Arab Nationalism Versus Islamic Fundamentalism as a Unifying Factor in the Middle East

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Unifying Factor in the Middle East

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Senior Honors Thesis

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One of the most important issues today on a global scale is the rise of Islamic fundamentalism. Many people have grown to fear anything associated with this movement, such as the Islamic religion and the people from the areas where this ideology prospers, mainly in the Middle East. Contrary to popular belief, most of the world’s Muslims live in Southeast Asia, not in the Arab world. Attributing the rise of Islamic fundamentalism to the religion of Islam itself therefore does not provide the answer as to why this ideology has emerged with such force. A few decades ago, another ideology arose in the Middle East region with the same unifying tendency, that of Arab nationalism. Arab nationalism, while it did not impact the West as much as Islamic fundamentalism has, did serve the same ideological space as Islamic fundamentalism now serves in the Middle East.

By looking at the full cycle of Arab nationalism, its beginning, its rise, and its fall, one can see how and why this ideology rose to power and then why it fell. The idea of a unified Arab world, while it did prosper for a few years under Egyptian President Nasser, did not originate in the Arab world itself; rather, European ideas of nationalism infiltrated certain Arab families who then proclaimed the cause to the Allied Powers after World War I in the hopes of attaining more land for their families and clans. As Chapter one will demonstrate, Arab nationalism never had a solid base in the Arab world because the idea was never a genuine one among most Arabs. Chapter one deals with the way the current Arab states were formed after World War I mainly by the Allied Powers. It also covers the politics of the carving of the states and how one Arab family in particular, the Hashemites, influenced greatly the formation and the initial rule of these new countries of the former Ottoman Empire. Chapter two focuses on the rise of secularism and Arab
nationalism, using Egypt as an example of the conditions under which it arose, since Egypt was the birthplace of the ideology.

Chapter three covers the reasons Arab nationalism failed and the response to the ideological failure. Arab nationalism was the first ideology that gave the Arabs hope and prominence independent of Western powers. The failure of this ideology to deliver the Arabs from their backward societies resulted in a deep inward looking period in which the Arab world tried to discover why Arab nationalism had failed them so horribly. Looking inward, the most obvious explanation, in their opinion, had been the neglect of Islam. Arab nationalism had preached secularism and the absence of religion in politics and society. That time frame being the first time that society had abandoned its religion; it made logical sense that the abandonment of their religion had caused the ideology’s downfall. During a period of about ten years, the Arabs tried to find alternate ideologies to fill the gap when Arab nationalism had failed. They eventually rested on Islam as the only ideology capable of explaining the reasons for their current situation.

Chapter four deals specifically with the Islamic response and the reasons Islam has become the main ideological force. Islamic fundamentalism, unlike Arab nationalism, originated in the Arab world and thus has more legitimacy than Arab nationalism ever had. This legitimacy gives the movement much more strength and endurance than Arab nationalism and partially explains why Islamic fundamentalism still remains the main ideological force in the Arab world.

The main sources used for information in this paper came from three authors: Efraim Karsh, Fouad Ajami and William Cleveland. The Karsh and Ajami books were used because they used extensive first-hand accounts for their information. Cleveland’s
book was used for the history because it has been used among all Middle Eastern professors at Boston College as a reference for the history of the area. Other sources are used throughout the paper, mainly from classes at Boston College on the Middle East and Islam. All of the sources used for this paper were used because of their reputation among academia in the Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies department at Boston College.
Chapter 1:

The Formation of Arab States
Although the idea of nationalism for the Arabs originated mainly from European ideas, nationalism did exist in the former Ottoman Empire among smaller minority groups, such as the Armenians. Nationalism had always been a threat to the Ottoman Empire from its minority populations. The Ottomans usually repressed these forms of nationalism with violent measures of suppression. In the mid 1800’s, the three Armenian religious communities, Gregorian, Catholic and Protestant, began to harbor nationalist ideas as a result of European and American missionary work and also as a result of the nationalist revival in the Balkans. In the 1870’s Armenian secret societies began to form. Eventually uprisings against the Ottoman Empire began to happen. Terrorism was also employed by the Armenians against both the Turks and other Armenians who would not subscribe to such nationalistic ideas. As a result, the Ottoman Empire enacted a campaign to repress the population between 1895 and 1896. During this time, one hundred thousand to two hundred thousand Armenians were killed and thousands more fled to Europe and America.¹

