

# Arab Nationalism: Past, Present, and Future

Hadza Min Fadhli Robby

*Department of International Relations,  
Islamic University of Indonesia, Yogyakarta  
Email: hadza.fadhli@uii.ac.id*

## Abstract

*This article would like to discuss the development of Arab Nationalism throughout history. Arab Nationalism is discussed initially as a part of resistance against Turkish and Ottoman power. The construction of enmity between Arab and Turkish nation became one of the most important feature of Arab Nationalism. However, the enmity against Turkish nation was not the only factor contributing to the Arab Nationalism. The existence of Arab nationalist movement and rise of Arab intellectuals gave the momentum for Arab nationalism to obtain a prominent place. As Arab nations declared their independence, there are aspirations which seeks Arab nations to be united into one country. One such ideal was brought up by Gamal Abdel Nasser, previously the President of Arab Republic of Egypt. Arab Nationalism experienced its hey-day during these days, but soon after, loses its charm after the war with Israel. This paper will also discuss the problems and reasons behind the decline of Arab Nationalism.*

Tulisan ini akan membahas tentang perkembangan nasionalisme Arab sepanjang sejarah. Awalnya, nasionalisme Arab tumbuh sebagai sebuah konstruk dan perlawanan terhadap kuasa Turki dan Usmani. Namun, seiring dengan tumbuhnya pergerakan akar rumput yang memperjuangkan nasionalisme Arab dan kebangkitan intelektual Arab, gerakan nasionalisme Arab mulai mendapatkan pamornya di tengah masyarakat Arab. Seiring dengan kemerdekaan negara-negara Arab, terdapat beragam aspirasi untuk menyatukan bangsa-bangsa Arab menjadi satu negara. Gagasan ini utamanya di bawa oleh Gamal Abdel Nasser selaku Presiden Mesir. Nasionalisme Arab mengalami masa-masa emas pada waktu tersebut, hingga negara-negara Arab di bawah kuasa Mesir kalah perang. Makalah ini akan membahas tentang masalah dan alasan di balik runtuhnya gagasan nasionalisme Arab.

**Keywords:** Arab nationalism, Middle East, Turkey, Arab, Pan-Arabism

## Introduction

Before we look further into the facts and before analyzing the phenomenon of Arab nationalism, it is essential to consider two concepts that will help us understand the phenomenon of Arab nationalism better. The two concepts that will be used here to analyze the phenomenon of Arab nationalism is nationalism and constructivism. These two concepts will be related with each other as we see how Arab nationalism became a very wide-spread discourse among Arab commons and people, even though the concept of Arab nationalism itself was previously foreign, elite-origin, and considered hostile toward Arab people because nationalism was known to be originated from Western philosophy, particularly after the development of liberal-democratic citizenship concept by Jean-Jacques Rousseau in *Le contrat social*. The same zeal of seeing a united Arab against foreign enemies and threats was constructed among Arab people, particularly in the time of aggression and crisis, and successfully created a united vision of constructing an Arab unity.

## Conceptual Framework

The first concept that will be explained here is the concept of nationalism. Nationalism itself as a sense of belonging of one person to its homeland had begun since the ancient world when the oldest civilizations of the world were built. In several civilizations, such as Egyptian, Greeks, and Chinese, the sense of commonness among the same ethnicities within a defined area had been constructed and found in several pieces of literature. However, the most critical phase of the conceptualization of nationalism took place during *Aufklärung* or Enlightenment Era in Europe<sup>1</sup>. As the concept of nation-state developed and took its place within mindsets of European rulers in 17th century after signing of the Westphalian agreement, some philosophers and leaders felt a need to have a better understanding and thinking framework which would help them to strengthen the concept of the nation-state, especially people who are living within the border of the nation-state. Such a concept has been developed abstractly by Thomas Hobbes in *Leviathan* when proposing the concept of commonwealth<sup>2</sup> and John Locke in his treaties, which then became the philosophical foundation of liberalism<sup>3</sup>. Hobbes and Locke had radical differences in viewing the natural character of human and their roles in society or country, but both philosophers contributed to strengthening the understanding of social contract as a basis for developing the concept of nationalism<sup>4</sup>.

After a debate between Hobbes and Locke on the nature of state and social contract, Jean-Jacques Rousseau then came with the concept of 'self-determination,' which emphasizes people's willingness to prevent natural selfishness and the tyrannical tendency of their fellows by creating a 'general

will' among people. The sense of 'general will,' according to Rousseau, can only be realized with people sacrificing their identity as 'natural man' to be exchanged with a new identity of 'citizenship' which has rights and responsibility within a community of people<sup>5</sup>. Rousseau continues that the concept of 'citizenship' itself is not a concept that could not be naturally born within the human. However, it has to be educated and imposed by the social system within an individual so that a human could understand that he belongs to particular nations, and as citizens, he is supposed to follow specific rules and responsibilities that were agreed by the general will of the nation<sup>6</sup>. At that time, Rousseau also believed that the form of citizenship could only be enacted in the Republican system since it is the only system that can ensure the sovereignty of people<sup>7</sup>. After Rousseau, there are also several philosophers, such as Emile Durkheim, Von Treitschke, and Jules Michelet, who are developing the concept of nationalism based on historical experience, ethnicity, and language similarities of people living within<sup>8</sup>. Most variation of Arab nationalism can be said to follow this philosophy, which was successfully formed and constructed in France and Germany, and Arab nationalist thinkers and activists were generally taking and imitating this example and shaping it according to Arabic context, and this will be explained in the latter part of the paper.

### **Origin of Arab Nationalism at The End of Ottoman Era**

In the 19th century, as the Ottoman Empire and its controlled regions experience the administrative reform program that has been started since the era of Sultan Mahmut II, the society within Ottoman Empire is also affected and experienced a turning point, which changed the course of Middle East history forever. The reform which was instituted first at the era Sultan Mahmut II and actively implemented during the era of Sultan Abdülmecit under the title of *Tanzimat-i Hayriye* (beneficial reforms) had brought many Western elements and values from various aspects, especially in the promotion of the idea of the nation-state, civil liberties, laicism, and democracy which was first founded after the proclamation of *Declaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen* (Declaration of the Rights of Men and Citizens) during French Revolution at the end of 18th century<sup>9</sup>. These Western values were brought to the Ottoman social and political, social environs (especially in the adoption of Ottoman's *Kanun-u Esasi* during *Birinci Meşrutiyet*) by Western bureaucrats, industrialists and Christian missionaries, who then established schools and academies throughout Ottoman regions, especially in the region of Anatolia, Levant and Northern Africa.

The existence of these schools and academies had proven to be successful in promoting Western philosophies and political values toward its students from Arab and Turkish origins. The graduates from these schools and academies were

soon influenced by the modern history of the Middle East with their Western-influenced worldview and political perspective. Besides the educational institution, Western values were also infiltrating the bureaucratic institutions in the Ottoman Empire. Some of the bureaucrats who work at the heart of the Ottoman Empire were sent to France and Germany to learn the administration and legal system of these two countries, which were considered as having a more comprehensive and modern system than the Ottoman's. After these Ottoman bureaucrats studied in France and Germany, these bureaucrats established governmental academies and schools in Turkey, such as *Mekteb-i Sultani* in Galatasaray (which previously was named *Galata Sarayı Enderun-u Humayun*) and<sup>10</sup>, and then throughout the Ottoman realms in the Levant and Northern Africa. These local institutions, just like Western institutions, became the first, modern, and outstanding educational institutions in the Middle East and were playing an essential role in educating future leaders and intellectuals in the region.

