FAR ③

21623

To Merge Or Not To Merge:
A Survey Of Arab Movements Toward
Socio-Political Union

LEVEL II

AD A096286

DTIC
S
MAR 1 3 1981
E

1974

DTIC FILE COPY

3

ABSTRACT

This study assesses the strength of Arab unity movements to create viable political communities in the Middle East and, by extension, unified super-military power. In examining the socio-historical rationale for Arab unity, the study analyzes the influence of Arab history on present events and the manner by which Arab historical traditions are used in the internecine struggle for political ascendancy among rival Arab nation-states. The study points out that Arab unity movements must grapple simultaneously with two often conflicting and contradictory problems: how to create a sense of nationhood if nationality becomes a legally established fact and how to face the challenge from the West.

Two case histories are used to trace the evolution and failure of the Arab unity movements; that is, the Syro-Egyptian Union of 1958, which resulted in the formation of the United Arab Republic, and the Libyan-Egyptian Union of 1973. The study then weighs the significance of future attempts at unity for the politics of world alliance in the region.

To Merge Or Not To Merge:
A Survey Of Arab Movements Toward Socio-Political Union,

Lewis B. Ware
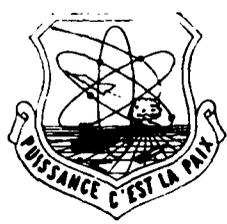
1974

Directorate of Documentary Research
Air University Institute for Professional Development
Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama

AIR UNIVERSITY DOCUMENTARY RESEARCH STUDY

(AU-202-74-IPD)

Published at

Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama

October 1974

TABLE OF CONTENTS

iii

INTRODUCTION

The movement towards Arab unity is not a recent phenomenon. The conditions and circumstances under which it has taken many of its modern forms change from day to day; nevertheless, the concept of Arab unity is based on a socio-historical rationale as old as the Arab people. Arab unity today reflects this rationale as a historical imperative and symbolically represents a desire to recreate the links to a past which many believe has never been broken.

In the broadest sense, this study seeks to clarify the socio-historical rationale upon which the ideological superstructure of Arab unity rests and to show how its unifying thread runs through a seemingly unintelligible diversity of events. Insofar as recent happenings in the Middle East have contributed to the revival of the Arab unity movement, a discussion of its historical genesis cannot be avoided. Still, history itself does not provide the only answers because Arab unity is a response to the heartfelt psychological needs of a historic people.

Therefore, the primary objective of this study is not to illuminate the Arab past as such, but, rather, to consider the psycho-social requirements of the past in the perspective of the historical present. This permits a proper assessment of the enormous influence exercised by the past on current political decisions.

1

The study begins by reconstructing the historical paradigm of Arab unity as it exists in the popular imagination. Correlation of this paradigm with the events of Islamic history makes it possible to isolate those points at which myth becomes fact. Second, the study examines the conditions under which the historical reality of Arab unity combined with its nonhistorical accretions to form the basis in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries for a belief-system that aimed at the total remodeling of Arab society. Third, the study traces the circumstances leading to the first and the most recent attempts at Arab political unity--the Syro-Egyptian Union of 1958, which culminated in the formation of the United Arab Republic, and the Libyan-Egyptian Union, which never came to fruition. These efforts are proposed as test cases for a fully evolved model of Arab ideological and political unity.

CHAPTER I

THE SOCIO-HISTORICAL RATIONALE FOR ARAB UNITY

"Allah made you one nation"
-The Koran-

Should the casual observer ask any Arab, regardless of his
class, confession, or nationality, to describe the major trends in
Arabo-Islamic history, he would probably receive an answer based on
the following paradigm: the Prophet Muhammad brought the message of
Islam to the Arabs through whose genius it spread to the far corners
of the earth; as a consequence, a great Arabo-Islamic civilization
flourished that transmitted, among other things, the lost knowledge
of Greek science to medieval Europe; this civilization eventually
fell into moral and social decay and collapsed under the attacks of
Christian Crusaders and Ottoman Turks who transferred the caliphate
from Mecca to Istanbul; despite numerous efforts to revive the Arab
nation and its civilization the decay continued into the present
century and was hastened by the imperialistic designs of the Great
Powers on the Middle East; after winning political independence from
the forces of colonialism, the Arab nation has once again taken the
road to renaissance and reconstruction of its past historical unity
and grandeur; it will again take its rightful place among the great
nations of the world. This paradigm not only provides the basic
historical justification for Arab nationalism, Pan-Arabism, and
Pan-Islamism but also expresses a transcendent and all-embracing
philosophy of modern Arab historical unity.

3

Islam and Arab unity are inseparable as concepts. Islam brought
the factionalized Bedouin tribes of Arabia together as a cohesive
socio-political entity in the seventh century and projected them into
the full light of world history. By its very nature, Islam is a tran-
scendent faith. It emphasizes a pure monotheism and admits no com-
promise of the unitarian character of an ineffable godhead. It claims
to supercede both Judaism and Christianity as perfected expressions of
a divine world order. Therefore, Islam has the right to proclaim that
it is an ideal system of ethical, political, and social values. In
other words, Islam possesses a discernible teleology of history; that
is, it is a religion with a doctrine of final goals for the historical
process. According to Islamic philosophy, if the religion of Muhammad
has brought with it a perfected world order, then the historical proc-
ess has come to an end since subsequent history after Muhammad cannot
be qualitatively superior to prior history. Thus, the future has value
only as a reflection of the perfection of the past. Any change from
the prescribed course of events cannot be interpreted as progressing
from a chain of causes and effects independent of God. Instead, it
progresses from the very hand of God operating to change the actions
of men predetermined originally by Him. From a Western point of view,
the Muslim philosophy of history is profoundly ahistorical. The point
is that historical Islam projects Arab unity into the future not as a
result of the progressive historical process but as a re-creation
of something that allegedly already existed when the factionalized
Arabs accepted the Prophet's all-encompassing, over-arching, morally

4

perfected belief-system. Hence, the historical quality of later Arab unity cannot be disassociated from the ethical content of Islam nor from its Arab background. It embraces a kind of cyclical determinism that neatly reverses the philosopher Leibnitz's dictum from "the present is saturated with the past and pregnant with the future" to "the present is saturated with the future and pregnant with the past."[1]

Another factor is the character of Muhammad himself. Like most prophets, Muhammad possessed a charismatic personality capable of binding people together in the name of his message. Although Muhammad never claimed a direct personal knowledge of God, his position as God's messenger, rasul Allah, and the instrument for the revelation of His Word, the Qur'an, legitimized, from a religious standpoint, the need for a supreme leader. And Arab unity movements would, by necessity, experience this need in the course of their historical development. In his efforts to end an era of social and political instability in the Arabian peninsula, Muhammad revealed to the Arab tribes that "Allah made them one nation."

The Arabs carried God's message to the world when they broke out of the confines of the Arabian peninsula to conquer the land mass from the western tip of Africa to the Central Asian steppes. Ethnically, of course, the Arabs are not one people; nevertheless, the basic egalitarianism of Islam allowed for simple conversion and, consequently, for the rapid arabization of subject peoples, since Arabic was the holy language of the Qu'ran. Whole groups of

people--Berbers, Negroes, Hamites, Persians--became islamicized and, to a certain extent, arabized. This was accomplished with the gradual integration of the conquered peoples into the Arab tribal system by means of a patron-client relationship that permitted the clients--*mawali*--to adopt the genealogical lineage of their masters. Within two centuries of Muhammad's death, whole populations had altered their religious and cultural identity. Thus, an Arab empire appeared in history and, because of its outward religious and cultural homogeneity, gave the impression of a unified political system. It is not the purpose of this study to argue whether the Arab empire was, in fact, a centralized and unified political entity. More accurately, perhaps, the Middle Eastern, Central Asian, and North African land masses, for many centuries, were united under Arab sovereignty, but they functioned under the control of local dynasties that claimed the privilege of exercising power within the Arabo-Islamic imperium. Such was the case in the times of the Omayyads and Abbasids after the death of Ali, the last of the four Rightly-Guided Caliphs, i.e., Deputies of the Prophet.

However, toward the end of its classical period, the empire received a severe blow from a phenomenon called shu'ubism. Derived from the Arabic word "people," shu'ubism relates to a political schism of an ethno-linguistic nature and, in the parlance of modern Arab nationalism, signifies anti-Arabism. This movement in Islam reasserted the culture, language, and religion of the conquered peoples, a far graver challenge to the universality of Islam than ordinary

6

political factionalism. Originally an early Persian phenomenon, the shu'ubis claimed the superiority of Persian over Arabic and, by extension, the superiority of ancient Zoroastrianism over Islam. The Arab masters of the empire met the challenge by quashing this early Persian proto-nationalism with force.

The abhorrence for anti-Arabism felt by modern Arab unity movements can be fully understood only in the context of historical shu'ubism, since defenders of Arab unity regard the period of classical Islam as the apogee of Arab imperial achievement. Indeed, here was the period of the expansion of Arab science and its dissemination to the West, a period when the religion of Islam flowered as a great civilization. In terms of Arab unity, the implication is that pride in Arabism does not emanate from purely Arab creations. It is concerned with what the Arabs transmitted to the West and now which must be returned. Therefore, the ideologues of Arab unity cannot tolerate any assertion that the culture of Islam is derived from any source in non-Arab culture, Persian or Greek.

By the eleventh century, the vitality of the Arab empire had exhausted itself, and historical decline had rapidly set in. The actual Arabness of the empire had become a thing of the past. Non-Arab Islamic dynasties of Kurds, Turks, and Persians attempted to stem the tide, but they were powerless against the impingements of the formidable Ottoman war machine which, by the sixteenth century, had engulfed the Arab world from its base in Asia Minor. This was also a time when renewed Christian interest in the Middle East took

the form of religious crusades to recover Palestine. In the popular imagination, the period of Arab historical decline is remembered less as a time of Turkish domination than of Christian imperialism in the Middle East. After all, the Turks were Muslims and, although they usurped the Caliphate from the Arabs by removing it to Istanbul, they were more acceptable as conquerors than the Christians. The Christian push into the Arab heartland caused greater psychic damage to the Arabs because it represented a defeat at the hands of an inferior religious culture. Of course, the cause of Arab decline was never laid exclusively at the feet of either the Ottomans or the Crusaders. Muslim historians generally state that the decline of the Arabs was not due to the superiority of the forces arrayed against them from the outside but to the internal weakness of the Islamic community. Salvation lay with a return to a purer Islam through a renewal of its moral and spiritual power. In this way, history provided modern Arab unity movements with a convincing argument for the social and political renaissance of the Arab people through political action. If the Arabs could regain the lost ideal of political community sanctioned by their history and the Qu'ran, then social rejuvenation would follow as a logical consequence.

