹³⁹ 'Ismat Saiyf Duwla, 'An al-'Uruwba wa al-Islam, op. cit., pp. 10-15.

distinction between a variety of communities.¹⁴⁰ Accordingly Muslims are a "nation distinguished from other people by their identification and attachment with Islam" while the Arabs are a nation "distinctive when compared with other peoples and nations by the same criteria that distinguishes other nations from peoples and tribes."¹⁴¹

Saiyf Duwla makes the relationship between Islam and the Arab nation an organic one. He considers that "the Arab nation is the creation of Islam. Before Islam there had existed no Arab nation."¹⁴² This refers to his concept of the nation discussed earlier on. But if this approach helps in making the distinction between an Arab and Islamic nation it is still problematic. Since that Islamic nation is founded on an identification with Islam it surely includes the Muslim Arabs. This dual identification creates a problem of identity and loyalty for the Arab. The Muslim Arabs would seem obliged to belong to two nations simultaneously. Which identity are they to give loyalty and priority to? As Muslims are they to strive for the unity of the Islamic umma or do they, as Arabs, have only to accommodate pan-Arab unity? Therefore this approach leads the argument back to square one. How does this approach deal with the issue of religious minority and how it views secularism?

Saiyf Duwla allocates a considerable part of his book on Arabism and Islam to a discussion of secularism. However his approach to secularism is somehow unique. He starts by denying

¹⁴⁰ Ibid, pp. 15-21.

¹⁴¹ Ibid, pp. 21-22.

¹⁴² Ibid, p. 33.

any contradiction between secularism and religion. He attributes the view that equates secularism with antireligion to the misinterpretation of its history in Europe. According to Saiyf Duwla secularism "evolved with Christianity as one of its doctrines. It then became one of its corner stones and part of its theological heritage."¹⁴³ Saiyf Duwla explains that secularism in Europe established an order that is "secular in its view of religion, individualistic towards society, liberal towards the state, and capitalist towards the economy."¹⁴⁴

This seems to be a comprehensive view of secularism that distances it from being merely antireligion. Therefore Saiyf Duwla is dismayed by those who think that secularism would do away with religion. Applied to the Arab world how would this concept of secularism work? Saiyf Duwla's answer is quite unexpected. He sees no need for secularism in the Arab world. He does not use any of the arguments other Arab intellectuals use in denying the need for secularism. Even though he appreciates the existence of the Christian minority he argues that it needs no secularism. Both Arab Christianity and Islam have no provisions that would imply a need for secularism since they establish a firm separation between religion and state.¹⁴⁵

However Saiyf Duwla provides another argument which in his opinion further excludes the need for secularism in the Arab case. He considers all Arabs, Muslims and Christian alike, to belong to "an Islamic personality no matter what the religion of

¹⁴³ Ibid, p. 119.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid, p. 145.

¹⁴⁵ 'Isamat Saiyf al-Dawla, interview with the author.

its bearer may be."¹⁴⁶ To support this argument Saiyf Duwla provides historical material and analysis of government in Islam. He elaborates on issues related to political and social relations according to the main principles of Islam. His aim seems to be centred round his pan-Arabist orientation. Therefore he uses the material to deny the need for secularism. It seems that Saiyf Duwla's approach is concerned with emphasising the unity of the Arabs and consolidating the idea of the Arab nation. To him the idea of an Arab Islamic personality encompassing Christian and Muslim Arabs is more important than the question of minorities and secularism. Therefore he considers any call for secularism a threat to the Arab nation.¹⁴⁷

This view is also expressed by the Lebanese Khaliyl A. Khaliyl. He calls for the unity of the Arabs regardless of their religious differences. He believes that the division of the Arabs into "an Islamic majority and a Christian minority is serving their enemies."¹⁴⁸ This is similar to Saiyf Duwla's view and it shows that some Arab nationalists are only concerned with preserving the cultural unity of the Arab nation. Khaliyl thinks that Islam is the most unifying factor of the Arabs. He calls for a "cultural Islam that can unite all the Arabs."¹⁴⁹ However Khaliyl realises that an argument of this sort is unable to solve

¹⁴⁶ 'Isamat Saiyf Duwla, 'An al-Uruwba wa al-Islam, op. cit., p. 245.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid, p. 264.

¹⁴⁸ Khaliyl A. Khaliyl, al-'Arab wa al-Dimuqratiyya: Bahth fiy Siyyasat al-Mustaqbal (The Arabs and Democracy: An Inquiry Into the Politics of the Future) First Edition (Beirut; Dar al-Hadatha, 1984) Arabic Text (Present Author's Translation) p. 66.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid, p. 66.

the problem facing the Arabs. He therefore calls for the establishment of a new concept of the Arab nation.

In this new proposed concept Islam would be the culture without any religious implications. The Arab nation would not be based on

an ambiguous ideal of the nation encircled in an inclusive religious ideal. This religious ideal is similar to a shallow epistemological shell that can no longer be relied upon as a fence against political, scientific and technological modern knowledge.¹⁵⁰

Arab nationalist thought is required to produce a new concept of "a common Arab nation seeking internal understanding and realisation." This is a call for a concept of an Arab nation, based on living experience based on rationality and common interests, that would be able to avoid the struggle of identities. Although Khaliyl does not explicitly refer to secularism it is implicit in the quotations cited above.¹⁵¹

Secularism, however it is presented and in any form, is totally resented by the Egyptian lawyer and historian Tariq al-Bishriy.¹⁵² Despite his appreciation of the alliance between Arab nationalism and Islam against their common enemies he still sees a reason for their contradiction. The source of this contradiction is the secular orientation of Arab nationalism. Bishriy explains that had it not been for the secular elements in Arab nationalism it would have not been an ideology confined to an elite. The masses are Muslims and secularism does not

¹⁵⁰ Ibid, p. 105.

¹⁵¹ Ibid, pp. 105-106.

¹⁵² Tariq al-Bishriy, interview with the author, Cairo; 26.4.1995.

satisfy their needs.¹⁵³

By insisting on secularism Arab nationalism is introducing an alien concept into the culture of the masses.¹⁵⁴ Secularism is a "western implantation" that attempts to transform Islam into a "Protestant Islam confined to the individual's relationship with God."¹⁵⁵ Therefore secularism is restricting the inclusiveness of Islam which is a religion and state. Although secularism does not inflict any harm on Christianity it does take away vital components of Islam's essence.¹⁵⁶ Arab nationalism must be decoupled from secularism or it will remain an ideology of an elite alienated from the masses.¹⁵⁷

The contributions discussed above were made in the early 1980s. They echoed the differences between the Arab nationalists and Islamists that marked the 1950s and the 1960s. The clear conclusion that can be drawn is that both sides of the debate were loyal to their traditions. In substance the contributions discussed above show the poverty of the arguments presented by both sides. Compared with the ideas of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries these contributions offer nothing new. In the words of Constantine Zurayq, the contributions made at the conference on Arab nationalism and Islam in 1980 were

¹⁵³ Tariq Bishriy, "al-Khulf Biyna al-Nukhba wa al-Jamahiyyr Izaa al-'Alaaqa Biyna al-Qawmiyya al-'Arabiyya wa al-Islam" (The Separation Between the Elite and the Masses Towards the Relationship Between Arab Nationalism and Islam), in Muhammad A. Khalafallah et al, al-Qawmiyya al-'Arabiyya wa al-Islam, op. cit., p. 289, p. 287.

¹⁵⁴ Tariq Bishriy, interview with the author.

¹⁵⁵ Tariq Bishriy, "al-Khulf Biyna al-Nukhba", op. cit., p. 291.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid, pp. 292-296.

¹⁵⁷ Tariq Bishriy, interview with the author.

frustrating. "Despite the changes of circumstances the quality of the contributions is below those of the pioneers."¹⁵⁸

(iii) The Unsolved Debate

The years right after the convening of the conference witnessed many political and intellectual developments. Prominent among these developments was the rise and increase in the strength of political Islam and the decline of Arab nationalist movements. It is important to see how these developments impinged on the debates on Arabism, secularism and Islam. The 1980s also saw newcomers to the debates. The new participants were Maghribi intellectuals who hitherto were absent from the scene. This is a very important development since it offers another level for analysis and comparison. In the Maghrib there are no religious minorities, except for the tiny Jewish community in Morocco, therefore the contributions of Maghribi intellectuals are not affected by religious divisions particularly since the Maghrib belongs to one Islamic sect, Sunni Islam.¹⁵⁹

The Arabists were trying to reconsider their position in light of the experience of the last three decades. They had to look for alternatives. That involved an attempt to build bridges with the Islamists with whom they shared an affiliation to the idea of an Arab nation. The dialogue with those Islamists reflected a willingness for compromise on the part of Arab nationalists. One of the steps taken was the convening of a

¹⁵⁸ Constantine Zurayq, "Mulahadaat Khitamiyya" (Concluding Remarks), in Muhammad A. Khalafallah et al, al-Qawmiyya al-'Arabiyya wa al-Islam, op. cit., p. 545.

¹⁵⁹ M.'Abid Jabiriy, interview with the Author.

conference of the two trends. The conference, under the name of al-Hiwar al-Qawmiy al-Diniy, the Nationalist Religious Dialogue, was held in Cairo in 1989. It was designed for establishing the common factors that link both trends.¹⁶⁰ The symposium was attended by intellectuals and practitioners representing both trends.

The dialogue reflects the desire of Arab intellectuals to liberate themselves of what Belqaziyyz describes as the "psychology of the warriors."¹⁶¹ The dialogue was also a reflection of the plurality that exists within each trend. It was attended by people from different Arab countries and different generations. The discussion below will concentrate on some contributions from both trends. Emphasis will be on the contribution of the leading intellectuals of each trend and in particular on those whose earlier contributions were discussed above.

The Islamists rejected secularism as an obstacle hindering an alliance between Arab nationalism and Islam. This is the view adhered to by Tariq Bishriy and Ahmed K. Abulmajd. Bishriy repeated his previously outlined view that secularism is an alien implantation to Arab Islamic culture. Bishriy cannot perceive of an Islamic society without the implementation of the Shar'ia. Therefore the call for secularism widens the gap between Arabism

¹⁶⁰ The papers and discussions of the conference were published in: Tariq Bishriy et al, al-Hiwar al-Qawmiy al-Diniy: Auwraq wa Munaqashaat (Nationalist-Religious Dialogue) First Edition (Beirut; Markaz Dirasat al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya, 1989) Arabic Text (Present Author's Translation).

¹⁶¹ 'Abd Ilah Belqaziyyz, Ishkaliyyat al-Marqa' fiy al-Fikr al-'Arabiyy al-Mu'asir (The Problematique of The Frame of Reference in Contemporary Arab Thought) First Edition (Beirut; Dar al-Muntakhab al-'Arabiyy, 1992) Arabic Text (Present Author's Translation) p. 110.

and Islam. Secularism was a European experience and concept associated with a nationalist movement. Hence it is unscientific "imposing the same association on a different historical and civilisational context."¹⁶²

Ahmed K. Abulmajd also repeated his view that secularism is not an integral component of the nationalist principles. Therefore, he argues, those who attempt the secularisation of Arab nationalism are not honouring the nationalist principle nor are they loyal to it.¹⁶³ Muhammad 'Amarah deplores the attempt at secularising Arab nationalism. He considers secularism a "European particularity" that is not fit for the Arabs since "in Arab history there existed no contradiction between religion and state."¹⁶⁴ This view is quite a departure from 'Amarah's previous view towards secularism. It shows the extent of the influence of political Islam on some Arab intellectuals.

'Amarah had conceived a fusion of Arab nationalism and Islam. In his previous writings he attempted to provide an interpretation of Arab Islamic history within a nationalist perspective. He went as far as to suggest that the Islamic reformist movement of Wahabism and Sanusism were Arab nationalist in content. The change of heart can be explained in that 'Amarah's dissatisfaction with the performance of the Arab

¹⁶² Tariq Bishriy, "Huwla al-'Uruwba wa al-Islam" (on Arabism and Islam), in Tariq Bishriy etal, al-Hiwar al-Qawmiy al-Diniy, op. cit., p. 38.

¹⁶³ Ahmed K. Abulmajd, "Huwla al-Hiwar al-Qawmiy al-Diniy" (On the Nationalist Religious Dialogue), in Tariq Bishriy etal, al-Hiwar al-Qawmiy al-Diniy, op. cit., p. 53.

¹⁶⁴ Muhammad 'Amarah, "Huwla al-Hiwar al-Qawmiy al-Diniy" (On the Nationalist Religious Dialogue), in Tariq Bishriy etal, al-Hiwar al-Qawmiy al-Diniy, op. cit., p. 121.

nationalist movement led him to reconsider his position. 'Amarah's new stand calls for the desecularisation of Arab nationalism and its Islamicisation. He argues that the Islamicisation of Arab nationalism means that "the benefits for Arabism would be greater."¹⁶⁵ If Arabism was Islamicised it will form a step "on the ladder of Islamic identity ... its loss will be far greater and definite if it is secularised."¹⁶⁶ 'Amarah indicts secularism for the "loss of our national independence" because it is a foreign principle that seeks the separation of the inseparable, i.e. religion and state. The alternative option in 'Amarah's view is the implementation of the Shari'a. Shari'a serves the needs of Arab society and becomes a "national requirement and a task for national revolution."¹⁶⁷

This is an example of the demands the Islamists are making before the pan-Arabists. The Islamists are exploiting the weakness of the Arab nationalist movement. Initially they emphasised the compatibility of Arabism and Islam and then they called for secularism to be omitted from the nationalist discourse. Now they call for the desecularisation of Arab nationalism and the implementation of the Shari'a. The view of Islam as an inclusive social order i.e. a state and religion is expressed by all representatives of this trend. The Islamist view is clearer in the argument of the Lebanese intellectual Radwan al-Saiyyd. Saiyyd argues that Islam is not "a theological law or closed rituals; it is a model of life. It is the ecology of the

¹⁶⁵ Ibid, p. 122.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid, p. 122.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid, pp. 200-201.

united cultural life."¹⁶⁸ The nationalist secular trend, nevertheless, still maintained that secularism is the appropriate response to the situation in the Arab world. They still attempt to prove the existence of secularism within Islam itself. They argue that Islam does not contradict, but on the contrary, is compatible with secularism.¹⁶⁹

Hasan Hanafiy is proposing a modified version of secularism that stops between secularism proper and the Shari'a. He calls for the admission of some elements of secularism by realising its aims of liberty and progress while realising the demands of Shari'a.¹⁷⁰ Hanafiy distinguishes between the Shari'a and the Fiqh (jurisprudence). Shari'a is "general principles" while Fiqh is an explanation of particular circumstances and how Shari'a could be applied to them.¹⁷¹ Therefore, Shari'a is not changing while the Fiqh does so according to the changes in circumstances. This leads Hanafi to suggest that Islam does not rule out the possibility of designing formulas suitable to the changing circumstances even though they contradict Fiqh.¹⁷² This view however suffers from ambiguity since the difference between Shari'a and Fiqh is not all that easy. Therefore it seems that

¹⁶⁸ Radwan al-Saiyyd, "al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya: Nazra fiy Idyulujiyyat al-Naqaid wa al-Badail" (Arab Unity: An Overview of the Ideologies of Denial and Alternatives), in A. Duri et al, al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya, op. cit., p. 630.

¹⁶⁹ Muhammad Khalafallah, interview with the author.

¹⁷⁰ Hasan Hanafiy, "al-'Ilmaniyya wa al-Islam: al-Islam la Yahtaju ila 'Ilmaniyya Gharbiyya" (Secularism and Islam: Islam Needs No Western Secularism), in Jalawl Faiysal, (ed), Hiwar al-Mashriq wa al-Maghrib (the Dialogue of the Mashriq and the Maghrib) First Edition (Cairo; Maktabat Madbuliy, 1990) Arabic Text (Present Author's Translation) pp. 43-44.

¹⁷¹ Ibid, p. 45.

¹⁷² Ibid, p. 45.

Hanafi's thesis makes the issue more complex. This is even clearer when he uses the term secular Islam that needs no "extra secular western civilisation."¹⁷³

The secularists still argue that this is the main point when discussing secularism. They are not against religion nor is it the submission of the state. Secularism is neutral towards religion and liberates religion from state domination by identifying secular elements within Islam itself. This is the thesis put forward by 'Ali 'Abdulrazaaq in his provisions for government and that it ends up putting public interests above all.¹⁷⁴ These views were expressed during the interviews conducted by the author with a number of Arab intellectuals and scholars: Saiyyd Yasiyn, Isma'iyl Sabriy 'Abdulla 'Abdulla Diyn Ibrahiym and Kamal 'Abdullatiyf.

Sa'd Din Ibrahiym does not see a contradiction in his argument against secularism nor in the adoption of some secular elements.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷³ Ibid, p. 45.

¹⁷⁴ The Egyptian writer 'Ali 'Abdulrazaaq expressed these views. His book on government in Islam was banned to the extent it was banned. 'Abdulrazaaq himself was expelled from the 'Ulama Society after a brief intellectual court-martial defence. See his book and the documents explaining it (Muhammad 'Amarah, al-Islam wa Usul al-Hukm li al-Hukm (Government of 'Ali 'Abdulrazaaq) Second Edition (Cairo: 'Arabiyya lil Dirasaat wa al-Nashr, 1988) Arabic text and English Translation).

¹⁷⁵ Sa'd Diyn Ibrahiym, "Huwla al-Hiwar (Nationalist Religious Dialogue), in Tariq Bishriy (ed.) Diniy, op. cit., p. 244.

Hanafi's thesis makes the issue more complex than it already is. This is even clearer when he uses the same ambiguous phrase of secular Islam that needs no "extra secularism extracted from western civilisation."¹⁷³

The secularists still argue that the Islamists miss the point when discussing secularism. They argue that secularism is not against religion nor is it the submission of religion to the state. Secularism is neutral towards religions and therefore liberates religion from state domination. They point to the secular elements within Islam itself. They reiterate the same thesis put forward by 'Ali 'Abdulrazaaq that Islam has no provisions for government and that it encourages rationalism and puts public interests above all.¹⁷⁴ These views were expressed during the interviews conducted by the author of this research with a number of Arab intellectuals and particularly Samir Amin, Saiyyd Yasiyn, Isma'iyl Sabriy 'Abdullah, Ghaliy Shukriy, Sa'd Diyn Ibrahiym and Kamal 'Abdullatiyf.

Sa'd Din Ibrahiym does not see substance either in the argument against secularism nor in the arguments that call for the adoption of some secular elements.¹⁷⁵ He argues that the call

¹⁷³ Ibid, p. 45.

¹⁷⁴ The Egyptian writer 'Ali 'Abdulrazaaq was a pioneer in advocating these views. His book on government in Islam was met with great hostility to the extent it was banned. 'Abdulrazaaq himself was ousted from the Azharite 'Ulama Society after a brief intellectual court that would not consider his defence. See his book and the documents explaining the circumstances in Muhammad 'Amarah, al-Islam wa Usuwl al-Hukm li 'Ali 'Abdulrazaaq (Islam and Government of 'Ali 'Abdulrazaaq) Second Edition (Beirut; al-Muasasa al-'Arabiyya lil Dirasaat wa al-Nashr, 1988) Arabic Text (Present Author's Translation).

¹⁷⁵ Sa'd Diyn Ibrahiym, "Huwla al-Hiwar al-Qawmiy al-Diniy" (On The Nationalist Religious Dialogue), in Tariq Bishriy et al, al-Hiwar al-Qawmiy al-Diniy, op. cit., p. 244.

for the implementation of the Shari'a is problematic and falls short of answering the critical issues of political and social organisation. He throws the question at Shari'a advocates. He points to their differences in interpreting Shari'a itself. Ibrahiym highlights their differences as to the nature, the form and the purpose of the political system. He criticises their approach towards legislation and who has the right to legislate.¹⁷⁶ Since the implementation of the Shari'a would cause problems that would aggravate the already existing divisions in the Arab world secularism is the positive alternative. Ibrahiym believes that secularisation of politics provides the realistic answer to these questions. Though secularism may contradict the Shari'a it still has lot "in common with Islamic thought."¹⁷⁷

However this sincere call for secularism which Ibrahiym shares with many intellectuals like those interviewed by the author is not accepted by the Islamists. The Islamists, aware of their strengths, still consider it a camouflage of secularism and a deviation from the Islamic content of Arab culture. Their alternative is the implementation of the Shari'a.¹⁷⁸ The Islamists, however, still have to explain what that means in detail. They have to provide alternative understanding and renew themselves. To stop at calling for Shari'a and rejoice at the weakness of Arab nationalist movement would not end the debate.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁶ Ibid, p. 244.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid, p. 244.

¹⁷⁸ Tariq Bishriy, Interview with the author.

¹⁷⁹ See examples of this in the comments on Radwan Saiyyd's paper made by: Aziz Azmeh, Nasify Nasar and Ghaliy Shukriy in A. Duri etal, al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya, op. cit., pp. 649-652.

To reject secularism would lead to the "establishment of a theological state ... There is a threat that religious state poses for individual freedoms ... the dead would govern the living."¹⁸⁰

The contributions discussed above give the clear conclusion that the debate about Arabism, secularism and Islam is not settled yet. Secularism in particular was the source of major disagreement. Although its advocates somehow bowed to the pressure from the Islamists and attempted to reconcile secularism with Islam the Islamists still do not accept the offer. Even an Arabised formula of secularism is rejected as echoing imported solutions that can not win the hearts of the Muslims. The above debates, however, represent the efforts of the Mashriqi Arab intellectuals to tackle the issue. It is appropriate therefore to see how the Maghribi intellectuals dealt with the issue liberated from the complexities of religious plurality of the Mashriq. The Maghribi contributions will be analysed through the writings of Jabiriy and Belqaziyyz.

Jabiriy's approach towards the issue of secularism is peculiar to some extent. He considers that the whole debate on secularism in the Arab world is irrelevant.¹⁸¹ This is based on Jabiriy's view that secularism is "a false issue since it expresses needs in contexts that are incompatible with them."¹⁸² These needs are those of "democracy that respects minority rights and political rationalism ... these are objective needs indeed

¹⁸⁰ Saiyyd Yasiyn, interview with the author.

¹⁸¹ M. 'Abid Jabiriy, interview with the author.

¹⁸² Ibid.

... but they loose their rationality, necessity and legitimacy when expressed in an ambiguous slogan such as secularism."¹⁸³ This call is not anti religion or Islam for Jabiriy believes it does not imply the exclusion of Islam which is "an essential component of Arab existence. A spiritual Islam for the Muslim Arabs and a civilisational Islam for all Arabs Muslims and Christian alike."¹⁸⁴

It seems hard to classify Jabiriy's position towards secularism. On the one hand he sees it as inappropriate solution to the needs of the Arabs. On the other hand he provides a view of Islam that is loyal to that of traditional Arab nationalist thought on which basis it calls for secularism. In addition to this Jabiriy is trying to separate secularism from the concept of democracy and rationality which leads his idea into ambiguity. This approach may be seen as an attempt to reach a compromise between secularists and their counterparts. A compromise can be achieved by removing the idea of secularism and probably the word itself from the debates.

This falls in the line of Jabiriy's attempt to restructure the Arab mind.¹⁸⁵ Accordingly he calls for the democratisation of

¹⁸³ M. 'Abid Jabiriy, "al-Dimuqratiyya wa al-'Aqlaniyya Badal al-'Ilmaniyyah" (Democracy and Rationality Instead of Secularism) in Jaluwl Faiysal, Hiwar al-Mashriq wa al-Maghrib, op. cit., p. 46.

¹⁸⁴ M. 'Abid Jabiriy, "Min Ajl I'adat Binaa al-Fikr al-Qawmiy al-'Arabiyy" (Towards the Restructuring of Arab Nationalist Thought) in, A. Duri etal, al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya, op. cit., p. 793.

¹⁸⁵ Jabiriy's basic intellectual occupation is to try to restructure Arab mind and thought. This he attempts to achieve by providing a structural reading of Arab heritage and thought. His reading claims to be not based on ideology. It is concerned with critical issues of how Arab mind works. How it produces knowledge and systems of knowledge? How could the epistemological obstacles and crises be overcome? This, if accomplished, argues Jabiriy, would make cultural heritage relevant to present. All Jabiriy's works are devoted

Arab nationalist thought as a precondition for its victory. It is a compromise by which Arab nationalist thought coexists with all other trends. Jabiriy considers secularism an alien concept to the Arabs. Secularism came to the Arab east when it was propagated by Christian Arab intellectuals. Secularism therefore was a call for independence and it came to denote "Arabism and Arab nationalism."¹⁸⁶ At that juncture independence, unity and secularism meant "the establishment of an Arab state in the east independent from the Ottomans."¹⁸⁷

The call for independence from the Turks was struggling against the idea of pan-Islamism which the Ottoman Sultan employed to check the separatist tendency among the Arabs. Therefore, explains Jabiriy, the call for an Arab state with a secular component was directed against Turkish pan-Islamism. Arabists did not mean the "exclusion of Islam." Jabiriy, rightly, notes that in the Maghrib and the Arabian Peninsula secularism was not conceived of. Secularism was only marginally advocated in Egypt.¹⁸⁸ But if secularism was not meant for its own value during the early days of Arab nationalism, how then does Jabiriy explain secularist ideas after the independence of the Arab countries?

to his project. Particular focus may be found in his; Takuwiyun al-'Aql al-'Arabiyy: Naqd al-'Aql al-'Arabiyy (The Formation of Arab Mind: the Critique of Arab Mind) vol.1, (Beirut; Dar al-Tali'a, 1984); Buniyat al-'Aql al-'Arabiyy: Dirasa Tahliyyliyya Naqdiyya li-Nuzum al-Ma'rifa fiy al-Thakafa al-'Arabiyya (the Structure of Arab Mind: An Analytical Critical Study of Systems of Knowledge in Arab Culture)(Beirut; Markaz Dirasat al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya, 1986).

¹⁸⁶ M. 'Abid Jabiriy, "Min Ajl I'adat", op. cit., p. 796.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid, p. 796.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid, p. 796.

Jabiriy attributes secularist ideas after independence to the fear the Christian minority had towards the idea of a pan-Arab state. They feared that this proposed state would be dominated by Muslims. Therefore they called for a balancing formula that would put them on equal footing with their Muslim countrymen. That formula was secularism since it would lead to a state "based on rational democratic not religious domination."¹⁸⁹ Jabiriy's argument implies that the call for secularism was needed for making a distinction between Arabism and Islam. The secular idea was the device the Arabist movement employed to reject Turkish rule disguised in Islam while it practised policies of Turkification. The debate was not centred on secularism in contrast to Islam. Rather the debate was centred round the issues of government.¹⁹⁰

After independence this debate was "transformed into a theoretical problem, a problem of entity and identity."¹⁹¹ Jabiriy argues that lack of democracy and therefore rationality made the problem of minorities reflect itself in secular terms. The problem of religious minority in the Fertile Crescent was not considered a political problem. That eventually led to its generalisation to include the whole of the Arab world even where such problem had never existed. This, explains Jabiriy, gave birth to the problematic pair of Arabism\ Islam.¹⁹² Jabiriy argues

¹⁸⁹ Ibid, p. 796.

¹⁹⁰ M. 'Abid Jabiriy, interview with the author.

¹⁹¹ M. 'Abid Jabiriy, Ishkaliyyaat al-Fikr al-'Arabiyy al-Mu'asir, (Beirut; Markaz Dirasat al-Wahda al'Arabiyya, 1989) p. 105.

¹⁹² Ibid, p. 105.

that there is no need to debate secularism in all Arab countries. The alternative appropriate debate should be that of democracy. Unless Arab nationalist thought rids itself of the irrelevant debate on secularism, Arabism and Islam, it will be in a continuing chronic crisis.¹⁹³

The thrust of Jabiriy's argument is that the debate on secularism is a false one. He separates secularism from democracy and rationality. However his argument does solve the problem only by ignoring its relevance. This view is not accepted in the Arab east where the problem is an essential part of the debate. Jabiriy's separation of secularism, democracy and rationality is also not shared by many Arab intellectuals of secular orientations. For Samir Amin, not only is secularism necessary for the Arab world but it is "connected with democracy."¹⁹⁴ Saiyyd Yasiyn's view is that democracy and secularism are inseparable.¹⁹⁵ Ghaliy Shukriy shares the view that secularism is a "mechanism of the democratic system." It plays the role of "respecting the citizen's rights, preventing an explosion of the religious diversity and realising democracy."¹⁹⁶

Belqaziyz provides an explanation of the debates on Arabism, secularism and Islam that falls within the boundaries of intellectual history.¹⁹⁷ His explanation traces the root of the debates to the difference in the concepts of Arabism and Islam

¹⁹³ Ibid, pp. 105-106.