One of the vital things which were learned by Western-educated Arab and Turkish intellectuals and bureaucracy is the idea of nationalism. The idea of nationalism, which was firstly conceptualized at the end of the Twenty-Years War through the Treaty of Westphalia and was firmly implemented after the French Revolution, had brought change toward the political, social, and economic landscape in Europe. This change, particularly in the advancement of human life quality and industrial development, has inspired the intellectuals in the Ottoman Empire to adopt the same system in their context. Among one of the first and most influential intellectuals within the Ottoman Empire known to formulate the concept of Arab nationalism is Rifaat el-Tahtawi from Egypt, who was living in the middle of the 19th century. French-educated, he was keen to develop the concept of *wataniyyah*, or nationalism in the Arabic context<sup>11</sup>

Rifaat developed the concept of *wataniyyah* because he was inspired by the advancement of French culture and civilization, and he sees that such advancement was brought by the sense of pride and love of people with their homeland. Although Rifaat was amazed by French civilization and nationalism, as a devout Muslim, he despised the immoral quality of French social life. Therefore, Rifaat's concept of *wataniyyah* is not fully adopting a Western understanding of nationalism and *wataniyyah* is the first trial of infusing Islamic-Arabic values into the nationalism discourse<sup>12</sup>. Rifaat also argued that concept of *wataniyyah* is very suitable for Egypt as Egyptian had a distinct system and structure since the era of Pharaoh, and because of this, Egyptian had a very close tie with their own country<sup>13</sup>. Despite Rifaat's efforts to localize the nationalism discourse, his effort was not successful as several 'ulama and sheiks saw him as Western collaborators, and in one time, he was considered an infidel. Beside Rifaat, a similar concept was also developed by Mehmet Ali Pasha, Albanian-descent governor of Egypt. Mehmet Ali Pasha tried to develop nationalism

concept in Egyptian context and then importing the concept into the broader context of Arab nations. Mehmet Ali Pasha even had a dream of building a new Arabic empire with a foundation of Arabic-Islamic values which could compete with Ottoman empire, but this dream was not realized<sup>14</sup>.

Later on, nationalism or *wataniyyah* discourse grew significantly in the Middle East in the last decade of the 19th century and early decade of the 20th century. In the Levant region, several Christian Arabs were aspired to develop a movement that could help the rise of the Arab nation. In their understanding, for the Arabs to be developed toward the same level as Europe, Arab nations need to unite together and leave behind their religious identity, which had caused differences and conflict among themselves. Most Christian Arabs intellectuals call for the secularization of the Arab nation and considering that every Arab people who carry Arab identity and speaks Arabic should be equal. One of the first proponents of such an idea is Boutros al-Bustani, a Lebanese Maronite who has known for his effort in the establishment of the *al-Madrasah al-Wataniyyah*<sup>15</sup>. According to several experts, al-Bustani has a significant influence on creating the conception of modern Arab education, which is vital for the development of Arab nationalism. In the *Madrasah al-Wataniyyah*, which he established, he tried to nurture a new paradigm based on secularism and equality among the Arab students coming from different religions<sup>16</sup>. Although he was inspired by the Western paradigm of secularism and equality, as Rifaat al-Tantawi did, al-Bustani also refused to follow the Western way of life, and he retained the application of Arabic cultural and societal values in the education system that he developed in *Madrasah al-Wataniyyah*.

### **The Ascension of Modernist Islamic Thought and Its Contribution toward Arab Nationalism**

Besides the contribution of al-Tantawi and al-Bustani, several experts also linked the rise of Arab Nationalism toward the advent of Pan-Islamism and Islamic Modernism thought, which was risen throughout the 20th century. Such advent had begun from a reformist Muslim scholar, Jamaluddin al-Afghani, who had stood up in the response of the downfall, negligence, and lack of unity in the Muslim *ummah* during the 19th-20th centuries. He proposed that Muslim should prepare a new and fresh perspective on their religion to prepare for the modern era which will be filled with technological and scientific development, and along with that, inevitable political and social development<sup>17</sup>. Jamaluddin al-Afghani had proposed for a Pan-Islamist concept which unites all Muslims under a vision of progressive Islam, which can answer the challenge of modern time. Al-Afghani's idea and discourse had proven to be influential in the Islamic world, particularly in Ottoman Turkey and Egypt, which had experienced the educational reform at the time<sup>18</sup>. Soon enough, Al-Afghani's thought was soon

to be followed by Muhammad Abduh, an Azhari and Paris-educated scholar who became a personal student to Al-Afghani, and both scholars then created a magazine called *Urwatu'l Wutsqaa* when they were exiled in Paris.

Like Afghani, Abduh strongly emphasized on the contextualization and modernization of Islamic thought and criticized a traditional and literary understanding of Islam which had caused the decline of Islamic community<sup>19</sup>. Abduh, known as Neo-Mutazilate, called for Muslim ummah for a better unity under a single caliphate, but with a new spirit of humanism, freedom of thought, and modernism. In the relations toward the development of Arab nationalism, Al-Afghani and Abduh had a relatively negative view on nationalism, which was considered as a divisive concept<sup>20</sup>. Their Pan-Islamism and Islam Modernism thought had inspired several Arab leaders, such as Qaddafi and Naseer, in developing the Pan-Arabism concept, which will be discussed later on. Along with Abduh and Afghani, some experts also take note of the influence of Rashid Rida's thought on the importance of *umma* unity in the modern era and Abdur Rahman al-Kawakibi's thought on nurturing the concept of Islam-Arab nationalism by criticizing Ottoman Caliphate administration<sup>21</sup>.

### **Earliest Political Movement of Arab Nationalists**

After the rise of the discourse of Arab nationalism among intellectuals in the Arab and Muslim world, several movements were also beginning to rise as a response toward the spread of Arab nationalism discourse and pressure of Western colonization toward several Arab regions, such as Egypt, Syria, and Lebanon. The earliest movement that could be considered as the pioneer of the nationalist movement in the Middle East region is the 'Urabi Revolution, which was led by Ahmad 'Urabi or also known as Arab Pasha. Arab Pasha was known as one of the military commanders of Egyptian force during the era of Mehmet Ali Pasha. He started a revolt because he had seen injustice and discriminative policy that had been applied upon Egyptian soldiers and military officers. The policy instructed that conscription for Egyptian soldiers will be limited to 7 years, and military-strategic administrative positions will be given to Turco-Circassian officers who had been educated in Ottoman military academy<sup>22</sup>. Beside this policy, Urabi and many Egyptian also sees that the Ottoman had applied huge taxation upon agricultural products, such as cotton<sup>23</sup>.