Despite the treacherous massacres, the nationalistic sentiment in Armenia failed to secede. After more years of rebellion and uprisings, the Ottomans decided the only solution to the Armenian problem was deportation and exile. First, the Ottoman army assigned all Armenians in the army to “labor battalions” and took away the soldiers’ weapons. Most of these soldiers were taken to secluded places and shot by the Ottomans after being forced to dig their own graves. At the same time, the Ottomans disarmed all Armenians of personal weapons, while allowing the Muslim Armenians to keep their weapons. Then the Ottomans deported whole Armenian vilayets (townships) to Syria in concentration camps. Most died along the route to these camps or were simply killed by

the Ottomans. At the end of this genocide, one British official estimated the total number of uprooted Armenians at 1,200,000 (half of them killed, the other half deported); this represents about two-thirds of the whole Armenian population.²

The national feelings harbored by the Armenians posed such a threat to the Ottoman Empire that the Turks concluded extermination was the only way to survive. So deep was the fear and hatred of the Armenians that whenever “deportees arrived at a village or a town, they were exhibited like slaves in a public place, often before the Government Building itself.”³ During the deportations, epidemics spread rapidly because of the horrible living conditions. The Ottomans deliberately did not bury the dead for days so that the epidemics would spread more and kill more Armenians. The Armenians were deported to the most inhospitable living places in eastern Anatolia. In some places, the Armenians had to face the Kurds, who helped the Ottomans with the massacre of 1895-1896.⁴

Another minority group that caused fear for the Ottomans was the Zionist Jews. Djemal Pasha, the Ottoman leader who conducted the mass deportations of Armenians in 1915, also sought to quiet the nationalistic tendencies among the Zionist Jews. He arrested and tortured hundreds of Jews in an attempt to draw an anti-Ottoman conspiracy plan out of them. Jewish agricultural settlements were raided by the Ottomans and their populations interrogated in an Ottoman attempt to discover possible spies. In addition, the Ottomans encouraged the local Muslim populations to fight against the Jews.⁵

² Karsh, pp. 154-156.
³ Ibid., p. 158.
⁴ Ibid.
⁵ Ibid., pp. 169-170.
While the Ottomans feared two ethnic populations because of their nationalistic sentiments floating around at the time, they did not have a problem with their Arabic speaking population, or their Muslim population. The Armenians were mainly Christians and the Zionists were Jewish. For the most part, the Arabs remained loyal to the Ottomans until the bitter end.

There did exist a couple of organizations that harbored the idea of a pan-Arab empire, but they were very few in number. T.E. Lawrence, the champion of the Arab cause for the British, stated in a 1915 note on the conditions in Syria:

“There is no national feeling. Between town and town, village and village, family and family, creed and creed, exist intimate jealousies, sedulously fostered by the Turks to render a spontaneous union impossible. The largest indigenous political entity in settled Syria is only the village under its sheikh, in patriarchal Syria the tribe under its chief...All the constitution above them is the artificial bureaucracy of the Turk...By accident and time the Arabic language had gradually permeated the country, until it is now almost the only one in use; but this does not mean that Syria – any more than Egypt—is an Arabian country. On the sea coast there is little, if any, Arabic feeling or tradition; on the desert edge there is much.”

The Arab population only cared about those people who could take care of them and supply food and protection. The families and clans had lived there for centuries, and thus had their own established institutions for governing themselves, which happened to be in clans. These clans and family organizations had been fighting with each other since time began. The idea of uniting them all into one group was not even remotely fathomable.

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6 Karsh, p. 173.
On the Arabian Peninsula, there exists a region called the Hijaz. This was the birthplace of Islam. The sharif (local leader) of this region had to come from the Prophet Muhammad’s tribe, the Quraish tribe, because of the importance of guarding Islam’s most sacred place. Needless to say, the sharif of Mecca holds insurmountable power because of his importance to the Islamic religion. In 1908, Hussein-Ibn-Ali of the Hashemite clan of the Quraish tribe became the new sharif of Mecca. With his powerful post, Hussein began to extend his power over the Arabian Peninsula, which at that time still consisted of numerous clans that often fought with each other. Hussein also had the help of his three sons: Ali, Abdullah and Faisal.\(^7\)

When World War I began and the Ottoman Empire joined Germany, the tribal leaders were divided in the directions to which they threw their support. Some supported the Ottomans, while others supported the British. The clans who decided to support the British did so because of the possible rewards if the British won the war. All of them would support the British for the right rewards, and none would support the British for nationalistic reasons. Each of them, the rulers of the Gulf principalities and local prominent Arab leaders, was an opportunist, ready to capitalize on any move that would give them more land and power.\(^8\)

Aware of the nationalistic ideas imported to the area by Europeans, Sharif Hussein of Mecca successfully played the idea of an Arab nation to the British. Because of the prominence of his post as sharif of Mecca, Islam’s holiest site, and because of his local power base, the British believed Hussein when he claimed to represent all Arabs. In addition, Hussein had connections with two secret Arab societies, Al-Fatat and Al-Ahd.