¹⁹⁴ Samir Amin, Interview with the author.

¹⁹⁵ Saiyyd Yasiyn, interview with the author.

¹⁹⁶ Ghaliy Shukriy, interview with the author, (Cairo; 30.4.1995).

¹⁹⁷ 'Abd Ilah Belqaziyz, interview with the author.

as incompatible identities. The conspiracy-based fear of Arab nationalism among the Islamists was sustained during the confrontation between Arab nationalist regimes and Islamic movements during the 1950s and the 1960s.¹⁹⁸ The demand of securing the rights of minorities was seen by the Islamists as a threat to those of the Muslim majority. That led to yet another psychological problem. The advocates of minority rights and secularism saw the Islamists denial of their rights as a proof of Islam's intolerance and oppression. The Islamists considered the secularists as agents of foreign powers. Taken together with the hostilities between Nasser and the Ba'thists in Syria and Iraq on the one hand and the Islamic movements in these countries on the other this scenario was the soil in which the controversy sprang.¹⁹⁹

Belqaziyyz argues that the debates on Arabism, secularism and Islam are an echo of an old debate. The current debates are a breed of the old ones. Despite its acute political appearance the controversy is epistemologically linked to Arab nahda and its problematique. The nahda was problematic by expressing itself in pairs of concepts that carry incompatibilities. This is clear in pairs such as those of "we\the other, religion\science, authenticity\ modernity, identity\ modernity, etc."²⁰⁰ These pairs had potentially involved political problems and the appearance of other problematic pairs. Belqaziyyz makes the observation that

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ 'Abd Ilah Belqaziyyz, al-Qawmiyya wa al-'Ilmaniyya: al-Idyulujiyya wa al-Tariykh, First Edition (Rabat; Dar al-Kalam, 1989) pp. 30-33.

²⁰⁰ Ibid, p. 39.

today "we can find something similar to an identification between each pair and the pair of Arab nationalism\Islam." The examples are that "Arab nationalism has been identified, in the views of nahda and contemporary nationalist intellectuals, with progress, modernity, science and modernism." The same applies to Islam which quite often is identified with "ego, authenticity and identity in a variety of interpretations."²⁰¹

It is clear from the contributions discussed above that the debates of the nahda about Arabism, secularism and Islam have been reproduced, though in new political terms. The examination of the contributions confirms Belqaziyy's thesis that Arab nationalist thought has not been able to maintain or sustain a breakaway from its attempt at nahda. There is what he calls a continuation of "two moments of the problem: the theoretical moment and the political or politicised moment."²⁰² But if this explains the problem epistemologically what kind of political explanation does Belqaziyy offer? Belqaziyy argues that the European occupation of the Arab world put political issues at the centre of Arab thought. A shift from theory to politics was definite and as long as Arab thought was occupied with political issues, this prevented any elaboration on the theoretical level. The urgency of political or politicised issues during the struggle against occupation swept away intellectual productivity. All intellectual activities were centred round producing slogans of independence and self-determination.²⁰³

²⁰¹ Ibid, p. 39.

²⁰² Ibid, p. 40.

²⁰³ 'Abd Ilah Belqaziyy, interview with the author.

Belqaziyyz argues that after the Egyptian revolution of 1952 the problematic of nahda was the arena of Arab consciousness. The achievements of Nasserism created an illusion because they were considered a realisation of nahda's aspirations.²⁰⁴ This amounted to a "psychological impediment barring the Arabs from realising the reality about the continuation of the nahda problems."²⁰⁵ However when realities hit hard after the end of the heyday of the 1950s and the 1960s "problems of the nahda returned as those of identity, modernity, Islam, nationalism, etc."²⁰⁶ Belqaziyyz explains this reproduction of the nahda issues in the nature of Arab ideology. He sees Arab ideology as an "ideology of battles i.e., an ideology of parties thinking on many issues not as intellectuals producing knowledge but as party intellectuals who produce knowledge according to their interests even if truth was sacrificed."²⁰⁷

The discussion above clearly demonstrates the absence of a coherent and balanced view of the issues of secularism and Islam. Arab nationalist thought in the 1980s seems to have maintained the previous views. Despite the apparent existence of arguments advocating secularism agreement is still not established. Differences are evident as far as the issue of the relationship between concepts of Arab nationalism, secularism and Islam is concerned. The rise in the power of political Islam obliged Arab nationalist thought to give some concessions. However, the

²⁰⁴ 'Abd Ilah Belqaziyyz, al-Qawmiyya wa al-'Ilmaniyya, op. cit., p. 43.

²⁰⁵ Ibid, p. 43.

²⁰⁶ Ibid, p. 43.

²⁰⁷ Ibid, p. 43.

Islamists seem not to have accepted this sign of good will. Attempts at dialogue have only succeeded in making political compromises that are unable to transcend old differences.

Arab nationalist thought still considers Islam a civilisation and culture of the Arabs. Even though it showed some understanding of the question of the Shari'a, the Islamists saw that a sign of weakness and an attempt to conceal the setback Arabist ideology suffered. Arab nationalist thought emphasised the historical relationship of Arabism and Islam. But the Islamists still refuse to abandon their long-held view that Islam is an inclusive way of life. The differences remain unsolved. Arab nationalist thought is attempting to solve the dilemma of reconciling secularism with Islam. This is seen as an important step in order to accommodate the popular appeal of political Islam.

However it seems that the problem inherent in Arab nationalist thought is its view of Islam itself. Regarding Islam as a culture and a civilisation of the Arabs along with keeping alive secular ideas is a sign of the weakness of Arab nationalist thought. This implies the existence of a theoretical problem in evaluating the political component of Islam. The analysis of the 1980s contributions clearly demonstrates the need for such theorising. It is needed to close the gap in its ideological structure.²⁰⁸ Till this is achieved the debate on Arabism, secularism and Islam remains an unresolved one. The new contributions are, by and large, the same old wine in new

²⁰⁸ Constantine Zurayq, Nahnu wa al-Mustaqbal, (Beirut; Dar al-'Ilm lil Malaa'iyyin, 1980) p. 223.

bottles.

4-3: Minorities and Democracy

(i) **Minorities: The New Approach**

The debate on minorities in the Arab world presents some conceptual problems. Arab intellectuals are affected by the use of the western term of ethnicity since there is no Arabic equivalent of this term.²⁰⁹ Arab writers approach the issue of ethnicity by their reliance on terms like minorities, sects, 'Asabiyya (kinship-based solidarity), and al-Milal (sects) wa al-Nihal (ethnicity) wa al-A'raq (minorities). But these terms do not solve the problem. The common way of describing ethnicity is either by employing the concept of ethnicity itself or by using the term minority.

This is an evidence of the neglect of the issue in Arab thought. Most of the studies on minorities in the Arab world were either written not by Arabs or concentrated on the case of a particular issue in a particular Arab country. The study of Albert Hourani is the greatest effort written by an Arab that attempted to be inclusive.²¹⁰ However, the study itself was written in English and only dealt with six Arab countries. This contributed to the insufficiency of knowledge about ethnicity in

²⁰⁹ Elizabeth Picard, "Naqd Istikhdaam Mafhuwm al-Ithniyya fiy Tahliyl al-'Amaliyyaat al-Siyyasiyya fiy al-'Alam al-'Arabiyy" (A Critic of the Use of Ethnicity Concept in Analysing Political Processes in the Arab World), in Niviyn Mus'ad(ed), fiy al-'Alamiyya wa al-Khususiyya fiy Dirasat al-Mantika al-'Arabiyya (Internationalism and Particularism in Studying the Arab Region) (Papers of the Second Egyptian-French Seminar) First Edition (Cairo; University of Cairo, Markaz al-Buhwath wa al-Dirasaat al-Siyyasiyya, 1991) Arabic Text (Present Author's Translation) p. 212.

²¹⁰ Albert Hourani, Minorities in the Arab World, (London; Oxford University Press, 1947).

the Arab world and made the question of minorities a blackspot in Arab thought. This was particularly true of Arab nationalist thought which prior to the period of investigation had not dealt with the issue at any significant length.

Arab nationalist thought since its inception displayed tolerance and acknowledged the Christian Arab minorities. There was no political or intellectual programme or any articulate conceptualisation dealing with the issue along the lines of the pan-Arabist project. The fact that Arab nationalist thought in its early days only showed tolerance and the admission of Christian Arabs to the Arab nation may be explained by the effects of the Islamic reformists on Arab nationalist thought. Reformists saw no contradiction between Arabism and Islam. Islam was the spirit of Arabism and Arabism was the body of Islam. Therefore, tolerance was seen as an Islamic principle that should be applied to all non Muslim Arabs.

However, this was not able to provide a clear cut answer to the problem. It sought to treat religious minorities according to the Millet system of the Ottoman Empire. This raised the fears of Arab Christians who argued that such a system would make them second class citizens. The fact that many Arab nationalists were Christians made it possible for Arab nationalism to include this basic concept of tolerance. It is also possible to assume that Arab nationalist thought in its early days was occupied with the issue of establishing the existence of an Arab nation and challenging the state of fragmentation. The concentration was on Arab unity and avoiding the issue of minorities fearing that it

might weaken the pan-Arabist idea.²¹¹

Many Arab writers considered the issue of minorities the making of colonialism. They argued that the Arab world had not known such a problem before the nineteenth century.²¹² Their prescription for what they saw as an illness was to advise that members of nationalist minorities be relocated and scattered in groups in different remote areas. This they considered the ideal solution that would weaken the coherence and solidarity of minorities and make them easily absorbed in the Arab nationalist bag. The secular Arab nationalist excluded religion from the nation's criteria and approached the issue differently.²¹³ This trend provided a view of minorities that can, theoretically, guarantee total equality on the basis of citizenship. This may solve the problem of the non-Muslim Arab religious minorities but falls short of solving the problems of other minorities of a nationalistic nature, such as the Kurds and the tribes of Southern Sudan.²¹⁴

The issue of minorities was not appropriately and inclusively approached by the two trends of Arab thought. If the Arabist Islamist trend attempted to provide a formula for treating Muslim cultural and nationalist minorities who are part

²¹¹ Saiyyd Yasiyn, Tahliyl Madmun, op. cit., p. 84.

²¹² Nabiyyh Amiyh Faris and Muhammad Tawfiyyq Hasan, Hadha al-'Alam al-'Arabiyy: Dirasaat fiy al-Qawmiyya al-'Arabiyya wa fiy 'Auwamil al-Taqaadum wa al-Tkhuwr wa al-Wahda wa al-Tafaruq fiy al-'Alam al-'Arabiyy (This Arab World: A Study in Arab Nationalism, Factors of Progress, Decline, Unity and Fragmentation in the Arab World)(Beirut; Dar al-'Ilm lil-Malaa'iyyin, 1953) Arabic Text (Author's Translation) p. 157.

²¹³ This refers to contributions of Husry, the Ba'th party and Nasserism.

²¹⁴ Saiyyd Yasiyn, Tahliyl Madmun, op. cit., p. 145.

of the abode of Islam it failed to accommodate that of the religious minority. Despite the admission of the concept of citizenship in its argument, the Islamist trend still denies equality. The secular trend has no provisions for dealing with nationalist and cultural minorities. Clearly each trend excludes an ethnic group from complete membership of the political community.

On the political level of state-building, Arab states dealt with the issue of minorities and identity according to a compromising formula. This was facilitated to some extent by the short lived experience of liberalism in the Arab world whereby social pluralism was approached through political pluralism. But the failure of the liberal experience during the 1950s and the 1960s brought the issue of minorities to the fore again. The problem became one of the concerns of Arab nationalist thought after the war of 1967 which opened the doors for criticism and rethinking about many issues.

The Egyptian sociologist Sa'd Diyn Ibrahiym was one of the pioneers of the call for reconsidering the issue of minorities. He concentrated his efforts on their deprivation from political participation. Ibrahiym argued that to neglect the issue of minorities would not only aggravate the problem but also have serious effects on the pan-Arabist aim of uniting the Arabs.²¹⁵ The civil war in Lebanon was dramatically effective in bringing the issue of minorities to the concerns of Arab writers. The war made Arab writers realise the explosive nature of the issue. The

²¹⁵ Sa'd Diyn Ibrahiym, "Nahuww Dirasa Susiylujiyya lil Wahda: al-Aqaliyaat fiy al-'Alam al-'Arabiy", Qadaiyya 'Arabiyya, Year 3, vol. 3-6, Feb-July 1976, pp. 5-25.

contributions discussed below show the nature of the new debates.

Although the 1980s witnessed the evolution of new thinking about the issue of minorities, there are still some contributions that keep to the old line of thought. An example of this is to be found in the work of 'Ismat Saiyf Duwla. He still does not see the importance of the issue of minorities. When he deals with the topic he is loyal to the traditional Arab nationalist principle. Saiyf Duwla argues that Muslim and Christian Arabs alike are one Arab Islamic personality.²¹⁶ This approach echoes traditional Arab nationalist views on the issue. It conceives only of religious minorities that may be accommodated by highlighting the civilisational aspect of Islam. Arab nationalist thought in the 1980s still has to reflect on the issue particularly after the problems encountered by countries like Lebanon, the Sudan, Egypt and Algeria. These showed that even the conciliatory formula applied by Arab states fell short of dealing with the problem, especially if lack of political participation is taken into account.

However, the lack of democracy in the Arab world made Arab writers focus, when dealing with minorities, on the need for a more liberal approach towards political participation. Ali E. Hillal Dessouki thinks that the problem of minorities may be solved by the implementation of citizenship principles.²¹⁷ Accordingly any citizen has the right to play a role in the political process. The citizenship principle is thought to solve the problem of minorities since it provides "equality between

²¹⁶ 'Ismat Saiyf Duwla, interview with the author.

²¹⁷ Ali E. Hillal Dessouki, "Ta'liq", op. cit., p. 138.

citizens despite their race, religion or language."²¹⁸ But this approach to minorities is, according to Jusiyf Mughiyzil, only a legal and constitutional formula that does not eradicate the problem. He calls for the implementation of secularism to avoid the contradictions that Shari'a and Islamic fiqh cause.²¹⁹

This emphasis on democracy is widespread among Arab writers who deal with minorities. This is obvious in the contribution of Constantine Zurayq. He argues that unless democracy, equality, dignity, and other fundamental liberties are guaranteed to all Arabs irrespective of their religious, ethnic, economic or social origins the problem of minorities and especially that of Christian Arabs will be impossible to tackle. Zurayq argues that unless these issues are dealt with the Arabs will not succeed in building their nation or homeland.²²⁰ Muhammad Faiyq, the Secretary General of the Arab Human Rights Organisation, believes that the essence of the issue is related to democracy. He makes the point that members of minorities are oppressed twice in their countries. "First they are oppressed as other citizens are and second because they belong to a minority."²²¹

The same emphasis on democracy is held by Radwan Saiyyd. He notes that the issue of minorities is over argued and that it is becoming unobjectively articulated. The problem of minorities is

²¹⁸ Ibid, p. 138.

²¹⁹ Jusiyf Mughiyzil, "Ta'liyyq"(A comment), in Tariq Bishriy etal, al-Hiwar al-Qawmiy al-Diniy: Auwraq wa Munaqashaat, (Seminar Papers) First Edition (Beirut; Markaz Dirasat al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya, 1989) pp. 140-141.

²²⁰ Constantine Zurayq, Matalib al-Mustaqbal al-'Arabiyy: Humuwm wa Tasawlaat, First Edition (Beirut; Dar al-'Ilam lil Malaaiyyin, 1983) p. 81.

²²¹ Muhammad Faiyq, "Ta'liyyq" (A Comment), in Tariq Bishriy etal, al-Hiwar al-Qawmiy al-Diniy, op. cit., pp. 158-159.

nothing more than the problem of democracy which all citizens feel.²²² Even though some Arab writers still consider that language and culture are the criteria of the nation they are not able yet to apply that to linguistic and cultural minorities. To argue that democracy is the solution to all minority related problems is to avoid dealing directly with the relevant issue.

Some Arab writers reject what they consider the "exaggerated widening of the concept of minorities."²²³ Isma'iyl Sabriy 'Abdullah thinks that to limit Arabness to Sunni Arab Muslims is a misleading idea. This contradicts the principle of nationalism which "does not consider religion a condition of nationalism." This argues, 'Abdullah, conceives of Sunni Arabs as a coherent homogeneous group, an assumption that runs counter to the fact there are many sects within Sunni Islam. 'Abdullah calls for an approach that restricts minorities to those "concentrated on a particular territory, with a distinctive tongue and a distinct civilisation that is more or less different from Arab civilisation."²²⁴

This is an entirely new development in Arab nationalist thought that looks with appreciation on the case of nationalist minorities. 'Abdullah goes so far as to suggest that every minority has the right to "revive its language and use it in its everyday life along with Arabic. Also it has the right to develop its civilisational heritage in an atmosphere of inclusive

²²² Radwan Saiyyd, "Ta'liyyq" (A comment), in Tariq Bishriy et al, al-Hiwar al-Qawmiy al-Diniy, op. cit., p. 156.

²²³ Isma'iyl Sabriy 'Abdullah, "al-Umma al-'Arabiyya: al-Haqiqqa", op. cit., p. 123.

²²⁴ Ibid, p. 123.

democracy which is the only framework for realising unity."²²⁵ However it is clear that his main concern is with Arab nationalism. He argues that Arab nationalism "strengthens and becomes enriched by the respect of nationalist minorities."²²⁶

Despite this recognition of the nationalist minorities, 'Abdullah's approach is still suffering from a loophole. It does not offer a coherent approach to the problem of ethnic plurality in the Arab world. It concentrates on realising Arab unity whereby the rights of minorities are respected within the boundaries of the pan-Arab state. Minorities would find it in their interest to "remain part of the federal Arab union with its particular entity."²²⁷ This argues 'Abdullah is to view the issue of minorities as a "secondary contradiction compared with the basic contradiction between the existence of the Arab nation and the fragmentation of the Arab land."²²⁸ Even though 'Abdullah admits the right of nationalist minorities like the Kurds in self-determination, he sees that possible only within a federal system that allows it self rule. 'Abdullah's approach is a significant development within Arab thought. It accommodates nationalist minorities but still falls short of allowing them total self determination. However it absolutely rejects the existence of any religious minorities.²²⁹

It is clear that Arab nationalist thought needs more courage

²²⁵ Ibid, p.124.

²²⁶ Ibid, p. 124.

²²⁷ Ibid, p. 124.

²²⁸ Ibid, pp. 124-125.

²²⁹ Isma'iyl Sabriy 'Abdullah, interview with the author.

in dealing with the issue of minorities. The call for democratisation may help in solving some of the problems minorities encounter but it is not sufficient to eradicate the problem. What needed is a more sincere and honest answer to the issue of minorities that considers national self-determination. The view of the Egyptian Copt writer Ghaliy Shukriy is central to this approach. Shukriy argues that "only national and linguistic minorities qualify for the status. Christian Arabs, like the Copts, are not minorities since they are as indigenous people as their fellow Muslims are."²³⁰ The approach needed to tackle the issue of minorities is in what Shukriy calls a

new Arabism void of oppression. An Arabism that puts democracy at the top of its agenda and puts secularism at the top of the democratic agenda. Democracy and social justice are central to the solution of the problem of minorities.²³¹

Arab nationalist thought with minor exceptions still fluctuates between the Islamist and the secular traditional views. The secular trend solves the problem of religious minorities by advocating democracy and the respect of citizen's rights but it falls short of solving those of national minorities. The Islamist trend still represents the best available solution for the problems of the nationalist minorities of Islamic religion since it considers them ordinary Muslims. Its exclusion is based on religion not on national boundaries.

The contributions of Sa'd Diyn Ibrahiym are the most distinguished on the issue of minorities in the Arab world. He believes that one of the main obstacles to achieving Arab unity

²³⁰ Ghaliy Shukriy, interview with the author.

²³¹ Ibid.

is the deficiency of Arab nationalist thought to accommodate the issue of minorities. Ibrahiym considers the neglect of minorities as running counter to the belief that Arab nationalism is a humanist idea.²³² Ibrahiym argues that minority-based problems involve issues of identity, state building, and social and economic differences like the shrinking of political participation and lack of social equality which negatively affect minorities. Ibrahiym considers that dealing with minorities requires the restructuring of the pan-Arabist ideal. This can be achieved through a strategy that can accommodate ethnic tensions and defuse them before they explode.²³³

This strategy consists of consolidating political participation and the establishment of a federal Arab state that respects civil society. This in Ibrahiym's view would create the needed conciliation between the aim of preserving the Arab particularistic territorial state's sovereignty and territorial integrity and the right of minorities in preserving their culture and human dignity. This is to suggest that as far as the religious minorities are concerned the solution would be in democratisation and reinstating the millet system. Ibrahiym argues that, if developed, the millet system, despite its bad reputation thanks to the bad reputation of the Ottoman Empire, would meet the needs of these groups.²³⁴ The millet system has a "spirit of allowing these groups the highest possible degree of self-independence within the state." But when it comes to

²³² Sa'd Din Ibrahiym, interview with the author, (Cairo; 2.5.1995).

²³³ Ibid.

²³⁴ Ibid.

national minorities democratisation is not the only answer.²³⁵ Ibrahiym goes as far as to admit the right of these minorities to independence.²³⁶

To conclude the discussion of the contributions on minorities it is important to note that Arab writers are not yet entirely divorced from traditional views especially as far as linguistic and cultural minorities are concerned. However, the contributions of the 1980s reflect a widening interest in the issue of minorities. This shows the extent to which Arab nationalist thought is eager to restructure itself and open the debates on the problems of nationalism. This is particularly clear in the existence of some contributions that entertain a liberal attitude towards minorities.

(ii) The Quest For Democracy

Arab thought discovered liberal democratic ideas and institutions after its encounter with the West in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The encounter with Europe led Arab thought to question the reasons behind Western advancement and Arab decline. Democracy was seen as the driving force behind Europe's progress. Democracy was causally linked to progress. Arab reformers argued that democracy equalled reason and progress and was against despotism. It was seen a necessary tool for ridding the East of its illness. Islamic reformists had to find an answer that would preserve Islamic values as well as keeping up with modernity. They sought to explain the democratic

²³⁵ Ibid.

²³⁶ Ibid.

idea by equating it with the Islamic idea of shura (consultation). This was considered enough to prove that Islam is compatible with reason and progress.²³⁷

The spread of democratic ideas worldwide after the First World War and the occupation of the Arab world by the European colonial forces opened the eyes of the Arabs to parliamentary democracy and liberal ideas. However, this was not accompanied by any theoretical articulation or treatment of democracy.²³⁸ Arab nationalist thought remained unconcerned with investigating democratic ideas. This may be attributed to the fact that Arab nationalism at its early stages lacked any coherent ideology and to the supremacy of other issues such as achieving the independence of the Arabs. Issues of democracy and social equality were postponed until pan-Arab aims will have been secured.

Class composition of the forces behind Arab nationalist movement may also have been a reason for this neglect of democracy. These forces were mainly drawn from the bourgeois and urban notables of the Arab parts of the Ottoman Empire. Their class concerns and interests were not in democracy.²³⁹ M. 'Abid Jabiriy explains the absence of theoretical treatment of democracy by referring to its incompatibility with the pan-Arabist idea of the time. Arab nationalists considered employing democracy meant allowing for the rights of minorities and if

²³⁷ M. 'Abid Jabiriy, al-Khitab al-'Arabiyy al-Mu'asir: Dirasa Tahliyyiyya Naqdiyya, Third Edition (Beirut; Dar al-Tali'a, 1988) p. 78.

²³⁸ Saiyyd Yasiyn, Tahliyl Madmun, op. cit., p. 48.

²³⁹ Ibid, pp. 79-80.

these were given a chance through democracy they would jeopardise Arab unity.²⁴⁰ No matter what the reasons may have been Arab nationalist thought before the Second World War lent very little attention to the issue of democracy.

From the early 1950s, however, new social forces emerged and began to occupy themselves with issues of democratisation and social change. Hence Arab thought began to put forward ideas of social justice and democracy. The poor performance of Arab regimes on the fronts of development and the failures of the short lived experience of liberal democracy significantly paved the way for such a development. The defeat of the Arab states in the war with Israel in 1948 was also vital in awakening Arab thought to the effects of undemocratic government.²⁴¹ The era of radical Arab politics was marked by a heavy emphasis on development and the attempt to achieve Arab unity while combating Israel. Therefore Arab thought embraced socialist ideas and strongly criticised liberal democracy. This played a major role in undermining the debate on democracy. Democracy was thought of as the eradication of social and class differences not as political and civil rights of the individual.

The democratic concept of Arab nationalist thought as epitomised by the Ba'th party and Nasserism suffered from many theoretical and practical loopholes. Arab nationalist thought advocated a form of democratic principle in which political democracy was seen as a distorted democracy. Nasser stated that "there is no sense in political democracy ... without economic

²⁴⁰ M. 'Abid Jabiriy, al-Khitab al-'Arabiyy, op. cit., p. 94.

²⁴¹ Sa'id Bensa'id, interview with the author.

democracy."²⁴² This concept of democracy, however, was not enough to solve the problem of democratic rule nor able to provide a coherent democratic model. Arab nationalist thought in its mainstream Ba'thist and Nasserite trends was unable to design a practical formula for this concept. Therefore neither practical nor theoretical answers were provided on the balance between political and social democracy.

Thus Arab nationalist thought still lacked any articulate concept of democracy that encompassed the political and civil rights of the individual. Institutions of civil society had no role to play in the political process. The gap between rhetoric and actual politics was an indictment of the Arab nationalist concept of democracy. The political situation deteriorated as the state made great inroads and civil society weakened.²⁴³ After the breakup of the Egyptian-Syrian union and the Arab defeat in the war with Israel in 1967 a new wave of writings was marked by an emphasis on criticising Arab nationalist thought and its traditional views towards democracy. Social equality, justice and democracy were considered vital to regenerating Arab politics and society. Democratisation was looked at as essential for eradicating the causes of the defeat.

The breakup of the Egyptian-Syrian unity and the defeat were seen as evidence not only of the negative effects of the lack of democracy but also an indication that Arab nationalist thought needed restructuring. However, the issue of democracy was not

²⁴² Gamal Abdul Nasser, Falsafat al-Thawra wa al-Miythaq wa Barnamaj Thalathiyn Maris, (Tripoli, Dar Maktabat al-Fikr, n.d.) p. 119, p. 110.

²⁴³ Kamal 'Abdullatiyf, interview with the author.

deeply argued in a way that allowed for the incorporation of democratic principles into Arab nationalist thought. The concern was with the absence of democratic institutions and the occurrence of political oppression. The contributions made no effort at articulating the concept of democracy. At best democracy was advocated as a question of progress and a political technique similar to technology.

The 1980s saw the renewal of interest in democratisation and human rights.²⁴⁴ This interest is expressed by the number of books, articles and seminars that Arab writers devoted to the issue. The concern with democracy is also evident in the establishment of human rights organisations in many Arab countries as well as the establishment of a pan-Arab human rights organisation in 1983. The 1980s also witnessed an intellectual quest for democracy and respect of human rights within the framework of civil society. Arab writers began to advocate democracy and, as notes Aziz Azmeh, "a prolific body of discourse on democracy has thus emerged." Therefore, the term democracy was introduced "into virtually all principal vehicles for the dissemination of contemporary Arab political discourse." "The question of democracy has become a major constituent in the political vocabulary prevalent in the Arab world today."²⁴⁵

It is important to note how Arab nationalist thought in the 1980s approached the issue of democracy and how the concepts are

²⁴⁴ Aziz al-Azmeh, 'Populism Contra Democracy: Recent Democratic Discourse in the Arab World' in Gassan Salame (ed) Democracy Without Democrats: The Renewal of Politics in the Muslim World, First Edition (London; New York; I. B. Tauris Publishers, 1994) pp. 116-118.

²⁴⁵ Ibid, p. 112.

highlighted. The seminar on democracy in the Arab world organised by the Beirut-based Centre for Studies of Arab Unity in 1983 was one of the most important developments. The seminar was attended by representatives of all ideological trends in Arab thought.²⁴⁶ After decades of criticising liberal democracy a new discourse on democracy is emerging. What caused this significant change? Some Arab writers explain this phenomenon by referring to the effects of the lack of popular participation and the use of violence against the opposition in the past. Other writers explain this emerging interest and democratic discourse by the failure of the Arab particularistic territorial state.