Because of these policies, Urabi, with several other Egyptian colonels, proceeds to start a movement which emphasizes on Egyptian nationalism and independence from all foreign powers. Urabi then gave series of ultimatum for Egyptian khedives and British powers in Egypt to put native Egyptian officer as minister of war in Egypt, to modify the constitution which represents a more just and equal treatment toward Egyptian subjects, and to ensure that the number of Egyptian soldiers in the army would be increased to 18.000 soldiers<sup>24</sup>.

Despite the initial success of the movement in taking control of the Khedive's office, eventually 'Urabi movement failed, and its leaders were put into custody under British control in Seychelles<sup>25</sup>. Although the 'Urabi movement had failed and buried to the ground, 'Urabi movement had marked a significant history in the development of national consciousness in the Middle East, especially among Arab people.

The development of the Arab nationalist movement took a remarkable turn when a coup d'etat occurred in 1908. Led by the triumvirate of Enver, Talaat, and Djemal Pasha and with the support from the Committee of Union and Progress or CUP (*İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti*), Sultan Abdulhamid II's rule was toppled. The constitutional system was enacted soon enough following the coup. Because of the restoration of the constitutional system and adoption of the new constitution, the new government's era under triumvirate was known as *İkinci Meşrutiyet* or Second Constitution Period, following the First Constitution Period in the 1870s. The new constitution emphasized political and social reformation by ensuring freedom of expression, equality of people under the law, and adopting constitutional monarchy system<sup>26</sup>. The Second Constitution Period is also unique because the government on this period also put significance on strengthening Turkish identity and Turkish nationalism (*Türkçülük*) in the modern era, which has been the principle of CUP since its establishment<sup>27</sup>. This notion of strengthening *Türkçülük* and also several political reforms which occurred during the Second Constitution Period has met with the unfavorable and robust response from Ottoman's multicultural society, especially from its Arab population<sup>28</sup>.

Since the beginning of *Tanzimat*, the Arab population had been disappointed with the ruling of Western-influenced Ottoman administration. This disappointment caused by three reasons: First, the Arab population considered Ottoman administration left *sharia* as necessary of law<sup>29</sup>; Second, lack of Arab population representative in Ottoman legislative bodies<sup>30</sup>; Third, the Arab population also deprived of its rights and suffered from injustice and discriminatory policy from Ottoman administration<sup>31</sup>. Therefore, several rebellions and movements, such as the 'Urabi Revolution in Egypt and another similar movement in Syria had been done in order to fight Ottoman rule over Arab-populated regions. On the other hand, there were segments of Arab elites in Ottoman Empire working to counter *Türkçülük* narrative by offering the notion of Ottomanism (*Osmanlılık*) which had been applied since the Hamidian era. In 1908, shortly after the declaration of Second Constitution Period, several institutions and organizations were established in order to promote *Osmanlılık* instead of *Türkçülük*, such as *Osmanlı-Arap Kardeşliği Kuruluşu* (changed its name to *İstanbul Arap Kuruluşu* after the former organization was closed in 1909)<sup>32</sup>. Nevertheless, the effort to offer *Osmanlılık* was failed because CUP's influence in the political and social system of Ottoman administration at that

time was so significant. Because all of the open political establishment for Arab population was closed, eventually several secret organization was established by Arab elites and intellectuals as an effort to strengthen and discuss further Arab nationalist idea, such as *al-Arabiyah al-Fatat* (Young Arabs) which was operating in Damascus and Beirut, *al-'Ahd* (The Promise), *Hizbu'l La Markaziyyah* (Party of Decentralization), etc<sup>33</sup>.

Before the beginning of World War I in 1914, Arab nationalist movements and organizations had been established throughout the Middle East, notably in the Levant (Sham) area, where many Western schools and academies had been established. The flourishment of this movements and organizations then led to a more significant momentum of Arab nationalist movement and finally in 1913, Arab nationalist organizations from all over the World met in Arab Congress in Paris to discuss the future of Arab nation within Ottoman Empire<sup>34</sup>. This congress also discussed the existence of the Zionist movement and its threat toward the Arab nation, especially to the Palestinian Arab population. Scholars acknowledged this Congress as a monumental and significant step toward the realization of the Arab nationalist movement and Arab unity. After the Arab Congress of 1913 and World War I, Arab nationalists experienced a very fast-paced development toward its movement. Arab rulers in Jordan and Saudi Arabia were beginning to solidify their military power and allying themselves with Allied powers. Soon after, new events came into being and changed political constellation in the Middle East forever.

### **Sharif Hussain and Arab Revolution of 1916-1918**

One of the essential points in the Arab nationalist movement is the Arab Revolution, which occurred in World War I, around 1916-1918. The revolution was initiated by a quasi-independent governor of Hejaz (which included two holy cities of Islam, Makkah, and Medina), Sharif Hussain. Bearing the status as a direct descendant of Prophet Muhammad, a pure Arab and Islamic identity, Sharif Hussain managed to gain support from some Bedouin tribes and also several leaders in the deserts of Hejaz and Arabia, and the most significant support was coming from Allied forces, especially from the United Kingdom<sup>35</sup>. At that time, Sharif Hussain and the United Kingdom shared a common enemy, which is the Ottoman Empire. Although the United Kingdom seemed reluctant to offer any assistance and support in the beginning, because the United Kingdom feared that its support for the Arab revolt would incite tremendous anger and protest from its Indian Muslim colonial subjects<sup>36</sup>. However, as the history had shown us, eventually the United Kingdom with its allies were more concerned with strategic gains which they could obtain in the Middle East if they agreed to build an alliance with Sharif Hussain, which are to weaken the position and strength of Ottoman Empire, as it faced war in two different fronts and to



gain new area of influence in the Arab regions who would like to secede from Ottoman Empire.

Because of Sharif Hussain's political maneuver with the United Kingdom through correspondence with Sir Henry McMahon (also known as Hussain-McMahon Correspondence)<sup>37</sup>, Ottoman Empire became angry and threatened him to give up his status as 'Emir of Makkah'<sup>38</sup>. In response to this maneuver, Djemal Pasha said clearly that if Sharif Hussain's proposal of alliance accepted by the United Kingdom, it means that Sharif Hussain is setting himself in opposition toward the Holy Islam Caliphate and Djemal Pasha considered Sharif Hussain's action as hypocrisy<sup>39</sup>. In 1916, by dismissing the Ottoman Empire's claim of the Islamic caliphate and considering Ottoman Sultan as 'atheist,' 'infidel,' and 'being astray from Sharia law,' Sharif Hussain declared *jihād* against Ottoman Empire<sup>40</sup>. After the *jihād* declaration by Sharif Hussain, United Kingdom – through the Damascus Protocol –also recognized Sharif Hussain as 'King of the Arab Nation' and entitled him with sovereignty over the area ranging from Birecik in Southeastern Turkey to the end of Persian Gulf near Kuwait<sup>41</sup>.