Beginning in the early years of the last century, the encroachment of the Great Powers in the area greatly reenforced this mode of thinking. At first, the Arab world believed that the battle would be won with the victory of Islamic spirituality over Western materialism. When this victory did not materialize, the Arabs proposed to

8

adopt the technology of the West in their quest to recover the values of the East. This was a radical departure from previous positions. In the early years of the nineteenth century, the Viceroy of Egypt, Muhammad Ali, was one of the first to modernize his army along Western lines in the expectation of restoring power to his nation. His objectives were to insure social reforms in his domain and to keep the West from further impingements on his power. The effect was just the opposite. One by one, the Arab princes in the area became financially indebted to the West for the tools of modernization with which, paradoxically, they hoped to keep the West at bay. With technological modernization came greater susceptibility to Western imperialistic designs. Finally, the West established political control over the area to assure Arab responsibility for their debts. Unity now assumed a new color. No longer was it a simple matter of preserving a spiritual heritage. Unity required an active fight against imperialism. In the process, modernization assumed a somewhat negative value. The Arab countries did not view modernization as a positive step that would attune the Islamic community to progress in the West. On the contrary, they tended to see modernization as a tool to stop the progress of any further Western encroachment that would eventually destroy their Islamic moral life. The problem presented itself as the struggle between Islam and science; that is, a struggle between an ancient faith and socio-economic, technological innovations foreign to its spirit. Historical, ethical, and spiritual currents had to be reconciled with conflicting secular, economic, and technological currents. If the colonizer felt

that he could selectively give the colonized certain instruments of technological progress, the colonized, because of his superior spirituality, felt that he could selectively borrow. In effect, Islam was juxtaposed against the forces of modernization but not reconciled to it. Most Arab unity movements combine secular socialism as a doctrine of modernization with non-secular Islam to form a strange hybrid ideology called Islamic socialism. They expect to use this ideology as an instrument for the future renaissance of the Arab nation; that is, to take a step back into the perfected historical past.

This chapter has emphasized the socio-historical bases of modern Arab unity movements. These movements represent an apparent messianic attitude towards the future based on a reconstruction of a past golden age. But pride in historical Arab unity is not based entirely on a demonstrably unified Arab imperium in the past. The real basis of this pride is the universality and achievements of classical Islamic civilization, i.e., the civilizing mission of Islam in the world. Furthermore, Islam and Arab unity are inseparable in the sense that the Islamic view of the world tends to unite the Arabs as a historic force. Arab unity movements are anti-imperialistic, since they stress the freedom of the individual from the shackles of Western Christian power. They have selectively borrowed from Western socialist theory as a means of rapid modernization to insure their continued independence from colonizing powers.

CHAPTER II

ARAB UNITY AND THE IDEOLOGY OF ARAB NATIONALISM

The concept of Arab unity evolved from Arab nationalism. Two of the more important forms taken by Arab nationalism in the past century were Pan-Arabism and Pan-Islamism.

Pan-Arabism declared that a nation is founded on the ethnolinguistic Arabness of individuals. Any person who spoke Arab and participated in Arab culture and history was considered an Arab. Thus, religious affiliations remained secondary. There could be Christian or Muslim Arabs, but they were unified first and foremost by being Arabs. Pan-Islamism, on the other hand, accentuated a man's ties to the community of Islam, that is, to the community of believers. It was more important to be an Arab *Muslim* than a Muslim *Arab*. Necessarily then, Pan-Islamism appealed to a greater range of people in the Middle East, but it was not really in competition with Pan-Arabism as a philosophy of nationalism because Arabism and Islamism were historically synonymous in the popular imagination. The real difference lay in the degree to which secularism could be admitted into nationalist doctrine. Thus, if a man considered himself an Arab first and a Muslim second, Islam would, in some way, need to undergo a desacralization before it could be included in a philosophy of nationalism. And this would have a tremendous impact on the acceptability of Western scientific practice as a factor of modernization and, consequently, Arab unity.

11

Essentially, the ideology of Arab unity that evolved from the philosophy of Pan-Arabism was a Christian Arab phenomenon. The influx of Western ideas into the Middle East increased in proportion to the number of Arab countries falling victim to British and French colonization. Paradoxically, it took a loss of personal liberty to bring an Arab rediscovery of the West. On the heels of the British and French colonial administrators came missionaries with printing presses. Under the guise of translating religious texts into Arabic for purposes of conversion, these missionaries stimulated a revival of the Arab language. This was certainly the case in Lebanon. By 1860, a Syrian Protestant College, later the American University at Beirut, and a strong American Presbyterian presence in the form of mission schools had been established in Lebanon. First to be attracted to these schools were the Christian Arabs who understood the practical importance of a secular Western education for the improvement of their communal status. With new notions of political and social community available in Arabic, the Arabs reappraised the meaning of their own history and culture in the light of Western concepts. Borrowing selectively from the West, some Lebanese and Syrians saw no reason why the Arab nation could not reconstitute itself on the basis of a shared past and common cultural traditions. As an ideology, Pan-Arabism owed much to the romantic ethno-linguistic nationalism that Lebanese and Syrians imbibed with their Western secular education.

Political and social upheaval in Greater Syria after 1860 resulted in a large migration of the new Christian Arab intelligentsia from

Beirut and Damascus to other parts of the Arab world, most notably
Cairo. The British established a de facto occupation of Egypt in
1882, and the new Arab renaissance found a home under the patronage
of at least a benevolent, if not occasionally oppressive, British
colonial regime. Many Arab Christian thinkers took part in the
renaissance. Although their views ranged the entire spectrum of
political opinion, they generally agreed that the desired path led
toward Arab social regeneration. Pan-Arabism first came to mean
a moral rebirth of the Arab people through an understanding of their
illustrious past. Next, it meant a reassertion of an Arab place in
history guaranteed not by Islam as a dogmatic faith but by Islam as
a contributing factor to world civilization. Finally, it asserted
the constitutional rights and privileges of each Arab to share in
the fruits of modern civilization as a citizen and not as a subject.

Significantly, these ideas carried no explicit reference to
the rights of Arabs to reconstitute their society within the bounds
of definite political limits. At the turn of the century, none of
the Arab Christian thinkers had yet conceived of Pan-Arabism in terms
of an absolute political ideology centered around the idea of the
nation-state. At that time, Pan-Arabism reflected the philosophy of
immigrants more interested in securing their rights as individuals
within a majority society of Muslims whose views of the world were
different and whose interests were frequently hostile. Initially,
Pan-Arabism was reformist and assimilationist in character. It was
a conservative philosophy that represented to the Christian Arab the
possibility of ending his social marginality among his Muslim com-

13

patriots. The pre-ideological stage of Pan-Arabism continued for a number of decades because the Christian Arab immigrant, faced with the opposition of the Muslim majority and the presence of a foreign occupying power in the Middle East, possessed no power base from which he could launch a political movement.

The Christians associated with this renaissance were, for the most part, journalists, publicists, and humanists. The early Pan-Islamists, on the other hand, were Muslims and members of the religious establishment--the *ulama*. The acknowledged innovator and spiritual father of modern Pan-Islamism was a religious scholar from Afghanistan, Jamal al-Din al Afghani. Like the Christian Arabs, al-Afghani migrated to Cairo shortly before the British occupation and made his reputation as a political radical. He proposed the political unity of all Muslim peoples in a superstate designed to fight the encroachment of colonialism in the Middle East. The Christians were inclined toward xenophilia--the love of the foreigners and what they could provide, but al-Afghani and the early Pan-Islamists were more or less xenophobic.

The Pan-Islamists viewed political unity as Islam's only hope for survival as a religion and for their own survival as a class of religious scholars who had traditionally held power in the Muslim world. They feared both the secularism implied in Western domination and the influence of Christian Arabs who had incorporated aspects of secularism into their socio-political philosophies. But they shared much in common with the Christian Pan-Arabists. Both agreed to use selected

14

Western ideas to strengthen their respective causes. In the final analysis, early political Pan-Islamism simply superimposed some salient features of Western constitutionalism on traditional Islamic political theory without changing any of its characteristics. The ancient tribal *shura* or council adopted by the caliphs could easily be called a parliament, and the judicial principle of *ijma'*--consensus opinion--was restructured into a concept of universal male suffrage. Essentially, they changed little of their basic features. The *Sharia*-- Islamic canonical law--would be the basis of a politically unified Islamic superstate. There would still be a Muslim caliph to apply the law, and only on paper would the individual be a citizen of a modern state and not its subject. Of course, al-Afghani did not mean for things to change very much. He was taking a step forward to retrench himself in the past; i.e., to recreate the myth of a united Muslim empire that had formerly existed in history and had traditionally fixed relations with the West. Al-Afghani wished to cordon off the Islamic world--the *Dar al-Islam* (House of Islam)--from the West--the *Dar al-Harb* (House of War). That is, he sought to insulate the Muslim world from the non-Muslim world with which the Muslims had waged historical conflict. In a word, this interesting thinker desired to recreate a situation of political *Jihad*--Holy War. His most important disciples in Egypt, Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Rida, were less inclined to take a purely political position on their master's doctrine of Pan-Islamic unity. Abduh, for example, believed that it was necessary first to reconcile religion with Western science before Western science

15

could be used to create a modern nation-state. Many Christian Pan-Arabists agreed with Abduh's goals, if not with his procedures, for Abduh still viewed Islam and its relation to politics from a standpoint of dogma. But the Christians insisted that Islam must be desacralized and recognized more or less as a theory of socio-cultural evolution. Abduh's reformism failed. He had no greater success in promoting Islam as a theory of national identity than the Christians had with their ideas of ethno-linguistic nationalism. The demise of both these positions in the early years can be traced not only to their mutual suspicions and the opposition of colonial power but also to other competing theories of national identification. The most important competitor was Ottomanism.

Since the middle of the nineteenth century, the Ottoman Empire had tried to reform its decaying imperial structures without compromising its Ottoman identity. It had adopted, with partial success, a Western constitution guaranteeing equal privileges and rights to all the *millets*--the non-Ottoman, non-Muslim peoples of the empire. Yet Ottomanism always stood in the end for the privileges of the Ottoman Turks--the *Osmanlilar*--the ruling Turkish-speaking Muslim people of Anatolia. Therefore, the multinational character of the Ottoman imperium manifested itself in a descending hierarchy of socio-religious groups unified by a loose system of representation through the religious leaders of the *millets* from the Turks on top to everyone else on the bottom. Egypt and Greater Syria were still nominally a part of the Ottoman Empire at the turn of the century.