Samir Amin believes that the deficiency of the particularist territorial Arab state in achieving development explains this phenomenon.²⁴⁷ He argues that the realisation of Arab intellectuals of the negative effects of this Arab experience led them to appreciate the vitality of democracy. The call for democracy and human rights is rooted in the understanding that "Arab progressive experiments were no more than an attempt to achieve national liberation while remaining within the world capitalist system."²⁴⁸ Therefore, the issue of democracy is evaluated within the context of the issues related to development

²⁴⁶ Sa'd Diyn Ibrahiym et al, Azmat al-Dimuqratiyya fiy al-Watan al-'Arabiyy (the Crisis of Democracy in the Arab Homeland), (Seminar Papers) First Edition (Beirut; Markaz Dirasat al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya, 1983) Arabic Text (Author's Translation).

²⁴⁷ Samir Amin, Azmat al-Mujtama' al-'Arabiyy (The Crisis of the Arab Society) (Cairo; Dar al-Mustaqbal al-'Arabiyy, 1985) Arabic Text (Present Author's Translation) p. 153.

²⁴⁸ Ibid, p. 153.

in general.²⁴⁹

The view that explains the issue by reference to the Arab state system is also expressed by Kamal 'Abdullatifyf. He considers that the system of government the Arabs experienced has established anti-democracy norms in Arab culture.²⁵⁰ The concentration of political power in the hands of emirs and imams led to the exclusion of principles of institutions and rotation of authority. Despite the changes undergone by Arab states, civil society has not been established.²⁵¹ The essence of 'Abdullatifyf's view is that Arab society remains alien to whatever establishes civil society because it lacks the social bases of democracy. The fact that "the Arab state is a dependent state where democracy can not be realised" makes the absence of the national state another factor that aggravates the problem.²⁵²

Samir Amin, Ali E. Hillal Dessouki, and 'Ali Umliyl contributed to the debates during the seminar on the crisis of democracy in the Arab world. They concentrated on what they considered to be the handicaps to democracy in the Arab world. Their analyses significantly differed from those attributing the lack of democracy in the Arab world to the incompatibility of Arab culture with democracy. They explained the problem by emphasising the importance of external factors. They considered

²⁴⁹ Ibid, p. 153.

²⁵⁰ Kamal 'Abdullatifyf, interview with the author.

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵² Kamal 'Abdullatifyf, al-Tawwiyl wa al-Mufaraqa: Nahuw Tasiyl Falsafiy lil Nazar al-Siyyasiy al-'Arabi (Interpretation and Departure: Towards A Philosophical Establishment of Arab Political Approach) First Edition (Rabat; al-Markaz al-Thaqafiy al-'Arabi, 1987) Arabic Text (Present Author's Translation) pp. 72-73.

the breaking of the dependency link as the decisive factor in leading any Arab democratic project into success.

Dessouki sees democratisation in the Arab world struggling against historical difficulties. He defines these in what he called the questions of challenge. These are: "how to obtain democracy in a dependent state and economy? What is the link between the relationship of dependence and political oppression? What is the relationship between national independence and democracy?"²⁵³ Dessouki also refers to the problems related to building a democracy within the framework of capitalism. He also questions the principle of rotating political authority within a centrally planned economy and public ownership. Dessouki argues that democracy is essentially linked with the way these questions are answered. There is, in his opinion, a need to free Arab thought from being hostage to the relationship that Europe's history established between democracy and liberalism. This also brings into the debate the problematique of linking democratic institutions with civil society while enabling it to express national culture and civilisation.²⁵⁴

This kind of questions is quite new to Arab nationalist thought. It displays an occupation with the theoretical aspects of democracy. Despite its obvious tendency toward achieving some distinctive form of Arab democracy the originality of such contributions is obvious when compared with traditional views discussed before. They show the degree of hope of achieving a new

²⁵³ Ali E. Hillaal Dessouki, "Ta'liyyq" (A Comment), in, Sa'd Diyn Ibrahiym etal, Azmat al-Dimuqratiyya, op. cit., p. 49.

²⁵⁴ Ibid, p. 49.

democratic model. It is important to note that many contributions express the consensus of Arab intellectuals within the Arabist tradition on democracy. They show the agreement among Arab intellectuals on the importance of democracy, political participation and the rotation of political authority.

However, the concept of democracy still suffers from some ambiguity in those writings. This was clearly demonstrated during the discussions at the seminar on the crisis of democracy in the Arab world mentioned earlier. Some Arab writers still establish the conformity of the democratic concept with the Islamic idea of the shura. This kind of understanding may be traced to the residual strength of traditionalist views in Arab nationalist thought. Therefore equating democracy and shura would bring into the debate some of the metaphysical elements of this thought. The discussions brought back concepts of authenticity, identity, distinctiveness and historical continuity. The result was endless arguments about these issues which show the degree of inconsistency of the new contributions. It shows also that democracy is not as yet seen and understood in isolation from the religious ethics. Democracy is not yet seen in purely secular terms. The result is disagreement on the form and content of the hoped for democracy.²⁵⁵

As explains Sa'id Bensa'id, the discussions on the

²⁵⁵ See, for example, the comments and discussions in response to a paper by 'Adil Husiyn, "al-Muhadiydaat al-Tariykhiyya wa al-Ijtima'iyya lil Dimuqratiyya" (the Historical and Social Determinants of Democracy), in Sa'd Diyn Ibrahiym et al, Azmat al-Dimuqratiyya, op. cit., pp. 1243-256. See particularly the comments of 'Ali Umliyl and Kamal Abuwdiyb. The views of 'Ali Umliyl may be found in his, al-Islahiyya al-'Arabiyya wa al-Duwla al-Wataniyya, First Edition (Casablanca; Al-Markaz al-Thaqafiy al-'Arabiyy, 1985) p. 200.

relationship between democracy and the shura show the degree of elective affinity Arab intellectuals still have with Islam.²⁵⁶ It also shows the process of reviewing the concepts and the relevance of historical experience to contemporary politics. The ambiguity concerning the appropriate conceptualisation of democracy is an evidence of self-criticism and the search for a new ideological structure. The debate about democracy and shura brings into mind the occurrence of a similar one during the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century. But if the reasons behind the old debate may be understood, what may justify the reemergence of the same line of thought?

If equating the shura with democracy was an attempt to defend Islam, any similar subsequent attempt cannot be explained by providing the same rationale. Arab thought may be obliged to look for such argumentation to counter the advent of political Islam. The attempt to equate democracy and shura may be understood as an attempt to make secular ideas like democracy acceptable against the Islamic background. However, assuming that democracy and shura are identical does away with the particular boundaries of each concept. It does not intellectually approach the historical conditions of the evolution of each concept. To say that shura is identical with democracy is to neglect the difference between a concept and a practice. Democracy is a concept that is not limited to the techniques of government while the shura, as known in Islamic history, was a technique of consultation that is bounded by religious principles.²⁵⁷

²⁵⁶ Said Bensa'id, Interview with the Author, (Rabat; 8.4.1996).

²⁵⁷ Kamal 'Abdullatiyf, interview with the author.

This approach, explains Kamal 'Abdullatifyf, excludes "theorising questions or those that concentrate on the philosophical aspects of each concept."²⁵⁸ This is because shura is "a political technique ... but not a definite factor of the system of Islamic government ... it was not part of its structure."²⁵⁹ Whereas democracy is a "system of political practice established by the principles of liberal political philosophy in the circle of rationalism; it legalises it, and socially and historically makes for it the institutions and the relative and changing norms."²⁶⁰

M. 'Abid Jabiriy considers equating shura and democracy an expression of a "misery of conscience" that Arab thought suffers from.²⁶¹ The democratic dream shows how torn apart Arab thought is. He explains that while dreaming about democracy Arab thought has not yet abandoned the idea of the "just despot."²⁶² Many Arab intellectuals still see necessity in having a just despot. His mission is to organise government and authority while working for the achievement of national unification. While the contributions of the 1980s display an attachment to democracy, there is also a nostalgia for the appearance of a genius leader who carries the task of realising Arab aims.²⁶³

²⁵⁸ Kamal 'Abdullatifyf, al-Tawwiyl wa al-Mufaraqa, op. cit., p. 68.

²⁵⁹ Ibid, p. 68.

²⁶⁰ Ibid, p. 68.

²⁶¹ M. 'Abid Jabiriy, al-Khitab al-'Arabiyy, op. cit., pp. 80-80.

²⁶² Ibid, pp. 82-83.

²⁶³ Examples of this idea may be found in many Arab nationalist writings like those of Nadiym Biytar, Saiyf Duwla, etc., where the memories of Nasser are highly valued. However, the Second Gulf War and Iraq's humiliating defeat

Jabiriy attributes the occurrence of these themes in Arab thought and the lack of any articulate treatment of issues of "the form of authority, its origin and the form of the regime that will practice it" to the centrality of the just despot concept in Arab thought. He also explains Arab thought's silence *vis-à-vis* "the form of socio-political organisation that democracy requires in a society like the Arab society" in the existence of the same idea.²⁶⁴ The just despot is seen by Jabiriy as the intellectual theme that structurally impedes Arab thought from approaching democracy as a system of governance. This structural impediment will remain until Arab thought liberates itself from the "the fantasy of the just despot and rationally and honestly reorganises the inside relationship between democracy as a system of government, on one side, and nationalist aims on the other side."²⁶⁵

Arab nationalist thought in the 1980s is surely characterised by the spread of discussions on democracy. The contributions involve many themes and aspects of liberalism and socialism. This may be seen as a sign of the process of renewal and self criticism. It also expresses the state of confusion towards the issues of political and social organisation. The contributions still show some effect of the discussion of the relationship between political and social democracy. This suggests that the dialectical relationship between the old and

destroyed, in the words of Sa'id Bensa'id, any "aspiration for a hero accomplishing the Arab mission." Sa'id Bensa'id, Interview with the Author.

²⁶⁴ M. 'Abid Jabiriy, al-Khitab al-'Arabiyy, op. cit., pp. 95-96

²⁶⁵ Ibid, p. 96.

the newly emerging paradigms is intense.

The discussions about the relationship between democracy, socialism and Arab unity also characterises the contributions of the 1980s. The occurrence of such discussions provides enough evidence to suggest that Arab nationalist thought still values highly the pan-Arabist ideas. However, this may also be seen as an indication of the inability of Arab nationalist thought to tackle democracy as a social order. Democracy in "a society of multiple minorities like the Arab society requires a system of decentralisation that is incompatible with the aims of unity and socialism."²⁶⁶

The ambiguity towards the issue of democracy was clearly expressed during the discussions of a paper delivered by Samir Amin at the seminar on the crisis of democracy in the Arab world. Amin presented a paper on the method of analysing the crisis of democracy in the Arab world in which he proposed a programme of democratic reform.²⁶⁷ His proposals and analysis were met with many hostile responses that came from all quarters of Arab nationalist thought.²⁶⁸ However, despite the sheer amount of criticism to his proposal Amin's treatment of the issue of democracy was a clear attempt at liberating himself from his

²⁶⁶ Ibid, p. 96.

²⁶⁷ Samir Amin, "Mulahadaat Huwla Manhaj Tahliyl Azmat al-Dimuqratiyya fiy al-Watan al-'Arabiyy" (Remarks on the Method of Analysing Democracy in the Arab Homeland), in Sa'd Diyn Ibrahiym etal, Azmat al-Dimuqratiyya, op. cit., pp. 307-320.

²⁶⁸ Participants at the seminar, left, right and centre, criticised Amin's ideas. From the right they included Jalaal Amiyin, Tariq Bishriy and 'Adil Husiyn. From the left, the most clear attack came from Tahir Labiyb who, surprised by Amin's change of position, exclaimed wether this is Samir Amin or someone else. See these in Sa'd Diyn Ibrahiym etal, Azmat al-Dimuqratiyya, op. cit, pp. 321-.

ideological attachments. He attempted to treat the issue while having no sacred values but a sincere urge for democracy and development. The fact that Amin's paper was void of terms like imperialism and proletariat shows the degree of self criticism and the honest attempts at renewing Arab thought.

Amin presented a programme for inclusive democratic reform that sought a marriage between bourgeois and populist democracy. The programme itself expresses some major differences from his ideological convictions. Amin argues that the problematique of democracy in the Arab case is part and parcel of a wider problematique of development. The objective conditions for accomplishing democracy are not ripe yet. This applies to either bourgeoisie or popular democracy. He argues that neither Western models of democracy nor Communist, Soviet or Chinese, models are relevant to the Arab case. This is because Amin believes that establishing democracy is conditional on the establishment of "a society and an economy that benefit from self-independence from the hegemonic capitalist system."²⁶⁹ Accomplishing democracy, in Amin's view, cannot be achieved until the Arab world, and indeed all developing countries, are independent from the capitalist world order. The essence of Amin's thesis is that democracy is conditional upon autocentred development that is conditional upon delinking from the capitalist colonial system.²⁷⁰

However, the programme for democratic reform that Amin presented at the seminar on the crisis of democracy in the Arab world is a major shift in his thinking. Amin argues that because

²⁶⁹ Samir Amin, Azmat al-Mujtama' al-'Arabiyy, op. cit., p. 154.

²⁷⁰ Ibid, p. 147.

inclusive democracy is hindered by the Arab world's dependency it is only possible to look for democratic reform. Amin's programme establishes democratic reform on: the respect of differing social interests, the linkage between democracy and the national problem, the linkage between political democracy and social democracy, inclusive political democracy, and that political authority results from the free choice of the masses and the reevaluation of orders in social life.²⁷¹ The programme is a clear indication of the process of self-criticism that Arab thought is experiencing in the 1980s. It shows the extent of the desire of some Arab intellectuals to free themselves from ideological dogmas and the attempt at reaching new formulas.

The new discourse reflects the Arab writers' dream of an inclusive democratic model that emphasises civil society and plurality. It establishes the rights and freedoms of the individual, which is borrowed from the liberal model, social justice, which is borrowed from the socialist model and cultural authenticity, which is based in the Islamic model. This reflects the ideological struggle within Arab thought and a state of selectivity towards the three concerned models.²⁷² The discussion of the contributions of the 1980s confirms what Azmeh rightly observes that despite the spread of democratic discourse "there has not yet emerged a specific canon of democratic writing to which reference is made by the various parties to democratic

²⁷¹ Ibid, pp. 147-149.

²⁷² These ideas were clearly demonstrated by many intellectuals interviewed by the author particularly Sa'id Bensa'id, Jabiriy, Belqaziyy, Saiyyd Yasiyn and Sa'd Diyn Ibrahiym.

discourse."²⁷³

However and as far as Arab nationalist thought is concerned the fact that democracy is being debated and became a basic ingredient reflects the process of restructuring. Even though the discourse does not prove the existence of an inclusive paradigm of democracy this should not obscure the significance of this development if neglect of democracy within traditional Arab nationalist thought is taken into account. The essence of the new discourse is the reordering of Arab priorities. Democracy is needed before development and this is in itself, a major change in Arab nationalist thought. To maintain that democracy should not be sacrificed in favour of any cause, even unity, is an intellectual and ideological breakthrough.

The prospect of developing this widening interest in democracy into a specific democratic canon will be affected by the developments on the front of democratisation in Arab states. This democratic discourse is taking place against a background of little if any democratisation. Unless supported by a process of democratisation this discourse will remain ineffective and "less the ground for political consensus."²⁷⁴ Arab thought, therefore, has to undergo the test of its democratic pretensions. The question, as Azmeh put it, is "whether this discourse is capable of actually instituting democracy as a permanent feature in long-term Arab political language."²⁷⁵

The discussion in this chapter has attempted to explain the

²⁷³ Aziz Azmeh, "Populism Contra Democracy", op. cit., p. 112.

²⁷⁴ Ibid, p. 112.

²⁷⁵ Ibid, pp. 112-113.

dialectic of old and new paradigms in Arab nationalist thought in the 1980s. The discussion of the contributions focussed on those related to issues of the Arab nation, Arab nationalism, Islam, secularism, minorities and democracy. The next chapter will address itself to the debates Arab nationalist thought has undergone regarding the issue of the particularistic territorial state. The purpose of the discussion will be to evaluate to what extent they reflect the emergence of a new paradigm.

Chapter Five

Arab Nationalism and the Arab State System

The defeat of the Ottoman Empire in the First World War and the victory of Britain and France was decisive in bringing about radical changes in the political situation of the Arab world. The plans the victorious powers negotiated during the war were implemented. This meant the division of the Arab world into British and French colonies. A number of new states were established. Each state was under some form of colonial control. The Arabs' hopes for independence and unity were frustrated. The Arabs were only to experience a change of their masters from the Ottomans to the Europeans.

Despite Arab attempts to challenge the situation their resistance was quietened and the new order was established. "By the mid-1920s the British and the French were the masters of the Middle East."¹ After that the European colonialists worked towards establishing the state structures needed to rule the region as efficiently as their interests dictated. Not only did Arab hopes become shattered but also they had to deal with new realities. As discussed in chapter two Arab movements in the inter-war period and during the Second World War had to struggle for independence. The goals of pan-Arabism had to be modified and

¹ Roger Owen, State, Power and Politics in the Making of the Middle East, First Edition (London; New York; Routledge, 1992) pp. 8-11.

limited to each individual territory. The fight for independence had to be confined to the boundaries determined by colonialism. Although solidarity existed liberation movements had to establish themselves and fight along the lines drawn by the colonial powers in each para-statal territory.

The aim of Arab unity had to be deferred till independence was achieved. This was the thinking of the Arab movement at the time and the circumstances that compelled it to do so. This meant, despite the existence of solidarity, the fragmentation of the pan-Arab movement. Each movement's leaders had to concentrate on particularistic issues. When independence was achieved or granted pan-Arab unity was not realised. Each independent movement, now the leaders of the independence struggle had become the rulers of the newly independent states, was occupied with consolidating its achievements. Therefore the emerging states were being entrenched. Unity was now remote as fragmentation and disunity were the order of the day.

The particularistic territorial not the pan-Arab all encompassing state was the reality of Arab politics. Between dream and reality a gap existed. Since then the aim of the Arab nationalist movement has been to undo the situation and bridge the gap.² Ever since its foundation the Arab state system has been viewed with disdain by the pan-Arabists. They considered the state system a creation of a foreign will that contradicted the nationalist ideal. Britain and France "determined almost all of

² Hisham Sharabi, "Unity, Disunity and Fragmentation in the Arab World", in Edward Said and Fuad Suleiman(eds) The Arabs Today: Alternatives for Tomorrow, First Edition ((Ohio; Forum Associates Inc., 1973) p. 137.

the new boundaries."³ The borders of the Arab states are seen as the embodiment of the political fragmentation of the Arab world. Therefore these boundaries were seen to have no logic.

The essential features of the Arab state system were mainly the work of the colonial powers. The boundaries and the identities of the new political entities were made either on the basis of pre-existing administrative entities or "involved either detaching some part of a former Ottoman province (for example, Transjordan) or, more usually, adding several provinces together (for example, Syria and Iraq)."⁴ This implied a process of carving up, deducting, adding and deducting and adding territories to form new political entities. This process "gave many of the new states a somewhat artificial appearance."⁵

This historical background of the Arab state system made pan-Arab nationalists despise the particularistic territorial states. Analysts too took into account this background and concluded that "the state was a weak creation, an artificial part of a naturally evolving entity called the Arab nation."⁶ This made the history, legitimacy and durability of the Arab states a subject of an intense debate within Arab thought. For the pan-Arab nationalists this 'artificial' origin of the territorial particularistic Arab states and their boundaries was a key starting point. They employed this concept for the purpose of

³ Roger Owen, Power and Politics, op. cit., pp. 11-13.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ William Zartman, "Introduction", in Adeed Dawisha and William Zartman(eds), Beyond Coercion: The Durability of the Arab State, (London; New York; Sydney; Croom Helm, 1988) p. 2.

discrediting these states and to justify the call for their withering away before Arab unity.

As discussed in chapter three traditional Arab nationalist thought despised the state system. Pan-Arab nationalism made it its task to dislodge the state system and aspire to Arab unity. Traditional Arab nationalist thought refused to bestow any legitimacy on these states. This was to participate in the lack of any sound theoretical treatment of the issue of state. Arab nationalist thought while obsessed with the pan-Arab state suffered an epistemological poverty as far as the individual state was concerned.

How these deficiencies were dealt with in the contributions of the 1980s is the subject of this chapter. Are they to mark a significant shift of position towards the state system and therefore pave the way for the emergence of a new paradigm? The following discussion will devote itself to these issues.

5-1: The Particularistic Territorial State: From Contempt To Discernment

In traditional Arab nationalist thought the reality of political fragmentation is compared with an idealist political unity. Although the Arabs had lived in unity only for a limited period during early Islam traditional Arab nationalist thought ignored this historical fact. The argument that the particularistic territorial states represent a unification step, in a region where societal and political fragmentation and absence of a central authority was the norm, was not an

acceptable thesis. The old paradigm ignored and neglected the message of Arab history and attempted to jump from a supposed historical unity to an aspirational one. This meant the lack of a proper understanding of the Arab state system.

Apart from confirming the alien origin of the state system the old paradigm paid no detailed attention to or investigation of the state system. However, some Arab nationalists were trying to come to grips with the mounting power of the state system. The fact that the state system resisted the power of the pan-Arab movement and built a strong authority made some of them realise the nature of their enemy. 'Ismat Saiyf Duwla, as early as 1968, acknowledged the immense material power of the particularistic territorial state. He argued that contrary to how Arab nationalists viewed them Arab states were not "names on paper but they are a full-fledged and complex apparatus."⁷

However this early acknowledgment by a leading pan-Arabist intellectual and ideologue was not to stir any relevant response from other intellectuals. The general trend remained that of discrediting the state and denying it any legitimacy. It is interesting to note that Saiyf Duwla himself was not yet to develop an entirely different ideological stand. His evaluation of the power of the particularistic territorial state seems to have been intended only to express fear.

Saiyf Duwla reveals scorn of this state and invites the Arab nationalists to purify themselves from its poisons. He went as far as urging the revolutionary pan-Arabists to avoid any

⁷ 'Ismat Saiyf Duwla, al-Tariyq ila al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya, (The Road Towards Arab Unity) (Beirut; Dar al-Tali'a; 1968) Arabic Text (Present Author's Translation)p. 29.

involvement in the governing of the state. His unqualified view was that

under no circumstances should the Arab revolution become a particularistic territorial state. In all circumstances the revolutionary vanguard should remain, in organisation and leadership, away and detached from the state, a system and a government.⁸

Therefore traditional Arab nationalist thought was blinded by its ideological design and saw no logic in the political reality it had to work in. The shock Arab nationalist thought had was that the state system was in a process of growth. The state system was gaining ground as the dream of Arab unity became more remote. Traditional Arab nationalist thought opted for the maintenance of its ideological position. This meant dealing with the particularistic territorial state in a 'puritanic' way that reflected an ethical rather than a political stand.

(i) Arab Nationalist Thought and The State Concept

As explained in chapter three Arab thought had not elaborated on the issue of the state. Its obsession with the idea of a united Arab state hindered the treatment of the theoretical issue of the state. This theoretical deficiency may be attributed to the nature of Arab thought. Arab thought is essentially a unity-driven and oriented thought. M. 'Abid Jabiriy considers this a result of the centrality of political unity in the Arab cultural perspective. Culturally, unity is a part of a heritage that had been accomplished in the past and it is the locomotive of progress in the past and the future. This implies that the issue is related to the way Arabs interpret their history. In

⁸ Ibid, p. 291, p. 121.

this interpretation the cultural or the ideological encompasses the political.⁹

Despite differences in the focus of unity, Islamic, regional or pan-Arab, the concept of unity is very central. Arabist ideology aims at challenging the status-quo. Therefore it

did not deal with the state issue, the issue of managing the different relations and institutions that crystallised during a divergent and multiple historic process, within territorial, population, legalistic and economic boundaries ... Therefore, circumstances seemed artificial, remnants of a sick past, or a consequence of a present that external domination prohibits its true and authentic self-expression.¹⁰

Although Arab thought experienced state powers during the encounter with Europe and later on during European colonisation, it was not linked to the concept of state itself. The emphasis was on cultural sources of power more than on building a strong state. Therefore, a state's political foundations were associated with the ideal of national, pan-Arab, or religious unity.¹¹ This is the view of the Moroccan historian 'Abdullah Laroui. He explains that Arab thought on the state was influenced by the Arabist utopia which denies legitimacy to the particularistic territorial state. He considers that Arab thought was centred on the utopia of Arabism and Arab society. This resulted in ignoring

⁹ M. 'Abid Jabiriy, interview with the author.

¹⁰ Wadah Shararah, Huwla Ba'd Mushkilaat al-Duwla fiy al-Thaqafa wa al-Mujtama' al-'Arabiyyin (On Some Problems of State in Arab Culture and Society) First Edition (Beirut; Dar al-Hadatha, 1980) Arabic Text (Present Author's Translation) pp. 82-83.

¹¹ Gassan Salame, "'Strong' and 'Weak States', a Qualified Return to the Muqaddimah", in Gassan Salame (ed), The Foundation of the Arab State, First Edition (London; New York; Sydney; Croom Helm, 1987) p. 26.

the need for elaborating on the state phenomenon.¹²

According to Wadah Shararah this intellectual stance is natural. He explains that all Arab projects to do with the desired state of the Arabs, westernised, Islamist or pan-Arabist, are inclusive projects. Therefore the perceived state is the inclusive all encompassing one that satisfies the utopian model. The intellectual consequence of this is that Arab thought lacked any treatment of the state as a philosophical, social and political concept.¹³ The Moroccan 'Ali Umliyl explains this theoretical deficiency in the foreign incidence of the state in the Arab world.¹⁴ He goes on to say that for Arabs and Muslims, state was not a pure theoretical issue. They experienced the state only as a force imposing on their societies and colonising their countries later on. Foreign interference and colonial pressures were responsible for introducing the state into the region.¹⁵

State was, however, introduced "not as an integrated but dismembered institution. Their [Muslim intellectuals] role was limited to reacting to what actually took place." This is because the tanzimaat

were introduced along scattered periods (relating to the army, education or communication, etc.) and dislinked from an integrated apparatus (the state). In addition, there

¹² 'Abdullah Laroui, Mafhuwm al-Duwla (the Concept of the State) (Casablanca; al-Markaz al-Thaqafiy al-'Arabiy, 1981) Arabic Text (Present Author's Translation) pp. 17-69.

¹³ Wadah Shararah, Huwla Ba'd Mushkilaat, op. cit., p. 141.

¹⁴ 'Ali Umliyl, al-Islahiyya al-'Arabiyya wa al-Duwla al-Wataniyya, First Edition (Casablanca; al-Markaz al-Thaqafiy al-'Arabiy, 1985) p. 88.

¹⁵ Ibid, p. 88.

existed no awareness of the full logic (theory of the state).¹⁶

Umliyl is referring to the question to which Arab and Muslim intellectuals attempted to find an answer during the nineteenth century. As discussed in chapter two, Muslims tried to explain Europe's strength and their own weakness. The answer they came up with allocated a central place to the importance of renewing state structures and institutions. The answer to the dilemma of countering the West's encroachment was to be found in the West's "advancement of its institutions, particularly the institution responsible for managing society , i.e. the state. This meant that the concept was confined to the formal political level."¹⁷

The introduction of the state into Arab thought was fragmentary and a byproduct of the European pressures on the Arab world. This is not to suggest that the Arabs and their thought had not known any state articulation prior to the encounter with the West as Charles Butterworth implies.¹⁸ Arabic Islamic thought had dealt with issues and concepts of political authority and political organisation not least within Islamic fiqh. What is suggested here, however, is that concepts of the state and the nation-state are alien to Arab thought. They were introduced in the nineteenth century and after. Having borrowed these concepts Arab thought did not epistemologically absorb them intact. These concepts were the subject of modification and re-articulation.

¹⁶ Ibid, pp. 88-90.

¹⁷ Ibid, pp. 88-90.

¹⁸ Charles Butterworth, "State and Authority in Arabic Political Thought", in Gassan Salame (ed), The Foundation of the Arab, op. cit., pp. 91-110.

Umliy1 explains how the concept of the state underwent a process of modification and re-articulation. Underlying the effects on the thought of Muslim intellectuals Umliy1 explains the source of their theoretical deficiencies. He says that

concepts related to the national state acquired a content different from what they had while in their original environment. Perhaps the untrue awareness of the social history behind the evolution and development of the national state in Europe ... was one of the main causes of their political thought.¹⁹

Umliy1 concludes his analysis by emphasising the effects of the imposition of a modern state organisation on Arabs through colonialism. He thinks that the basic effect was the "unclear and disintegrated apprehension of the theory of modern state."²⁰ Whereas in Europe state was identified with the nation the Arabs were confronting a "relationship of contradiction between state and nation."²¹ This explains the frustration of the pan-Arabists and their disdain of the Arab state system.

The state system contradicted two fundamental ideas. It contradicted and destroyed the Ottoman Empire and the concept of the umma that, however ambiguous, accompanied it. It also contradicted the very idea that accompanied it, namely that of nationalism and that state and nation ought to be identical. Therefore it contradicted both the classical and the new concepts of the nation. Arab nationalist thought faced a dilemma. It had to cater for seemingly contradictory ideas. The idea of Arab nationalism only gave credit to an Arab nation within one state.