The first operation against Ottoman Empire was started in summer of 1916, where at that time groups of Arab soldiers attacked Ottoman garrison in Medina and Makkah, but this first operation was eventually failed<sup>42</sup>. Nevertheless, in following years, with the help of Allied expeditionary force stationed in Allied headquarter in Cairo, Ottoman soldiers were forced to hold the defensive position until the end of the war and forced to surrender itself to the Arab-Allied military coalition in 1918 after Arab-Allied military coalition entered Damascus<sup>43</sup>. During the development of the war in the Arabian front, the Allied and Arab powers had discussed the plans for the Middle East and Arab regions, which focused on the division of Arab regions for the Allied powers. The agreement for plan in the Arab world was signed secretly by France and United Kingdom government without any consent from Sharif Hussain on 1916 under the Sykes-Picot Agreement<sup>44</sup>. Undoubtedly, this agreement had set the Arabian region, which had no border (as it was under the single control of the Ottoman Empire) into areas with border, and this agreement still has an enormous influence on the political constellation in the Arab world and Middle East region until now.

### **Rise of Arab Nationalist Movement during Interwar**

As soon as World War I and its following peace conference (Versailles, Lausanne, and Sevres) ended, Allied powers of the United Kingdom and France were entering the Middle East region and taking control over the Sykes-Picot mandate zone. France occupied the Levantine area of Syria and Lebanon, whereas Britain occupied Transjordan, Iraq, and Palestine. The existence of Allied powers in the Middle East provoked Arab nationalists to solidify and

strengthen its movement in order to obtain its full independence from any foreign power. In fact, during the Interwar period, Arab nationalists grew louder, and its movement was going more prominent than ever, compared to the Ottoman era. Through the 1920s-1930s, several experts observed that former Arab intellectuals and elites in Ottoman Empire were regrouping again into new parties and movements, but this time they are demanding full independence within their border (which has been defined in Sykes-Picot Agreement). Several new, loose, and region-wide political movement was created, as shown in '*Asabat al-Qawmi al-Araby* and *al-Istiqlal* (Freedom) movement which encompasses activists from Iraq, Syria, and Palestine. Having influenced by some Marxist philosophy on socialist politics, *Al-Istiqlal* have several essential concerns for the future of Arab nation to be freed from Western capitalist power<sup>45</sup>. *Al-Istiqlal* also especially concerned the future of Palestine which was under threat at that time due to the existence of Zionist terror groups<sup>46</sup>. The movement of Arab nationalist at that time was mostly focused in Baghdad, because the Iraqi government offered the job for Arab nationalists in Iraq governmental academies and schools<sup>47</sup>. The growth of Arab nationalist movements was also felt in Egypt, where new bureaucrats and intellectuals in Egypt was forming a new party called *Wafd*, and this party had a significant influence in the early period of Egyptian modern politics and creation of Arab League<sup>48</sup>. In some extent, the parties and movements existed in the Arab world at that time were not only party focusing on Greater Arab nationalism, but several parties proposed a more border-defined nationalism within Arab geography, and this phenomenon was clearly shown in the example of Syrian Social Nationalist Party led by Anton Sa'adeh<sup>49</sup>.

Many new intellectuals were also existed and became influential at this time, and these intellectuals would play an essential role in shaping the Pan-Arabism movement in the 1960s. Among the earliest intellectual which had an important role in conceptualizing Arab nationalism and solidifying its movement is Sati' al-Husri. Al-Husri had been the focus of Bassam Tibi's book, *Arab Nationalism*. Sati' al-Husri had an essential place in Arab nationalist thought development because his thoughts influenced the founders of Baath Party and he also interacted with many Arab nationalists coming from the different spectrum, mainly leftists and radical rightists<sup>50</sup>. Sati' al-Husri formulates an idea about Pan-Arabism nationalism based on his criticism of Renan's idea on nationalism and his reflection on Ibn Khaldun's idea on *ashabiyya*<sup>51</sup>. He said that even if Arabs were divided into many states, it is still a *single and united* nation, since Arab people shared the same historical past, same racial identity, and spoke the same language<sup>52</sup>. His idea was then developed by Syrian-born nationalists Zaki Arsuzi, Michael Aflaq, Salahuddin al-Baytar, and Abdurrahman Syahbandar in the late 1930s- and early 1940s by creating the Baath Party. This Arab nationalist party influenced Arab politics until the early 2000s<sup>53</sup>.

The struggle of the Arab nation in achieving their independence was not only shaped by the intellectuals and elites. Arab nationalists and Islamist groups also initiated many frontal and physical struggles as a response toward Allied and Mandate forces' reluctance to let Arab nations to stand equal as a free and independent nation. In Iraq, the *Haras al-Istiqlal* movement led by Shiite religious leaders were operating under the principle of non-cooperation with the United Kingdom occupying forces. In this movement, the Sunni population also joined the Shiite movement because Sunni people deemed they shared the same destiny of being oppressed and the duty of defending their own homeland<sup>54</sup>. The movement was soon enough repressed by UK occupying force, and there were 5000 Iraqi died within the duration of the conflict<sup>55</sup>. The similar physical confrontation by local people and Arab nationalist in Syria and Palestine were also seen during the 1930s. In Syria, a big rebellion led by Druze leader called Sultan Pasha al-Atrak during the early 1920s until the 1930s, and the other rebellion was also initiated by Adil Arslan and former Syrian French officer Fauzi al-Qawaqiji during the Great Syrian Rebellion against French forces in 1925-1927<sup>56</sup>. In Palestine, a significant military rebellion around the 1930s was led by Izzuddin al-Qassam against the existence of UK military occupation, and the Zionist terror group had left a memorable mark for later Palestinian-Islamist liberation movements, such as HAMAS<sup>57</sup>. In the end, because of strong pressure coming from elites, intellectuals, and people in Mandate area, the Mandate administration eventually gave independence – although reluctantly and periodically – to the government of Iraq in 1932, to the government of Syria in 1941 (after a long negotiation process and delay by the French government) and the government of Lebanon in 1943 (after the signing of National Pact as a principle for power division among Lebanese diverse and multicultural society). Several other states, such as Jordan and Saudi Arabia, proclaim their independence in the 1930s.

### Three Important Stream of Arab Nationalism

During the Mandate period, the Arab world had seen a rapid growth of various Arab nationalist movements coming from different ideological and philosophical background. To understand better the development of Arab nationalism ideas, Mahdi Abdul Hadi divided Arab nationalist ideological streams into three parts: Islamism, Arab nationalism, and Leftist-Secularist<sup>58</sup>. These three ideological streams of Arab nationalist, which had grown in exponential numbers during Mandate Era, had proposed an independent Arab nation. However, in detail, they had different principles, formulations, and strategies regarding how Arab nation should achieve their independence and how the Arab nation should construct their national identity and develop their nation in the modern era. The first that will be discussed here is Islamism or Islamic perspective. Islamic perspective had been taken into account to develop

a better conception of Arab unity and Arab awakening by Arab nationalists and Islamic scholars alike since the era of Jamaluddin al-Afghani and Muhammad Abduh. As a main religion in the Arab world, it is without a doubt that Islamic religious values had influenced and structured the social and political system in Arab.