\(^7\) Karsh, p. 175.  
\(^8\) Ibid., p. 177.
who subscribed to Arab nationalism. The British intelligence completely overestimated the size of these secret societies, which gave strength to Hussein’s claim. In reality, Al-Fatat only had forty activists and hardly any connections to the army; Al-Ahd’s officers in the Ottoman army only constituted one half of one percent of all Arabs in the Ottoman army.9

Hussein’s willingness to support the British against the Ottomans was a result of the Arab clan mentality. The British had a lot of wealth and power; they could help Hussein gain more land and power if he supported them. To survive in the desert, clans do what they need to survive; if there is an opportunity to gain one step above other clans then a clan will take it. The Arabian tribes had been warring with each other since time immemorial on the Arabian Peninsula. Hussein was merely the head of one clan who, because of his credentials, was able to capitalize on a huge opportunity with the British. Hussein was to help the British by leading an “Arab Revolt” against the Ottoman Empire. This would weaken the Ottoman Empire and allow the British to succeed. Hussein was to lead the revolt with his army, which he claimed had much more power and influence than it really did. In reality his army consisted of his tribe members and those other tribes in the Hijaz with whom he was able to persuade to fight on his side. To the British, however, Hussein claimed he would have the support of all the Arabs because all Arabs would join his fight once it started. The reality proved to be much different.

Such was the competition between Arab tribes, that Hussein had a difficult time gaining enough support from the local clans in the Hijaz. According to T.E. Lawrence; “The plundering occupied all the energies of our Bedouins, and Turkish counter-attacks

9 Karsh, pp. 181-183.
came up unopposed from N. and S.\textsuperscript{10} Local tribes and clans only cared about the amount of wealth they could gain from helping Hussein in his “Arab Revolt;” they cared nothing about high ideals such as nationalism or freedom. Hussein’s sons and other small tribes spent so much time discussing the specifics of remuneration that military operations faced delays. The Hashemites also had a huge problem with the desertions of tribes due to disputes over material gain.\textsuperscript{11}

In accordance with Hussein’s attempts of building his own kingdom, he even talked to the Ottomans to see what he could gain from them. In 1916, he sent a telegram to Enver Pasha laying down three conditions to be met in order for his Arabs to fight with the Ottomans. These three conditions included: “general amnesty for all political prisoners arrested and tried in Syria; autonomy for Syria; and… the making of the sharifate of Mecca hereditary in his family.”\textsuperscript{12} Logically, Enver Pasha responded as a father would to a disobedient child, demanding that Hussein send his tribesmen to the front and also sending a three thousand-strong Ottoman force through the Hijaz on its way down to Yemen. After realizing that the Ottomans would not grant his requests Hussein decided to side with the British. Also, in reaction to the Ottoman forces passing through his area, Hussein concluded that he had better launch the revolt against the Turks at that moment, without even informing the British in a timely manner and without fully preparing militarily for the revolt. Hussein’s son, Faisal, also established secret contacts with the Turks in an attempt to discern how much land he could gain from them. The

\textsuperscript{10} Karsh, p. 191.
\textsuperscript{11} Ibid., p. 191.
\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., p. 193.
Hashemites only had the intention of securing their own power under the guise of a great Arab nation.\textsuperscript{13}

In concordance with the Hashemite dream of building their own kingdom, the Hashemites looked down on most non-Hijazi Arabic-speaking communities.\textsuperscript{14} They especially detested Egyptians. Hussein would request Sudanese troops over Egyptian ones. When Egyptian troops arrived in the Hijaz, the Bedouins treated them very harshly. The Bedouins refused adequate amount of food to them, sometimes fired at them and interfered with their military preparations, such as emptying their sandbags and stealing the sacks.\textsuperscript{15} The Hashemites only cared about their own tribe; they cared nothing about other Arabs, despite their claim to represent all of them.