16

Nevertheless, Ottomanism, under fire from the West, accepted, on paper at least, the notion that all Ottoman citizens were equal regardless of confession or racial origins even if they were not *Osmanlilar*. Many Christian and Muslims accepted Ottomanism as an alternative to Pan-Arabism or Pan-Islamism when these philosophies began to develop a tone of political separatism.

The separatist tone became more strident when World War I touched the Middle East. The Pan-Arabists began to call for a separation of the Arab areas of the empire and their reconstitution as autonomous provinces. The Pan-Islamists called for the unity of all Muslims under a centralized empire that would remove the caliphate from Istanbul, where it had resided since the sixteenth century, and return it to Cairo, the intellectual capital of the Arab world. After the Young Turk Revolution of 1908, the Ottomanists continued to hold the empire together with a promise of political equality for all subjects. But another competing nationalist philosophy, Pan-Turanism further complicated this effort to hold a dying empire together. Pan-Turanism claimed that the real foundation of the Empire should rest on the unity of the Turkish-speaking elements alone. This notion provoked Czarist Russia to wrath because it jeopardized the status of millions of Central Asian Turks brought under Russian rule during the nineteenth century.

The extension of World War I to the Middle East and the subsequent disintegration of the Ottoman Empire had dire consequences for Pan-Islam and Pan-Arabism. The Arab world was suddenly divided into states whose artificial boundaries rarely reflected socio-cultural or religious con-

17

formity. Christians, Jews, Muslims, Druze, Alawites, and Kurds
found themselves living on different sides of any number of borders.
The Arab revolt of 1914, promoted by the British against the Ottomans,
occurred because the Arabs had accepted the British promise of postwar
independence of the Fertile Crescent area. This freedom never really
materialized. In its place appeared a neo-colonialist postwar mandate
system that maintained British and French control in the region. Added
to this system was the threat of Jewish nationalism to which the British
had acquiesced in Palestine. In many respects, the ideals of Pan-Arab
and Pan-Islamic nationalism were further from realization during the
first decade after the war than before it. On the other hand, the new
political situation provided invaluable experience now that the Arab
East was suddenly endowed with the outward forms of nationality:
territorial limits, political parties functioning freely, and national
parliaments. This meant that the concept of nationality would evolve
quicker than that of nationhood.

CHAPTER III

THE POLITICS OF MERGER: TWO CASE HISTORIES

Syria

"One Arab nation with an eternal message"
-Michel Aflaq-

The first attempt to merge two independent Arab states politically came in 1958 when Syria and Egypt formed the United Arab Republic (UAR), a federation dedicated to the principles of Arab unity, freedom, and socialism. This chapter reviews the background of events that led to Syria's entry into this with Egypt.

The Syrians have always been a factionalized people who tend to divide along sectarian lines. This should not be surprising when one realizes that the Syrian population includes not only Christians, Muslims, and Druze but also sizeable Alawite and Kurdish communities. To this diversity should also be added the diversity of Syrian geopolitics. Small schismatic Muslim sects occupy the mountainous Jebel Druze in the south and the coastal highlands in the west. Bedouins roam in the Eastern Desert, and a non-Arab Kurdish population inhabits the Turkish-Iraqi frontier. In addition, urban Christian and Jewish minorities in the cities of Damascus, Aleppo, Homs, and Hama contrast with mixed Sunni and Shii Muslim and Christian agricultural communities on the plain. Because of these diverse characteristics, the Syrians tend to be volatile and highly individualistic in their approach to national politics.

19

Only slight changes have occurred in modern Syria to reverse the tendency toward political fragmentation. In fact, events since 1920 have only tended to reenforce the pattern. Geographically, Syria constitutes the land bridge between the Mediterranean and the hinterland of Asia, a natural point of access to the Mesopotamian River valley and the Persian Gulf. Syria has always been the object of the imperial designs of the West and of the Egyptians and the Turks who, over the centuries, vied for the control of this strategic territory. Caught in the vise of powerful contending neighbors, Syria has enjoyed little peace throughout her history. Furthermore, the fall of the Arab kingdom in 1920, the reoccupation of Syria by the French, the loss of Damascus' direct link to the sea at Beirut in 1926, and the isolation of Aleppo from Antioch and her traditional port of Alexandretta in 1939 added economic dislocation to a host of problems retarding Syrian national unity. Moreover, in the thirties, constant pressure from Hashimite Iraq to absorb Syria and, in 1948, the fateful creation of the Israeli state set in motion a series of military coups in Syria. Obviously, the adoption of Pan-Arab unity as a national ideology represented one possible way of creating a viable political community within Syria.

The appeal to Arab unity in Syria took a form known as Baathism, an ideological creation of Michel Aflaq, who was a Greek Orthodox Christian Arab from Damascus. Aflaq returned from Paris in the 1930s to take a teaching post in Damascus' largest secondary school. Here, he met Salah al-Din Bitar, a Muslim science teacher who assisted him in founding the Baathist Party.

In Paris, Aflaq had been impressed with the works of Bergson, Tolstoy, and Marx and, in a brief flirtation with Communist ideology, he thought that communism represented a modern metaphysical cure for the world's social ills. But, in 1936, he became disenchanted with Communist collaboration in the French Popular Front Government of Léon Blum. Nevertheless, he adopted many of his ideological principles from Marxism and from the German romantic nationalism inherent in Bergson's philosophy of man.

Aflaq expressed his ideas in terms of a trinity: unity, freedom, and socialism. Unity signified the elimination of all national boundaries in the regeneration of Arab character and society. Aflaq's objective was to free the Arab spirit from communalism and confessionalism. "Baath" was an appropriate title for Aflaq's party because it signified "resurrection," an extremely Christian connotation. Thus, unity for Aflaq was messianic in the sense that the Arabs would bring the rebirth of moral values in the world through their own national renaissance. Freedom, the second element in the trinity, resulted from unity. It meant the return of personal liberties and the destruction of colonialism. As the third element, socialism denoted the social order by which freedom and unity could be acquired. For Aflaq, socialism was less a system of specific remedies than a romantic image of Arab regeneration. Baathism--that is, resurrectionism--owed more to Christian utopian socialism, which is both ethical and individualistic, than to doctrinaire principles defining man's place in society. However, a proper understanding of Baathism and its concept of Arab unity requires

21

an awareness of whom one is unified *against*. For Aflaq, socialism guaranteed unity against the West and the corrupt haute-bourgeoisie who dominated Syrian politics in the interwar period. In the Baathist sense, socialism is a reaction to both a domestic and an international problem. Therefore, it is extremely nationalistic in character.[2]

Islam's role in the Baathist scenario points to the Christian Pan-Arab roots of Baathism. Islam expressed the national genius of the Arab people—their national history, culture, and civilization. Pride in the culture of Islam, not belief in its creed, was a link to the future originating in the past. By associating Islam with moral regeneration through an "ethical" socialism, Aflaq hoped to make Baathism acceptable to Muslims and remove any suspicions that Baathism was an instrument of Christian domination. In the final analysis, the goals of Baathism would be achieved in precisely the same manner that Marxism succeeded in Russia, i.e., by a mass uprising of the people against the forces of evil.

Revolution is a key concept in the Baathist program. Aflaq stated: "By revolution we understand that true awakening of the spirit which it is no longer possible to deny or doubt, the awakening of the Arab spirit at a decisive stage in history."[3] If revolution is necessary to reconstitute an Arab nation historically extant *a priori,* then this awakening must come from a historical "sleep." Hence, the close relationship between history and revolution. Aflaq further claims:

> Our past, then, understood in this pure and true sense, we have stationed in the vanguard, a light to show us the way . . . . [4]

22

Curiously enough, Baathism, as a movement with a progressive philosophy of history, really moves backward in time to recapture the rationale for its forward motion. Aflaq describes this process as follows:

> The past, considered as the reality of the Arab, as the self-realizing reality of the Arab spirit, cannot come, cannot *come back* and *come down* and *descend;* rather we must march *towards* it, onward in a progressive spirit. (Italics mine)[5]

Aflaq sees revolution and history in terms of a return to an Arab past in the same way that a Muslim might see the return to the age of Muhammad: a period of perfect fulfillment of the Arab personality and the Arab role in history. In a word, he views a return to the past as the respiritualization of the Arab world.

In Aflaq's words, the bond that ties the individual to the Arab nation is love:

> The nationalism for which we call is love before anything else. It is the very same feeling that binds the individual to his family, because his fatherland is only a large household and the nation a large family.[6]

From this point of view, Aflaq takes the next logical step in relating revolution, history, and the nation to a doctrine of Arab unity:

> The Arabs form one nation. This nation has the right to live in a single state and to be free to direct its own destiny. The Arab fatherland constitutes an indivisible political and economic community. The Arab nation constitutes a cultural entity. Any differences among its sons are accidental and unimportant. They will disappear with the awakening of Arab consciousness. The Arab fatherland belongs to the Arabs.[7]

In the Baathist context, socialism connotes a kind of étatism in which the state not only regulates the moral life of the private sector

23

but establishes a degree of control over the economic life of the public sector. In brief, "socialism" signifies an activist and highly pragmatic approach to the creation of a viable political community. It is based on a highly questionable *Volkgeist* view of the nature of man and society.

Baathism followed a thorny path in the quest of its goals. In the first place, it faced competition in the late thirties and early forties from other contending ideologies. The Communist Party was having its heyday under the capable leadership of Khalid Bakdash, who came from an old Kurdish family. With its appeal to ethnic minorities, communism cut heavily into the support expected by the Baathists from the Christian community. Baathism was also challenged by Antun Sa'adah's Syrian Social Nationalist Party (SSNP), which preached a Pan-Syrianism diametrically opposed to Baathist Pan-Arabism. Sa'adah's ideology proposed a revivified Greater Syria extending from the edge of the Sinai to the Taurus mountains. His idea of the Syrian nation included a reintegration of Lebanon into Syria on the basis of the notion that the Syrians were not Arabs but were ethnically Syrian with a history and culture unique among the nations of the Middle East. Sa'adah claimed the unbroken historical continuity of the Syrian nation with the ancient Phoenician civilization of the Mediterranean littoral. But the influence of Sa'adah's party came to an end with his assassination in 1949. This left still another party in contention with the Baath Party. This party carried the name of the Arab Socialist Party (ASP), and it had a profound

impact on the future of the Baath in Syria. In its efforts to win
mass support during the thirties and the forties, the Baath found
itself in political coalition with the ASP and several other political
parties against the ruling Nationalist Bloc, a party representing
the interests of the reactionary and pro-Western landholding bour-
geoisie. Under the leadership of Akram al-Hawrani, the ASP brought
under the Baathist aegis the support and energies of the tradesmen
and the petite-bourgeoisie of the provincial towns. Most important,
it won for the Baath the sympathies of an influential group of army
officers.