In the context of Arab nationalism, many Islamic scholars, such as Afghani, Abduh, Rashid Rida, and al-Kawakibi, felt the need to develop a new concept of Islam and politics in the modern era, which are founded based on freedom, nationality, democracy, and human rights. These scholars felt the need to develop a new understanding of Islam because these scholars felt that the reason for Muslim *umma* is backwardness, *taqlid*, and inflexibility to novelties in the era of progress. Although there has been debate on how to develop a synthesis between Islam and nationalism (whether it should be done under a Pan-Islamic concept or a national-scale independence struggle), the Islamic perspective had played an important role in influencing Arab nationalism concept. Several of the movements which were created during the 1920s – 1930s were Muslim Brotherhood (*al-Ikhwān al Muslimin*), Jerusalem Committee, and Hijaz Committee. Two of these movements, the Jerusalem Committee and Hijaz Committee, were holding conferences to discuss the future of Islam *umma* in the modern age. The first being held was the Jerusalem Islamic Conference in December 1931. This conference invited Muslims from all over the globe, including Muslims from outside of the Arab world, for example, from Ceylon, India, and Java<sup>59</sup>. As a conference dedicated to discussing the *umma*'s problem, the conference focused its discussion and debates on several issues, such as the strategy of independence struggle with colonial power (cooperatives or non-cooperatives), protecting and maintaining the Holy Places of Islam, especially the Al-Aqsa Mosque, and the problem of imperialist influence in Islamic world<sup>60</sup>. Several Arab nationalist movements, such as *al-Istiqlal* and the Syrian-Palestinian nationalist movement, sent its representative and actively discussed the problems of colonialization and imperialism with another delegate<sup>61</sup>. The other committee, Hijaz Committee, also held a conference in the 1930s on Islamic and Arab unity and management of Islamic holy places<sup>62</sup>. Muslim Brotherhood, also known as *Ikhwān* in the later time, also argues that it is important for Muslims to strive for Arab Unity<sup>63</sup>.

Nationalist stream of Arab nationalism idea reaches a larger audience than Islam's perspective because some of the nationalist stream thinkers also considered that secularism could not be separated in the process of nation-building in the Middle East. Some of the notable Arab nationalist thinkers and leaders were Christian, for example, Boutros al-Burtani, Anton Saadeh, and Constantine Zuraiq<sup>64</sup>. These Christian Arab nationalists had lived for many years inside a majority Muslim environment, and they had appreciated some elements of Islam. For these secularists, the Arab nation should apply the

secular legal framework in order to ensure justice and harmony within society. Several other nationalist thinkers and activists not fond of secularist ideas, and this can be found within *al-Istiqlal* movement, as they had cooperated with Islamist scholars in realizing Arab unity. The same Arab nationalist organization which prefers a synthesis between Arab nationalism, Arab conservatism, and Islamism also can be found in *Jam'iyatu Asy-Sya'bul Mishra* in Egypt and in *Al-Futuwwana*, an Iraqi paramilitary organization<sup>65</sup>. In a rare case, some Arab nationalist parties even exhibit fascistic tendencies, as been shown in the Syrian Socialist National Party led by Anton Saadeh, which built upon a principle of Greater Syria and Syrian nationalism<sup>66</sup>.

Leftists instead had different and more radical thinking compared to the Nationalist and Islamist stream of thought. In the context of Arab nationalism, Leftist argue that it is essential not only to struggle against colonialist and imperialist but at the same time it is also essential to struggle against old bureaucratic and traditionalist system in the Middle East to build a new political and economic system in the Middle East which favors Arab people and also to join the global struggle against bourgeoisie and imperialists. The earliest leftist movement in the Middle East first came into being in Turkey, and then during the World War I, another leftist movement led by a Coptic Christian named Salama Musa also existed in Egypt<sup>67</sup>. Since the World War I and Bolshevik Revolution, there had been debate among Arab Leftists whether the movement should also involve in International Congress led by the Soviet Union or whether the movement should be focusing itself on the local struggle with a moderate form of socialism. The most notable Arab nationalist movement from the leftist stream of thought came from the Baath movement. The idea of instituting Baath movement or *Hizbul-Baa's al-Arabi asy-Syuyu'i* came from an article entitled *Baa's al-Arabi* (The Rise of Arabs) which was written by Zaki Arsuzi in 1938<sup>68</sup>. In this article, Arsuzi –together with his compatriot, Salahuddin al-Baytar- invites Arab people to join a movement to enlighten and to liven up the spirit of Arab nation (*Ihya al-Arab*)<sup>69</sup>. The physical structure of the Baath movement was created by Michael Aflaq and was declared in 1948. The Baath Party, as it is later known, was built on the principle of moderate socialism (socialism with Arab characteristics) and Pan-Arab unity<sup>70</sup>. Michael Aflaq believed in the unity of Arab nations, both political and economic sectors, and the Arab nation should fulfill its eternal mission to realize the union of Arab nations living in the wide-area from Toros Mountain near Mediterania to the shores of Arabian Sea<sup>71</sup>. In later moments, Baath Party played a huge role in shaping Pan-Arabism ideas, especially in the 1960s.

After World War II ended and Allied forces left as the winner in this war, a new question arose among newly independent Arab states. This new question concerned the future of Palestine, whether it could be an independent Arab nation, or a dual Israel-Arab nation, or an independent Israeli nation. The last

one is a nightmare for every Arab nationalist because, since the 1930s, the coming of a Jewish refugee from Europe had caused sectarian clashes and terror among the Arab population in Palestine. Therefore, the possibility of an Israeli nation existed within greater Arab geography could threaten the existence of Arab states and nations and the vision of Pan-Arabism. In order to meet this challenge, Arab states agreed to create a new institution to ensure the unity of the Arab state under the League of Arab States, or more known as the Arab League. This chapter will specifically explain the case of how Israel could be recognized as a common enemy for the Arab nation, how the Arab League was created to ensure the future threats and challenges could be addressed together, and the development afterward, especially on the creation of United Arab Republic.

### **Israel and the New Arab States**

How could Israel be a common enemy of Arab nations in the very first place? At the beginning, we have to understand the development of the Zionist political movement, its effort to build a Jewish state in the Middle East, and how Arab people clashes with Zionist and Jewish settlers in early 20th century, even before Israeli state was created. The Zionist political movement was conceptualized by Theodore Herzl in his book called *Judenstaat* (The Jewish State)<sup>72</sup>. The Zionist political movement was a movement that revives the nationalism spirit among Jewish people as a response toward anti-semitic policies enacted by European states<sup>73</sup>. This political movement argues that Jewish people must build their state in their ancestors' homeland, which is located in Jerusalem. Herzl realized that his idea might be utopic, but he thought that the time has come for Jewish to search for a land so that Jewish can live peacefully without any discrimination and intervention<sup>74</sup>. Herzl's idea was brought to the World Jewish Congress in 1897 and received various responses, from criticism to lukewarm supports from fellow Zionist and Jewish nationalist<sup>75</sup>. His proposal was considered as being unrealistic, but, in the following years, several European Jews traveled to Palestine, bought lands from Arabs, and started to settle together with the Arabs in Palestine.

In the beginning, societal clashes and conflicts were not occurred, since the Jewish population was still smaller compared to the Arab population. However, as time goes by, especially after The Balfour Declaration, which mentions the support for the creation of a Jewish state was announced, and more European Jews came to the Palestine, Arab population started to see the existence of the Jewish population as a threat to their existence. Thus, around the 1920s-1930s, there were conflicts occurred between emigrated Jewish and Arab population, with the first conflict happened in Tel Aviv-Jaffa after May Day celebration in 1921<sup>76</sup>. Several armed groups were created from both sides, for example, Jewish

settlers with Irgun and Hagana militia group and Arab population with Izzuddin al-Qassam-led militia brigade. Many civilians trapped between conflicts of these armed groups killed. Before World War II began, British Mandate in Palestine announced the White Paper, which contained several relevant provisions, such as stopping the sale of land in Palestine and limiting the flow of Jewish immigrant coming from Europe to Palestine in order avoid more conflict between Arab-Jewish population<sup>77</sup>.