¹⁹ 'Ali Umliy1, al-Islahiyya al-'Arabiyya, op. cit., pp. 97-106.

²⁰ Ibid, pp. 97-106.

²¹ Ibid, p. 106.

The nation-state idea credited the Arab state system and lay the doors open for the development of many nations within their respective states' boundaries, independent from both the Islamic and Arab concepts of umma.

What made the situation for Arab nationalist thought more complicated was that the pan-Arabist idea suffered from the absence of the pan-Arab nation-state while the particularistic territorial states lacked the nation factor. Since the Arab nationalist movement failed in realising its aim of uniting the Arabs in one state, the establishment of the Arab state system marked a defeat of this aspiration. Thus the antagonistic stand Arab nationalist thought maintained towards the state system.²²

This hindered serious elaboration on the issue of the state. Until the 1980s Arab nationalist thought essentially repeated its old thesis about the state system and lacked any treatment of state related issues. It is the task of the following discussion to determine whether the 1980s contributions are significantly different and in what way.

(ii) The Consolidation of the State System

Contrary to the assumption of traditional Arab nationalist thought Arab states have, so far, consolidated their existence. Claims that these states were of foreign origin and their boundaries were cartoonic failed to destabilise them. The Arab state system has demonstrated a strong desire and ability to

²² Sa'id Bensa'id, "al-'Aql al-'Arabiyy wa al-Wahda: Nihaiyat al-Khitab al-Qawmiyy al-Klasiiyy" (Arab Reason and Unity: the End of the Classical Nationalist Discourse) Al-Wahda(Unity) vol. 46\47 (1988) Arabic Text (Present Author's Translation) p. 50.

withstand the animosity of pan-Arabism.

Pan-Arabism has failed to achieve its aim of dislodging and dismantling the state system. Despite the hegemony of its ideological paradigm during the 1950s and the 1960s the loud rhetoric of Arab nationalism has not managed to eliminate its perceived enemy, the particularistic territorial state.²³ The record of Arab politics since independence suggests that not only have states consolidated their entities and structures, it also shows that *raison d'état* prevailed in many incidents. Inter-Arab conflicts were a recurring phenomenon and armed conflicts were a fact of inter-Arab relations.²⁴

The Moroccan thinker M. 'Abid Jabiriy affirms that Arab states have become a fact of "definite and defiant reality."²⁵ Not only has the particularistic territorial state displayed durability, but also, as Jabiriy explains, "its internal apparatus and external links display defiance and objection. It

²³ Gassan Salame, " 'Auwaiq al-Waqi' al-'Arabiyy al-Qutriyy" (the Impediments of Arab Particularistic Reality), in A. Duri et al, al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya Tajarubuha wa Tawaqu'atuha (Seminar Papers) First Edition (Beirut; Markaz Dirasat al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya, 1989) pp. 469-471.

²⁴ Ahmed Yuwsif Ahmed, al-Sira'aat al-'Arabiyya al-'Arabiyya (1945-1981): Dirasa Istitla'iyya (Inter-Arab Conflicts (1945-1981): An Explorative Study) First Edition (Beirut; Markaz Dirasat al-Wahda al-'Arabia, 1988) Arabic Text (Present Author's Translation). This book is a pioneering study of inter-Arab conflicts. It is an example of the emergence of a new paradigm in Arab nationalism. Not only does this study spring from the particularistic territorial states as the reality of Arab politics, it also attempts employing social sciences' methodology in their study.

²⁵ M. 'Abid Jabiriy, "Mustaqbal al-Fikr al-'Arabiyy wa Ishkaliyyat al-Taquadum wa al-Wahda" (the Future of Arab Thought and the Problematique of Progress and Unity) Shoun Arabiyya (Arab Affairs) vol. 51, September 1987, Arabic Text (Present Author's Translation) p. 16.

also has established and consolidated social and psychological structures in the body of its society."²⁶ The particularistic territorial state, whether paying only a lip-service or devoted to Arab nationalism, has not withered away. It has persisted "without fusion, secession, reconstitution or dissolution into a large pan-Arab unity."²⁷

As time lapsed particularistic territorial states underwent a process of state-building. Like any new state, Arab states were keen to succeed in establishing themselves as nation-states. They attempted to acquire all the qualities that would make them 'real' legitimate and sovereign states. Despite their lack of the many prerequisites of nation-state status, Arab states behaved as if having these qualities. They carried on programmes of building political structures and embarked upon the process of creating national identities and local histories in order to facilitate the national integration of their communities.²⁸

Even though Arab states have not fully accomplished their aim of building nation-states, they remain, nonetheless, committed to this aim. The creation of state structures was challenged internally by a complex of social, political, economic and ethnic factors and the existence of primordial loyalties. They have also been challenged by pan-Arabism or, albeit

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ William Zartman, "Introduction", op. cit., p. 1.

²⁸ Many Arab states' constitutions claim nationhood for their communities. See, Nasiryf Nasar, Tasuwuraat al-Umma al-Mu'asira: Dirasa li Mafahiyyim al-Umma fiy al-Fikr al-'Arabiyy al-Hadiyth wa al-Mu'asir, Second Edition (Beirut; Dar Ammuwaj, 1994) pp. 489-535. Nasar provides an analysis of Arab constitutions regarding this matter.

nominally, by pan-Islamism. Nevertheless Arab states appear to have "overcome them without being severely wounded or weakened."²⁹ The particularistic territorial state appears to be "continuously gaining new ground and progressing, imperceptibly perhaps, but no doubt solidly."³⁰

The consolidation and consistency of the state system posed a serious challenge to Arab nationalist thought which had to provide an appropriate response to this challenge. This is where the contributions of the 1980s appear significant and realistic in contrast to the traditional paradigm. Arab intellectuals in the 1980s attempted to provide an understanding of the issues in a way that detached itself from rigid ideology. They sought to explain the dichotomy between what had been thought as the sweeping power of Arab nationalism and the enhancing power and entity of the state system. Pan-Arab thought in the 1980s confirms that realities of fragmentation and Arab disunity are more complex than romantics had thought. This is clear in the contributions analysed here.

Nadiym Biytar's contribution is one of the outstanding efforts made during the 1980s.³¹ He addresses the issue and underlines its serious challenge to Arab nationalism. His contribution signifies and acknowledges the need for restructuring Arab nationalist thought in order to survive the

²⁹ William Zartman, "Introduction", op. cit., p. 2.

³⁰ Hazem Beblawi and Giacomo Luciani, "Introduction", in Hazem Beblawi and Giacomo Luciani (eds), The Rentier State, First Edition (London; New York; Sydney; Croom Helm, 1987) p. 1.

³¹ Nadiym Biytar, Juwdhuwr al-Iqliymiyya al-Jadiyda, First Edition (Beirut; Ma'had al-Innmaa al-'Arabiy, 1983).

challenge. This challenge is a different one from that which Arab nationalism encountered during the 1920s and the 1930s. In the first decades of this century Arab nationalist thought had to tackle the issue of defining the Arabist idea itself. Arabism then had to be defended against external threats in the form of foreign rule. Now, Arab nationalism has to struggle against internal forces. The challenge, as Biytar explains, is "how to get out of a particularistic territorial ghetto."³²

What makes the challenge more difficult is that this ghetto is the "product of internal trends and forces ... what we now face is not to prove our national existence as a nation ... now the fundamental problem is how to transform from fragmentation to unity."³³ What Biytar is emphasising here is that the realisation of Arab national existence is no longer the task of Arab nationalist thought. It is an established thesis and this implies that traditional Arab nationalist thought had played its role and is no longer suitable for the new challenges. The old paradigm is a spent force that cannot deal with the consolidation of the state system. The message is that there is a need for a new paradigm to replace the old one.

The new paradigm would be assigned the task of doing away with the situation of fragmentation. This means the need for appropriate concepts and methodological tools necessary to perform a new task. Biytar's views on this issue are an example of the emerging paradigm in Arab nationalist thought. His contribution is one of the most coherent and systematic attempts

³² Ibid, p. 20.

³³ Ibid, p. 20.

in the study of the particularistic territorial state. Therefore the bulk of the discussion here will focus on Biytar's effort. Other contributions also will be alluded to whenever relevant. This will serve the purpose of identifying the new trend in Arab nationalist thought as well as making comparisons between contributions.

Biytar's analysis of the way the Arab state system consolidates itself starts by rejecting the traditional cartoonic nature theory. He points to a number of factors contributing to the process of state consolidation.³⁴ These are identified as related to history, identity, ideology, politics and economy. Through its employment of mechanisms derived from these factors the particularistic territorial state consolidates itself. Given its durability since independence the state has been able to rely on making history of its own. Not only has the state survived against competing notions, it also has been able to manipulate history.³⁵

By becoming the force dictating history within its borders the state has been able to interpret history the way it deems suitable to credit its existence. Time has been on the side of the state. It allowed it to interpret and also to become "the controller and manipulator of history."³⁶ While becoming a political and historical reality the particularistic territorial

³⁴ Nadiym Biytar, "Duwr al-Duwla al-Qutriyya fiy Tarsiykh al-Tariykh al-Qutriy" (the Role of the Particularistic Territorial State in Consolidating Particularistic History) Al-Wahda (Unity), vol. 42 (1988) Arabic Text (Present Author's Translation)

³⁵ Ibid, pp. 29-39.

³⁶ Ibid.

state succeeds " unconsciously in crystallising common feelings into an identity."³⁷ The lapse of time allowed the state to create "a psyche that implies an acceptance or a supposition that it is legitimate and real."³⁸

From this quotation a recognition of the particularistic territorial state and the development of particularistic identities is clearly visible. Here a remarkably new approach is provided. Contrary to traditional views the effects of contemporary history and the role of state mechanisms are acknowledged in bringing in another identity. No longer is identity only seen in its pan-Arabist level but also at its particularistic level. Identity here is not the work of metaphysical factors but the result of social, economic, political and historical process.

A devout pan-Arabist who believes in the necessity and virtue of Arab unity, Biytar conceals no fears of the emerging particularistic identity. He consider what he calls the "psychological mechanism" the most dangerous of all state mechanisms. This is because it represents the most ever enormous challenge to Arab identity and Arab unity. If the call for Arab unity and indeed Arab nationalism finds its focus in Arab identity then a competing identity poses a great danger to this aim. Biytar identifies the threat state identity presents to Arab nationalism in that it eventually will do away with Arab identity itself. He explains that the continuation of particularism gradually weakens Arab identity and may eventually cause "a final

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid, pp. 29-39.

eradication of unity qualities. The continuation of particularism and the state in its existence transform the belief in unity into a surficial shell."³⁹

Biytar's view becomes clearer when he tackles the issue of particularistic history. He considers the state's desire to interpret and invent a national history of its own as the corner stone of having a distinct identity and entity. This has been done in almost all Arab states, those who are particularistic in ideology or those who are pan-Arabist alike. Every state has realised the importance of having a distinctive history in order that the legitimacy of the state is not questioned since it springs from this history. This has been done to "consolidate and separate its history as a particularistic history."⁴⁰

Designing a state ideology is important for welding legitimacy to the state. Since Arab states view themselves as sovereign entities they require all the qualities needed for statehood. The creation or even the invention of national history and national myths reflects this need. Arab states are undergoing two processes simultaneously. State-building and nation-building processes go hand in hand and they reveal the urgency these states feel in face of the circumstances. Not only do Arab states have to convince other states (Arab or none-Arab) they qualify for statehood but also have to make themselves look so in the eyes of their own citizens.

The stability of the political regimes also has to rely on this ideology of state legitimacy. Political stability is based

³⁹ Ibid, p. 34.

⁴⁰ Ibid, pp. 34-35.

on the legitimacy of regimes and states particularly if the lack of ethnic homogeneity is taken into account. However, this is not to suggest that the endeavour to establish the identity of the particularistic territorial state contradicts that of Arabism. Particularistic identities are also based on Arabism, Islam as well as on particularistic history. However, Biytar rightly observes that "the existence of particularistic territorial state in itself means a particularistic mechanism based on itself despite the supreme aims that accompany it."⁴¹

This is the central point in the analysis of Sa'd Diyn Ibrahiym. He points out that state-building process

consolidated the existence and durability of the state, externally and internally. It bestowed upon it a *dè facto* legitimacy' in the face of others (Arab and foreign states) and its own citizens some of whom may initially have hesitated in recognising its *dè jure* legitimacy.⁴²

Therefore, the state-building process and the building of modern state institutions increased the states' ability to control and dominate most aspects of societal life. Therefore they were able to consolidate their entities. Despite Arab nationalism the state managed to "consolidate its particularistic identity to the point it became accepted by its citizens."⁴³

Other writers confirm the role of state-building in the consolidation of particularism. What Biytar calls the mechanism of economics is seen by other writers as having "worked to

⁴¹ Ibid, pp. 29-39.

⁴² Sa'd Diyn Ibrahiym, al-Mujtama' wa al-Duwla fiy al-Watan al-'Arabiyya, First Edition (Beirut; Markaz Dirasat al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya, 1988) pp. 177-183.

⁴³ Ibid, p. 299.

diversify and consolidate existing states."⁴⁴ However, Biytar assigns great importance to the role played by economic factors. He notices that the role of economic factors in consolidating the state is a manifestation of a "particularism mechanism of multiple dimensions that consolidate this existence once and for all."⁴⁵ This mechanism is a danger for Arab unity since it is "an end to any unification work and the idea of unity itself."⁴⁶

Therefore, the logic of the particularistic territorial states is to be found in many factors. As Gassan Salame observes the survival and continuation of these entities have a renewed spirit of continuity. The passage of time confers legitimacy on them that springs from their successful resistance to factors challenging their existence.⁴⁷

From the discussion above it is clear that Arab nationalist thought is attempting a new understanding of the state system. The content of this new attempt evidently departs from the traditional romantic ideological views. The consolidation of the state system has obliged Arab nationalist theory to reconsider its position. The new approach is more realistic and politically rather than ideologically oriented.

However, Arab nationalist thought, when acknowledging the consolidation of the state system, is not relinquishing its goal of Arab unity. Arab unity, in one form or another, remains very central to Arab nationalism. The realities of Arab politics make

⁴⁴ Hazem Beblawi and Giacomo Luciani (eds), The Rentier State, op. cit., p. 1.

⁴⁵ Nadiyah Biytar, "Duwr al-Duwla al-Qutriyya", op. cit., p. 38.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Gassan Salame, " 'Auwaiq al-Waqi' al-'Arabiyy", op. cit., p. 473.

it more realistic and pragmatic for Arab nationalism to work in conjunction with old enemies. Particularistic territorial states have been the norm of the day and Arabs find no embarrassment in identifying themselves with the state. Arab nationalist thought is coming to terms with the state system. However, it still relies on the current of Arabism at grass-root level.

Arabism remains a central fact in culture at grass-root level.⁴⁸ From this perspective the proclamation by F. Ajami that Arabism is dead may only be considered as overemphasising the ability of the Arab states to consolidate themselves in spite of Arabism. This is to suggest that, in the words of Roger Owen, "the power of the individual states to resist pan-Arab appeals had become much greater."⁴⁹ But Arabism "remained a central fact of Middle Eastern life whatever else might be going on."⁵⁰ Roger Owen sharply remarks that "what Ajami is trying to describe is not the end of Arabism itself but an important change in the way it was interpreted and put into political use."⁵¹

The new contributions in Arab nationalist thought recognise the fact of the state and no longer underestimate the implication of the institutionalisation of particularistic identities. Nevertheless, this does not go as far as to register Arab

⁴⁸ This seems in line with the shift Arabist ideas underwent at the grass-root level. The survey of Arab public opinion attitudes towards Arab unity highlighted that the aim of achieving Arab unity became more realistic and pragmatic. Sa'd Diyn Ibrahiym, Itijahaat al-Raiy al-'Aam al-'Arabiyy Nahuww Masalat al-Wahda: Dirasa Maiydaniyya, Third Edition (Beirut; Markaz Dirasat al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya, 1985) p. 119.

⁴⁹ Roger Owen, State, Power and Politics, op. cit., p. 90.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

nationalism a spent force. Nor does this imply that the pan-Arab idea is abandoned since the new paradigm suggests no outright contradiction between pan-Arabism and particularism.⁵²

(iii) The Indigenous Origins of The Arab State System

Realising that the state system has consolidated itself, and contrary to traditional views, the new contributions seek to find appropriate historical, social and political explanations to this phenomenon. Though convinced that the Arab state lacks the full qualities of the nation-state Arab intellectuals in the 1980s began to explore the issues behind its stability. The 1980s witnessed the emergence of a new debate on the origins of the Arab state system. The new debates attempt to provide a balanced and documented history of the Arab state system.

The debates are significant since they reflect the widening participation of Arab academics, historians and social scientists. There is in these debates a clear decrease in the role played by ideologues and a marked reliance on scientific methodology rather than strict ideological dogma. The new trend clearly distinguishes between the ideological disdain of the state system, associated with traditional views, and the need for its objective study. This stems from the obvious observation that since the state system is the reality of Arab politics any attempt at changing the status quo must begin with its objective study.

The following is a discussion of some contributions of Arab

⁵² This view is widely shared by intellectuals interviewed by the author such as: Hasan Nafa, Sa'd Diyn Ibrahiym, Saiyyd Yasiyn, Jabiriy and Bensa'id.

intellectuals regarding the origins of the Arab state system. The contributions that attempt to provide a new look at the origins of the Arab state system are numerous. To discuss all of them is beyond the scope and limits of this research. The discussion will be selective. The selection is centred on the contributions from the three countries of the study, Lebanon, Egypt and Morocco. The contributions discussed here are, however, representative of the general trend and the debates within each country. They will also include some contributions of Arab intellectuals living abroad (i.e. in Western countries) and contributions of few Arab writers other than those living in the field work countries since their contributions are seen vital in detecting and evaluating the change in Arab thought.

The contributions discussed here are the work of some of the most prominent Arab intellectuals who enjoy a wider Arab audience. They were also discussed by gatherings of Arab intellectuals at conference and seminar levels. They all deal with the origins of the Arab state system. They no longer accept the traditional thesis that this system was wholly transplanted by foreign powers. Rather, they attempt to portray it as one of indigenous roots as well.

Gassan Salame argues that despite the foreign origin of some entities, foreign will was not completely arbitrary. He explains that foreign powers took care that every entity be founded around solid nuclei (a tribe, sect or family). Salame's approach focuses on internal and indigenous circumstances in explaining the origins and the consolidation of the Arab state system. The Arab state system was the interaction of internal and local forces and

not the work of aliens.⁵³

Particularistic territorial entities reflect the local social solidarities. These solidarities are linked by a

common affiliation, sectoral, local, tribal. They gradually got the state apparatus under their control. These groups, with its distinctive rural origins, benefited from the foundation of modern entities. They, somehow freely, migrated to live in the city, to get free education, enlist in modern parties and join the armed services, without having to abandon their traditional rural solidarity.⁵⁴

Salame rejects traditional Arab nationalist views on the role of colonialism in the formation of the Arab state system. He refutes as unrealistic the accusation of colonialism being responsible for the creation of an identity problem in the Arab world. What colonialism did, according to Salame, was to

deal, as interests dictated, with a fragmented society. The essential effect of colonialism was to seize the decisive moment in the history of the region between the disintegration of the Ottoman sultanate and the freezing of geography according to new categorisation. Ever since world order has been a faithful guardian of the new geographic status quo.⁵⁵

Similar views are also, albeit in more detailed articulation, provided by the Lebanese Iliya Harik. Harik's thesis is that "contemporary Arab states are the product of indigenous and regional forces mostly unrelated to European colonialism, and in most cases predate it."⁵⁶ Using the term

⁵³ Gassan Salame, al-Mujtama' wa al-Duwla fi al-Mashriq al-'Arabiyy (Society and State in the Arab East) First Edition (Beirut; Markaz Dirasat al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya, 1987) Arabic Text (Present Author's Translation) pp. 20-22.

⁵⁴ Ibid, p. 22.

⁵⁵ Ibid, p. 66.

⁵⁶ Iliya Harik, "The Origins of the Arab State System", in, Gassan Salame(ed), The Foundation of the Arab, op. cit., pp. 21-39.

state to refer to "an established authority which enjoys jurisdiction over a core territory and people for an extended period of time, stretching over at least three generations" Harik remarks that Arab states are not only "old societies but also old states."⁵⁷ Applying this definition to Arab states Harik argues that "most of these states were locally rooted and enjoyed legitimacy in the eyes of their people." These states "had recognised boundaries, or at least, a core territory where their authority endured through the vicissitudes of time."⁵⁸

Harik credits Arab states with old foundation. With the exception of those of the Fertile Crescent which "emerged at the hands of the colonial powers" all Arab states "go back to the nineteenth century or a much earlier period." Harik argues that only Fertile Crescent states conform to "Arab nationalist theory about the emergence of the state system." Harik explains the fact that Arab nationalist theory adopted this thesis because the Arabist ideology itself "emerged in the Fertile Crescent."⁵⁹

Harik provides a classification of Arab states based on the variations in their origins. He identifies their structures, power bases, legitimacy and traditions. This allows him to identify five different types of states: the imam-chief system (e.g. North Yemen, Oman, Morocco); the chiefs and imams alliance system (e.g. Saudi Arabia); the traditional secular system wherein authority is based upon a dynasty with no religious attributes (e.g. Lebanon and the Gulf states); the bureaucratic-

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid, pp. 21-39.

⁵⁹ Ibid, pp. 21-39.

oligarchy type where authority basically lies in the hands of urban garrison chiefs employing an extensive bureaucracy (e.g. Egypt and North African states); and the colonially created state system (the Fertile Crescent with the exception of Lebanon). In the first four types Harik explains that a certain local mechanism and power structure were the essential decisive factors in establishing the nucleus of a state. This state will then be recognised by the foreign powers in the nineteenth century.⁶⁰

Harik admits that

colonialism affected the boundaries of Arab states, but it did not, with the exception of the Fertile Crescent cases, create these states. Colonialism gave more definitive form to the indigenous states and introduced elements of modern administration to them.⁶¹

Therefore while Harik traces the origins of the Arab state system to indigenous factors he also cannot ignore the role played by colonialism. By introducing modern state organisation and centralised government colonialism participated in the complexities of the Arab state system. This is understood since colonialism was decisive in the emergence of "the nationalism of the state system by introducing a centralised system of administration in most countries under their control."⁶²

While Salame and Harik are concerned with bringing to the fore the vital and decisive role of the indigenous forces, Bahgat Korany subscribes to a position that maintains the primacy of

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid, pp. 22-39.

⁶² Ibid, pp. 22-39.

external factors.⁶³ This is not to suggest an outright association with traditional views of the foreign transplantation of Arab states. Rather Korany's view is from the perspective of international relations. He argues that rules of world order and regional order designed the Arab states. These rules were the creation of the dominant Western powers.

The basic assumption here is that "external factors predominated in the territorial definition of Arab states."⁶⁴ Though this seems close to traditional views Korany's analysis while emphasising the role of external factors does not, as do traditional views, preclude the existence of indigenous factors. Korany's approach is distinct in its attempt to explain the interaction of the dynamic forces that led to the foundation of the contemporary Arab state system.

Defining the state as the "establishment of an organised political authority in a recognised territory" Korany establishes a link between concepts of territory, sovereignty and formal government. Considering the legal level of the definition of the state an alien concept to "grass-root political culture (based on a 'pan' concept, whether Islamic or Arab)" Korany considers the Arab territorial state system "a phenomenon made in Europe." What Korany views as alien is a "foreign political culture based on the territorial concept." Accordingly, he establishes his thesis that the Arab state system was "imported from Europe."⁶⁵

⁶³ Bahgat Korany, "Alien and Besieged Yet Here to Stay: The Contradiction of the Arab Territorial State", in Gassan Salame(ed), The Foundation of the Arab, op. cit., pp. 48-52.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid, pp. 48-52.

Korany views the Arab state system as a "part of a global process, of the expansion of international society or global rift." He explains that the

intrinsically European system became universalised to the rest of the world. In the Arab region it did so in successive stages: the co-optation of the Ottoman empire into the European balance of power in the eighteenth century, the fragmentation of this empire and its replacement by the mandate system during and after World War I, and the present inter-state Arab order following World War II, shaped by the mandate system.⁶⁶

From the discussion it is clear that the role played by local forces in the foundation of the Arab state system is emphasised. External factors are not, however, excluded but they are reinterpreted. Apart from this the common view in the contributions of the 1980s is that the state system is not entirely of foreign origin. Colonialism is credited with playing the role of uniting some previously fragmented territories.⁶⁷ This view is exceptional and new in Arab nationalist thought. It is important, therefore, to discuss it in some detail.

The discussion is based on the contribution of Sa'd Diyn Ibrahiym whose contribution is indicative of the emergence of a new paradigm in Arab nationalist thought. Ibrahiym's analysis of the birth of the particularistic territorial state stems from the actual existence of particularism in the Arab world. Though believing all parts of the Arab world "belong to one nation with one primary culture."⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Ibid, p. 57.

⁶⁷ Sa'd Diyn Ibrahiym, interview with the author.

⁶⁸ Sa'd Diyn Ibrahiym develops his views in a pioneering Arab nationalist study on state and society: al-Mujtama' wa al-Duwla, op. cit., p. 170.

Ibrahiym confirms the existence of

particularism of the great Arab regions within this general unity. Also there is territorial particularism within every region (the Maghrib, the Nile valley, the Mashriq, and the Arab Peninsula). Moreover, there are particularisms within each individual country.⁶⁹

While recognising the unifying role of Arabisation and Islamisation in the formation of the Arab nation, Ibrahiym refers to the fact that this process took place among peoples of extensive diversity. He explains that the Arabs, Islam and Arabic language interacted with these different factors in a historical dialectical process. This process resulted in the few centuries after the seventh century in bringing about the factors unifying the Arab land in one Arab homeland.⁷⁰

This implies that particularism lived and continued alongside the unifying factors. This coexistence between civilisational particularisms and commonalities explains the "divergent development among the regions of the Arab homeland, even before Western infiltration." Western infiltration played the role of introducing factors that "consolidated, intensified and, in most cases, spoiled this divergent development among regions of the Arab homeland, and inside the parts of every region."⁷¹

Turning his attention to the issue of the origins of Arab states Ibrahiym provides a typology that distinguishes between three groups of states according to the role played by indigenous or external factors in their foundation. The first group of

⁶⁹ Ibid, p. 170.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid, p. 171.

states includes those that were

existent entities, with independent and quasi-independent political authority (under the Ottoman Empire). Western colonialism dominated these and uprooted the local political authority or marginalised it and took its place during occupation. It did not significantly alter its boundaries. These are Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Egypt.⁷²

The second group are states that were "entities that were divided or had lost some parts or had parts added to it." This category is mainly manifest in the Mashriq region. The Mashriq was reordered and divided according to the British-French plan into

Syria, Lebanon, Palestine and Jordan. Parts of Syria were deducted and added to Mount Lebanon (Tripoli, Beqa' and Sidon) to create "Grand Lebanon", the size of which was doubled twice by an administrative decree of the French mandate authority in 1920. Another part of north-western Syria was cut and handed to Turkey, another part became part of a new political entity, Jordan. The latter was, framed by a British decision, from three parts that were deducted from neighbouring entities.⁷³

Iraq also belongs to this group. It became an entity with its present borders after the First World War. "It was an amalgamation of three previous Ottoman districts (wilayyaat)." The same applies to Libya and Mauritania.⁷⁴

And the third group consists of present Arab states that had not experienced direct colonialism. These are Saudi Arabia, Yemen and countries of the Gulf (the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Bahrain and Kuwait). However, these countries were

affected by British colonialism during the last century in at least two basic aspects: ... the demarcation of their present boundaries and the imposition of a minimum level of respect, not necessarily acceptance, of these boundaries

⁷² Ibid, pp. 171-172.

⁷³ Ibid, pp. 172-173.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

... the consolidation of the present ruling dynasties in power, and the advising of them on external affairs , and some of their internal affairs till complete formal independence in the 1960s and 1970s.⁷⁵

In summary, Ibrahiym considers the boundaries of Arab states as having been the product of "direct or indirect interaction with colonial experience and western domination during the last two centuries and particularly during the inter-war period." This thesis is a significant development in Arab nationalist thought. It amends the previously held view that colonial designs shattered and fragmented the Arab world. Ibrahiym believes that "colonial design reordered the Arab homeland and divided it according to its aim and interests." This is to say that the Arab world was not united before the advent of colonialism. Political fragmentation was the norm not only at the general Arab level but also at the regional and local levels.