Aflaq was an ideologue more interested in the intellectual
aspect of party philosophy; al-Hawrani was a practical and pragmatic
politician who found in the Baath a conducive political ideology
that would further his own personal struggle for ascendancy against
the rival Communists and SSNP politicians. Although the alliance
had its ups and downs, it allowed Aflaq to concentrate on party
theory while Bitar and al-Hawrani translated the movement into a
network of cells in the urban and rural centers and in the army. A
tendency toward collective and decentralized leadership characterized
the Baathist political structure in Syria, and cells expanded at a
rapid rate in Iraq, Jordan, and Palestine. In its early years, the
Baathist Party tended to attract intellectuals and army leaders dis-
satisfied with the leadership of the old guard nationalists, but it
became increasingly The party paramilitary as it gained influence in
the army.

A turning point for the Baath Party came in 1949. With the cataclysmic defeat of the Syrian Army in the Israeli War of Independence, Colonel Husni al-Za'im's coup brought the military Baathists to power in Damascus. The Baathist appeal for Arab unity now shifted in support of Arab irridentism and focused on the need to recover the Palestinian homeland. Thus irridentism was conveniently raised to the level of Syrian national policy. This had a disastrous effect on Syria. With the Israeli crisis continually brewing, the Syrians began to move away from a nascent loyalty to Syria as a territorial unit and toward an Arab superstate.

The promise of a viable Syrian political community united under Baathist military regimes began to dissolve with each successive military coup and with Syria's embroilment in the conflict with Zionism. From 1949 onward, conflicts between Syrian factions intensified and exascerbated an already unstable situation.

In 1951, Iraq's premier, Nuri al-Said, suggested the unity of Syria with Hashimite Iraq and Jordan in alliance with Great Britain, France, and Turkey. Syria now became the object of the machinations of her neighbors. To counterbalance the alliance that gradually evolved into the ill-fated Baghdad Pact of 1955, Syria began to flirt with the Soviet Union and Egypt. Thus, Great Power rivalries in the area aggravated Syria's troubles with her neighbors. In providing military assistance to any Middle East nation threatened by international communism, the Eisenhower Doctrine pushed Lebanon and Iraq to the brink of civil war in 1957-1958 and caused an encirclement

of Syria. The Doctrine was also partially responsible for the alliance between Egypt and the Soviet Union in that year. Complicating the issue in 1956 was the Suez conflict that made Nasir a national hero in the Arab world. At a decisive moment in her national history, Syria had nowhere to turn.

Internally, the Baath was weak despite its alliance with the military. This weakness and the rapid polarization of the Middle East in the fifties caused the Baathists to fear a Communist take-over in Syria. Consequently, the Baathist Party entered a new period of political alliances although Baathism never ranked in Soviet policy as a progressive political ideology in a generally anti-Communist Middle East. The best that the Soviets could expect was a popular revolution that established a bourgeois regime friendly to the Soviet Union. But the Baathists feared the domestic Communist party more than the Soviets and eventually turned to Nasir as the lesser of the two evils. The army tended to accept Nasir's intervention because the Syrian military sought protection from a competing Iraqi army and the bourgeois politicians whom it despised. Thus, Nasir could use a Communist take-over in Syria as an excuse for intervention. Egypt's intervention took the form of a Syro-Egyptian union under the guise of greater Arab unity.

Egypt

"Unity . . . is identified with the
Arab experience itself . . . ."
-Jamal Abd al-Nasir-

Factionalism in Syria results in part from Syria's unique geo-
political position and social fragmentation; Egypt represents the
opposite extreme of the political spectrum. This does not imply
that factionalism is nonexistent in Egypt. To a greater or lesser
degree, factionalism is a *sine qua non* of any Arab political system.
Modern Egyptian factionalism centers around the question of how best
to define Egyptian nationality in political terms. The Syrians, on
the other hand, grapple with the more basic problem of nationhood
itself.

The Egyptians have always viewed themselves as Egyptians.
Despite the Pharaonic, Christian, Greek, Roman, Byzantine, and Islamic
phases of Egyptian history, the Egyptian people have never lost the
feeling of sameness and uniqueness. Egypt's singularity rests on a
number of cultural, sociological, and physical factors. One of the
most important is the Nile River. The Nile runs like a ribbon through
thousands of miles of desert and imposes an unvarying rhythm of life
on the peasant people who live with its ebb and flow.

The Egyptians are an agricultural people whose welfare is linked
to the rise and fall of the river. The modern Egyptians are a racially
homogenous people of basically Hamitic stock, and they possess, to a
remarkable degree, the physical characteristics of the ancient Egyp-

tians. Only the Nubians of Upper Egypt remain apart from other
Egyptians in language, culture, and race. For the most part, the
Egyptians are orthodox Sunni Muslims, except for approximately 10
percent who are Coptic Christians. However, these Christians are
indistinguishable from the Muslims with the possible exception of
their profession. The Coptic Christians tend to be urban craftsmen
and tradesmen rather than fellahin (peasant farmers). The Copts
feel that they are the true descendants of the pharaohs because of
the similarity of their liturgical language with the ancient Egyp-
tian language, but the Muslims also express a kinship to, and a
continuity with, the pre-Islamic past. Despite religious differences,
the same socio-cultural values permeate all aspects of communal life
in Egypt and these values are enhanced by a continuity of political
structures, which, over the centuries, has permitted a centralized
administration of the Nile resources.

In view of Egypt's traditional sense of national unity and
political continuity, why did the Egyptians seek union with Syria?
To answer this question, one must first examine certain significant
historical events that led to a new concept of Egypt's place in the
Arab world.

Egypt's first contact with the West in modern times dates from
the Napoleonic invasion of 1798. The French presence was instru-
mental in the decline of Mamluk power in Egypt and the ascendancy of
Muhammad Ali, an Ottoman janissary of Albanian origin. Muhammad Ali
undertook a program of modernizing his army as the first step in

29

establishing Egyptian hegemony over the Arab East. Ostensibly,
his objectives were to gain Egyptian independence from the Sublime
Porte. But his policy of independence led him into foreign adven-
tures against Ottoman Syria and Arabia, both logical targets for
Egyptian imperialism. He viewed Syria as a buffer between Egypt
and Ottoman Anatolia and Arabia as the focal point of trade routes
from the Red Sea and caravan routes into the Fertile Crescent.
Since Muhammad Ali's army needed an infrastructure for support,
Egypt embarked on a modernization program in its traditional indus-
tries and educational system similar to the Ottoman programs some
years earlier. Muhammad Ali's efforts to transform traditional
Egyptian socio-economic structures had a profound effect on the
country. Egypt accepted foreign intellectual and cultural influence
and contracted heavy debts that contributed to increased economic
insolvency. In addition, a whole new class of landowners associated
with Muhammad Ali's family sprang up and imposed ever greater burdens
on the peasantry.

Enforced modernization under Muhammad Ali's successors only
imposed new and unfamiliar reforms and an aggressive foreign policy
that emanated from the ruling class. It did not provide for the
betterment of the people and the strengthening of domestic institu-
tions. Muhammad Ali achieved many of his objectives because of a
fairly centralized bureaucratic apparatus. Nevertheless, moderni-
zation did not narrow the gulf between the people and the state.
It only removed Egyptian society one step further from the governing

30

class and substituted for the former Mamluks a class of bourgeois landowners whose demands on the populace were equally oppressive.

For a century, Egypt moved toward ruin and came under the domination of Great Britain and France. Eventually, Egypt lost its fight against Western imperialism and became a de facto protectorate of Great Britain after 1882. But the struggle against the West continued after the occupation and took other forms, one of which, paradoxically, was an attempt to reconcile Western science with Islam. This effort was the work of Muhammad Abduh mentioned in the last chapter. After his death, his disciples used his work as the basis for a conservative Pan-Islamic reaction to the West. They attempted to employ Western scientific ideas against the secularism inherent in all forms of Westernization. Despite the nationalistic feelings of the Egyptian people, Egypt was a major center of Islamic learning and the focal point for Pan-Islamic sentiment. On the other hand, Syria, with the capital of the historic Caliphate at Damascus, naturally gravitated toward Pan-Arabism. But not even Pan-Islamism managed to turn the tide of imperialism. Like the Baath Party four decades later, Pan-Islamism competed with other doctrines of national reconstruction and reform, notably Ottomanism, Egyptian nationalism, and Pharaonism, which stressed Egypt's continuity with its pre-Islamic past.

At the time of World War I, Egypt viewed none of these doctrines as a viable ideology capable of creating the national unity necessary to end the British occupation and restore national sovereignty. Thus,

31

Egypt entered the twentieth century in much the same position as Syria; that is, the object of the postwar machinations of European powers. It was a de facto British colony ruled by the Wafd Party representing bourgeois elements that had profited most by the Western presence. And Egypt shared the same kind of defeat as the Syrians in later conflicts; for example, the 1948 War of Israeli Independence. This series of events and humiliations created the atmosphere for the 1952 military coup that recovered Egyptian independence lost 60 years earlier.

The dominant figure in that coup was Jamal Abd al-Nasir, who stated in his *Philosophy of the Revolution*:

> . . . it is not in vain that our country lies to the
> southwest of Asia, close to the Arab world, whose life
> is intermingled with ours. It is not in vain that our
> country lies to the northeast of Africa, a position
> from which it gives upon the Dark Continent wherein
> rages today the most violent struggle between white
> colonizers and black natives for the possession of its
> inexhaustible resources. It is not in vain that Islamic
> civilization and Islamic heritage which the Mongols rav-
> aged in the conquest of the old Islamic capitals, retreated,
> and sought refuge in Egypt where they found shelter and
> safety as a result of the counterattack with which Egypt
> repelled the invasion of these Tartars at Ein Galout . . . .[8]

Obviously, Nasir chose to base Egypt's post-revolutionary political orientation on certain aspects of Egyptian nationalism rather than Arab unity. Nasir thought first of the role that Egypt would play in the struggle against colonialism and of Egypt's right to lead that struggle by virtue of its colonial history. He emphasized Egypt's racial homogeneity and differences from the Arabs as an ethnic group, but he also claimed that Egypt's special geo-political

position would qualify it to arbitrate inter-Arab disputes. This leads one to believe that Egypt's main interest in the Arab world was solidarity and not unity in the struggle against the West. Yet Nasir did turn eventually to a policy of Arab unity.