The problem grows as World War II ended, where Arab and Jewish populations had aspired since the early 1920s to create their state in Palestine. Since the early 1920s, Arab nationalists had discussed this issue seriously, because the establishment of the Jewish state would threaten Pan-Arab unity and expand Jewish influence in the Middle East. Therefore Jewish state was considered as an enemy by Arab nationalists, even before the real state was born. Similar to Arab nationalists, Jewish nationalists had debated the issue of Israel's establishment among Arab states. To clear up the issue once and for all, the United Nations created a Partition Plan that would satisfy the interest of both Arab and Jewish nationalists. In November 1947, member states of the UN agreed to create two separate states between the Arab-Jewish population and the border of these states were defined according to the amount of land controlled and the amount of Arab-Jewish population<sup>78</sup>. Zionist leaders were satisfied with partition plans as they saw the plan as again for the Jewish population, but Arab nationalist leaders saw the plan as a new problem and 'an injustice' done by UN member states toward the Arab population<sup>79</sup>. Sadly, after the decision came and declared from the UN, the partition plan was not realized, and fighting among Zionist and Arab military forces could not be avoided. At that time, Zionist military forces were more organized as a product of military training for years in former militia groups such as Haganah and Irgun and Arab military forces were not as organized as Zionist military forces, so Arab population was left without defense and forced to leave the land they have lived for hundreds of years. Finally, after conquering land by land in Palestine and British Mandate Administration left Palestine, Zionist politicians led by David Ben Gurion proclaimed Israeli independence on 15 May 1948<sup>80</sup>.

### **Creation of the Arab League and Arab Liberation Army**

As Palestinian Arabs faced threats and terrors from the existence of the Jewish population in Palestine and surrounding territories, Arab nationalists also prepared for united action to defend Palestine from Israeli attacks. The realization of Israel as a single and common enemy catalyzes Arab unity, and soon enough, many Arab nationalists created new institutions and forces to contain Jewish influence in the Middle East. Since 1936, when Palestinian laborers did general strike, Iraqi people showed their support by joining the

strike and holding public meetings all over Iraq<sup>81</sup>. The scale of the Iraqi people's movement was so large that the Iraqi government even forced to ban the protest and public meeting, but it was no use since Iraqi people would not stop going to the public meeting to support Palestinian. In October 1938, a conference was held under the theme of defense for the Palestinian nation with the participation of delegates from the Islamic world and Arabic world<sup>82</sup>. After World War II, concrete cooperation between Arab states was strengthened and realized with the creation of the Arab League. As mentioned in the Annex Regarding Palestine in the Charter of League of Arab States, Arab League was not only created to strengthen cooperation among newly independent Arab states and to promote Pan-Arabism in the Middle East but also to promote the Palestinian state independence as the Arab nation in international scale and to defend the rights of Palestinian Arabs for self-determination<sup>83</sup>. When United Nations mediated the Partition Plan, Egypt as one of the founding state of Arab League propose an alternative plan that would favor Palestinian Arabs' and Arab nationalists' interest – but this plan was rejected<sup>84</sup>. Eventually, when the UN Partition Plan was agreed among UN member states and presented to Arab League, Arab League rejected the Partition Plan as the plan reflects injustice toward the Arab population and benefits the Jewish population, which only came to Palestine as immigrants rather than a permanent resident. Soon after conflict escalated and until 1948, the Zionist military advanced to Arab lands in Palestine and eventually declared its independence.

After the declaration of Israeli independence, the Arab nation felt that the threat had become real, and their nightmare came into being. Forces to defend Arab lands in Palestine were prepared as soon as possible with the participation from Arab countries, such as Egypt, Jordan, Syria, and Iraq. Arab League had prepared plan since 1947 for a united force of Arab nation to threaten UN Observer Mission and Zionist militia, but the plan was realized in 1948<sup>85</sup>. Fauzi al-Qawuqji, a Turkoman-Syrian experienced military commander was appointed to head the Arab Liberation Army to attack Israel and to reclaim back Palestine to Arab nation<sup>86</sup>. Arab Legion, a military legion owned by King Abdallah of Transjordan, also allied with the Arab Liberation Army in this war. The war started in 1948 with the attack from Transjordan to Jewish-populated area in Israel<sup>87</sup>. However, unfortunately, the fortune was not on the Arab military forces. Arab military forces were defeated because of miscoordination among army and personnel and personal ambition of individual leaders to obtain Palestinian lands for their interest. In 1949, the war was then concluded Armistice Agreement was signed between Israel and Arab leaders (particularly Jordan and Egyptian leader). Jordan obtained control over the West Bank region, Egypt obtained control over Gaza Strip and the surrounding area, and Israel protects its partition zone, plus several other Arab lands which they had conquered during the 1948 Israeli-Arab war<sup>88</sup>.



The failure of the Arab League and Arab Liberation Army to defeat Israel in the Israeli-Arab War in 1948 did not stop the Pan-Arabism idea to rise furthermore. On the contrary, during the 1950s-1960s, Pan-Arabism Movement grew to its most significant extent in history. The Pan-Arabism rising factor could be accounted into several reasons: first, the existence of prevailing ideology and universal threat, second, the presence of a uniting leader, third, the resonance of these ideologies toward people, and fourth, support from the international community, especially from great power at that time (referring to Soviet Union support to the United Arab Republic). As constructivists argue, the shared values among agents in a structure could have a significant impact on structural change, and this presumption could be seen clearly in the context of the rising of Pan-Arabism in its Golden Age.

### **Gamal Abdul Nasser, Nasserism and Pan-Arabism**

Many experts relate the rise of Pan-Arabism movement during the 1950s-1960s to one leader, President of Egypt (and successively, President of United Arab Republic), Gamal Abdul Nasser. Why is Gamal Abdul Nasser so successful in building a Pan-Arabism movement in the Arab World? Before looking more in-depth, we have to look first at the background of Gamal Abdul Nasser as a person and as a leader. Gamal Abdul Nasser is an Egyptian military officer who has a humble background. As his military career progressed, Nasser took attention to ongoing political development and connected himself with another military officer who had the same vision on Egypt's future. Nasser was concerned with British colonialism which had caused Egypt's backwardness in many years and lack of unity and cooperation among the Arab nation in the struggle against colonialist power, including the struggle against Israel<sup>89</sup>.