Ibrahiym confirms that even though colonialism

actually fragmented some Arab regions as in the case of the Fertile Crescent, Yemen and Somalia, the aims and interests of colonial states required in other cases that they 'unite' and 'add' existing entities to each other as the case with the Sudan and Libya.⁷⁶

Ibrahiym concludes his analysis by presenting an evaluation of the effects of Western colonialism on the evolution of the Arab state system. He explains that the Arab world had known a situation of disarticulation prior to Western colonialism. This disarticulation manifested itself in the existence of particularism that spread all over the Arab land. What Western colonialism did was not to invent disarticulation but to

⁷⁵ Ibid, pp. 171-174.

⁷⁶ Ibid, p. 175.

transform disarticulation, that was the liquid state in Arab history till the eighteenth century, into fragmentation. It bestowed on it the appearance of stability by creating particularistic territorial legal and institutional frames in the fragments.⁷⁷

As can be noted from the contributions outlined above a new explanation of the origins of the Arab state system is being introduced. This more balanced view is gaining ground among Arab intellectuals. Arab nationalist thought, however, still held colonialism responsible for the institutionalisation of fragmentation in the form of the state system, though it is providing a fresh approach to the question. No longer is the Arab state system seen as a mere creation of a foreign will.⁷⁸

Arab states originated through a process of interaction between external and indigenous forces where the latter had the upper hand. The indigenous forces are more likely to help explain the durability and the consolidation of the state system.⁷⁹ How do the contributions of the 1980s explain the relationship between the aim of Arab unity and the reality of the state system? This is the subject of the discussion below.

5-2: The Dialectic of Unity and Fragmentation

As alluded to earlier states were considered a foreign creation and therefore contradicting the living Arab nation. The particularistic territorial states were seen as obstacles standing in the way of Arab unity. It was argued that any project

⁷⁷ Ibid, p. 53.

⁷⁸ This is a widely held view by intellectuals interviewed by the author during the field trips to Egypt and Morocco.

⁷⁹ Sa'd Diyn Ibrahiym, Interview with the author.

for Arab unity must start with doing away with these states. This view is no longer appreciated by the new thinking. Having acknowledged that Arab states had indigenous origins Arab intellectuals in the 1980s began to elaborate on the complex issue of the relationship between the state system and the aim of Arab unity.

In the contributions discussed below a new paradigm is emerging. It is entirely different from traditional views in its evaluation of the functions of the state system and its future role in realising any form of Arab unity. The contributions of the 1980s question the traditional view that the Arab nation was politically united prior to colonialism. It also question the view that colonialism destroyed that unity. Arab history is reinterpreted wherein Arab unity is no longer seen as the only actual fact that had characterised this history. The contributions start with the basic assumption that Arab unity had its ups and downs. Though unity had been sometimes achieved throughout Arab history, no longer is the idea romanticised and idealised.

The new contributions see Arab history as that of a series of movements of unity as well as fragmentation. This historical realist view of Arab history is the essence of Arab nationalist thought in the 1980s. It is based on an interpretation in dialectical terms. Arab history was a dialectic not a static process. Centrifugal and centripetal forces together had been at work. This explains both incidents of unity and disunity in Arab history. Here a significant departure from romantic Arab nationalism may be detected.

Though the new thinking still holds the concept of the Arab nation as fundamental it emphasises the independence of the nation from the state. The new contributions no longer establish an automatic link and compatibility between the nation and the state as its political realisation. Therefore, a new interpretation of the dichotomy of Arab politics is provided. Here the foundation and the consolidation of the Arab state system is not considered as refutation of the Arab nation. A nation may be united without it having a single nation-state or even if it has many states seeking the loyalty of individuals. Arab unity may be achieved without necessarily destroying these states. Unity has many forms that do not necessitate the withering away of particularistic territorial states. Since Arab history itself involved both incidents of unity and disunity, therefore the state system is not by definition a handicap to Arab unity.

In his treatment of the issue of unity and fragmentation in the Arab world Sa'd Diyn Ibrahiym rejects traditionalist views of Arab nationalism. He deems untrue the thesis that "the unity of Arab homeland, historically, was since the eighth century the norm and disunity and fragmentation were the exception."⁸⁰ Ibrahiym also rejects the claim that "present, and maybe previous, fragmentation is the work of foreign forces." Nevertheless, he does not accept the counter thesis that

the unity of what is known as the Arab homeland was the exception that did not last more than two centuries of the last fourteen centuries and that fragmentation was the norm that predominated during most of the other twelve

⁸⁰ Sa'd Diyn Ibrahiym, al-Mujtama' wa al-Duwla, op. cit., pp. 50-51.

centuries.⁸¹

Having rejected both contending projections of Arab history, Ibrahiym puts forward his interpretation. He argues that "dealing with the issue in the form of absolute theses describing a static case is beyond reason. It negates the logic of history and human sociology." Ibrahiym calls for an evaluation of the issue in a "comparative dialectical form. To view Arab history and contemporary Arab reality as a dynamic process."⁸² Ibrahiym states that the dialectic of unity and fragmentation or disarticulation has governed Arab history. This is because the Arab world did not remain in an

inclusive state of unity in most of its history (which began with Arab-Islamic advances). It was politically united during the whole of the reign of Caliphs Othman, Ali, the Ummayyads, the first century of the Abbasides.... The period is approximately two hundred years.⁸³

However, Ibrahiym adds that

the Arab homeland did not remain fragmented during the rest of the last fourteen centuries. The following twelve centuries saw the emergence of small entities that soon were subject to annexation and political integration into larger entities. These may not have included all parts of the Arab homeland but they definitely were bigger than contemporary particularist territorial units.⁸⁴

From this springs the thesis that "unification as a political societal process represented a continuous historical trend and that fragmentation as a political societal process represented a counter historical trend."⁸⁵

⁸¹ Ibid, pp. 50-51.

⁸² Ibid, pp. 50-51.

⁸³ Ibid, p. 52.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

But how did the relationship between the two indigenous processes of unity and fragmentation and external factors develop? How did the incident of colonialism intervene with this indigenous process? Ibrahiym identifies a relationship between this indigenous dialectic and external factors. He believes that since fragmentation was a historical process independent of colonialism the latter is not to blame for present day fragmentation of the Arab world.

Ibrahiym explains the role of foreign factors by the change of the borders it imposed. He makes the observation that

before the last colonial invasion, that began two centuries ago, internal boundaries between the regions of the Arab homeland had not impeded the movement of people, goods or ideas. The concept of political authority had not necessarily carried a spiritual or nationalist loyalty nor imposed a legal obligation on the sons of the Arab homeland. Processes of unification or disintegration were not subject to legitimacy as a legal or international concept. The only active legitimacy, ... was civilisational religious and cultural legitimacy supported by military force in order to secure the requirements of justice.⁸⁶

Having confirmed that fragmentation is not an alien concept to the Arab world Ibrahiym provides a view that departs from traditional views that hold colonialism totally responsible for the state of fragmentation in the Arab world. Ibrahiym concludes that colonialism did "transform the disarticulation, that existed up to the nineteenth century like a mercurial case in Arab history, into fragmentation." When colonialism created institutional and legal frameworks for particularistic territorial states it lent them consistency and stability which later became embodied in legal and international legitimacy.⁸⁷

⁸⁶ Ibid, pp. 52-53.

⁸⁷ Ibid, pp. 52-53.

From Ibrahiym's analysis it is clear that the contributions of the 1980s are no longer satisfied with traditional Arab nationalist thought's hostile attitude towards the state system. The foundation of the Arab state system is no longer seen as an act of a foreign will. Arab history involved both incidents of unity and fragmentation. Although Arab nationalist thought considers unity part and parcel of Arab history and heritage, this unity was only one such part of that heritage. It is a possibility that was realised in the past.⁸⁸ However, the fact remains that fragmentation is not an alien concept to the Arab world. The "dialectic of unity and fragmentation is a fundamental factor of Arab culture."⁸⁹

A close look at Arab literature in the 1980s would reveal the emergence of a new approach towards explaining the issue of fragmentation. Some Arab intellectuals even consider the concept of fragmentation inaccurate and call for its abandonment. Jabiriy criticises what he calls the "ambiguous misleading concept of fragmentation that Arab nationalist thought sees as the direct contradiction of unity."⁹⁰ Jabiriy argues that to view fragmentation as a contradiction of unity and its negation is to impose an ambiguous conceptualisation of unity. This ambiguity only reveals one aspect of the complex Arab reality.⁹¹

⁸⁸ M. 'Abid Jabiriy, Ishkaliyyaat al-Fikr al-'Arabiy al-Mu'asir, (Beirut; Markaz Dirasat al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya, 1989) p. 79.

⁸⁹ Gassan Salame, " 'Auwaiq al-Waqi' al-'Arabiy", op. cit., p. 471.

⁹⁰ M. 'Abid Jabiriy, interview with the author.

⁹¹ Ibid.

Jabiriy explains that fragmentation negates unity at the language level and only if judged at the level of linguistic counterparts but at the level of Arab reality the concept of fragmentation is insufficient. It can not reflect the rich and complex content that forms the identity of the particularistic territorial state which is the real and true contradiction of unity.⁹² Here a new understanding of the conceptual pair of unity and fragmentation is provided. Jabiriy calls for a sincere attempt at criticising misleading concepts like that of fragmentation. There is a need to call things by their true and appropriate names. Therefore, the concept of particularistic territorial state should replace that of fragmentation.⁹³ Obviously, this is a realisation that Arab nationalist terminology ought to be amended and this is a significant aspect of the new debates.

(i) The Crisis of the Particularistic Territorial State

While recognising the legitimacy of the state system Arab intellectuals have in the 1980s begun to show interest in the nature of the phenomenon. The literature in the 1980s attempted to fill the gap that previously existed as far as the investigation of state-related issue is concerned. The new contributions now deal with the issue in an intellectual rather than ideological manner. It is clear that the consolidation and

⁹² M. 'Abid Jabiriy, Ishkaliyyaat al-Fikr, op. ci.t, pp. 94-95.

⁹³ Ibid, pp. 94-95.

the durability of the state system obliged Arab intellectuals to reconsider the issues.

However, the state system is undergoing a crisis. The nature, causes and aspects of the crisis form a major part of the content of the contributions that are the subject of the discussion below. The crisis of the particularistic territorial state is echoed in the nature and magnitude of the problems the state has been unable to overcome. Primary among these are problems of identity, political and social integration of the ethnic groups and legitimacy.⁹⁴ Sa'd Diyn Ibrahiym thinks that these problems are inseparable. These problems would emphasise the crisis of legitimacy the particularistic territorial state is facing. Not only that its legitimacy is in question but also that the state's ability to remain solid and viable is being tested.⁹⁵

Ibrahiym argues that developments in the Arab world since 1973 reveal that the state is facing a crisis. He outlines the events he considers have demonstrated the crisis of the state. These include events of: the civil war in Lebanon (1975 and after), the Sudanese civil war (1983 and after), the hostile action of non-Arab countries on the Sudan, Somalia and Iraq, the eruption of inter-Arab armed conflicts, as between the two Yemen, Egypt and Libya, Morocco and Algeria and Qatar and Bahrain, the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982, the Israeli raids on Tunisia

⁹⁴ Sa'd Diyn Ibrahiym, al-Mujtama wa al-Duwla, op. cit., p. 331.

⁹⁵ Sa'd Diyn Ibrahiym, "al-Duwla al-Qutriyya wa Sinariyuhaat al-Mustaqbal al-'Arabiyy" (Particularistic Territorial State and the Scenarios of Arab Future), Al-Wahda (Unity), vol. 48 (Sept. 1988) Arabic Text (Present Author's Translation) pp. 6-7.

and Iraq, and the popular uprisings in many Arab states. These events, explains Ibrahiym, reveal the deep crisis of the particularistic territorial state.

In addition the state has been encountering problems of preserving its independence, independent economic development, social justice and in widening popular political participation.⁹⁶ However, The problem of identity is by and large the major one threatening the particularistic territorial state. Ibrahiym traces this problem in the period when the state was founded. He refers to the competing identities that were at work when the Arab state system emerged. As alluded to earlier all particularistic, pan-Arab, regional and Islamic identities, though not necessarily contradictory, were available when the system was founded. The implicit or explicit choice of any of these identities would have meant problems at the internal or regional levels.⁹⁷

Arab particularistic states that opted for

emphasising or creating final national identity (Tunisian, Algerian, Egyptian, Sudanese, or Kuwaiti) collided and clashed with feelings of a large sector of its citizens who aspired towards affiliation to a wider political and civilisational association such as the 'Arab nation' or the 'Islamic nation'. Also, some states collided or were hit by the reality of the narrowness of the particularistic resources base needed to build a modern state.⁹⁸

Those states that opted for the

Arab identity (pan-Arab) as its final identity and

⁹⁶ Ibid, pp. 6-8. This is also the view of other Arab writers interviewed by the author. e.g. M. 'Abid Jabiriy, Hasan Nafa and Sa'id Bensa'id.

⁹⁷ Sa'd Diyn Ibrahiym, al-Mujtama wa al-Duwla, op. cit., p. 331.

⁹⁸ Ibid, pp. 331-332.

considered its particularism a transitional stage imposed on it and not wilfully its own choice (e.g. Syria, Iraq, Jordan and Yemen etc.) collided with the feelings of non-Arab ethnic formations inside its borders (e.g. the Kurds of Iraq, the tribes of south Sudan).⁹⁹

The same kind of problem was encountered by states that opted for an Islamic identity, such as Saudi Arabia and the Sudan during the reign of Ga'far al-Nimiyriy, and some Gulf countries. In some of these states, where there are non-Muslim religious minorities, the option collided with the feelings of non-Muslims.¹⁰⁰

This analysis makes it clear that particularistic territorial Arab states, no matter what identity option they went for, have been facing the problem of building an inclusive national identity. Clearly, identity is very central to the idea of nation-state and to achieving integration. But, as Ibrahiym explains, all Arab states have not so far succeeded in overcoming the problem.¹⁰¹ In reality, however, states attempted, in the words of Ibrahiym, to "foul the problem of identity or postpone its resolution by relying on rhetorical conglomeration."¹⁰²

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, pp. 331-332.

¹⁰¹ Syria, for example, has had two different concepts of Syrian identity: one based on the idea of Great Syria that includes the Fertile Crescent, and that of a Syria as a part of the Arab nation. As Elizabeth Picard explains, none of these would establish a Syrian particularism or a Syrian nationalism since according to the first concept Syria would naturally extend into Lebanon, Palestine, Jordan and Iraq, and according to the second concept it would be a part of the Arab nation. Therefore, Syria's national boundaries are not clear and its realistic identity is not defined. Elizabeth Picard, "Naqd Istikhdaam Mafhuwm al-Ithniyya fiy Tahliyl al-'Amaliyyat al-Siyyasiyya fiy al-'Alam al-'Arabiy", in Niviyn Mus'ad(ed) al-'Alamiyya wa al-Khususiyya fiy Dirasat al-Mantika al-'Arabiyya (Cairo; Cairo University, Markaz al-Buhuwth wa al-Dirasaat al-Siyyasiyya, 1991) pp. 215-217.

¹⁰² Sa'd Diyn Ibrahiym, al-Mujtama wa al-Duwla, op. cit., p. 332.

The problem of identity is aggravated by that of socio-political integration of the ethnic formations in some Arab states. Many states face the issue of ethnic diversity. The experience reveals that integration has yet to be achieved. Lack of integration was clearly evident in the incidents of social crises like the civil wars that a number of states have gone through. This reflects the strong link between identity and integration since "the choice between competing identities implies the exclusion or the alienation of one sector of the population or social formation from the main flow of public political life."¹⁰³

Legitimacy is also a major problem facing Arab states. This is particularly the case where "a majority of present Arab countries experienced the birth of a state's institution for the first time this century." This implies, explains Ibrahiym, that the "consolidation of the state's institutions and historical legitimacy in the eyes of its citizens is shaky and doubted."¹⁰⁴ This is even harder when state legitimacy is linked to the continuous deterioration in the legitimacy of political regimes. The fact that, despite Arab regimes' employment of all measures to generate legitimacy, their failure makes the legitimacy issue a hard one to resolve.¹⁰⁵

The contribution of Sa'd Diyn Ibrahiym discussed above is

¹⁰³ Ibid, p. 334.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, p. 334.

¹⁰⁵ Sa'd Diyn Ibrahiym, "Masadir al-Shar'iyah fi Anzimat al-Hukm al-'Arabiyyah" (Sources of Ruling Regimes' Legitimacy in the Arab World), in Sa'd Diyn Ibrahiym et al, Azmat al-Dimuqratiyyah fi al-Watan al-'Arabiyy (Seminar Papers) First Edition (Beirut; Markaz Dirasat al-Wahda al-'Arabiyyah, 1983) p. 403.

an indication of the new trend in Arab thought. Not only does this trend appreciate the Arab state system, it also attempts investigating the different issues that impede the development of this system into a wider one. The particularistic territorial state has become a central topic of study and analysis. The state system is now a reality that has to be reckoned with. The new trend also assigns a realistic function to this system in future Arab projects.

The pioneering research project carried out by a large group of Arab academics and intellectuals under the auspices of the Beirut-based Centre for Arab Unity Studies is another indication of the new trend. The project is a prospective analysis of the Arab world that was the product of an effort of Arab intellectuals who share a pan-Arabist orientation. Therefore, it is important to treat its findings and underlying arguments to evaluate the originality of the new trend.¹⁰⁶

Although the prospective study project foresaw three basic probable scenarios of a future Arab world, the centrality of the state system in all of them may not be missed. The focus of the scenarios is to establish the necessity and urgency of Arab unity or integration in one form or another. However, the three scenarios, a more fragmented Arab world, co-operation and co-ordination driven Arab states, and a politically united Arab world, all reflect an acknowledgement of the central role of the

¹⁰⁶ The project entitled, "Istishraq Mustaqbal al-Watan al-'Arabiyy" (the Arab world: A Prospective Study), includes four aspects: the Arabs and the World, Arab Economic Development, Society and State, and the overall systematic model of economic, political, social, national, pan-Arab, regional and international interactions.

state system.

None of the three scenarios see the possibility of the state withering away. In fact the scenario of a more fragmented Arab world foresees more fragmentation of some existing Arab states and hence the appearance of yet more states. Despite their clear advocacy and preference for the third scenario, i.e. the foundation of a pan-Arab state, contributors to the study do not negate the probability of the state system acting as a catalyst for Arab unity. There is an affirmation that the particularistic territorial state may be a vehicle for unification. This is clear since they foresee a pan-Arab state composed of states or regional federalism or even confederalisms.¹⁰⁷

This reflects the essence of the new trend in Arab nationalist thought. Arab states are here to stay and despite their deepening crisis it is difficult to eliminate or liquidate them. The fact that the Arab states have been able to withstand the pressures has affected the nature and orientation of Arab nationalist thought. The new paradigm is no longer hostile to the state system. Political reality forced Arab nationalist thought to abandon its romantic goal of an inclusive Arab political unity (indimajiyya) that requires the withering of the state. Federalism or even confederalism is now accommodated since it serves the purpose of preserving the particularistic interests of each Arab state.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ Khaiyr Diyn Hasiyb, Mustaqbal al-Umma al-'Arabiyya: al-Tahadiyyat wa al-Khaiyyaraat (The Future of the Arab Nation: Challenges and Options) First Edition (Beirut; Markaz Dirasat al-Wahda al-Arabiyya, 1988)

¹⁰⁸ During the seminar on Arab unity the proposal outlined in a paper presented by the Lebanese 'Isaam Nu'maan on "Mashruw'

5-3: Particularistic Territorial State: A Catalyst for Arab Unity

The new contributions argue that the state system is not, by definition, a contradiction of the Arab nation, Arab unity or Arab nationalism. Therefore, the Arab state system is not automatically an obstacle impeding the prospect of Arab unity but may be its catalyst and the vehicle of a pragmatically feasible Arab unity. This is to underline a new ideological view that stems from a theoretical thesis. This is to argue that there should be no "automatic identification between nationalism and unity."¹⁰⁹

The new position is best put forward by the Lebanese historian Iliya Harik. While confirming that "the universalist principle of Arab nationalism is not entirely dead", Harik sees the possibility of its "working in conjunction with particularistic trends towards a new order, whereby the sovereign states permit the growth of supra-national institutions leading to a future federation of some sort." Harik's thesis is based on his view that the "state system is not necessarily a negation of Arab nationalism." He articulates the view that the state system "may well be the fundamental pillar upon which a federated Arab

Distuwr a-Itihaad al-'Arabiyy" (A Proposal for an Arab Union's Constitution), arguing for federalism was very welcome by the participants. This reflects the change in Arab nationalist thought as far as the form of Arab integration may be. See the discussion of Nu'maan's proposals in A. Duri et al, al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya, op. cit., pp. 847-888, pp. 904-932.

¹⁰⁹ Ahmed Yuwsif Ahmed, "al-Qawmiyya wa al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya" (Nationalism and Arab Unity), Al-Fikr Al-'Arabiyy (Arab Thought), vol.1, nos. 4,5 (Sept-November 1978) Arabic Text (Present Author's Translation) p. 323. This view is shared by Hasan Nafa and Muhammad Saiyyd Sa'iyd, Sa'id Bensa'id, Jabiriy, Belqaziyyz and Kamal 'Abdullatiyf. Interviews with the Author.

state may develop."¹¹⁰

The new contributions put forward an entirely fresh approach to the state system. It acknowledges the fact that the foundation of some Arab states was a step towards societal integration and unity. These states put an end to situations of fragmentation at the societal level while attempting the realisation of integration. This, argues Antuwn Masarraah, raises the need for a new approach towards the state system. He calls for "the establishment of a new science of unification that does not spring from general principles of a need for unification."¹¹¹ This call has been met with a considerable response in the 1980s. Many Arab writers have come to the view that there is no inherent contradiction between the state system and the aim of Arab unity. "There is no unavoidable and final contradiction between the two."¹¹²

There is an unmistakable tendency in the contributions of the 1980s to elaborate on the possibility of the state system working in conjunction with Arab nationalism. The experience of European integration has lent Arab thought a more pragmatic and less romantic approach. The fact that Europe has been able to maintain high levels of integration led Arab intellectuals to question the validity of the traditional Arab nationalist views

¹¹⁰ Iliya Harik, "the Origins of the Arab", op. cit., pp. 44-45.

¹¹¹ Antuwn Masarraah, "Fiy Mustaqbal al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya: al-'Itiraaf bi al-Wualaat al-Tahtiyya: 'Amil Tawuhiyd am 'Amil Inqisaam", al-Majalla al-'Arabiyya lil 'Uluwm al-Siyyasiyya, vol. 1, 1986, p. 37-54.

¹¹² M. 'Abid Jabiriy, "Mustaqbal al-Fikr al-'Arabiyy wa Ishkaliyyat al-Taquadum wa al-Wahda", Shoun Arabiyya, vol. 51, September 1987, p. 17.

that saw unity only in political form. A considerable body of literature emerged in the 1980s that attempted to understand the logic and the underlying factors behind the European success. It sought to find ways of applying the lessons of the European experience to the Arab situation.¹¹³

The new trend considers restructuring Arab nationalist thought a necessity if any future form of Arab unity is to take off the ground. This is seen by the Lebanese historian Mas'ud Daher as vital if Arab nationalism is ever to realise its goals in a pragmatic fashion. It is necessary that

Arab nationalist thought abandons its old thesis and view of the particularistic territorial state. It ought to understand this particularism and attempt to integrate the theoretical with the practical and the particularist with the nationalist (pan-Arab) and to prevent their collision.¹¹⁴

Contributions of the 1980s reveal the emergence of a new trend in evaluating the dichotomies of unity and fragmentation, states and state, and reality and hope. Even though this trend may be detected in contributions from all parts of the Arab world, it is even clearer in the contributions of the Maghribi intellectuals. As discussed earlier in this study the Maghribi intellectuals have been more appreciative of the state system

¹¹³ Many Arabic studies are concerned with this issue. A body of functionalist literature is available to witness to this trend. Examples are numerous. They include to name a few: Jamiyl Mattar, "al-Tajarub al-Wahdawiyya al-Wazifiyya: al-Jami'a al-'Arabiyya", in Waliyd Qaziya et al, al-Qawmiyya al-'Arabiyya fiy al-Fikr wa al-Mumarasa (Seminar Papers) First Edition (Beirut; Markaz Dirasat al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya, 1980); al-Saiyyd Yasiyn, al-Tagriyr al-Istratijiy al-'Arabiyy 1988, (the Arab Strategic Report 1988) (Cairo; Muasasat al-Ahraam, 1988); Muhsin Mu'auwad, "Muhawalaat al-Takamul al-Iqlimiy fiy al-Watan al-'Arabiyy", in A. Duri et al, al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya Tajarubuha wa Tawaqu'atuha, op. cit.

¹¹⁴ Mas'ud Daher, "Ta'liyyq" (A Comment), in A. Duri et al, al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya, op. cit., p. 1061.

than their Mashriqi counterpart. This is because the state in the Maghrib region had not been a product of a foreign will. The Maghribi states had been there before the advent of European colonialism.

Intellectuals interviewed explain the absence of the hostile attitude towards the state in the Maghrib. They refer to the period of struggle against French colonialism in the Maghrib countries as having been the background of this attitude. In that period the primary goal of the independence movements was to reclaim the particularistic territorial state, its re-foundation and consolidation. Hence, the Maghribi intellectuals consider the state a national not a particularistic territorial one. This is because the Maghribi states had been independent entities isolated from the reach of the Ottoman Empire and therefore only colonialism ended their independence.¹¹⁵

While in the Arab Mashriq the call for Arab unity implied the liquidation of the state system, in the Maghrib context it was quite different. As Jabiriy explains, unity meant defending particularism and territoriality. Therefore, the nature of the call for unity in the Maghrib was based on the concept of a national state that was lost because of colonialism. Any unity meant the "defence of national state and the affirmation of its entity."¹¹⁶ This distinction is important in evaluating the content and nature of the Maghribi contributions. However, the Maghribi contributions exemplified by Jabiriy do not necessarily

¹¹⁵ M. 'Abid Jabiriy, Sa'id Bensa'id, Kamal 'Abdullatiyf and 'Abd Ilah Belqaziyz, interviews with the author.

¹¹⁶ M. 'Abid Jabiriy, Ishkaliyyaat al-Fikr, op. cit., pp. 91-93.

imply satisfaction with the territorial particularistic territorial state. They also consider the state as undergoing a crisis. The crisis is reflected in the state's inability to achieve the aim of economic development and popular political participation.

The Maghribi contributions consider that the state is in a position that no longer allows it to perform the tasks a modern state must undertake to achieve the social, political and economic goals of its society. Nevertheless Moroccan intellectuals interviewed by the author affirm that to say the state is in a crisis does not amount to ignoring that it is a reality that may not be jumped over. Not only has the state been the realisation of liberation aspirations but also the actualization of the objective condition for the possibility of realising any Arab unity. The particularistic territorial state is a precondition for Arab unity. This is because, explains Jabiriy, it was

impossible to achieve Arab unity during the Ottoman rule and colonial period. It was, practically, impossible to move directly from colonialism to unity in the Arab world. It was practically impossible to establish unity between the newly independent states; states that had to concentrate on building their entities and realise themselves.¹¹⁷

But if the particularistic territorial state is the objective condition of Arab unity, as argues Jabiriy, how then could Arab unity be achieved? Jabiriy argues that the particularistic territorial state may allow and work for Arab unity. This may take place only when the state reaches the stage

¹¹⁷ M. 'Abid Jabiriy, "Min Ajl I'adat Binaa al-Fikr al-Qawmiy al-'Arabiyy", in A. Duri et al, al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya, op. cit., pp. 790-791.

of "satisfaction." This suggests that Arab unity is a two-step plan. First; the state is established, and consolidated. Second; the state must satisfy itself of itself (i. e. no longer feels the hunger) or reaches a stage where it is no longer hungry for affirming stateness. This is to suggest that a state is not willing to embark upon any project that would compromise its sovereignty or existence while it is yet to affirm these aspects of stateness.¹¹⁸

This is to say, in the words of Jabiriy, that the state is only prepared to forego its stateness or parts of it and become part of a larger entity if its stateness is firmly established. The state will favour unification or integration if it "satisfies its need for self-affirmation and enters history on one hand, and feels historical incompetence and inability on the other hand."¹¹⁹ Jabiriy argues that the record of the Arab states shows that they have realised these goals. Therefore, they become functionally unemployed. This is expressed in the deepening crises of Arab states in the last two decades. They suffer a self-inflicted disability. They are no longer able to carry on with asserting their existence. They are unable to protect their own independence by their sole reliance on their own resources.¹²⁰

This is to suggest that the state system is now a spent force. It cannot realise its own aims and it has to work for a different formula. Arab unity in one form or another is the alternative. But would that imply that the state system is to be

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ibid, p. 791

¹²⁰ M. 'Abid Jabiriy, interview with the author.

done away with once and for all? Jabiriy argues that the crisis of the Arab states may only be overcome if a form of a union between them is achieved. Not only is this union necessary for development and progress but also is the sole true respiration for the suffocated Arab state.¹²¹

This is not to express an ideological belief in the political unification in one single state as contrived in the traditional paradigm. Jabiriy sees Arab unity as only possible when it recognises "the peaceful coexistence between the Arab states."¹²² But how may this be perceived? How could the peaceful coexistence of Arab states be achieved and what is the relevant strategy for that? Jabiriy puts forward the view that assigns Arab culture a functional role in achieving this desired situation. He argues that Arab culture has played the role of uniting the Arabs, spiritually, rationally, and ethically. A consolidation of this historical role is needed in order that Arab culture assume its unifying function despite political fragmentation. This is an important development regarding the function of Arab culture as perceived by Arab nationalist thought. Arab culture is not only seen as the base of the Arab nation but it is considered a relevant appropriate tool of transcending fragmentation. If the unifying role of Arab culture is given enough time to function it will lead to Arab unity.¹²³

Therefore, as far as the relationship between the state

¹²¹ M. 'Abid Jabiriy, Ishkaliyyaat al-Fikr, op. cit., p. 80.