After all, by virtue of her uniformity of culture and history, only Egypt could provide the leadership for Arab unity. Moreover, Egypt occupies the core area for such unity because of its size, wealth, population, relative stability, security, and, above all, its intellectual dynamism. When Nasir finally did affect a union with Syria, he accomplished it in a revolutionary way by proclaiming Egypt's de facto leadership. But if Syria's espousal of Arab unity helped in overcoming internal problems, Nasir's primary aim was to use Pan-Arabism in solving an external problem--the threat that he perceived from the West. To use Arab unity as a justification for his anti-colonialist policy and Egypt's right to lead the movement, Nasir had to satisfy certain ideological requirements: restore the center of the historic Arab nation to Cairo; prove that the Egyptians were Arabs; and deter the Egyptian population from its flirtation with the West.[9]

Like Aflaq, Nasir turned to the past for his rationale and, like every new leader, he exercised the prerogative to rewrite the history of his generation. Nasir found his link to the past in Saladin, the famous Saracen hero of the Crusades. Saladin, or Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi, was a Kurdish mercenary who ruled Egypt in the twelfth century and recaptured Jerusalem from the Crusaders.

33

Hence, Saladin could serve as the symbol of the Egyptian patriot par excellence and Nasir's struggle against Western imperialism. Only a short step further was the view of Saladin as an instrument for unifying Syria, Palestine, and Egypt. Not only did Saladin accomplish these mighty deeds, most of which are historically debatable, but he was also credited with restoring Sunni Islam to Egypt which, until Saladin's rule in Cairo, had been the center of heterodox Shiite Islam brought to Egypt by former Fatimid rulers. As mentioned earlier, Sunni Islam is the religion of the majority of the Arabs. Therefore, from the Egyptian point of view, Saladin is, logically, an Arab or at least someone who has been Arabized. Consequently, from Saladin's time on, many historians perceived the thread of a progressive Arabization of Egypt.

At this juncture, one must observe that Nasir's goals were purely pragmatic and that Arab unity served as a practical tool to implement his desire for political leadership in the Arab world. These political aims had an internal rationale in terms of Nasir's domestic policies. His claim to leadership resided in his power base within the army, which had been the agent of modernization in Egypt since the time of Muhammad Ali. Naturally, this power base was small, and, as a result, it imposed modernization from the top. Thus, it was imperative for Nasir to obtain a consensus of all Egyptians for his revolutionary policies as soon as possible. The military élite felt it necessary to develop support for revolution at the base. To legitimize his control, Nasir turned to the myth that power resides in the people.

34

His attempt to organize the peasants into a political community first took the form of an amorphous populism called the Liberation Rally. The Rally of 1956 failed, and it was followed by the National Union of 1961, which ceased to function after the dissolution of the union with Syria. The National Union was followed by the Arab Socialist Union envisaged in Nasir's Charter of 1962 as the instrument that would bring political activity to the level of the individual. As a reflection of Nasir's pragmatic political philosophy, the Union had no fixed ideology and proceeded by trial and error. All other contending centers of institutionalized political power in Egypt—parties, religious fraternities, etc.—were suppressed, and their authority was transferred to *al-Ra'is* (the Chief). This paved the way for a centralization of power in the National Union which represented Nasir himself.

However, the need for rapid technological and economic development did not abate with Nasir's failure to find a political solution for domestic problems. As a political expedient, Nasir then adopted the idea of socialism already popularized by the Baathists. Nasir did not view socialism as a path to the humanistic utopianism envisaged by Aflaq. He viewed socialism as a means of producing a modern state overnight. Nasir's socialism required technocrats to restore the viability of an Egyptian economic system that had suffered ruin at the hands of liberal intellectuals and professionals of prior regimes.

This was Nasir's dilemma. The professional soldier in Nasir distrusted the professional intellectual and denied him a role in Egypt's reconstruction. But Nasir needed the intellectual's technological skills. Nasir had already rejected intellectualism as a foreign and imperialistic Western concept; still he was forced to employ intellectuals. His method of handling the problem was to absorb the technocrats and intellectuals into the bureaucracy and thereby neutralize their power in the name of revolutionary democratic socialism.

The result was a spurious kind of "Islamic" socialism without substance or meaning, but it reflected a tradition in keeping with the efforts of Muhammad Abduh and Muhammad Ali to bring the various forms of Western and Eastern thought into a harmonious union. But, as a military man, Nasir had no real authority either in the peasant population or in the civilian intellectual circles of the capital. Union with the Baathists in Syria was the result of a search for a civilian formula that would legitimize Nasir's military authority and, thus, insure the success of his external politics. The need for a civilian formula indicated that Nasir recognized the danger of continued dependence by the military elite on the technocrats and intellectuals. With its slogans of freedom, unity, and socialism, the Baathist Syrian Government was a source of that legitimization. The union with Syria failed miserably to achieve its goals from the point of view of both countries, but, paradoxically, it made Egypt so much more "socialist" that Nasir could justify protecting

36

his weakened regime from internal reactionaries who were ready, after 1961, to exploit its political failure with Syria.[10]

Thus, internal politics forced Egypt to turn first from Egyptian nationalism, to Arab solidarity, and, finally, to Arab unity. From the 1952 Revolution of Free Officers until the union with Syria in 1958, Arabism had intensified in Egypt, and this made the transition to unity easier. The failure of the Egyptian Army in the Palestine War of 1948 and the evacuation of the British from Suez hastened the growth of Arabism since Egypt used its claim to Arab leadership to move the Arabs away from the imperialist camp. As in Syria, Arab irridentism in Palestine and anti-colonialism promoted by the Soviet Union kept the call for Arabism at a fever pitch. Combined with the need for domestic legitimacy, Arabism made union with Syria more and more attractive.

But one should remember that Nasir's interpretation of Baathist principles was not exactly the same as the Baathist interpretation. Although both parties agreed on the necessity to use Arabism in support of radical revolution, scientific socialism, and freedom from colonization, Egypt saw the situation as an opportunity to reassert its control over the Arab world and to reestablish Arab and Islamic domination over the non-Arab parts of the region. Without doubt, union with Syria gave Egypt a greater credibility in the Third World, especially in Black Africa where Nasir's financial and cultural assistance to rebel groups not only made him the darling of the anti-colonial forces but served to stem the tide of a growing

37

Israeli diplomatic presence. The union came at a propitious
moment for, if Aflaq represented a party without a country, Nasir
was the leader of a country without a party.

The Syro-Egyptian Union of 1958

> "Never were the Arabs more dis-
> united as when Egypt took up the
> sacred mission of uniting them."
> -Habib Bourguiba-

In the Syro-Egyptian Union of 1958, both Syria and Egypt saw
in the other a solution to a host of internal and external problems
which they could not solve individually. The Syrians saw Nasir as
a revolutionary hero--an Arab Bismarck ready to unite the Arabs, an
instrument of Baathist progressive ideology, a saviour of Syria from
a mythical Communist conspiracy, a positive force for quelling Syrian
factionalism, and the source of continued Baathist political dominance
in Syria. Nasir, on the other hand, saw Syria in terms of political
legitimization for his domestic Arab union and as a supporting pillar
in his struggles to maintain "positive" neutralism. His brand of
neutralism signified a firm stand against the United States, Great
Britain, France, Israel, and the treacherous Baghdad Pact Arabs, the
Iraqis. Moreover, a union with Syria would allow Nasir to maintain
pressure on Hashimite Iraq whose desire for unity with Syria against
Egypt presented a constant source of concern for Nasir and a golden
opportunity to eliminate the Syrian army, the Baathists, and the
Communists as potential sources of power. A union with Syria would
guarantee Nasir's ambition to make Egypt the center of the Arab world.

But Nasir was never keen on a federal union with Syria as long
as it implied a partnership of equals. He was determined that Egypt

39

would remain the first among equals in any union scheme. Extremely suspicious of Baathist motives and opportunism, Nasir was more interested in a unity of political elements and political objectives than in a unity of states. Syria simply did not satisfy Nasir's requirements for revolution. He suspected that the "nationalist" government of Syria did not reflect the will of the Syrian people within the framework of an independent state similar to that of Egypt. Nasir believed that a state must pass through this phase of "nationalism" before it could achieve unity with another state, and Syrian "nationalism" was not "gradual" enough for his tastes. Nasir fretted over the bizarre political marriage that he would make with a Syrian military-civilian regime considered only as a political faction with revolutionary potential.

The union came despite these misgivings, and it was indeed a miracle that it lasted as long as it did. Within several months after the union, Nasir attempted to unify the army commands in Syria, the Northern Province, with the military of the Southern Province, Egypt. Cairo became the capital of the new United Arab Republic with Nasir as its president and with several Syrian dignitaries as figurehead vice-presidents. Within a year, Syria was colonized by a legion of Egyptian teachers, bureaucrats, and military officers who soon came to regard the Northern Province as Egyptian *Lebensraum*.

In 1961 the union became a shambles. Syria seceded from the United Arab Republic, and Nasir promptly condemned Syria as "reactionary" and "bourgeois." On the psychological level, the immediate cause

of disintegration was self-evident. The Egyptians and the Syrians, albeit Arabized peoples, were not the same kind of Arabs. This unhappily exposed to the unionists the absurdity of the Arabs' perception of themselves as a socio-political, historical, cultural monolith. On the administrative level, the Syrians could not cope with the imposition on Syrian soil of an infinitely more complex Egyptian bureaucratic tradition. Moreover, in the name of streamlining political administration, Nasir ordered dissolution of the Baath and replacement by his own National Union. This underscored the more important difference in political cultures since the large amorphous National Union did not satisfy the Syrian need for factionalism. That is, it did not satisfy the needs of the Syrians to squabble among themselves although their more astute politicians realized that factionalism had caused their sorry political predicament. Obviously, Baathist philosophical simplism not only failed to deal constructively with the contradictions of practical politics but also conflicted with Nasir's trial and error pragmatism. Ultimately, Baathist decentralization of command in the party and government structures and its emphasi on the collective leadership necessary for a working relationship with its military colleagues could not stand against Nasir's insistence that he was the supreme leader.