In the early 1950s, Nasser joined The Free Officer, an officer group in the Egyptian Army, who had become dissatisfied with King Farouk's administration. In the Free Officer group, Nasser rose quickly to become one of the group's leader and right hand of General Mohammad Naguib<sup>90</sup>. In 1952, after considering that King Farouk's administration had failed to solve the Suez Canal crisis, The Free Officer moved quickly to Cairo and pressured King Farouk to abdicate from his throne, resulting in the end of monarchy rule in Egypt since centuries ago. Soon after, The Free Officer movement led by General Mohammad Naguib positioned itself as leader of The Arab Republic of Egypt. But, rather than Naguib, Gamal Abdul Nasser has proven to be more popular among Egyptian people because he had built a political connection with several civil and political group in Egypt, including the *Ikhwan*<sup>91</sup>. Gamal Abdul Nasser's rise was unpredictable and unprecedented. Even three years after the coup, which is in 1955, he represented his country in Asia-Africa Conference in Bandung – Indonesia, therefore enhancing his popularity and his image in global

scale<sup>92</sup>. His successfulness in solving the Suez Canal Crisis in 1955-1957, his rejection toward USA's plan of building security cooperation in the Middle East through Baghdad Pact, and his nationalization efforts of Suez Canal together with several foreign assets in Egypt made him a popular hero not only in Egypt but also in the Arab world. He was considered as a hero of Arab people who protected the Arab nations' independence and sovereignty from colonial and imperialist power.

At the height of his influence and his power, Nasser tried to build and spread the spirit of Arab nationalism and Pan-Arabism into the whole Arab World and the Middle East. These efforts were reflected in his speeches and his initiative to build the United Arab Republic. Many experts coined Nasser's effort and thought of uniting Arab in the spirit of Arab nationalism in the term of *Nasserism*. The idea of Nasserism consisted of four essential principles: Pan-Arabism, socialism-populism, Arab nationalism, and some influence of modern Islamism. The first being Pan-Arabism as Nasser always emphasized on the necessity of creating Arab unity and solidarity to strengthen Arab peoples' struggle against colonialism and imperialism<sup>93</sup>, which is also the reason why there are also socialism-populism elements in his thoughts<sup>94</sup>. Arab nationalism and modern Islamism value also influenced Nasser's thought, as he is known to have read the works of al-Kawakibi, one of the earliest Arab nationalist thinkers in 19th century who proposed the creation of unity of Arab nations and the reformation of Islamic teaching according to modern values<sup>95</sup>.

### **Creation of the United Arab Republic: Golden Age of Pan-Arabism?**

One of the realizations of Nasser's idea of Pan-Arabism is the creation of the United Arab Republic. How was the United Arab Republic created? In the beginning, as Nasser spread his message of Pan-Arabism, the message was delivered to his Syrian counterpart, which also had the same vision of establishing a Pan-Arabic unity. Thus, without doubt, some representative of Syrian's Arab Renaissance Socialist Party or Syrian Baath Party came to Nasser and asked him to unite their country together with Egypt in order to start a political union process in Arab world<sup>96</sup>. Nasser was convinced to create the United Arab Republic after various Syrian Baath politicians and elites came to him and told him that the union between Egypt and Syria would weaken the force of communist element in the Middle East and eventually, Soviet influence would also be diminished later<sup>97</sup>. After a long period of negotiations and talks, Syria and Egypt were united as one state in the United Arab Republic on 1 February 1958. The unification between Syria and Egypt shocked many states, including the USA and Israel, which fear that this unification effort could be a way for a more astronomical union of the Arab World. Many Arab people also welcome the unification between Syria and Arab as a milestone toward the

grand vision of Pan-Arabism. However, some elite leaders in the Middle East (for example, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and Lebanon) might not share the same feeling about the unification with their subjects.

Although the United Arab Republic unification was welcomed with joy and hope by many people in its first moments, in later moments, United Arab Republic's foundation was beginning to crumble at its earliest time. Since the negotiation, there had been concerns about how the power would be shared among Syrian and Egyptian leaders in the United Arab Republic and how the economic system would be run in the new country. As evidence shows, Nasser tended to dissolve Syria as one with Egypt and considered Syria as an asset for the development of Egypt in the context of United Arab Republic<sup>98</sup>. The political and economic power was entirely centered into Egypt, and Syria was just serving as an Egyptian client by supplying economic needs and following direct political order from Cairo without any political autonomy in a quasi-federalist political system. This phenomenon reflects and repeats the story of Mehmet Ali Pasha's rule in Syria, where he also did the same thing after he conquered Syria in 1860s<sup>99</sup>. He incorporated Syria into his larger Egyptian territory, but he does not share any political power and any economic resources from Syria, instead he applied a centralized political and economic system that disappointed and angered Syrian people. In the era of Nasser, Syrian political independence was shut, and many political parties in Syria were closed because Nasser would like to see Syria in a stable condition<sup>100</sup>. Many private-owned companies in Syria were also nationalized and declared by Nasser to be owned by the United Arab Republic. Seeing Nasser's egoism in the incorporation of Syria's political and economic assets into Egyptian-centralized United Arab Republic, several Syrian armed officers cannot wait to do a coup d'etat and declared Syria seceded from the United Arab Republic in 1961<sup>101</sup>. Nasser's bigger dream of creating an Arab Union started to fall from this moment.

### **Eisenhower Doctrine and USA-Soviet Balancing Game in the Middle East**

It is fascinating to put the Arab nationalism analysis into the context of the Cold War because the leading player of the Cold War, USA, and the Soviet Union were also concerned with the influence of Arab nationalism in the Middle East – either positively or negatively. The USA, which at that time was led by former US Army General Dwight D. Eisenhower, applied Eisenhower Doctrine in dealing with the spread of communist and socialist ideology in the Middle East. Eisenhower Doctrine states that the USA will provide economic and security assistance to any country in the Middle East who is ready to crush communist influence inside its own state<sup>102</sup>. The Eisenhower Doctrine was formed into practice when UK, Iran, Pakistan, Iraq, and Turkey signed Baghdad Pact and formed a new security alliance in the Middle East called CENTO (Central Defense

Treaty Organization)<sup>103</sup>. This security alignment was not in favor of Nasser's plan to unite Arab, and Nasser did propaganda to blackmail the Baghdad Pact as Western interference upon the Arab World.

Not only Baghdad Pact, but Eisenhower also concerned with Egyptian strategic position in the building of Arab nationalism and Pan-Arabism under Nasser. Although Eisenhower administration, have a cautious approach toward the Nasser government, sees that Pan-Arabism which was developed by Gamal Abdul Nasser could be served as an inhibitor for Soviet Union communist ideology spread in Middle East<sup>104</sup>. At first, the Eisenhower administration would like to build better relations with Egypt, but it was not realized due to historical and political circumstances in the USA and the Middle East.

The Soviet Union had a complicated position on Arab nationalism and the Pan-Arabism plan because several communist movements supported by the Soviet Union were not in favor of the Pan-Arabism plan, as they favor a political and economic revolution that would lead into the proletarian class victory. Nevertheless, throughout history, the Soviets had shown its support toward Egypt as the central country in the Middle East. The support which Soviet show to Egypt was not ideological, instead it is more strategic support to secure Soviet position and influence in Middle East<sup>105</sup>. Soviet assisted in Egypt in building the Aswan Dam<sup>106</sup>, after the USA rejected the financial assistance proposal, and the relations between the two countries strengthened ever since with more concrete cooperation on military areas<sup>107</sup>. Soviet was not concerned to build a new military pact in the Middle East as Western Blocs did in CENTO, but rather using its proxy alliance in the Middle East with Egypt and leftist political wing in Middle East countries to keep its feet in the region.