¹²² M. 'Abid Jabiriy, "Mustaqbal al-Fikr", op. cit., p. 20.

¹²³ Ibid, pp. 17-20. This is also the view of Muhammad Saiyyd Sa'iyd, who views Arab culture in a functionalist prospective; interview with the author.

system and the aim of Arab unity is concerned the new contributions reflect the new trend in Arab nationalist thought. The state system does not intrinsically impede Arab unity. The deepening insoluble crisis of the Arab state would oblige it to accept the need for an Arab unity of some sort. Arab states have proved the logic underlying their existence "otherwise they would have collapsed long ago."¹²⁴ This logic has, so far, "outweighed that of the unionists. Therefore, it is up to the hour winning."¹²⁵ If the call for Arab unity is ever to win the battle pan-Arabists must "carefully review this logic and attempt a patient dismantling of it." Arabists will have to "accommodate it in their project. This involves refraining from viewing it only as an obstacle. It involves approaching it as political entities that have their own logic."¹²⁶

The contributions discussed above reflect the emergence of a new trend in Arab nationalist thought. The new paradigm does not despise or disdain particularistic territorial states. It is based on a discernment of reality, attempts to explain it, and make use of it to achieve the aim. A clear expression of the new paradigm is the work of Arab intellectuals discussed above. These contributions reflect a sincere attempt at explaining the state system and its complex relation with society. It filled an epistemological gap in Arab nationalist thought *vis-à-vis* state in general and Arab particularistic territorial state in

¹²⁴ Gassan Salame, " 'Auwaiq al-Waqi' al-'Arabiyy" op. cit., p. 473.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid, p. 473.

particular. The studies express a clear effort to abandon the traditional thesis. The new paradigm calls for transcendence, assimilation and accommodation.¹²⁷

¹²⁷ Examples include: Elbaqi Hermassi, al-Mujtama wa al-Duwla fiy al-Maghrib al-'Arabiyy, First Edition (Beirut; Markaz Dirasat al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya, 1987); Khalduwn Hasan al-Naqiyb, al-Mujtama' wa al-Duwla fiy al-Khaliyj wa al-Jaziyra al-'Arabiyya: Min Manzur Mukhtalif (State and Society in the Gulf and the Arabian Peninsula) First Edition (Beirut; Markaz Dirasat al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya, 1987); Naziyh al-Aiyuwbiy, Turath al-Duwla al-Markaziyya fiy Masr (the Heritage of the Central State in Egypt) First Edition (Beirut; Markaz Dirasat al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya, 1987); Sa'd Diyn Ibrahiym, al-Mujtama wa al-Duwla, op. cit. and Gassan Salame, al-Mujtama wa al-Duwla fiy al-Mashriq al-'Arabiyy, First Edition (Beirut; Markaz Dirasat al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya, 1987).

Chapter Six

Arab Nationalist Thought: The Premises of the New Paradigm

6-1: The Developments of the 1980s and the Revision of Arab Nationalist Thought

The 1970s ended in what F. Ajami considered the prevalence of *raison d'état* and the end of pan-Arabism. The developments that the Arab World witnessed in this period certainly seem to support Ajami's conclusion that Arab states were making great inroads into consolidating themselves. But to say that Arab nationalism died would be an exaggeration that overlooks certain realities of Arab politics and contributions to Arab thought in the 1980s. As argued in chapter three Arab nationalism has decreased in its power and hold over Arab politics. The Arab nationalist movement suffered a great defeat after 1967 particularly after the death of Nasser, but as an ideology or a nationalist thought that conceived of an Arab nation Arab nationalism seems to have defied the death prognoses.

In the 1970s *raison d'état* prevailed. Oil and the kind of political and economic relations accompanying its boom played an important role in enhancing the particularistic tendencies. This paved the way for the emergence of a new kind of particularism. This particularism was essentially an oil-based one. Therefore,

the issue of Arab unity was viewed in a perspective different from that of the 1950s and 1960s. Oil-rich countries considered their particularism, even though running counter to Arab unity, as a way of protecting their oil wealth which, otherwise, would be threatened by the pan-Arab unity.

This was clearer in the Gulf where the establishment of states was linked to oil. Reference to the achievement of the state and the high level of per capita income were employed to justify the state and its particularism.¹ The prevalence of *raison d'état* was significantly evident when Egypt decided to go its own way in making peace with Israel. Egypt signed the Camp David accord with Israel in September 1978 amidst wide Arab disapproval that resulted in the isolation of Egypt. The Arabs froze Egypt's membership of the Arab League and moved the headquarters of the organisation to Tunis as a sign of dismay and disapproval of Egypt's abandonment of the pan-Arab cause.²

The 1970s also witnessed trends that sought to deny any values that may be attributed to the achievements of the pan-Arabist project. This was obvious through the attempt at discrediting all economic, political and social achievements of this project especially in countries where Arab nationalist

¹ The effects of oil wealth on the ideas of Arab nationalism and the consolidation of state particularism are well explained in Mahmuwd 'Abdullfadiyl, al-Naft wa al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya: Tathiyar al-Naft al-'Arabiyy 'ala Mustaqbal al-Wahda wa al-'Alaqaat al-Iqtiysadiyya al-'Arabiyya (Oil and Arab Unity: The Effect of Arab Oil on the Future of Unity and Arab Economic Relations) First Edition (Beirut; Markaz Dirasat al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya, 1979) Arabic Text (Present Author's Translation).

² Albert Hourani, A History of the Arab Peoples, First Edition (London; Faber and Faber, 1991) p. 421.

regimes ruled before.³ This meant putting an end to Arab radicalism and the emergence of an Arab system dominated by reactionary conservative tendencies. In the words of the Egyptian journalist Mohammed H. Heikal, that implied the transition from the age of revolution to that of wealth, and "the doctrine of cashism" that " knows the price of every thing and the value of nothing."⁴

Although there was an upsurge of the Palestinian fedayeen action, which for a time represented the revival of radicalism, this was short-lived. It was obvious that the pan-Arabist project suffered from theoretical deficiencies as well as societal problems. The Arab world appeared to be suffering from fragmentation, disunity and challenged by forces that not only hindered Arab unity but also put national unity in each country at risk. However developments seem to have followed two directions. On the one hand Arab states were united, verbally at least, in condemning Egypt's policies in not sticking to the pan-Arab policy of not recognising Israel. On the other hand they showed willingness to see to their particular interests.

A kind of pragmatism evolved in Arab politics. This pragmatism did not mean, however, that the Arabs are no longer affected by ideology. But does this mean that, in the Arab world, ideology is no longer relevant? On the contrary, ideology is

³ In Egypt, for example, the Aswan Dam, a project that was hailed by Arab intellectuals as a sign of development and freedom, was now to receive criticism as destroying Egypt's agricultural potentials.

⁴ Mohammed H. Heikal, "The Future Arab World: An Overview", in Hani A. Faris (ed), Arab Nationalism and the Future of the Arab World, First Edition (Belmont, Massachusetts; Association of Arab American University Graduates Inc., 1987) pp. 3-4.

still as relevant as ever. As Jabiriy explains, if the west does not need ideology any more it is because it may rely on science and technology and their ideological content as an alternative, the Arabs do not own science and technology. Therefore, ideology still has an important role to play in the Arab world. This role is that of theorising for the future.⁵

Arab nationalist thought is essentially part and parcel of Arab ideology and since Arab nationalist dreams were shattered after the 1967 defeat the obvious role of ideology would be to rebuild this dream. In the words of Jabiriy, the function of ideology is that it begins from

rebuilding the world of the present, and ending the state of frustration by viewing things through revolutionary realism; the realism that faces the reality as it stands in order to transform it. The building of a future renaissance project requires, today, a little of dream and more rationality and criticism.⁶

The event of the Iranian revolution in February 1979 had the effect of bringing ideology to the fore of Arab politics. So, as Ajami put it, if the 1970s was a period of ideological retreat of Arab nationalism, the Iranian revolution with its heavy Islamic orientation and employment of Islam, especially after war erupted between Iran and Iraq in September 1980, reopened questions of ideology and identity. The Iranian revolution played the important role of reviving Islam in politics.⁷ The Iranian

⁵ M. 'Abid Jabiriy, interview with the author.

⁶ M. 'Abid Jabiriy, Ishkaliyyaat al-Fikr al-'Arabiy al-Mu'asir, (Beirut; Markaz Dirasat al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya, 1989) p. 180.

⁷ James P. Piscatori provides a concise analysis of the different approaches in studying Islam in politics. He, rightly, raises the issue of how difficult it is to study Islamic politics and therefore to evaluate Islamic fundamentalism. James P.

attempts at exporting their brand of Islam to the Arabs contributed to a great degree to consolidating existing religious movements. It also played a vital role in the emergence of a new fundamentalist trend that sought the reconstruction of Arab society on an Islamic basis.

That meant creating an environment in which, particularly in the Gulf, political regimes felt threatened by the effects this would have on the social order in countries of strong Islamic sentiments especially Shi'a Islam. The Iran-Iraq war may be viewed in this respect as an attempt by the Arab states to contain the effects of Iranian Islam. Although the war itself ended with a UN-negotiated cease fire in 1988, its effects were strongly felt in all Arab states.⁸ The revival of political Islam was evident in countries such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Bahrain, Algeria, Tunisia, Jordan, Lebanon, and the Sudan.⁹ In Egypt President Sadaat was assassinated at the hands of a fundamentalist militant Islamic group that opposed his policies and sought the restoration of an Islamic foundation in Egypt.

The Iranian revolution also had the effect of raising the issue of the relationship between Arabism, Arab nationalism, secularism and Islam. The Iranian revolution was also detrimental in bringing to the centre of thought and politics the distinction

Piscatori(ed), Islam in the Political Process, (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 1983) pp. 1-10.

⁸ Albert Hourani, A History of the Arab, op. cit., pp. 432-433.

⁹ In Saudi Arabia, the Great Mosque in Mecca was seized in 1979 by a group led by Juhaiymaan al-'Utaiybiy while civil unrest and riots erupted among the Shi'a of the Eastern Province. In Bahrain, a group led by Hadiy al-Mudarris was active. In Syria the Muslim Brotherhood was active against the government.

between two interpretations of Islam and their role in the political process. Therefore, the interpretation of Islam employed by countries like Saudi Arabia was divorced from that advocated by the new fundamentalist movements. A major difference is that the fundamentalists would now emphasise and employ the slogans that were employed by Arab nationalist thought. These included the struggle against imperialism and Zionism and the call for social justice, though within an Islamic framework.

The effect of this on the debate was marked by the change of position held by some Arab intellectuals, such as Muhammad 'Amarah. From being secular Arab nationalists or from the position of interpreting Islamic history in favour of Arab nationalism some intellectuals moved to the view that attempted to Islamicise Arab nationalism. As Faleh 'Abdulljabbar notes, this intellectual change of position was not difficult at all. Since Arab nationalist thought employs the concept of distinctiveness (*khususiyya*) of the Arabs a switch to the direction of the fundamentalist position would be easier for the same emphasis on distinctiveness is also employed by the fundamentalists.¹⁰

Some scholars attempt to explain this in that political Islam relies on modern global, of European origin, ideological frames. This is seen by Aziz Azmeh in that political Islam's interpretation of society resembles some concepts of Arab

¹⁰ Faleh 'Abdulljabbaar, "al-Naz'a al-Qawmiyya al-'Arabiyya wa al-Islam: 1890-1990" (Arab Nationalist Trend and Islam), in Faleh 'Abdulljabbaar (ed), al-Qawmiyya Marad al-'Asr am Khalasuhu (Nationalism: A Disease of the Age or its Emancipation) First Edition (London; Dar al Saqi, 1995) Arabic Text (Present Author's Translation) pp. 114-119.

nationalist thought.¹¹ Azmeh explains that both political Islam and Arab nationalist thought view society as that of a closed net and a communal harmonic association without the existence of any internal actual differences that may impinge upon the unity of its will or direction. Azmeh goes further to suggest that political Islam is closely similar to other movements and ideologies. He argues that

if we took away its heritage ancestral (salafiy) frame of reference and its salafiy utopia which it employs, political Islam would be the ideological mate of all populist movements ... and particularly peripheral and sieged nationalist movements: like Slavonic nationalism, German and Italian nationalisms in the twentieth century, Hindu nationalism that provokes the killing of Muslim Indians, and the fascist conceptions that Arab nationalism had.¹²

This point is well raised by Sami Zubaida. He argues that despite their hostility political Islam and Arab nationalism share some characteristics. There exists "fundamental facets of similarity in the structure of thought and politics between nationalism and political Islam."¹³ This is because despite the emphasis of the Islamists on the internationalism and inclusiveness of Islam the argument on which political Islam depends remains, in practice, essentially "within a nation-state or a group of nation-states."¹⁴ What Zubaida is implying is that while political Islam rejects concepts like nationalism and

¹¹ Aziz Azmeh, "al-'Ilmaniyya wa Tahuwlaat al-Mujtama'at al-'Arabiyya", Dirasaat 'Arabiyya, vol. 11\12 (1994) pp. 17-18.

¹² Ibid, pp. 17-18.

¹³ Sami Zubaida, "al-Naz'a al-Qawmiyya wa al-Islam al-Siyyasiy" (Nationalism and Political Islam), in, Faleh 'Abduljabbaar(ed), al-Qawmiyya: Marad al-'Asr, op. cit., p. 84.

¹⁴ Ibid, p. 84.

nation-state as alien to Islam, it calls for the building of an Islamic nation, umma, based on religion. This is to say that political Islam does not reject nationalism per se or the imagined eternity of nationalism and nation itself but a particular brand of it that rests upon ethnicity or culture and not religion.¹⁵

The 1980s was a period of disarray in Arab politics. The divisions of Arab states, along the lines of the peace with Israel or the Iran-Iraq war, and the division between the rich and poor states were growing. A gap also existed within each society between the rich and poor.¹⁶ Coupled with a population growth problem each society polarised more than had previously been the case.¹⁷ These issues further raised those of justice and democracy. This environment was the right one for the development and strengthening of a political Islam. The Islamists capitalised

¹⁵ Ibid, p. 84. This view is shared by Faleh 'Abduljabbaar who argues that the new Islamic fundamentalism is a "reproduction of nationalist movements of the middle classes which we witnessed in the 1950s" since it is centred on the concept of distinctiveness which marks it as cultural nationalism; Faleh 'Abduljabbaar, " al-Naz'a al-Qawmiyya al-'Arabiyya wa al-Islam: 1890-1990", op. cit., p. 117.

¹⁶ This was evident in many events that took place in countries like Algeria, Tunisia, The Sudan, Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon where civil unrest known as 'bread revolutions' took place in 1988, 1987, 1987-88, 1987-88-89, 1989 and 1987 respectively.

¹⁷ Sa'd Diyn Ibrahiym refers to what he calls the class conflict in the Arab world. He presents data that suggests the existence of extreme class social divisions in incomes. For example, 47% of the Arabs only get 14% of Arab gross product. Per capita incomes also vary considerably. These fluctuate from US\$ 15840 in Kuwait to US\$ 14000 in United Arab Emirates to reach only US\$ 320 in Egypt and US\$ 110 in Somalia. See his, al-Nizam al-'Arabiyy al-Ijtima'iy al-Jadiyd (The New Arab Social Order) First Edition, (Beirut; Markaz Dirasat al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya, 1982) Arabic Text (Present Author's Translation) pp. 213-214.

on these problems and the inability of Arab states, especially after the rapid decline of oil prices, to provide solutions to social and economic problems.¹⁸

These problems bore witness to the crisis of particularist territorial states. They revealed the extent of their structural crisis that touched upon all aspects of state-building.¹⁹ Furthermore the developments in Europe towards more integration made it more difficult for many Arab states especially in the Maghrib to find assistance from individual states abroad.²⁰ The whole picture was to demonstrate the inabilities of Arab states and their weaknesses. No more was this weakness and the weakness of Arab nationalism in the political arena evident than during the second Israeli invasion of Lebanon.

In 1982 Israel invaded Lebanon for the second time (the first was in 1978) to destroy the PLO militarily and politically. Arab states stood silent before the event and the massacres of Palestinians either at the hands or unprevented by the invading power. After that the PLO moved its HQ to Tunis and the Palestinian National Council expressed its willingness to recognise Israel and negotiate peace with her. It was clear that the Palestinian problem had become just that, a Palestinian one, and no longer a driving force behind the call for Arab unity. This was further consolidated when the Palestinians under

¹⁸ Albert Hourani, A History of the Arab, op. cit., p. 447.

¹⁹ Mas'ud Daher, al-Duwla wa al-Mujtama' fiy al-Mashriq al-'Arabiyy: 1840-1990 (State and Society in the Arab East: 1840-1990) First Edition (Beirut; Dar al-Adaab, 1991) Arabic Text (Present Author's Translation) p. 454.

²⁰ M. 'Abid Jabiriy, interview with the author.

occupation erupted in a popular uprising in the end of 1987 and the beginning of 1988.²¹ The Intifada as it became known was another expression of the national Palestinian option and the retreat from the pan-Arab one as far as the Palestinian problem was concerned.

Jamiyl Mattar summarised the state of Arab nationalism and its movement in the beginning of the 1980s by saying "a quick look at the political literature published in the Arab homeland during the last period reveals the depth of the crisis that the Arab nationalist movement suffers." He recognised the extent of the crisis that "prompted results and actually engraved on the Arab land obvious marks and swept into the Arab soul to disintegrate its national components."²²

The spread of the Iranian brand of political Islam did not result in destroying the Arab system of states. However, it managed to awaken the Arab states to the fragility of their positions. Arab states felt it necessary to find appropriate formulas to tackle the problems associated with the Iranian phenomenon and the effects of the failure of the state-led development in checking social disorder. A certain reassertion of Arab unity seemed to provide the potential of getting rid of the imbalance. The Arabs felt the need to clear the air among themselves and devise a formula that would simultaneously preserve the identity of the particularistic territorial state

²¹ Albert Hourani, A History of the Arab, op. cit., pp. 431-433.

²² Jamiyl Mattar, "Intikasat al-Haraka al-Qawmiyya al-'Arabiyya" (The Setback of the Arab Nationalist Movement) Shoun Arabiyya (Arab Affairs) vol.10 (December 1981) Arabic Text (Present Author's Translation) p. 4.

and do the job of defeating political Islam. Therefore the Arab World saw the initiation of some carefully crafted and limited unions between Arab states.²³

The developments in the 1970s and 1980s had enormous effects on the balance of wealth and power in the Arab world. They also were instrumental in effecting political orientations and played a vital role in conceiving new approaches towards unity. Factors of neighbourhood and integration began to be valued as a driving force for unity. This implied the need for giving proper credit to these factors in designing any unity. The establishment of the regional cooperation councils reflects a clear change in Arab nationalist thought, a fact that is clearly demonstrated by the welcome these councils received from Arab intellectuals.²⁴

Albert Hourani summed up the characteristics of the Arab world in the 1980s by saying:

an observer of the Arab countries in the 1980s would have found societies in which ties of culture, strong and perhaps growing stronger as they were, had not caused political unity; where increasing wealth, unevenly spread, had led to some kinds of economic growth but also to a wider gap between those who profited most from it and those who did not, in swollen cities and the countryside, ... where the urban masses were calling in question the justice of the social order and the legitimacy of governments out of the depths of their own inherited culture, and the educated elite was showing a deep disturbance of spirit.²⁵

²³ Peter Mansfield, The Arabs, (London; Penguin Books, 1992) pp. 491-492.

²⁴ 'Abd Ilah Belqaziyyz reviews the debates on the relationship between these councils and the aim of Arab unity. See his, Ishkaliyyat al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya: Khitab al-Raghiba wa Khitab al-Mumkin, First Edition (Casablanca; Afriqiyya al-Sharq, 1991) pp. 64-65.

²⁵ Albert Hourani, A History of the Arab, op. cit., p. 447.

(i) Arab Nationalism: Abandonment and Creativity

The developments of the 1980s were instrumental in bringing considerable changes that affected Arab nationalist thought. On the intellectual level Arab nationalists saw in the revival of Islam a chance that they ought to exploit. They attempted to do so by giving proper attention to the mass dimension of Arab nationalist thought. This they saw vital in avoiding the repetition of the collision between Islamic fundamentalism and Arab nationalism that marked the politics of the 1950s and the 1960s. Arab nationalist thought began to reconsider Islam as a mass ideology that they could not neglect for fear of collision with its followers and organisations, and this was to avoid putting the Arabist ideal at risk. As Bassam Tibi put it a "need has emerged to modify Arab-Islamic views on nationalism."²⁶ Arab nationalists felt the need to reevaluate their views on Islam and its relation with Arab nationalism.²⁷

Indicative of this trend is the congress Arab nationalist intellectuals held in Beirut under the auspices of the Centre for Arab Unity Studies on Islam and Arab Nationalism. The papers delivered at the congress reveal that many Arab nationalist thinkers were willing to abandon their secular views. This may be seen as an attempt to absorb the effects of the Iranian revolution by emphasising the link between Arabism and Islam.

²⁶ Bassam Tibi, Arab Nationalism: A Critical Enquiry, Second Edition (London; Macmillan, 1990) p. 5.

²⁷ Sa'd Diyn Ibrahiym, "Qiyas Itijahaat al-Raiy al-'Aam al-'Arabiyy Nahuww Masalat al-Wahda: 'Ard lil al-Dirasa al-Maidaniyya" (Measuring Arab Public Opinion Attitudes Towards The Issue of Unity: An Overview of the Empirical Study), in Waliyd Qaziyha etal, al-Qawmiyya al-'Arabiyya fiy al-Fikr wa al-Mumarasa (Seminar Papers) First Edition (Beirut; Markaz Dirasat al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya, 1980) p. 192.

However, they all affirmed their belief in Arabism and aspired for Arab unity.²⁸ It is clear that the rise of political Islam had the effect of grouping together ideological streams of Arab thought that hitherto had been divided and in conflict. Thanks to the strength of political Islam Marxists, Ba'thists, Nasserites and Liberals had to run to one shelter.

Despite the ambiguity surrounding the concept of secularism and the fact that many Arab nationalists abandoned their belief in a clear-cut secularism, secularism became the unifying slogan of many Arab intellectuals. As Burhan Ghalliyun explains, all these forces had to rally to each other for fear of being swept away by the force of political Islam. Therefore, "secularism became the only idea able to provide a common ground for this conglomerate which is bound and united by one fear."²⁹ This is clearly demonstrated in the contributions discussed in this thesis which shows the unclear nature of secularism in Arab nationalist thought. This secularism suffers from

great ambiguity that allows all those who have no echo of their thought or life in religious values, those who are enemies of religion or those who fear the competition of the Islamic movements, in government and opposition, to feel that they belong to one thought and to rally around a collective basic principle.³⁰

Even the Arab left had to come to terms with Arab nationalism. Arab Marxist political thought was obliged to

²⁸ The papers and discussions are published in Muhammad A. Khalafallah et al, al-Qawmiyya al-'Arabiyya wa al-Islam (Seminar Papers) Second Edition (Beirut; Markaz Dirasat al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya, 1982)

²⁹ Burhan Ghalliyun, al-Mihna al-'Arabiyya: al-Duwla Did al-Umma, First Edition (Beirut; Markaz Dirasat al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya, 1993) p. 261.

³⁰ *Ibd*, p. 261.

approach Arab nationalism and to admit Arab unity into its ideology. Anouar Abdel-Malik, for instance, moved towards recognising Arab unity and presented his thesis of "a nation of two levels that aims at reconciling a nation's distinctiveness and an identification with a historical and cultural whole that is wider."³¹ This thesis was advocated by Abdel-Malik to accommodate the nation in its particularistic and pan-Arab expressions so that a country like Egypt "would not cease to be itself ... nonetheless nothing would override the fact that Egypt has been an Arab country since the year 640."³² The same applied to the stance of the Sudanese and Lebanese communist parties that modified their Marxist view of Arabism. This was also clear in the writings of Arab Marxists like the Egyptians Lutfiy al-Khuliy and Isma'iyl 'Abdullah who among many other Arab Marxists admitted the nationalist idea into their ideology.³³

The developments that took place in the 1980s led Arab nationalist thought not to die as many would think. It had the effects of directing it into new paths that it hitherto had evaded while sunk in its own romanticism. Arab nationalist thought found itself facing the challenge of theoretical and practical problems that sprang from the realities of Arab society. That led to a new thinking about the intellectual premises of Arab nationalism and the fundamentals of the Arabist

³¹ Anouar Abdel-Malik, al-Fikr al-'Arabiy fiy Ma'rakat al-Nahda, First Edition (Beirut; Dar al-Adaab, 1978) p. 57.

³² Ibid, p. 41.

³³ Ghaliy Shukriy, "Ta'liyyq" (A Comment), in A. Duri et al, al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya Tajarubuha wa Tawaqu'atuha, (Seminar Papers) First Edition (Beirut; Markaz Dirasat al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya, 1989) pp. 665.

project.

Jabiriy summarises the developments that Arab nationalist thought has known in the 1980s as reflecting this change in its thinking. He explains that

for example, we came to accept the particularistic territorial state and talk about it while any such talk before was ridiculed since this state was seen as an embodiment of fragmentation and falsified entities. Today we talk about the particularistic territorial state as an international, social, economic, political and psychological reality. Moreover, we see the desired Arab unity as only being possible through this same territorial Arab state not through jumping over it. Therefore, we came to accept regional unions whereas in the 1950s and the 1960s we considered it a distortion of the idea of unity. On the other hand, all came to assign Islam its place in our understanding of Arabism and Arab nationalism... In sum we came to think in terms of the relative not the absolute.³⁴

This argues Jabiriy is a concrete evidence of the changes affecting Arab nationalist thought. Arab thought has reached the stage wherein it differentiates between "political reality and the ideological dream. Therefore, we ended up assigning priority to the political above the ideological."³⁵

The nagging questions were on how, in face of the consolidation and not the withering away of the particularistic territorial state and the Islamic challenge, to revive the pan-Arabist idea? How to make this idea compatible with realities of the contemporary age and how to equip it with the necessary tools by which it would be more realist and effective? How to deal with the societal facts of every day life and how to present itself as a valid alternative to both political Islam and the

³⁴ M. 'Abid Jabiriy, Ishkaliyyaat al-Fikr, op. cit., pp. 178-179.

³⁵ M. 'Abid Jabiriy, interview with the author.

particularistic territorial state? How to tackle the issues of national unity in each state and how to deal with sectarianism, and minorities involved in the troubles in countries like Lebanon, Iraq, and the Sudan?

As an editorial in Al-Wahda illustrates, Arab nationalist thought attempted this revision on three levels. The first is that of the relationship between the objective and the subjective conditions that affect the realisation of any Arab unity. The second concerns the relationship between the nationalist principles and the changing realities. These realities determine the efficiency of the nationalist factors in deciding on the possibility of uniting the Arabs in any conceivable political form. And the third reflects the need to revise the relationship between the particularistic and the pan-Arab. Arab nationalist thought felt the urgency of this need.³⁶

Discussion and analysis of the contributions of Arab intellectuals dealing with the issues related to Arab nationalism and unity provided in this research attest to the emergence of a new trend. This trend may be seen as that of the unionists or functionalists which came to be spread among many Arab intellectuals especially in the Maghrib. This trend establishes its stand on the needs of reconciling the mutual and common interests of the Arab countries. This trend in contrast to the classical trend does not see unity as solely based on Arab nationalism but as something that common interests dictate.³⁷

³⁶ Al-Wahda, "al-Iftitahiyya" (Editorial) Al-Wahda, vol.7 (April 1985) Arabic Text (Present Author's Translation) p. 4.