However, the disintegration of the union did not lead to a complete break in relations between Nasir and the Baath. Talks on reunification proceeded until 1963. During these two years, mutual recriminations flew back and forth between Cairo and Damascus. But a pro-Baathist

41

coup in Iraq sealed the fate of the reunification talks. Under

the Hashimites, Iraq had entered into union with Hashimite Jordan

to counterbalance the Syro-Egyptian Union of 1958. When the Baathists

took over in Iraq, Syria immediately turned to Iraq for protection

from a vengeful Nasir. In 1963, Syria and Iraq signed a union agree-

ment in the hope of persuading Egypt to join as a junior and somewhat

neutralized partner. Although Syria feared Egypt, only Nasir's per-

sonal stature could give legitimacy to such a union. Once again, the

Syrians were caught in their previous dilemma, and Nasir reacted with

tremendous fury when he faced the possibility of a Fertile Crescent

union that would challenge his leadership of the Arab world. Nasir,

of course, condemned the union because, for him, the choice was Egypt's

supremacy or nothing.

Curiously enough, Nasir's prestige diminished because of these

adventures, but his charisma did not suffer. Egypt retained the name

of the United Arab Republic after the secession and, through a clever

manipulation of the Baath slogan of freedom, unity, and socialism,

retained for herself the ideological leadership of the Arab world.

<u>Whither Libya?</u>

> "Egypt is a country without
> a leader. I am a leader
> without a country."
> —Mu'ammar Qadhdhafi—

Despite the demise of the Syro-Egyptian Union, the Arab unity

movement continued to move forward at a rapid rate. In the years

following 1961 to the present, a spate of rash attempts have been

made to unify the Arab world politically, but they have always ended

with the same negative results. Col Mu'ammar Qadhdhafi, Libya's

strong man, made the most recent attempt, and this too amounted to

a colossal failure. Fifteen years after Nasir's initiative, Qadhdhafi's

proposed unity plan showed a tendency to adopt Nasir's structural model

which included elements of Baathist ideology.

Qadhdhafi's vision of Arab unity was different in many respects

from previous plans. The external factors were no longer the same:

the Arab-Israeli conflict had intensified; superpower presence in the

Middle East had become a confirmed reality; and oil had begun to play

a decisive role in the concept of unity. But, for all this change,

there existed an underlying similarity between Qadhdhafi's idea and

methods and those of his predecessor, Nasir.

What are the pertinent factors that compelled Libya towards union?

First is Libya's unique socio- and geo-political position in the Arab

world. Libya sits astride a crossroads in the Middle East between the

Arab East—the *Mashriq*—and the Arab West—the *Maghrib*. The division

is not so much socio-historical and psychological as it is plainly

physical. Halfway across the Libyan landmass near the town of Sirta,

the Saharan Desert reaches within five miles of the Mediterranean

Sea. The desert has formed two distinct regions in Libya--Tripolitania

to the west and Cyrenaica to the east--each with its own distinct his-

torical and social character. Cyrenaica belongs to the Bedouin world

of the Egyptian Western Desert, tribal in outlook and fundamental in

religion, with historical, social, and linguistic ties to Egypt and

Wahhabi Arabia. Tripolitania, on the other hand, belongs to the

sedentary world of the Tunisian coastal peasant, to the world of small

villages, and to the world of the semi-urbanized bourgeoisie. Ethni-

cally, the family unit has greater importance in Tripolitania than

the tribe, and its customs, mores, and language form a part of the

Maghrebian cultural continuum.

Another factor of considerable importance in shaping the present

socio-political identity of Libya was the Senussi *tariqa* or religious

brotherhood. Every religion shows a propensity for reformation, often

in the form of revivalism and fundamentalism, whenever the faith begins

to deviate toward worldliness and secularism. Such has been the case

with Islam. Reformation tends to center around doctrinal differences

that may give birth to a new sect or reflect an ethical imperative to

return to the letter and spirit of revealed law. Senussism manifested

the latter tendency. Like Wahhabism in Arabia or Mahdism in the Sudan,

Senussism required a return to a puritanical, ascetic social ethic as

a solution to the problem of corruption in Islam and the threat to

44

Islamic society from without. Conservative in principle and even reactionary in the socio-religious sphere, these movements can be politically quite revolutionary for, in its desire to recreate the theocratic state of classical Islam, the Senussi reunited the Bedouins of Cyrenaica and brought them back into the mainstream of modern Islamic history. In calling for the greater unity of Islam which the Senussi propagandized in Libya, this brotherhood made it possible for the various tribes to express themselves politically as a unit for the first time in their relations with the outside world. Muhammad al-Senussi, who brought his message to the Cyrenaican tribes in the late eighteenth century, had, by the middle of the nineteenth century, created a unified front against both Turkish and, later, Italian imperialism in Libya. Essentially, his purpose was to establish in North Africa a type of primitive religious nationalism that would permit Senussi brotherhood to practice its own traditions and live according to its own institutions. In the final analysis, Senussi power in the desert hinterland impeded the political unification of the area by Turkish garrisons moving east along the coast from Tripoli and, 80 years later, by Italian troops occupying a string of forts at the edge of the uninhabitable wastes.

Although the Senussi confederacy of tribes extended its influence as far west as Tripoli and as far east as the Egyptian oases, Senussi power became more minimal the further the tribes ranged from the Cyrenaican heartland. The Tripolitanian tribes recognized the spiritual leadership of the Senussi but not its right to political hegemony. The

45

Egyptians were equally suspicious of Senussi power in the Western

Desert and, consequently, maintained irridentist pressure on

Cyrenaica, which they claimed as their own. The lack of real

Senussi penetration in Tripolitania can be explained by the differ-

ences between Cyrenaican and Tripolitania society and culture. The

tended to form socio-political relations based on tribal associ-

ons; the latter, more diversified in its social and economic inter-

ests, were inclined to a cohesiveness based on particularistic tenden-

cies coalescing around individuals.[11] This perhaps expresses itself

best in geo-political terms as the cleavage between a semi-sedentary

society and a society that lives on the fruits of a pastoral economy.

The Italian invasion in 1911 quickly destroyed the temporary

accomplishments of the Ottoman Turks in unifying this country. Although

the provinces showed little love for the Turks, they formed a common

cause with them against the Italians during World War I. This Pan-

Islamism had two different rationales. For the Senussi of Cyrenaica,

it justified their continuing desire for territorial expansion in the

name of *Jihad*--Holy War. It served the Tripolitanians as a vehicle

for internal unification of tribal and semi-sedentary elements against

the Italians.[12] By the end of World War II and with the expulsion of

the Italians, the country had still not undergone political and social

integration.

Furthermore, the manner by which Libya obtained independence in

1952 as the United Nation's first test case in the Third World did

nothing to mitigate the divisions within Libyan society. Libya emerged

into statehood at a time of great conflict and confusion between
the East and the West. Mussolini's demise, the establishment a
half decade later of the state of Israel, and Arab irridentism
placed Libya in a precarious position. Great Britain did not know
what steps to take in Libya since the British role in the Middle
East was fast diminishing, especially after the debacle in Palestine.
The Soviet Union could not decide between trusteeship or independence
for Libya. Neither could the United States for that matter, because
of the uncertainty of its new position in postwar Middle Eastern
politics. Egypt would have preferred to establish its control over
Libya, but Egyptian control was not acceptable to the major powers.
Finally, Libyan independence was granted as the best way to eliminate
an embarrassing problem. With the consent of the major powers, the
Libyan Government took the form of a federation of three provinces
under the sovereignty of the Senussi Amir, Idris, now elevated to
the kingship of the new nation. The loose combination of three pro-
vincial governments--Tripolitania, Cyrenaica, and the desert Fezzan--
under a religious leader did not produce an institutionalization of
power in the central government.

By the time the Libyan state reached its tenth anniversary, the
discovery of vast quantities of oil had forced the government into
new postures vis-a-vis the West and had entangled it in future Arab-
Israeli disputes with petropolitics as a basic issue. Libya's new
orientation succeeded only in retarding the development of nationhood
that had been so neglected in the past.

47

In many respects, the 1969 military coup engineered by Col Qadhdhafi and his Free Unionist Officers resembled, in form and content, Nasir's revolution 17 years before. Libya suffered much the same socio-political degeneration experienced by Egypt prior to the 1952 coup: weakness of civilian institutions, a corrupt bourgeoisie, and a populace separated from, and unresponsive to, the governing elites. Under these conditions, the military assumed power because it apparently was the only disciplined group in the country capable of governing.

Characteristically, Qadhdhafi came to power seeking the same kind of legitimization that Nasir sought in Egypt. Qadhdhafi proposed that his junta represented the progressive elements in Libya and that his power was firmly rooted in the people in whose name he reserved the right to speak. But Qadhdhafi's espousal of both Islamic and Pan-Arab ideologies distinguished his regime from Baathist Syria and Nasirist Egypt. Syria and Egypt were more cautious in their handling of fundamentalist Islam as a revolutionary philosophy.

This can be explained in several ways: first, on a superficial level, Libya remained homogeneously Sunni Muslim, with almost 98 percent of its people practicing the orthodox faith. Second, and most important, Qadhdhafi's Revolutionary Command Council sought to legitimize itself as the heir to Tripolitanian Pan-Islamism and on the basis of the religious austerity and historical Islamic drive of the Senussi.[13] This fundamentalism tied in well with an anti-Western policy geared to debasing European cultural influence, and it brought Libya into the

fold of those military regimes that were fighting for Arab rights
in Palestine.

Essentially, Qadhdhafi harnessed the anti-Senussi tradition
in Tripolitania through a creation of a new religio-political formula
which he declared to be the "natural" conclusion of the modern Islamic
historical process.[14] Even Nasir had never gone this far in his philos-
ophy of the revolution. Accompanying the return to a politicized
Islamic fundamentalism was a rapid economic nationalization of all
foreign capital in Libya. This nationalization included a subsidi-
zation, similar to that of Nasir, of all revolutionary movements in
the Third World and unqualified political and financial support of
radical Palestinian elements who still aimed at the physical anni-
hilation of Israel. Qadhdhafi's initial rapid success in external
and internal affairs did not encourage him to look inward and restruc-
ture the Libyan Government as he had promised. Qadhdhafi was even more
pragmatic than Nasir who, in the end, had turned to the Baath to give
his regime a semblance of political order. Qadhdhafi's approach re-
flects, par excellence, a non-political model of nation building which
assumes that popular revolution is identical with popular government.[15]
For this reason, Qadhdhafi's military government stood little chance
of ever having to compromise with the bureaucracy that Nasir had to
create. Nasir confronted the internal bureaucratic tradition of
Egypt and the highly developed skills of Egyptian technocrats lacking
in most parts of the Arab world, including Libya. Therefore, it came
as no surprise when Qadhdhafi dismissed the first civilian prime

49

minister of Libya several months after the coup, and the junta
took ever-increasing control of the administrative apparatus.
Simultaneously, Qadhdhafi's personal charisma increased and, in
the search for methods of achieving political and social integra-
tion and legitimacy, the colonel naturally turned to Nasir as the
only Arab capable of leading a supranational Arab state.