The idea of Arab Nationalism, which had been developed since later years of the 19th century, finally came to an end when the United Arab Republic had failed, and Arab countries faced another episode of war with its enemy, Israel. The downfall is indeed unstoppable at that moment because the historical context had changed, and the *zeitgeist* had disappeared from Arab people.

### **Start of Downfall: 1967 Six-Day War**

The start of Arab Nationalism actually can be seen since the fall of the United Arab Republic, where Syria finally decided to secede from Egypt and stand again as a single nation. Nevertheless, the real downfall happened when Arab states (especially Egypt and Jordan) were involved in the 1967 Six-Day War. The war started with false intelligence from the Soviet government, which informed a massive movement of Israeli soldiers toward the Southern border of Syria in Golan Heights. There was no such movement detected, but this false intelligence had caused heightened military tension between Israel and Syria<sup>108</sup>.

After hearing this false intelligence, the Syrian military command decided to keep a high amount of soldiers in its border to prevent any possible attacks. Syria also asked Egyptian military for assistance in containing Israeli force movement around its border<sup>109</sup>.

Thus, the Egyptian military was ready with its infantry and artillery force to enter Syria through the Sinai Peninsula, which at that time was under the observance of the UN Peacekeeping Mission. Egyptian military force decided that UN Peacekeeping Mission should move its position from the Sinai Peninsula, because Egyptian military force would do anything in order to save itself and Syria from Israeli military threat<sup>110</sup>. In May 1967, Egyptian military force successfully captured Sharm el-Sheikh, a strategic city and port bordering Israel<sup>111</sup>. This military maneuver blocked Israeli navy located in Taiba and Eliat from the outside world, and Israeli people were in a state of panic because of this sudden attack from Israel<sup>112</sup>. Responding to Egyptian blockade toward Israeli port city of Eliat, Israel mercilessly bombed the airplane bases owned by Egyptian and Syrian Air Force, therefore disabling Egyptian and Syrian forces to conduct air operation toward Israel and demoralizing Egyptian and Syrian force in the war<sup>113</sup>. The war was finally ended with a bitter defeat of Egypt, Syria, and Jordan. In this war, Israeli forces successfully capture cities that were previously owned and controlled by Arab countries, such as Gaza Strip, Sinai Peninsula, Jerusalem, West Bank, and Golan Heights<sup>114</sup>. The defeat left a shameful legacy upon the last year of Nasser's presidency, and Nasser's rhetoric of struggle against Israel and colonialist power was dimmed and ended as Egyptian and Syrian forces return from their battlefield.

### **Conflict of Idea: Baathism vs. Nasserism**

The conflict between Baathism and Nasserism also one of the causes of the Arab nationalism project to be failed in the Middle East. Although sharing the same ideals about Pan-Arabism and Arab nationalism, each ideology still had its way of understanding the nature of Pan-Arabism itself and the strategy that should be used in order to achieve the Pan-Arabism goal. Nasserism seems concerned a more Egyptian-led process with a centrist administration system, but Baathism considered a more decentralized, federal-like administration system, in which every Arab states had their autonomy in political and economic terms. The difference between Baathism and Nasserism is also probably stemmed from different mindsets owned by Egyptian nationalist and Syrian nationalist because each other had different historical conjecture, a different way of conducting politics throughout history, and even different language (in terms of accent).

## Rise of Islamic and Ethnic-Based Political Movement

The rise of Islamic and ethnic-based political movements also forced the idea of Arab nationalism to be left and buried into the ground. As Arab politicians were not concerned with the agenda of Arab nationalism, more concerned about their domestic issue after the 1973 War, and applied rapprochement policy toward the United States of America, people were seeking alternative political movements that fit their original identity. The first thing that came into people's mind is an Islamic movement, were around year 1960s-1980s there were many Islamist movements started to take place within society, even though the government repressed them. Among the examples were *Islam Jihad* in Egypt, *Hizbullah* in Lebanon, and *Ikhwan*, which had expanded its sphere of influence not only in Egypt but also in Syria, Iraq, and Jordan. Some of these Islamist organizations chose to radicalize themselves and build their organization on intricate secrecy in the authoritarian political system. However, some others chose to build their system and recruit their cadre within society, even if they had to face authority directly.

The ethnic-based political movement also existed within the 1970s, especially when a minority ethnic group had felt injustice and considered that time to demand their right had come.. In Irak, Kurdish liberation movement or also known as *Peshmerga* had begun their movement since 1960s<sup>115</sup> and particularly intense in the 1980s-1990s after Saddam Hussein's systematic killing toward the Kurdish population in Northern Iraq.

## Arab Nationalism in 21st Century: Rising from the Fall?

This paper had discussed comprehensively the Arab nationalist movement, which happened around the 19th century and 20th century, with all of its dynamics from its rise to its fall. Although Arab nationalism had ended since the late 1960s, Arab Spring has shown a remarkable phenomenon of Arab people unity to strive together under the relatively same slogan anywhere. This time the keyword is not nationalism, but it has changed into new keywords of 'democracy,' 'freedom,' and 'social justice.' Robert Owen noted that the demonstration which occurred around the Middle East has proved that the unity of Arab people is still there. Facing with real-life concern and autocratic government, as the democratic spark was flamed throughout borders of Arab countries, people moved together hand-by-hand to topple down their leader peacefully, without any grand rhetorics and bloody struggles<sup>116</sup>. Arab unity had shown itself in a different form in the different political and historical contexts of the 21st century.

Can we said that Arab nationalism and Arab unity would revive once more in the 21st century? As Tariq Ramadan said, the political development in Arab Spring should be seen with cautious optimism – as in this new era, the Arab nation and Arab people should find a new concept, especially on how their local values of Islam and Arab culture can be synthesized to create a new understanding of politics and democracy in this century<sup>117</sup>

## Summary

The paper has tried to explain the account of Arab nationalism and its development around the course of history extensively. As history developed, it has been proven that Arab nationalism took different shapes in its movement, which started as a philosophical movement as a way to reflect and criticize the condition of the Arab nation at that time and then continued to be a movement of action. The form of Arab nationalism itself did follow not only one stream of thought but also the different stream of thought based on the ideological choice of its thinkers and its activists. There are notably three streams of thought in Arab nationalism, with first being Islamist, second being Nationalist, and third, being Leftist. These three streams of thought had their place in the history of the Arab nationalist movement and effect on Arab politics. Although different, actually three of them concerned with the same issue of Arab nationalism, Arab independence from foreign powers, and Arab unity. With the existence of a common threat (Israel), Arab countries became more united in their movement, and this unity reached its heyday during the era of Gamal Abdul Nasser's leadership in Egypt.

Nevertheless, eventually, the movement failed since the downfall of the United Arab Republic and the defeat of Arab states in the 1967 Israel-Arab War. There is some hope from several experts regarding Arab people's unity in demanding democracy during the Arab Spring. However, then again, the political development should be seen cautiously and carefully as Arab people still have to find their solution toward the existing problem of autocratic government and to explore a new way to understand democracy better in the context of Islamism and Arab culture.

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