³⁷ This trend is clear in the contributions of intellectuals like: Gassan Salame, Jabiriy, Turkiy Hamad, Antuwn Masarrah and

Indicative of these developments in Arab thought also is what may be seen as a dialectic of Maghribi and Mashriqi approaches regarding the issue of Arab unity. As the discussion shows the traditional Mashriqi approach had focused on the primacy of Arab nationalism and the idea of uniting the Arabs based on romantic nationalism, especially until the defeat in the war with Israel in 1967. The Maghribi approach has been more pragmatic and bounded by the realities of Arab politics and society. This is evident in its attitude towards the state system. Arab particularistic territorial states were seen by the Mashriqi approach with scepticism and distaste. The Maghribi approach, however, looked at them as a necessary development and historical step towards the achievement of any possible form of Arab unity. Jabiriy, for example, considers the particularistic territorial state as the basic prerequisite for the transformation of the Arab world from disunity to unity.

The difference in approaches was clear during the discussions and symposia that the Centre for Arab Unity Studies held during the 1980s. In these gathering the Maghribi approach received an unwelcome reception from the Mashriqi intellectuals. The extent of this reached a point wherein some of the latter attempted to look down upon the first and undermine the significance of their efforts at reconstructing Arab nationalist thought. Some Mashriqi participants maintained that the Maghrib in general and its intellectuals in particular have always been on the periphery of Arab politics and thought. This was an

Burhan Ghalliyun and it is shared by individuals and groups of a multitude of ideological and intellectual schools.

attempt to establish that because of their geographical position Maghribi intellectuals are prone not to understand the issues at stake.³⁸

However, the response of Mashriqi intellectuals to Maghribi contributions may be explained in other terms. The dialectic of these Maghribi and Mashriqi approaches may be explained by the paradigm hegemony of the Mashriqi Arab nationalist ideal that tries to maintain its intellectual authority and centrism. The Mashriqi approach is the real father of Arab nationalism and the Mashriqi intellectuals, despite the sincere desire of many of them to renew Arab nationalism, see in the Maghribi approach a challenge to their established hegemony as far as Arab unity and nationalism are concerned.³⁹ It is very hard for them to abandon their approach in favour of another that comes from what they see as a very remote part of the Arab world and from countries like Morocco that are without the credentials of Cairo or Damascus.

The new approach can be recognised in its distinctiveness and it seems to have had the effect of converting many Mashriqi intellectuals to it. However, some of the Mashriqi and Arab Gulf intellectuals who admitted the Maghribi approach into their thought were also severely criticised by the Mashriqi

³⁸ Moroccan Intellectuals interviewed by the author like Jabiriy, Bensa'id, Belqaziyy and 'Abdullatiyf argue that the major loophole of the Mashriqi approach is its tendency to generalise. Therefore Mashriqi intellectuals apply the distinctive Mashriqi situation to the totally different Maghribi one.

³⁹ The Maghribi approach is trying to end this paradigm hegemony by calling for a new Arab nationalist thought and a new paradigm that, in the words of Sa'id Bensa'id, achieves "the fertile and innovative breakaway from traditional Arab political theorising." interview with the author.

intellectuals to the point of having some of their contributions discredited as anti-Arab nationalism.⁴⁰ If this, as argued, shows the reluctance of Mashriqi traditional Arab nationalist thought to accept rivalry from a new paradigm threatening its intellectual centrism it also expresses a theoretical and methodological transformation of Arab nationalism as has been argued in this research. The contributions of the 1980s discussed in this research made it possible to evaluate the nature of this transformation and its role in reconstructing Arab nationalist thought.

The study carried out by a group of Arab academics in 1978-79 gave clear indications as to the state of pan-Arab ideology at the grass root level. Conducted in the form of a survey of the attitudes of Arab public opinion towards Arab unity in ten Arab countries in the east and the west of the Arab world, the study allows an examination of the Arab nationalist thesis at the grass roots level.⁴¹ The study reveals how Arab nationalist thought in the 1980s had to admit this into its paradigm. The findings of the research establish two facts: the first concerns the nationalist feeling of the Arab and the second touches the premises of Arab nationalist thought in its classical brand.

⁴⁰ This was evident at the conference on: Arab Unity: Its Experiments and Expectations organised by the Centre for Studies of Arab Unity in 1988. The papers presented by Turkiy Hamad and Gassan Salame were severely criticised because they argued for the centrality of the particularistic territorial state to Arab unity and maintained that, as Turkiy Hamad did, the particularistic territorial state is not a fragmentary force but a unifying one. See the discussions of Hamad's paper in A. Duri et al, al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya, op. cit., pp. 188-202 and Salame's paper, pp. 494-522.

⁴¹ Sa'd Diyn Ibrahiym, "Qiyas Itijahaat al-Raiy al-'Aam", op. cit..

As to the issue of Arab nationalist consciousness that the researchers raised, their samples in the ten Arab countries provided a clear answer:

The sweeping majority believes that the population of the Arab homeland is in fact one nation-even though half of those believe in the total homogeneity of the sons and peoples of this nation. The other half affirms that inside the one nation there is diversity among its peoples. About one tenth of those researched recorded the existence of nations and peoples that are only weakly linked while another tenth supported an in-between concept that neither refuses nor acknowledges the concept of a single Arab nation.⁴²

The research also establishes that Arab unity has not been forsaken at the grass-root level:

Despite all the cases of failure and handicaps in past experiments at unity, the majority of those researched from the ten countries that the study covered is still keen on demanding one form or another of political unity among the parts of the nation ... The hierarchy of the ten countries on the scale of the indicator of unity preference makes it clear that inclination in any of them is not less than 57%.⁴³

However the important fact to register in this respect is that the need for a form of political unification was not justified on clear-cut pan-Arabist grounds. Rather the problems facing Arab particularistic territorial states and the challenges of social and economic issues are seen as urging some form of unification or cooperation among Arab states.

96% of the researched registered that their countries face enormous economic, social and political problems. Three quarters of them (77%) said that their countries cannot handle or solve these problems on their own and that they need assistance from another Arab country.⁴⁴

⁴² Ibid, p. 119.

⁴³ Ibid, p. 128, p. 132.

⁴⁴ Ibid, p. 128.

This means that Arab unity is no longer viewed in a romantic or solely nationalist perspective but that interdependence of interests is seen as the pillar of political unification. This realism is a clear indication of the need to transcend the romanticism of Arab unity as there exists, as evident from the study, an "increasingly large sector that views unity as a means for territorial (particularistic) development and for the realisation of individual aspirations."⁴⁵ But what about the other theses of Arab nationalist thought concerning Arab unity and how to achieve it? What about the idea of indimajiyya (inclusive unity that builds a single entity in replacement of Arab states) unity and what are the indications of the results as to the conception of Arab unity itself as presented in Arab nationalist thought?

The research team that undertook the task of evaluating Arab public opinion attitudes towards Arab unity could draw conclusions through which Arab nationalist thought would examine its theory. The conclusions of the study can be seen as shaking the foundations of Arab nationalist thought and awakening it to the deficiencies in its traditional structure. This can be understood in that "the hopes of Arab unity became more pragmatic than it had been."⁴⁶ Arab public opinion has reached the stage of

abandoning its extreme romanticism in its view of nationalist issues and the issue of unity ... Political unification of this great homeland cannot be achieved between a day and a night ... The age of national unification by force is gone and will not come back.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Ibid, p. 193.

⁴⁶ Ibid, p. 135.

⁴⁷ Ibid, pp. 193-194.

These results described in the quotations above would herald the death of the indimajiyya unity and show the importance of domestic development as a determinant factor in viewing Arab unity. The conclusion is that the Arab of the 1980s is opting for Arab unity as an appropriate tool that meets his needs and aspirations. His view stems from the understanding and evaluation he applies to his social, economic, and political status. The real force behind the Arab belief in Arab unity is related to the problems he associates with his situation. It has to be viewed in light of the failure of the Arab state to carry out its duties towards the society it asks for its allegiance. Obviously these results could not claim that the Arab is opting for unity because he is only loyal to the premises of Arab nationalist thought or that his support of unity could be explained in the reasons traditional Arab nationalist thought presents.

The developments in the Arab world after 1967 made clear the problems inherent in Arab nationalism. As the 1980s began it was evident that Arab nationalist thought had to reconstruct itself to meet the new conditions. Arab nationalist thought in the 1980s made real attempts at criticising the old concepts and rethinking the question of the Arab nation. Despite the occurrence of some traditional views mainstream Arab nationalist thought in the 1980s did not remain imprisoned in the old concepts derived from the nineteenth century. However, it is as yet early to suggest that Arab nationalist thought in the 1980s reached an intellectual stand where it could construct Arab nationalism completely anew.

6-2: The New Paradigm: The Underlying Factors

The contributions of the 1980s discussed in this research are a continuation of the criticising trend that began after the collapse of the Egyptian-Syrian union in 1961 and the 1967 defeat. It was clear that Arab nationalists failed in achieving Arab political unity. Those who claimed that Arab unity was their aim did not actually act in accordance with that. They employed Arab nationalism to achieve their own goals.⁴⁸ The conflict among Arab nationalists was manifest in the events of the 1960s.⁴⁹ There was the disagreement between Nasser's Egypt and the new revolutionary government that came to power in Iraq in 1958. The civil war in the Yemen became an Arab-Arab one when Saudi Arabia and Egypt became heavily involved in it.

The confrontation between Arab nationalist regimes had serious repercussions on Arab nationalist thought and Arab nationalist movement.

The pan-Arabist political organisations (parties) were scattered. The Arab people were confused because of the disagreements and the differences in the interpretations of the pan-Arab leadership. Some pan-Arab parties preferred to be active within the boundaries of their respective particularistic territorial states and not the wider Arab context. This led to the planting of the first seed of contradiction in Arab nationalism.⁵⁰

That also had the serious effect of confining Arab nationalism to the boundaries of some Arab states where political regimes employed the idea to further their own programmes. That

⁴⁸ Eberharad Kienle, "Afaaq al-Qawmiyya al-'Arabiyya" (Horizons of Arab Nationalism), in Faleh 'Abduljabbaar (ed), al-Qawmiyya: Marad al-Asr, op. cit., pp. 74-77.

⁴⁹ Burhan Ghalliyun, al-Mihna al-'Arabiyya, op. cit., p. 64.

⁵⁰ Jamiyl Mattar, "Intikasat al-Haraka", op. cit., p. 6.

confinement of Arab nationalism and its attachment to the fortunes of regimes "inflicted harm on the nationalist trend and was a fundamental factor underlying its setback."⁵¹ Arab nationalism was misused. "Now and then, the ideology suffers from this while people become more doubtful and sarcastic of this ideology itself."⁵²

However, that and the defeat in the war with Israel in 1967, even though it signified the crisis of Arab nationalism at its peak, was not to announce its death. Arab nationalism was suffering a major crisis when it was realised that the bid on "achieving unity reached a clear historical crisis and that the idea of unity became a slogan used to camouflage a process of consolidating particularist territorial states and regimes."⁵³ This deadlock became even more evident when Arab nationalist thought from the 1970s onwards lost all the support political regimes had lent it in the past.

In the 1980s Arab politics were as remote as they could be from attachment to Arab unity. This was particularly clearer when the regime of Sadaat embarked on a process of liquidating Nasserism and its achievements in Egypt. The problem was further aggravated when other countries that were pan-Arab in orientation, like Syria and Iraq, became immersed in internal problems or in wars with neighbouring states. That was very

⁵¹ Ali E. Hillal Dessouki and Jamiyl Mattar, al-Nizam al-Iglimiy al-'Arabiyy: Dirasa fiy al-'Alaqaat al-Siyyasiyya al-'Arabiyya, Fifth Edition (Beirut; Markaz Dirasat al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya, 1986) pp. 249-250.

⁵² Eberhard Kienle, "Afaaq al-Qawmiyya", op. cit., p. 76.

⁵³ Burhan Ghalliyun, al-Mihna al-'Arabiyya, op. cit., p. 76.

significant and effective as far as Arab nationalist thought was concerned.

Though Arab nationalist thought lost political support and was being discredited in official circles it received some indirect rewards. Arab nationalist thought was no longer expressing official ideology or used to bestow legitimacy on political regimes. That meant it had to battle for itself and to enter into intellectual and theoretical struggle against other ideological trends. This was particularly the case with political Islam which had been kept behind bars or at least outside the arena by the pan-Arab regimes before. If traditional Arab nationalist thought relied heavily on these regimes and their security apparatus in checking the Islamists, that had a negative effect on the development of Arab nationalist ideology. It was not able to counter and confront other ideologies on its own merit.

However, Arab nationalist thought in the 1980s had to battle on its own. It found itself before new circumstances wherein it had to challenge other ideologies without the support of regimes but, quiet often, in a confrontation with them. This implied the need to transcend old concepts and to transcend the boundaries of particularistic territorial states and appeal to the wider Arab audience. This, as the contributions discussed show, meant that Arab nationalist thought in the 1980s became the concern of intellectuals and social scientists and no longer the mouth-piece of state propaganda.

The contributions of the 1980s discussed in this research represent an attempt at reestablishing the historical and

epistemological aspects of Arab nationalist thought. There is a clear attempt at the foundation of new interpretations of Arab history and reality that divorces itself from the old romanticism. These contributions were made in the 1980s which was a period of considerable change in the Arab world. The 1980s, as outlined earlier on, brought to the attention of Arab intellectuals issues that had an Arab context. These were related to democracy, political participation, equality, dependency, development, and the need to accommodate modernity while preserving authenticity and identity. That implied the important task of abandoning generalisations and approaching the real nature of these problems. This in turn meant that traditional views and concepts that find their logic in a romantically conceived history are no longer appropriate.⁵⁴

Arab nationalism had to be seen not as an abstract idea but in its social and economic contexts. All that was taking place in what Arab intellectuals agree was an Arab crisis that also involved issues of minorities, sectarianism, the relationship between Arabism and Islam, human rights and an Arab crisis at the level of inter-Arab relations.⁵⁵ The feeling that there was an Arab crisis was shared by all Arab intellectuals. Some even

⁵⁴ Sa'id Bensa'id, interview with the author.

⁵⁵ The Egyptian daily al-Ahram for a whole year (February 1985-January 1986) devoted a page to a dialogue among more than one hundred Arab intellectuals from many countries. The dialogue was centred on the issue of how to reconcile Arab reality with nationalist aspirations. It is important to note that all participants agreed on the state of crisis the Arab world was undergoing. The articles and the responses are published in: Lutfiy al-Khuliy (ed), al-Mazaq al-'Arabiyy (the Arab Deadlock (Crisis)) First Edition (Cairo; Markaz al-Ahram, 1986) Arabic Text (Present Author's Translation).

thought that the crisis had been an on going condition of the Arabs since their separation from the Turks.⁵⁶ Arab intellectuals consider that the crisis is a major characteristic of contemporary Arab society. Arab society is seen as one that accumulates crises and the crisis of the 1980s was one of thought and reality together.⁵⁷ This crisis was a driving force behind Arab nationalists feeling that Arab nationalist thought had to be restructured anew.

There was an obvious need for rejuvenating Arab nationalism so it might respond to the challenges of changed circumstances and the political, economic and social variables in the Arab world. The commitment to this new nationalist thought reflects the feeling of Arab intellectuals that

the call for unity has so far lacked rational and human bases, it looked as though it was a call for unity on the basis of language, culture, history and interests similar to the nationalist unification in Europe, or looked as though it was a call for the revival of the Arab empire (Ummayed, Abbasids, or Fatimids) therefore our call was lost between the past of the unity of others and the past of the unity of ourselves. We did not enrich it with a call for a new Arab order, new Arab rationalism.⁵⁸

Given these developments that took place within the wider framework of the 1980s alluded to earlier, it was clear that Arab

⁵⁶ Kamil Saalih Abujadir, "al-Qawmiyya wa al-Wahda: Nahuw Mafhuwm Jadiyah lil Wahda al-'Arabiyya" (Nationalism and Unity: Towards a New Concept of Arab Unity) Al-Fikr Al-'Arabiyy, vol.59 (1990) Arabic Text (Present Author's Translation) p. 161.

⁵⁷ Al-Wahda, "al-Iftitahiyya" (Editorial) Al-Wahda, vol. 46\47 (1988) Arabic Text (Present Author's Translation) pp. 3-5.

⁵⁸ Hasan Sa'bb, "al-Muqaraba al-'Aqlaniyya lil Mu'dila al-Siyyasiyya al-'Arabiyya" (A Rational Approach to Arab Political Problem), in Antuwan al-Maqdisiy etal, al-'Aqlaniyya al-'Arabiyya wa al-Mashruw' al-Hadariyy al-'Arabiyy (Arab Rationalism and the Civilisational Project) (Seminar Papers) First Edition (Rabat; al-Majlis al-Qawmiyy lil Thaqafa al-'Arabiyya, 1992) Arabic Text (Present Author's Translation) p. 317.

nationalists had to respond to the challenge or else risk their ideology being swept away by the tide. The intellectual premises of Arab nationalist ideology had to be renewed to cater for these developments particularly after the 1980s witnessed the rise in the activities and popularity of political Islam. Despite the fact that the relationship between Arabism and Islam, their historical attachment and their political unity had predated the advent of nation-states, the challenge of political Islam made these the subject of an intense debate.

By putting forward the religious identity as an alternative to the nationalist one political Islam would hit nationalist thought at its heart. Therefore it was necessary that Arab nationalist thought defend its thesis. It was evident that sticking to the primacy of Arab identity would not be enough to check political Islam. This was because, as Burhan Ghalliyun states, identity in itself

has no value on its own and has no efficiency but in what it does in resolving the personality's real contradictions and assisting it to settle and be balanced and have clear goals, i.e. to be an active member in the arena of international relations. To succeed in that it must take into consideration its own actual abilities and therefore match conception and reality.⁵⁹

It was clear that the collapse of the Egyptian-Syrian union, the 1967 defeat and the developments of the 1980s enforced the failure of Arab nationalism in its traditional form. It failed in resolving "many theoretical and material issues and contradictions at the level of theory and doctrine and at the level of practical reality and its psychological, political,

⁵⁹ Burhan Ghalliyun, al-Mihna al-'Arabiyya, op. cit., p. 80.

class and geopolitical facts."⁶⁰ The pan-Arabists had a lesson to learn. They realised that if Arab nationalism was ever to recover its position and become "a doctrinal guide to nationalist action in the Arab world" the Arabs must become a "maker of history" which is the critical mission behind the birth of Arabism.⁶¹

Arab nationalist intellectuals realised that this mission is yet to be achieved. It still needs devotion and, more than anything else, requires the successful completion of the "battle of putting this homeland above its own contradictions ... and the confirmation of its unity that is dictated by culture, history and its geopolitical position."⁶² That implied opening the door for an intellectual effort that rereads and reinterprets the system of concepts of Arab nationalist thought. This need is the more urgent since the Arabs of today are "a complicated social phenomenon and reality."⁶³

6-3: The Premises of the New Paradigm

(i) Arab Nationalism and the State System: From Collision to Accommodation

From the contributions discussed in the preceding chapters it is clear that the study of state figures prominently. Arab thought in the 1980s had concerned itself with the issue in contrast to what amounts to a complete neglect of state issues in the old paradigm. Theoretical investigations of state related

⁶⁰ Ibid, p. 80

⁶¹ Ibid, p. 80.

⁶² Ibid, p. 81.

⁶³ Ibid, p. 93.

issues concern themselves with all historical, social and political aspects of the state. This is even clearer as far as the Arab particularistic territorial state is concerned. In contrast to the old paradigm of Arab nationalist thought the 1980s show a sincere attempt at understanding the phenomenon.

The contributions discussed in chapter five reflect this trend as they approach the state system and study the relevant issues of the relationship between particularistic territorial states and the desired pan-Arab state. As demonstrated in chapter five works like those carried under the auspices of the Beirut-based Centre for Arab Unity Studies reveal a clear effort at abandoning traditional views and concentrating on difficulties and the crisis the Arab states encounter and the relationship between state and society. This was to herald a new form of Arab nationalist thought while showing the incompetence of state ideology to become the heir of Arab nationalism. The crisis of the particularistic territorial state was an evidence that the Arab state system was unable to be the alternative since the void left by Arab nationalist ideology was to be filled by the Islamists.

As argued in chapters two and three the birth of traditional Arab nationalist thought coincided with the establishment of the Arab state system. The realisation on the part of the pan-Arabists that the Arab world became politically fragmented into independent political units led them to embrace concepts that disdained the state system. The contributions of the 1980s discussed in chapter five are no longer affected by this disdain. This was being made while the state system was not showing any

sign of withering away despite its enduring crisis. Therefore Arab nationalist thought in the 1980s had to spring from reality.

The Maghribi trend in the 1980s is worth noting for its significant position. The Maghribi intellectuals consider the particularistic territorial state as having a historical function and role to play. It is considered as a national unifying step and therefore an indispensable step on the road to any form of Arab unity. It is significant, in detecting the change in Arab nationalist thought in the 1980s, to discover that, as chapter five has shown, this Maghribi interpretation of the historical function of the particularistic territorial state gained acceptance by many Mashriqi intellectuals. It therefore claimed to be the mainstream trend in Arab nationalist thought in the 1980s.

The contributions of the 1980s see the state in the light of its historical function. That implies an acknowledgement of the nature of the sociological base that traditional Arab nationalist thought ignored. Arab nationalist thought has reached the stage wherein it is willing to acknowledge the state system and allow for its relevant weight in designing any Arab unity scheme. This is clearly demonstrated in the studies on the future possible scenarios of the Arab world discussed earlier. That is a clear abandonment of romanticism and dreams of Arab indimajiyya unity. The new paradigm attempts "reconciling the unity dream with reality."⁶⁴ The new paradigm springs from the conception that the "particularist reality is not a false one that may

⁶⁴ 'Abd Ilah Belqaziyyz, interview with the author.

easily be uprooted once will is there."⁶⁵ It considers it

solid and consolidated due to causes that go beyond its mere support by imperialism and Zionism but to those realities that were achieved and fostered by the particularistic territorial state. These include the development of economic and political particularist interests and the development of closed particularistic feelings fed by state-provided educational and media daily material.⁶⁶

It is obvious that the state system is now a fact of Arab politics that no wishful thinking or "ideology can, at will, cancel at a stroke of a pen."⁶⁷

However, the relationship between Arab nationalist thought and the Arab state system reveals a dichotomy. As Hasan Nafa explains, Arab nationalism had protected the particularistic territorial state and participated in the process of its internal integration. If Arab nationalism had completely disappeared from the scene, even in its most formal form that the Arab League represents, the particularistic territorial state would have faced great dangers. Pressures would have been against the state and would have led to the disintegration of its social components. Loyalties would have been attached to lower levels such as those of sects, tribes etc. This is because the state has not yet become a nation-state in the real sense of the concept.⁶⁸

The relationship between Arab nationalist thought and the particularistic territorial state reveals a strange dichotomy. While traditional Arab nationalist thought had looked upon the

⁶⁵ 'Abd Ilah Belqaziyyz, Ishkaliyyat al-Wahda, op. cit., p. 56.

⁶⁶ Ibid, p. 57.

⁶⁷ Ibid, p. 57.

⁶⁸ Hasan Nafa, interview with the author.

state as having been a foreign implant, had no legitimacy and its boundaries were cartoonic in nature, Arab nationalist thought and movement found the state at their assistance. The particularistic territorial state helped in making Arab nationalist thought and movement spread and gain strength particularly during the heyday of Arab nationalism in the 1950s and the 1960s. The Arab state was the instrument that Arab nationalism employed to maintain a kind of ideological, and sometimes political, hegemony and to realise the first Arab unity between Egypt and Syria in 1958.⁶⁹

Nevertheless, the particularistic territorial state, that had, through its adoption as an official ideology by some Arab regimes in the 1950s and the 1960s, lent Arab nationalism strength, represents the living proof that Arab nationalism has failed in achieving its goals. On the one hand, Arab nationalism developed thanks to the particularistic territorial state and against it simultaneously. The achievements of the state in development, education, and communication made the Arabs discover their common heritage and culture and realise the factors that bind them together. On the other hand, Arab nationalist thought was always, especially in the 1950s and the 1960s, equating Arab nationalism with revolution and challenging the status quo and particularly the state of Arab political fragmentation of which the state system was the great marker. Hence, the animosity traditional Arab nationalist thought had towards the state system.

⁶⁹ Ghaliy Shukriy argues that despite this success in achieving this unity its breakup was more to do with Arab nationalist thought inability to transform Arab nationalism into an identity of the Arabs than anything else; interview with the author.

This led the Moroccan historian, 'Abdullah Laroui, astonished at this dichotomy, to exclaim that while

the particularistic territorial state equips the country, educates, employs, organises and this is the sphere of the sociologies of the state. All these achievements do not give her loyalty nor do they create a consensus around her particularly if propaganda constantly brings to memory that this is only a step on the road of achieving the grand Arab unity. And where is the Arab state that does explicitly advocate isolation and separation?!⁷⁰

It is important to note that Arab thought on the particularistic territorial state is influenced by the central issue of identity. As has been demonstrated in the previous chapters, the Arab is divided between loyalty to three levels of identity. There is the Arab identity, the Islamic identity, each with a pan conception of the nation, and the level of social solidarities identity attached to social formations like tribe, religious sects and minorities. The political identity that is based on being subject to the jurisdiction of a particular state is yet another identity. It reflects the political reality which the individual has no alternative but to live with and accept.

The contributions of the 1980s discussed in chapter four offer significant development in Arab nationalist thought upon these vital issues. However it remains to be seen whether the Arab would be able to reach a compromise with himself. However, Arab nationalist thought has not paid appropriate attention to the fact that Arab states are attempting to undergo a process of nationalisation or becoming nation-states. This means that the debate on the issue of nation in the Arab world is not over yet. The fact that Arab states are attempting to foster their own

⁷⁰ 'Abdullah Laroui, Mafhuwm al-Duwla, (Casablanca; al-Markaz al-Thaqafiy al-'Arabiyy, 1981) p. 169.

nations puts into question the theory of a nation's factors. It is clear that the concept of the nation and its factors need to be dealt with in the light of the experience of the Arab states.

(ii) Arab Unity: History or Future?

The contributions discussed in this research though faithful to the idea of the Arab nation do not ascribe to this nation a role that is more than it could play in politics. The existence of a nation does not guarantee its political unification. Factors of nationhood are not the only prerequisite for unification as they had not been sufficient to safeguard Arab political unity in the past nor to be able to achieve it. The new thought believes that since in the Arab world forces of unity and fragmentation are all at work in a dialectical relationship unity can not be considered to result automatically. Therefore social integration within each Arab state is more important than any reliance on the factors of nationalism in realising any Arab unity.

This is seen as particularly vital since many Arab states encounter problems of societal and political integration and face the risk of social and political atomization. The contributions of the 1980s do not call for any form of Arab unity solely on the basis of unity having been realised in the past nor on the idea that similar nations had been able to realise their political unification. Arab unity is considered as a desired future state of affairs in the Arab world that reflects a dynamic changing social and historical reality that is different from those that had taken place before.

Arab unity therefore becomes a dialectical concept affected by circumstances. No longer is Arab unity a static desire that is immune to the changing circumstances. Arab unity is more than the affectionate reproduction of a conceived glorious Arab history. It is not just an embodiment of Arab identity or the mere unification of a politically fragmented nation. Arab unity is seen in future terms. It is a requirement for development. It is clear that the new Arab unionist is future-oriented and not occupied by past nostalgia.⁷¹

The contributions of the 1980s considerably depart from the romantic views of Arab nationalism and are centred on this new concept of Arab unity. The frame of reference of historical unities (either Arab-Islamic or European), according to the new contributions, is not an acceptable premise. These historical references are not employed any more to justify the call for any future Arab unity. This is particularly true if the quest for democracy in the new contributions is taken into consideration. The new contributions see that the violence and terror associated with the historical unification experiences may not be justified even for a cause as good as national unification. Therefore the quest for democracy and the centrality of democratic discourse in the contributions of the 1980s reflects a desire to refute any call for unification that does away with democracy and also rejects unification by force.⁷²

⁷¹ Isma'iyl Sabriy 'Abdullah, interview with the author. The same view is advocated by Jabiriy, Bensa'id, Belqaziyz and 'Abdullatifyf, interviews with the author.