Thus, the scene was set for the next adventure in Arab politi-
cal unity. In 1963, King Idris had already taken a preliminary step
by bringing together the three Libyan provinces into a unitary politi-
cal framework that caused increased displeasure with the king. On the
other hand, this action helped to increase Libya's image as both an
Arab state and an African State geo-politically the center of the
struggle against colonialism to the south and a focal point under
Qadhdhafi for the fight against Israeli imperialism in the east. In
December 1969, Qadhdhafi signed the charter of Tripoli envisaging the
unity of Libya, Egypt, and the Sudan. This occurred at a low moment
in Nasir's popularity and helped to restore his prestige. The new
union was also accompanied by an application of many of Nasir's domestic
policies to Libya, including the formation of a kind of "Arab Socialist
Union." When Nasir died, Sadat initially assumed Nasir's burden. With
the withdrawal of the Sudan from the union, Hafiz al-Assad filled the
vacuum in 1971 with the entry of Syria into the projected federal
structure.

In an attempt to harmonize internal developments in Libya with a
new international role, Qadhdhafi, by 1971, had adopted a Pan-Arab

ideology of unity that was actually a pastiche of Baathist and
Nasirist concepts. The slogans of freedom, unity, socialism, and
social justice appeared in Tripoli after 1969. To satisfy Nasir and
to gain legitimacy, Qadhdhafi proclaimed his government a popular
revolution, not a military coup, designed to cleanse the country of
its backward elements and to enlist the support of the people.
Qadhdhafi promised that his military cohorts would always "go to the
people" because, like Nasir, they had their origins in the people.
Unlike the Baathists, he felt that political organization would have
little importance in Libya since the immediate goal of the junta was
whatever would be good for the people. Intellectual subtleties were
left aside. He also espoused a Baathist-type romantic and idealistic
socialism, amorphous in form and content, which accentuated the belief
that socialism not only avoids ideological expectations inherent in
Marxism but leads to the inevitability of irrevocable historical prog-
ress and development. Libyan socialism had an Aflaqian ring to it.
It meant untiring collective work and the participation of each citizen
in production for the good of the entire nation. This would result
eventually in social equality, justice, and true freedom. Even more
interesting and, ultimately, most disturbing, Qadhdhafi's socialism
was synonymous with Islam, emanating from the Koran and not from *Das
Kapital*. Rooted in the traditions of the Arabs and their faith,
"Islamic" socialism rejected all Western ideological premises. Con-
sequently, the Arabs would find their freedom in Islam as a religion
and not in Islam as a civilization. Islam had all the necessary
prerequisites in its Holy Writ for the socialist community.

51

If Qadhdhafi did not completely accept the Nasirist or the Baathist idea of Islam and socialism, he was closer to them in his philosophy of unity. Like Aflaq, he believed that no significant racial or ethical contradictions existed among the peoples of the Arab world. Like Nasir, he initially favored Arab solidarity based on this principle. This connoted a unity of peoples before governments. But Qadhdhafi considered political unity an inevitable necessity to protect the Arabs from their enemies in the West and to preserve their historical accomplishments. Like Nasir and Aflaq, he also believed that Arab unity represented no innovation; it was the culmination and realization of a historical reality deep in the Arab past. Soon, however, external circumstances, particularly Nasir's death, caused Qadhdhafi to reconsider his position on Arab solidarity. In fact, he went even further than Nasir in usurping Nasir's role; he suggested that unity should be full, complete, and not federal. No doubt, he recalled Libya's own failure to make federalism work at home.

One should not forget that a plan for an Arab federation consisting of Libya and Egypt (Syria dropped out in 1972) was as much the work of the Egyptians as it was that of Qadhdhafi. In Nasir's time, Libya fell heir to Syria's role of bride to Egypt and provided Egypt, once again, with the possibility of recapturing the Arab leadership tarnished by the UAR experience of 1961, the War of Attrition, and the stalemate with Israel. Now that Soviet-Egyptian relations were strained, the financial support and arms that Libya

52

could furnish to Egypt might tip the balance in favor of Egypt.
Since the 1967 conflict with Israel, Egypt had needed help to bolster
itself against its enemies, both foreign and domestic. At first,
Qadhdhafi's role vis-a-vis Nasir was that of an adoring subordinate,
but, with Nasir's death, he began to take on an independent role
vis-a-vis Sadat, whom he obviously distrusted. Qadhdhafi had never
been happy with Egypt's inclination to compromise on the Israeli
question after 1970, and he maintained constant pressure for Egyptian
radicalization by flirting with Algeria's Boumedienne, who was in
contention then and now for Nasir's crown. At the same time, Qadhdhafi
pumped millions of dollars into the Palestine Liberation Organization's
coffers and radical Third World revolutionary movements. Union with
Egypt would strengthen Qadhdhafi's radical image among the Arabs and
consolidate his political image at home. Union with Libya represented
to Sadat a source of funds for the next round with Israel and a point
of leverage against all Arab alignments hostile to his leadership. Such
a union lessened Egypt's dependence on Soviet military aid.

Other obvious but secondary advantages accrued to Egypt. As in
Syria, Egypt would again acquire *Lebensraum* to the West for its unem-
ployable teachers, technicians, and bureaucrats, who had a history of
provoking trouble at home in inverse proportion to Cairo's ability to
absorb them into an already top-heavy administration. Of course, Egypt
still maintained that the unity of ranks was more important than the
unity of governments and skittishly delayed the process by which
Qadhdhafi would have brought Libya into the union. The more Sadat

53

demurred, the weaker Qadhdhafi became at home. Therefore, Qadhdhafi pressed harder for unity and eventually, in desperation, demanded complete central unification of the two states instead of federation. In addition to this thorn in Sadat's side was Qadhdhafi's insistence that Egyptian morality was lax and his demand that a thoroughgoing Islamic puritanism be established in Cairo similar to that in Tripoli. This idea, replete with a sequestration of women and a prohibition of alcohol, was abhorrent to the Egyptians. The Egyptians also could not accept unconditional support of the Palestine Liberation Organization, unreserved aid to revolutionary Pan-Islamism outside the Arab world, the payment of the Islamic *zakat*--the religious tithe--by all the Arab countries, and an end to the influence of communistic and atheistic internationalism in the Middle East.

Qadhdhafi's demands were not acceptable to the Egyptians nor the less radical Tripolitanians within the Libyan military power structure. Egypt's desire to be first among equals doomed the union to failure although Qadhdhafi had been willing to take a back seat as vice-president in return for ideological concessions. The Islamic empire dreamed by Qadhdhafi, prepared ideologically by the Baath, and made anathema by the practical Egyptians who preferred an Egyptian empire brought back the specter of the humiliating Syrian experience. Moreover, the Libyan fear of colonization by the arrogant Egyptians mirrored the Syrian situation of the late fifties.

Egypt's conduct of the October War crushed all of Qadhdhafi's aspirations. The unity plan had been on the rocks months before Egypt

54

attacked in the Sinai. But Egypt's subsequent posture regarding peaceful solution of the war, a relaxation of socialist control at home, a firm stand against revolution for export, and a new relationship with the United States completely alienated the Libyan leader. Yet Qadhdhafi's quest for allies and friends did not cease. He immediately attempted to persuade Tunisia of the virtues of a union thereby isolating a recalcitrant Egypt. The initial favorable reaction from Tunis caused a suspicion that a rationalist Bourguiba had become senile and was now at the mercy of internal factions who had always remained skeptical of his firm pro-Western stance. However, Bourguiba might have taken into consideration the possibility of making Libya the pivot of a united Maghreb linked by a series of social and economic accords to Tunisia. This had been Bourguiba's dream for many decades. Besides, the Tunisian economic situation was disastrous, and Bourguiba surely had his eye on Libyan oil money. In this way, Bourguiba might have beaten Libya at her own game of isolating Egypt, Bourguiba's traditional enemy. At the same time, he might even have neutralized Libya in the bargain. But abrogation of this union scheme left Qadhdhafi high and dry in the early months of 1974, truly a leader without a country.

Present events in Libya reflect a psychological and political turning inward. Qadhdhafi has not been able to control internal developments. By late 1973, Libya turned again to the pursuit of its "popular" revolution. Qadhdhafi is staunch in his belief that the state must be ruled by Islamic legislation and purged of internal

and external reactionaries, represented by Faisal of Arabia who is
the only other ruling Islamic monarch of the Arab world. Consequently,
he seized on the idea of arming the citizenry. He claims that the
people are the single historical force capable of destroying the
bureaucrats and reactionaries and of waging the cultural battle
according to the tenets of the Koran. History is now being rewritten
in Libya; textbooks are burned, critics of the regime are dismissed;
and, in the name of disseminating the "revolution" among the people,
popular vigilante committees of the Maoist type are replacing the con-
ventional units of local governments. All this demonstrates Qadhdhafi's
frustrations over the fact that Arab councils have not accorded him a
place in their membership. He also fears that his larger Arab sister
states are planning to overwhelm Libya. On the internal scene,
Qadhdhafi's adolescent antics indicate his disappointment with the
Libyan people's inability to move fast enough into the future. In
recent months, Qadhdhafi's star has begun to sink. Appearing as a
split in the Revolutionary Command Council, Abd al-Salam Jalloud,
Qadhdhafi's right-hand man and a Tripolitanian, has quietly assumed
the reins of executive and has relegated the colonel to a position of
"national" ideologue. This is manifestly an effort to project a more
acceptable international image for radical Libya. Although the country's
policy of revolution in the Third World has not abated, Jalloud is now
seeking to repair Libya's damaged relations abroad. In its quest for
Arab leadership, internal cohesion, and support of its revolutionary
goals, Libya is courting the Soviet Union in a manner similar to that
of Nasir at the lowest point of his career in 1954-1955.

56

Thus, one can conclude that the Libyan experience with unity resembles, in most important aspects, a combination of Baathist philosophy and Nasirist pragmatic politics often carried to a degree of absurdity. In its general political orientation and ideological tenor, Qadhdhafi-ism offers little that differs in its range of options from previous regimes. On the other hand, it would be unfair not to underline the unique dimensions that separate Qadhdhafi's ideals from those of Nasir and the Baath. Neither of these two ideologies of Pan-Arabism have gone as far as Qadhdhafi toward the re-creation of a fundamentalist Islamic empire rooted in the immutable tradition, spirit, and history of the Arab past. This could not have been Qadhdhafi's legacy to the Arab world had it not been for Libya's singular position between the extremes of the Desert and the Sown and between the fundamentalism of the Bedouin Senussi and the Tripolitanian bourgeoisie tendency toward secularism.

CHAPTER IV

ASSESSMENTS

> "plus ça change, plus ça
> reste la même chose."
>
> -Old French Proverb-

Like most developing nations of the Third World, the Arab
states are searching for an appropriate formula to create a viable
political community. The unity movement in the Middle East repre-
sents one of the options exercised by the Arab nations in the pur-
suit of this goal. Unlike many of the Third World nations, the
Arabs possess a psychological perception of themselves as the
traditional center of the world historical and political state.
This self-image added to and detracted from the Arabs' argument for
the inevitability of political union. Since the Arabs have attempted
to recreate political unity on the basis of historical myth, they
have committed a travesty of their own past. This has debased its
value for future generations. In a word, they have succeeded only
in propagandizing Arab history in the interest of inter-Arab rivalries.
These rivalries have led them to accept, rather than question, the
historical myths created by and for themselves. Nevertheless, the
Arabs should not be held reprehensible for their actions. Sociologi-
cal logic permits each generation to rewrite its past in its own self-
interests just as historical logic does not permit the erasure of any
act from the consciousness of men.

58

Intimately linked to this need for synthesis with the past
is a revival of the moral values that have given depth and mean-
ing to that past. Therefore, the search for a modern identity,
expressed as an ideology of Arab unity, has an important ethical
dimension. Here appears the point at which the movement diverges.
Some Arab leaders have returned to a dogmatic form of Islam as an
answer; others have viewed Islam only as an important construct in
the civilization of the Arabs. The fact that Qadhdhafi is an
Islamic fundamentalist, Nasir an Islamic pragmatist, and Aflaq a
desacralizer of Islam points to the realities that stem from the
respective Libyan, Egyptian, and Syrian historical experiences.

Obviously, the nature of modern Arab political unity and its
relation to Islam presented a formidable problem to its theorists.
The accepted method of circumventing the problem was to transpose
into socialism, the second point in the Arab creed of unity, the
ethical virtues of Islam. The vague notion of non-political social-
ism, romanticized and idealized by Aflaq and Nasir, served to guaran-
tee the resurrection of the Arab morality by endowing the Arab spirit
with the historical virtues of cooperativism and communalism. Only
Qadhdhafi held out for a socialism that, in essence, was nothing more
than the Koran applied to social philosophy, making his version both
conservative and radical. The Arabs hoped that the different ver-
sions of unity would converge and lead to the achievement of human
freedom and social justice. Whether this aim can be accomplished
remains to be seen.

If the ideologies of Arab unity devised by these three per-
sonalities do not always resemble each other in terms of a pro-
gram for internal modernization and political community, they
certainly have the same external objectives. Arab unity endeavors
to give the West a psychological slap for its part in hastening the
deterioration of the Arab world during the colonial period and for
its consent to the establishment of an Israeli state that will always
represent the continuation of European imperialistic designs in the
Middle East. Consequently, Arab unity functions within the context
of irridentism which, in the baldest terms, requires the annihilation
of the State of Israel and the return of Palestine to Arab control.
This remains the goal of contemporary radical Arabs who still acutely
feel Israel's injury to Arab historical pride. Whoever restores some
of this pride, by military or diplomatic victories, automatically
becomes a spokesman for the Arabs in world councils. Finally, Arab
unity acts as a deterrent to the communization of the Arab world.
Although the concept of Arab unity may appear to rely on Soviet arms
and influence, Arab ideology remains steadfastly hostile to any idea
of the class struggle or the dialectics of materialism imposed on the
Arab world. Arab "socialism" is pragmatic, non-ideological at its
base, and profoundly romantic; it is more concerned with human aspi-
rations than with political and economic development along class
lines. To date, socialist planning in the Arab states has not yet
met with much success, nor has it produced the significant restruc-
turing of society necessary for a more far-reaching political orien-

60

tation. Despite proclamations of Islam and socialist reconcilia-
tion, particularly in Libya, Islam still holds tenaciously to the
concept of the individual's inalienable right to private property.
To the Arabs, socialism represents an expedient by which they can
push themselves into the twentieth century. Their purpose is to
show the West that they can and will assert the individuality of
their people in the most modern terms.

In the broadest sense, this study suggests several major trends
in the unity movement. First, Arab unity belies, rather than con-
firms, the existence of an Arab monolith; second, as an aspect of
Arab internationalism, the structure of Arab unity revolves around
inter-Arab rivalries for prestige and power within the Arab world
and acts as a guarantee of that power; and, third, Arab unity involves
a military dimension that works for and against political progress.
That is, any unified Arab superstate will greatly increase the Arabs'
military potential, but the possibility of unified military action
against Israel will proportionally decrease. This can be explained
in several ways. Military men or men with military experience con-
trol Arab politics. Therefore, a unified military command implies
the leadership of one national element over others within the supra-
national political structure. Moreover, it further confuses the
army's role as both an instrument of peaceful modernization and as
a war machine. The former task is usually left to civilian govern-
ment. Therefore, any military decision necessarily has broad politi-
cal implications more far-reaching than any taken by a government

61

under civilian control. In this respect, the Israelis, with their
unified command and separation of powers, stand a better chance of
gaining their military objectives.

Has the Libyan experience changed the course of the unity
movement? If so, whither Arab unity? Although Qadhdhafi has added
some new variations to an old theme, the objectives of the unity
movement have not changed appreciably. The only difference, per-
haps, is that Qadhdhafi has taken up Nasir's burden in Africa with
a vengeance, and he is trying to create an international Islamic
Third World force backed by enormous sums of oil money and military
materiel that Nasir did not have at his disposal. In this respect,
the concept of Arab unity has transcended its limitations of being
purely Arab. Today, it is more Islamic in character. Therefore,
the future must judge the effect of this Islamic neo-colonialism
on the Third World.

NOTES

1. Hrair Dekmejian, *Egypt Under Nasser* (Albany, 1971), p. 81.

2. Leonard Binder, *The Ideological Revolution in the Middle East* (New York, 1964), p. 186.

3. Sylvia Haim, *An Anthology of Arab Nationalism* (Los Angeles, 1962), p. 244.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 246.

5. *Ibid.*, pp. 246-247.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 242.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 223.

8. *Ibid.*, pp. 229-232.

9. Dekmejian, p. 76.

10. P. J. Vatikiotis, "Some Political Consequences of the 1952 Revolution in Egypt," *Political and Social Change in Modern Egypt*, P. M. Holt, ed (Oxford, 1968), p. 376.

11. Jacques Roumani, "Libya and the Military Revolution," *Man, State and Society in the Contemporary Maghrib*, I. William Zartman, ed (New York, 1973), pp. 346-347.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 348.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 352.

14. *Ibid.*

15. *Ibid.*, p. 353.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abu Jabr, Kamal, *The Arab Baath Socialist Party*, Syracuse, New York, 1966.

Bechtold, Peter, "New Attempts at Arab Cooperation: The Federation of Arab Republics," *Middle East Journal*, No 27, 1973, pp. 152-173.

Binder, Leonard, *The Ideological Revolution in the Middle East*, New York, 1964.

Evans-Pritchard, E. E., *The Senusi of Cyrenaica*, Oxford, England, 1949.

Dekmejian, Hrair, *Egypt Under Nasser*, Albany, New York, 1971.

Devlin, John, "Arab Socialism," *Modernization of the Arab World*, J. A. Thompson and R. D. Reischauer, eds, Princeton, New Jersey, 1966.

Golino, Frank, "Patterns of Libyan National Identity," *Middle East Journal*, No 24, 1970, pp. 338-352.

Haim, Sylvia, *An Anthology of Arab Nationalism*, Los Angeles, California, 1962.

Hammond, J., and Alexander, S., eds, *Political Dynamics of the Middle East*, New York, 1972.

"The Libyan Revolution in the Words of its Leader," *Middle East Journal*, No 2 , 1970, pp. 203-219.

Lenczowski, George, "Popular Revolution in Libya," *Current History*, No 66, Feb 1974, pp. 57-61.

Karpat, Kemal, ed, *Political and Social Thought in the Contemporary Middle East*, New York, 1968.

Kaylani, Nabil, "The Rise of the Syrian Ba'th," *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol 3, No 1, Jan 1972, pp. 3-23.

Kerr, Malcolm, *The Arab Cold War*, Oxford, England, 1961.

————, "Arab Radical Notions of Democracy," *St. Anthony's Papers*, No XVI, Middle Eastern Affairs, No 3, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1963, pp. 9-40.

---------, "The Emergence of Socialist Ideology in Egypt," *Middle East Journal*, 1962, pp. 127-144.

Khadduri, Majid, *Arab Contemporaries*, Baltimore, Maryland, 1973.

---------, *Modern Libya: A Study in Political Development*, Baltimore, Maryland, 1963.

---------, *Political Trends in the Arab World*, Baltimore, Maryland, 1970.

---------, "The Scheme of Fertile Crescent Unity," *Near East and the Great Powers*, Richard Frye, ed, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1957.

Khalidi, Tarif, "A Critical Study of the Political Ideas of Michel Aflaq," *Middle East Forum*, Vol XL, 1966, pp. 55-68.

Kimche, Jon, *The Second Arab Awakening*, New York, 1970.

Nusseibeh, Hazem, *The Ideas of Arab Nationalism*, Ithaca, New York, 1956.

Roumani, Jacques, "Libya and the Military Revolution," *Man, State, and Society in the Contemporary Maghrib*, I. William Zartman, ed, New York, 1973.

Sayegh, Fayez, "The Theoretical Structure of Nasser's Socialism," *St. Anthony's Papers*, No 4, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1965.

Seale, Patrick, *The Struggle for Syria*, Oxford, England, 1965.

Vatikiotis, P. J., "East and West," *The Western Mediterranean*, Cottrell and Theberge, eds, New York, 1974.

---------, "Some Political Consequences of the 1952 Revolution in Egypt," *Political and Social Change in Modern Egypt*, P. M. Holt, ed, Oxford, England, 1968.

Yamak, Labib Zuwiyya, *The Syrian Social Nationalist Party: An Ideological Study*, Middle Eastern Monograph Series, No XIV, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1966.