⁷² This is a point of agreement among all intellectuals interviewed by the author. However, few Arab intellectuals still consider the achievement of Arab unity possible if what they

Generally speaking the new contributions agree on the importance of achieving any form of Arab unity. However, they do not consider this desired unity a determined result of the existence of the Arabs as a nation. The nation is not seen as an eternal entity with a sacred mission as the Ba'thists used to argue. Arabism is seen as an identity that faces the challenge of other identities that make the personality of the Arab.⁷³ The Arab identity is not the all homogeneous one. Rather, it is liable to be affected by the existence of particularist and different levels of identity. It also encompasses within itself multiplicity and differentiation. Therefore Arab unity is not to destroy this rich multiplicity within the Arab culture and personality as it is not to make an Arab nation of a single dimension. Arab unity does not necessarily lead to the building of one nation-state.

(iii) Arab Unity: Its Nature and Form

The contributions of the 1980s offer a new understanding of the goal of achieving Arab unity. Intellectuals have expressed a strong tendency towards realising this goal. However the new paradigm seeks to provide a new rationale for this central goal.

consider as the unification rules that had worked together to bring about historical unification in Europe could work in the Arab case. This is the view of Nadiym al-Biytar. As discussed in chapter four Biytar argues that Arab unity is possible only if some rules are available. Biytar still repeats some of his old convictions that Arab unity needs a charismatic leader who can lead the masses towards this goal. He even goes on to suggest that democracy may be sacrificed for the achievement of unity.

⁷³ Constantine Zurayq, Matalib al-Mustaqbal al-'Arabiyy: Humuwm wa Tasauwlaat, First Edition (Beirut; Dar al-'Ilm lil Malaaiyyin, 1983) p. 205.

If any form of Arab unity or political integration is sought-after, it is not based on the sole factor of nationhood. There are factors that contribute to the call for unity or integration more than does the national factor. Therefore there is to be found in the contributions of the 1980s a strong emphasis on functionalism.

The contributions of the 1980s dealt with in this research are eager to emphasise the important role functionalism may play in preparing the way for any form of Arab unity or integration. It is clear that the contributions are affected by the achievement in Europe towards more integration. The fact that, without having the qualities of one nation, the Europeans have been able to achieve and sustain a working formula for cooperation or integration has struck Arab nationalist thought in the 1980s. It has been very effective in bringing functionalism into the intellectual and ideological premises of Arab nationalist thought.⁷⁴

As the Lebanese Antuwn Masarrah argues, traditional Arab nationalist thought and the ways it thought relevant to achieving Arab unity proved to be irrational and not pragmatic.⁷⁵

The Arabs are still occupied with issues of nation, nationalism, religions and unity. These are factors that time has transcended in an age of conflicting interests. The mere talk about issues of nation, nationalism, religions and unity may be a disuniting factor in itself.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ This tendency is clearly detected in the debates particularly among Moroccan intellectuals like Jabiriy, Bensa'id and Belqaziyy; interviews with the author.

⁷⁵ Antuwn Masarrah, "Ta'liyyq", in A. Duri et al, al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya, op. cit., p. 782.

⁷⁶ Ibid, p. 782.

The study of unification experiences in the world (in Europe for example) shows that unity is possible without having unity of "nation, nationalism, language, or religion or even without the existence of a common history but by virtue of common interests and danger."⁷⁷

It is important to note that functionalism as an approach towards Arab unity was almost completely ruled out in traditional Arab nationalist thought. Husry, for example ruled out economics as a factor in national formation. Now the functionalist approach is gaining a wide support and having considerable appeal to Arabists. Therefore an emphasis on the importance of establishing material links between Arab states and creating mechanisms of integration is a common thesis in the contributions of the 1980s.⁷⁸

If functionalism is clearly reflected in the contributions of the 1980s this is not to suggest that they undervalue the important role of spiritual or cultural factors in justifying the call for pan-Arab unity. The contributions discussed and the intellectuals interviewed believe that these factors have so far kept a reasonable degree of Arab cohesiveness and solidarity. However, these factors should be cemented by establishing material links and institutions or, otherwise, the Arabs will risk the erosion of these factors themselves.

⁷⁷ Ibid, p. 782.

⁷⁸ Saiyyd Yasiyn, in an interview with the author, goes as far as to suggest that the main feature of the new Arab nationalist thought is its functionalist approach. Though the functionalist approach is clearly detected in the contributions discussed in this research there is still to be found some arguments against the relevance of functionalism to the Arab case. Hasan Nafa, interview with the author.

Taking some steps on the road of functionalism is seen as necessary in order that the model of Arab unity may be relevant to the modern age. It is also vital to safeguard and protect the ideal itself. Moving towards establishing closer links among Arab states is seen to be as important as keeping the ideal alive within the consciousness of the Arab himself. As the Moroccan politician-scholar 'Abdullhadiy Abu Talib argues, the first step among the priorities of Arab unification is the

willingness to embark on a lengthy work of creating an Arab citizen who believes in unity and in its relevance and efficiency in developing his particularist society and as a way of improving his own living conditions and transforming his destiny.⁷⁹

The new contributions agree that the form and nature of any future Arab unity should be based on reestablishing the Arab consciousness itself. Arab nationalist thought must be restructured to cater for the needs of the present and the challenges of the future and not on the reproduction of the past. As Belqaziyyz argues Arab nationalist thought must, therefore, abandon its nostalgia with the past. It must leave aside any illusion of recapturing identity and move towards the horizon of an identity that requires construction.⁸⁰

This is to believe that the particularist territorial states are the nuclei of any future Arab unity attempt. The state, as Jabiriy argues, is the corner stone of any unification structure. This is because the existence of a state with all its relevant

⁷⁹ 'Abdullhadiy Abu Talib, Nazaraat fiy al-Qadiyya al-'Arabiyya (Reflections on the Arab Issue) First Edition (Casablanca; Dar al-Kitab, 1987) Arabic Text (Present Author's Translation) p. 94.

⁸⁰ 'Abd Ilah Belqaziyyz, interview with the author.

qualities is a prerequisite without which the flame of any unity may not ignite. There is a widespread agreement in the new contributions that Arab unity may not be achieved or even thought of before Arab states become equipped with all the qualities of modern states. The new contributions argue that Arab states have not yet reached this stage. They are seen as projected states till they acquire qualities such as like those of maturity, establishments, traditions and complete formation.

In the words of Jabiriy any Arab unity may not be achieved or thought of before the Arab particularistic state realises satisfaction of itself.⁸¹ This is particularly important since all Arab states have not yet completed the process of state-building. Therefore it is conceivable that any attempt at Arab unity should wait till this task is accomplished. As 'Abdullah Laroui explains, the particularistic state's existence as a full-fledged state, despite its apparent strength, is still "subject to doubt and questioning."⁸² This is to emphasise the importance of completing the building of state institutions since "it is necessary to achieve unity to have a state apparatus."⁸³

The contributions discussed in this research depart from the romantic views of traditional Arab nationalist thought discussed in chapters two and three. Arab intellectuals now deal with the issue of Arab unity in a more pragmatic way. They are almost free from imagination based on romanticism. As Constantine Zurayq put it "the true nationalist idea must look first and foremost

⁸¹ M. 'Abid Jabiriy, interview with the author.

⁸² 'Abdullah Laroui, Mafhuwm al-Duwla, op. cit., p. 146.

⁸³ Ibid, p. 170.

towards the future." Arab nationalism has to choose between two paths.

The first does not see of the present and the future but what the past allows, the second does not consider of the past but what future and present allow. The first path is memorial, nostalgic and is like a fiction story. The second is creative and constructive. The first is mystical and sentimental and the second is rational and wilful.

The future of Arab nationalism and the Arab nation depends on how the question is answered and on the choice made. Obviously, as Zurayq argues, there is no hope for the Arabs unless they choose the second option.⁸⁴

However, the state of frustration and gloom made some Arab intellectuals lean towards romanticism and imagination. This may be understood since any future conception is bound to have some romanticism and imagination as parts of its composition. Once ideology is at the centre of this conception the occurrence of romanticism and imagination becomes an important part of ideology.⁸⁵ Though Arab intellectuals whose contributions are portrayed in the preceding chapters agree that Arab unity is the best conceivable future for the Arabs, the project still suffers from ambiguity and generalisations. It, perhaps, still lacks a coherent framework and structure that clearly disassociates it from the old romantic one.

Arab unity conception in the contributions of the 1980s still has not reached the stage wherein it can be safely said

⁸⁴ Constantine Zurayq, "Muqifuna Min Tariykhuna", in Ahmed Hasan al-Zaiyyat et al, Qiraat fiy al-Fikr al-Qawmiy al-'Arabiyy: al-Kitab al-Thalith: al-Qawmiyya al-'Arabiyya, al-Islam, al-Tariykh wa al-Insaniyya, First Edition (Beirut; Markaz Dirasat al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya, 1994) pp. 84-86.

⁸⁵ M. 'Abid Jabiriy, interview with the author.

that it has entirely become the creative heir to the heritage of a theoretical project and able to respond to the challenges of Arab reality. However, it is clear that the new contributions are attempting to respond to the challenges that the Arab state system involves. As Gassan Salame explains,

the existing entities have a logic of some sort otherwise they would have collapsed long ago. This is not necessarily to imply that it has to be accepted or to fear its transcendence. It is a logic that is stronger than that of the unionists so it is to the hour winning. It will remain so if the unionists do not carefully and discreetly try to dismember it. Its total rejection is an evidence of the failure to confront it.⁸⁶

What characterises the new contributions is the attempt to transform Arab nationalism from a history of the past to become, in the words of the Lebanese writer Gassan Twinyiy, a "history of tomorrow." It is an attempt to make Arab nationalism an "aimful nationalism" that has clear-cut goals, scientifically and practically, in order that it becomes able to seek loyalties to a conceivable and practical nationalist project.⁸⁷

6-4: End of Arabism or a New Arab Nationalism

From the discussion of the development of Arab nationalist thought provided in the previous chapters it is clear that Arab nationalist thought and Arab ideology in general have been undergoing a crisis since the 1967 defeat in the war with Israel. However, to say that Arab nationalism is in a crisis is

⁸⁶ Gassan Salame, " 'Auwaiq al-Waqi' al-'Arabiyy", in A. Duri et al, al-Wahda al-'Arabiyya, op. cit., p. 471.

⁸⁷ Gassan Twinyiy, Qiraa Thaniyya lil Qawmiyya al-'Arabiyya (A Second Reading of Arab Nationalism) First Edition (Beirut; Dar al-Nahar, 1991) Arabic Text (Present Author's Translation) p. 20.

completely different from saying that it is already dead. It is clear that the crisis is paving the way for the birth of a new breed of Arab nationalist thought. The study has shown that there are many indications that this new breed is developing into a new paradigm of Arab nationalist thought that significantly differs from the romantic Arab nationalism of the 1950s and the 1960s.

As an editorial in Al-Wahda argues, Arab nationalist thought is bound to change its nature as a result of the crisis it suffered and as a measure towards catering for the realities in Arab politics and society.⁸⁸ Given the nature and content of the contributions discussed in this research, it is not difficult to note what these contributions carry of new concepts and theses. Obvious of these are concepts and theses of democracy, minorities, human rights, rationalism, pragmatism, and a conception of Arab unity that relies most on common interests more than it does on the idea of the nation.

This reflects a sincere attempt on the part of Arab intellectuals to change the focus and content of Arab nationalism and to devise new concepts and ideas based on the logic of criticism. It is clear that the new paradigm attempts to make use and benefit from the developments in social sciences as well as to draw lessons from the frustration of the past experiences. Therefore, criticism is the main marker of the new trend. This is because, as the editorial of Al-Wahda points out, criticism is a relevant and necessary approach towards refurbishing the

⁸⁸ Al-Wahda, "al-Iftitahiyya" (Editorial) Al-Wahda, vol.75 (December 1990) Arabic Text (Present Author's Translation) pp. 3-5.

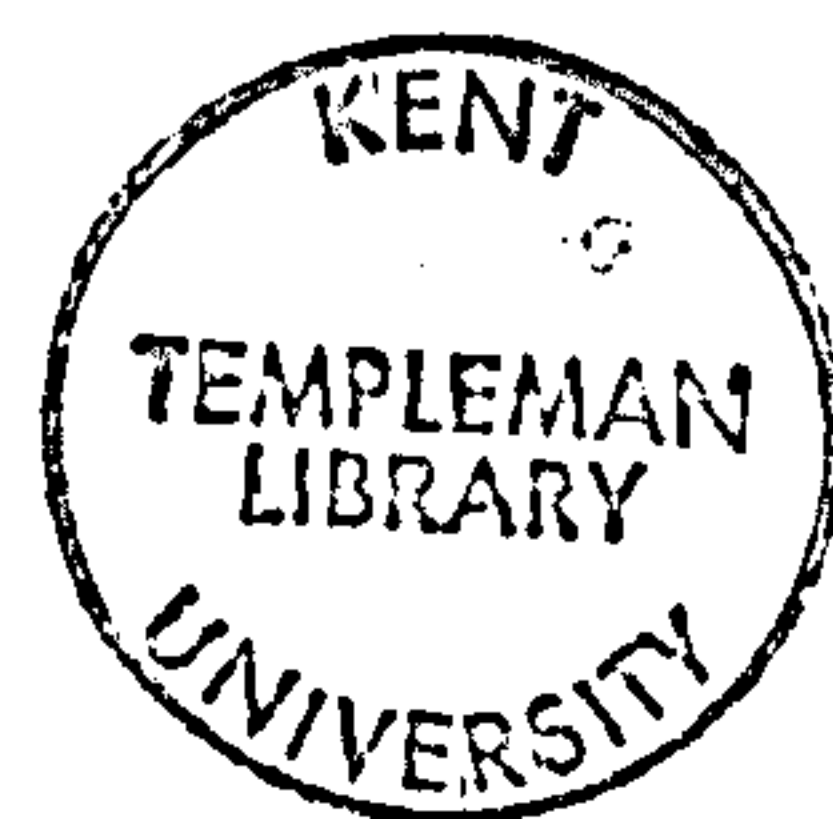
self and its reconstruction.⁸⁹

The contributions of the 1980s show a strong belief that the failure of Arab nationalist thought after 1967 was the outcome of its theoretical and epistemological deficiencies. The defeat that Arab nationalism had in the arena of Arab politics after 1967 is closely linked to the weakness of its ideology. This is a main point of emphasis in the new contributions. The thrust of the new trend is to try to avoid any undue confidence, romanticism and the simplicity that obscures realities. These factors are seen as underlying the defeat of the old version of Arab nationalist thought. The fact that these structural deficiencies were in action while the Arab world lacked any democratic practices made the matter even worse for Arab nationalism. This is particularly true because of the association of Arab nationalism with political regimes that had no room for democracy.⁹⁰

What is significant in the new paradigm is its realisation of the deficiencies of its ancestor. This realisation is probably what justifies its consideration as new. It lays doors open for a new and fresh reading of the problematique of Arab reality and therefore a revision of the structure of the pan-Arab project and ideal itself. But despite the agreement that traditional Arab nationalist thought has failed, and perhaps has ended, the new contributions do not see any reason to believe that Arabism or

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ghaliy Shukriy, interview with the author. Similar views are expressed by Jabiriy, Belgaziyy, Sa'd Diyn Ibrahiym and Bensa'id; interviews with the author.



Arab nationalism is dead.⁹¹

As argues Jabiriy, even if traditional Arab nationalist thought reached a "bottle-neck" this is not to prove the irrelevance of Arab nationalist thought *per se* nor does this prove that Arab nationalism is illogical. Rather, explains Jabiriy, this is only to suggest that traditional Arab nationalist thought was unable to provide a theory that can scientifically explain Arab reality and design the appropriate way of changing it.⁹² That traditional Arab nationalist thought failed in realising these aims does not imply that its content and goals are not legitimate or logical. Rather, this illustrates the "inability of the mind that produces this discourse to make it a coherent theoretical structure able to explain reality and provide the relevant theoretical capabilities for its transformation." This is to say that Arab nationalist thought was not able to become a 'scientific' ideology that "employs the reality in order that it changes it."⁹³

This view is shared by Arab intellectuals whose contributions are studied in this research and by those interviewed. They agree that what ended was traditional Arab nationalist thought and a version of the pan-Arabist idea. The version of idealist and romantic Arab nationalist thought of the 1950s and the 1960s failed and its failure is echoed in the new

⁹¹ It is important to register that all Arab intellectuals interviewed by the author adhere to this view.

⁹² M. 'Abid Jabiriy, interview with the author.

⁹³ M. 'Abid Jabiriy, al-Khitab al-'Arabiyy al-Mu'asir: Dirasa Tahliyyiyya Naqdiyya, Third Edition (Beirut; Dar al-Tali'a, 1988) p. 131.

contributions. The intellectuals interviewed agree on rejecting the idea that Arab nationalism is dead. They argue that if Arab nationalism had lost its power and hold over Arab politics this is because of the failure of its ideology and this ideology is now undergoing a process of regeneration.

Arab intellectuals argue that the developments in Eastern Europe and the ex-Soviet Union testify to the vitality and relevance of nationalism. The fact that nationalist identities have reemerged again in this region through the regeneration of nationalist myths and ideas is a clear indication that nationalism cannot die. Despite about seventy years of communist ideological manipulation and indoctrination, nationalism is back again and it is making the headlines in Eastern Europe and the ex-Soviet Union republics. Arab intellectuals interviewed consider these developments as bringing to the fore yet again the issue of national unification.⁹⁴ However, while these developments may bring to the fore the issue of unification it is clear that this is being done not on the line of heritage or romanticism but rather on the lines of political reason which the new contributions in Arab thought are eager to emphasise.

The contributions of the 1980s are attempting to revitalise the content of Arab nationalism. The contributions stress the need to rejuvenate Arab nationalism to accommodate the changes that the Arab world has undergone during the last two or three decades. But does this mean that Arab nationalism has lost its real content and became an Arab pragmatism wherein reality is the

⁹⁴ Hammad, Belqaziyyz and Jabiriy; interviews with the author.

independent variable whereas Arab nationalist thought is the dependent one? This is not a sound hypothesis since nationalism is in the end a theoretical base for practical politics. This base may not, even if it does want to, become a reality unless it reconciles itself with the circumstances or otherwise remain romantic texts.⁹⁵

The revision of Arab nationalist thought and the attempt by its advocates to rebuild its concepts is in line with what Burhan Ghalliyun considers as the Arab society entering "a stage of a painful search for itself, and an environment where it questions its past, identity, the basis of its erection and destiny that it had not done before."⁹⁶ The contributions of the 1980s were affected by the surge of political Islam. Political Islam has been a very decisive factor that made Arab intellectuals realise how important it is to lighten their nationalist Arabist interpretation of Arab-Islamic history. This is particularly true as far as the enquiry into the issues of nation and state is concerned. This is clearly demonstrated in the contributions discussed in the previous chapters. The interest in the issue of the state is a significant marker of these contributions of Arab nationalist thought. As Ghalliyun explains, the inquiry into state and the

understanding of its problems represents the essential approach towards analysing and interpreting the inclusive social, political, economic and cultural crisis in which

⁹⁵ Mustafa al-Faqiy, Tajdiyd al-Fikr al-Qawmiy (The Renewal of Nationalist Thought) First Edition (Cairo; Dar al-Shuruwq, 1994) Arabic Text (Present Author's Translation) p. 75.

⁹⁶ Burhan Ghalliyun, al-Mihna al-'Arabiyya, op. cit., p. 27.

Arab societies live.⁹⁷

Ghalliyun assigns the Arab particularistic territorial state a great role in bringing about this development. He explains that the endurance and consolidation of this state has created new social and material interests. It also led to the development of particularistic tendencies in the form of particularistic 'nationalist' doctrines. However, that does not reflect the emergence of "a nationalist popular movement in the real sense of the word in these independent countries."⁹⁸ Ghalliyun argues that the attempt at crystallising these particularistic tendencies is nothing more than an

expression of functionalist nationalisms that are necessary for the employment of the state's institutions and to give it the modern official character and make it formally look as a crystallisation of national will.⁹⁹

Ghalliyun argues that these particularistic 'nationalisms' will not transform into real nationalist doctrines, i.e. into sources of values and principles of cultural and imaginary identification for those individuals under its jurisdiction or those who speak about it.¹⁰⁰

This is because despite the obvious hold these local nationalist doctrines have over the state and its politics they still

live under the trusteeship of the pan-Arab nationalist idea and cannot stand without pretending to have affinity with it, as is proved by the preservation of the Arab League as a centre of this nationalism despite the lack of any real efficiency of its institutions.¹⁰¹

The view expressed by Ghalliyun supports the argument

⁹⁷ Ibid, p. 27.

⁹⁸ Ibid, p. 97.

⁹⁹ Ibid, p. 97.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, p. 97.

¹⁰¹ Ibid, p. 97.

underlying this study. If Arab nationalism as a political movement lost its hold over Arab politics since 1967 this is not to announce the death of Arab nationalism as an ideology or the disappearance of pan-Arabist themes in Arab thought. Arab nationalist thought is still alive as shown by the debates discussed here. However, Arab nationalism is not, given the developments in the Arab world alluded to earlier, bound to play the same role it played during its heyday in the 1950s and the 1960s.

As Ghalliyun foresees, Arab nationalism, in its new form, may incline to "form a kind of a general and uniting frame of reference to the smaller and sub-nationalism."¹⁰² However he acknowledges that the Arabs of today have competing identities. A reconciliation of these is not bound to take place until the debate concerning the place of each of these identities and its "role in the self-conception of identity and the political priorities is resolved and the feeling of contradiction between them is transcended."¹⁰³ This is particularly clear if the heavy concentration on creating a particularistic nationalism in Arab countries is noted.

The tendency of Arab states to create their own nationalisms that often tend to narrow chauvinism towards neighbouring Arab countries expresses the failure in forming the particularistic state as a nation; i.e. a state that has institutions, and the need, therefore, for a psychological substitution more than it does express, as some may think, the formation of particularist nations and the development of real local nationalism.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² Ibid, p. 98.

¹⁰³ Ibid, p. 98.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, p. 100.

Ghalliyun affirms that

there is no handicap that prevents Arabism, in an upcoming stage and if relationships between regional powers change, from again occupying the first position in the rebuilding of political identity.¹⁰⁵

This is also the view of many other Arab and non-Arab writers. There is a wide agreement among the investigators of the subject that Arab nationalism is not dead. What is deemed dead are those metaphysical concepts which give room for the emergence of new concepts based on rationalism. This rationalism assigns priority to interests and draws lessons from history.¹⁰⁶ Although there is an agreement that traditional and romantic ideas of Arab nationalism are now a spent force writers still consider that

Arab nationalism (I believe) will remain in existence but in a form that is greatly different from what it used to be during the 1930s, 1940s, 1950s and the 1960s. There will be an entirely new Arab nationalism.¹⁰⁷

The analysis of the contributions of the 1980s clearly establish what Erharad Kienle argues, that the "future will not allow room for things, such as a one Arab nation with an immortal mission or any thing similar to that since these puritan or sufiy names will disappear."¹⁰⁸ Although there are still to be found some contributions that emphasise the supremacy of the idea of the nation the new paradigm falls in line with what Ghalliyun points to, that

the success in building the wide space that civilsational development requires rests more on developing the

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, pp. 98.

¹⁰⁶ 'Abdulmun'im al-Saiyyd Sa'iyd, interview with the author, (Cairo; 1995)

¹⁰⁷ Eberhard Kienle, "Afaaq al-Qawmiyya", op. cit., p. 73.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, p. 74.

fundamentals and theses that help in building a great federal gathering than it does by relying on inventing a theory of the oneness of nation.¹⁰⁹

The Arabist idea is not the reflection of the "continuation of the old conception of identity or the hope of yet again renewing this conception."¹¹⁰ This is related to what Constantine Zurayq considers to be the inseparable link between issues of civilisation and those of reason and creativity.¹¹¹ He argues that the Arab nation is simultaneously involved in the battles of nation-building and civilisational awakening. These are "linked and inseparable battles. There is no true national-building without an active and rich civilisational content and there is no civilisational awakening without a national-building."¹¹² The contributions of the 1980s confirm these new concepts and ideas. The discussion has outlined the premise of the new paradigm in Arab nationalist thought. Compared to those of the traditional old paradigm outlined in chapter three the nature and content of the new premises are obvious to note.

¹⁰⁹ Burhan Ghalliyun, al-Mihna al-'Arabiyya, op. cit., p. 105.

¹¹⁰ Ibid, p. 106.

¹¹¹ Constantine Zurayq, Matalib al-Mustaqbal, op. cit., p. 180 and his, Nahnu wa al-Mustaqbal, (Beirut; Dar al-'Ilm lil Malaaiyyin, 1980) op. cit., pp. 227-239.

¹¹² Ibid, pp. 227-239.

Conclusion

The new contributions analysed in the previous chapters show that Arab nationalist thought was obliged by circumstances and frustration to rethink its concepts and ideas and hence restructure its problematique. The contributions that are the subject of this study are a continuation of the process of revision and criticism that Arab nationalist thought has been undergoing since the late 1960s. The discussions in the previous chapters focused on establishing the nature and content of the intellectual discourse in Arab nationalist thought in the 1980s and to see to what extent they differ from romantic Arab nationalism.

The analysis reveals that in contrast to earlier decades the 1980s witnessed the emergence of a new thinking. This new thought founds its concepts on reality and not on nostalgia. It is clear from the discussion that there is a significant retreat from metaphysical concepts and ideas. Therefore, the new contributions investigate unification rather than preach unity. Clearly, there is still to be found in the new trend a clear-cut emphasis on Arab unity as the desired state of future of the Arabs.

However, Arab unity is no longer seen as the reproduction of the past. Rather it is conceived as a project that is dictated by needs more than by identity and history. Unity is no longer seen as the contradiction of the state system. It is believed that such unity may not be accomplished through the destruction of the state system but by the democratic choice of these states whereby they maintain their existence and not wither away. The

new paradigm calls for assimilation and accommodation.

The discussion and analysis reflects an agreement that Arab nationalism is not dead but is undergoing an intellectual and ideological restructuring. The contributions of the 1980s are a continuation and renewal of Arab nationalist thought and therefore revitalise it among the ideological trends in the Arab world. The rise of political Islam and the attempt at building a new paradigm of Arab nationalist thought show that ideology in the Arab world still does have a role to play. However it is clear that this new Arabism is not aimed at inventing yet another ideology or doctrine that while affirming harmony of the Arabs does away with all the differences and particularism.

This in turn means that the new paradigm faces a fundamental challenge. The challenge is that of building on its ability to continue the process of renewal and bypassing or overcoming the contradictions. The new paradigm still has a long way to go. It has to rid itself of all the theoretical, epistemological and ideological deficiencies that characterise the old paradigm which some of its residue can still be traced in the new one. It remains to be seen whether the new paradigm would be able to overcome the two-fold difficulty of abandonment and creativity.

If the interest and concern in issues of democracy, civil society and minority reflects the waning of ideological dogma it is important that further research addresses the question of whether this trend will be consolidated. This is particularly important in view of the intense struggle between elements of democracy and secularism and those arguing for theocratic rule associated with the strong onslaught of political Islam. These

issues are closely linked to that of modernity and the relevance of Islam and Arab unity to the Arab aim of taking an active part in the modern world's development and indeed the development of themselves.

Given the nature and the magnitude of recent developments in the Arab world it is important to investigate the intellectual response of Arab nationalist thought to the changing nature of its environment. The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and the ensuing Gulf War as well as the developments on the front of the Arab Israeli conflict with the prospect of establishing a Palestinian state and the eventual liquidation of the Palestinian problem, the central question of the Arab nation as traditional Arab nationalist thought had maintained, have been the most dramatic developments that impinge upon the nature of Arab nationalist thought.

Further enquiry is needed to investigate the effect these would have on the debates on issues of democracy and its relationship with unity. The Palestinian issue was used as an ideological camouflage that hindered the prospect for democracy. The goal of achieving Arab unity was also employed to camouflage dictatorship. It is important to determine the nature of the new paradigm to analyse the contributions of the 1990s to see whether issues of societal nature stand the chance of being dealt with on their own merit and without any ideological camouflage.

The Arab world today faces the challenge of yet many societal problems. The last decades have increased the level and intensity of communications between Arab states to an unprecedented level which in turn strengthen the idea of Arabism.

However, problems are well evident in the fields of politics, economy and development. Their most obvious presence is felt in the problems the contemporary Arab faces and the difficulties he encounters while trying to attain some of his aspirations. It is important that some research is undertaken to test the ability of Arab nationalist thought to respond to the needs of the contemporary Arab. This would help in evaluating the prospect of consolidating the elements of rationalism and pragmatism within its paradigm. It is also vital to confirm the essential component of realism if Arab thought deals with the real issues or problems instead of ideological name-calling or concealment of real issues.

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