Hussein claimed to speak for all Arabs, when in reality most Arabs and Muslims detested the idea of an Arab revolt. Most Muslims did not like the idea especially, because the Ottomans had the caliphate; the political-religious leadership role passed down from Muhammad. Hussein, even though he came from the prophet’s lineage, did not hold this high, important post. Indian Muslims, specifically, abhorred the idea of an Arab revolt because the revolt would “put the safety and sanctity of the Holy Places of the Hijaz and Mesopotamia at peril, [divide] Islam at a time when unity [is] a vital necessity, and, above all, [weaken] the largest independent Muslim Empire on Earth.”\textsuperscript{16} Similar sentiments were to be found in Afghanistan, Greater Syria, North Africa, the Persian Gulf principalities, Palestine and Mesopotamia. Most of these areas looked on the Arabian Bedouins as trouble makers, not as national liberators.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{13} Karsh, pp. 193-198.
\item \textsuperscript{14} Ibid., p. 198.
\item \textsuperscript{15} Ibid., p. 191.
\item \textsuperscript{16} Ibid., p. 187.
\end{itemize}
Hussein successfully secured his Arab empire from the British through a British officer, Sir Henry McMahon. McMahon overstepped his instructions in offering Hussein the land promised in his letter to Hussein. The British knew the Arabs were not a united culture. According to a high British official in Cairo: “Arab unity and brotherhood has been discussed for a long time…The character of the people and the geography of the country are insuperable obstacles to any real unity for years and perhaps generations to come.”\(^\text{17}\) T.E. Lawrence, the British intelligence officer who helped lead the revolt with the Arabs even acknowledged: “the Arabs are even less stable than the Turks. If properly handled they would remain in a state of political mosaic, a tissue of small jealous principalities, incapable of cohesion, and yet always ready to combine against an outside force.”\(^\text{18}\) Lawrence’s mentor observed that:

“The period of genuine Arab Empire [is] extraordinarily short. Arabs governed Arabs, through Arabs [,] on an imperial scale much less than a century. It is just the Omayyad Caliphate – the Damascus period and no more…The brevity of purely Arab Empire was determined less by the force of non-Arab elements than by the inability of Arabs themselves to develop any system of imperial administration more adequate than the Patriarchal.”\(^\text{19}\)

The British officials in Cairo took the stance that in any postwar agreement “the Arabian Peninsula and its Muslim Holy Places should remain in the hands of a Sovereign Muslim State; and if this state was to be headed by a spiritual caliph, all the better, though it was up to the Muslims to settle this issue among themselves without

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\(^{17}\) Karsh, p. 206.

\(^{18}\) Ibid., pp. 206-207.

\(^{19}\) Ibid., p. 207.
interference from the European powers.” The caliph would not have temporal powers and the idea of sovereignty was merely an idea because the British did not believe the Arabs could pull together into a united empire. The British would support the independence of Arabia and would approve the Arab Caliphate if it was announced. The Arabs had to do chose someone themselves though; the British did not want to place someone in the throne. They merely said they would support whoever claimed the Caliphate. The British also originally rejected the land claims made by Hussein, who was trying to gain as much land as possible.

Even though Hussein had the post of Sharif of Mecca, one of the holiest posts in Islam, he wanted the caliphate for temporal power reasons, not because of the spiritual purpose. The leader of the caliphate in Islam serves as both the temporal and religious leader for the Muslim community. Hussein used his post as Sharif of Mecca to give him the religious authority he needed, but in reality he only wanted temporal power. In addition to the immorality of Hussein using a religious post to gain more temporal power, Hussein was also now using a non-Muslim power to help him secure the post. Both of these instances would be anathema to most Muslims. Hussein, although he portrayed himself as caring about the unity of the Arab race, never set firm limits on the boundaries of his empire in his requests to the British. If Hussein really cared about his Arab race, he would have had one set of limits the whole time, instead of changing his demands in an attempt to gain as much land as possible from the British.

In 1916, McMahon wrote a letter to Hussein responding to his demands for an Arab empire. He claimed to have been empowered “in the name of the Government of

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20 Karsh, p. 208.
21 Ibid., pp. 208-209.
Great Britain” to make promises of an Arab empire to Hussein. In this letter, McMahon accepted Hussein’s claim for an Arab empire, instead of a caliphate, thus removing the religious aspect from the picture and granting Hussein more temporal power. In reality, McMahon had been instructed by his boss not to give any specific promises beyond the Arabian Peninsula and its Holy Places unless it was absolutely necessary in order for the British to keep Hussein as an ally. 23

The British officials in Cairo painted a bleak picture for Britain in terms of the necessity of initiating the revolt immediately. It was Hussein who told the officials in Cairo of the need, but the British should have investigated further. One official claimed that: “A powerful organization with considerable influence in the army and among Arab Chiefs, viz: the Young Arab Committee appears to have made up its mind that the moment for action has arrived.” 24 In reality, the Young Arab Committee consisted of a handful of people whose views of a united Arab empire did not coincide with the general population. The vitality of such action was further relayed to the British as: “a big question of the future of Islam…time is of the greatest importance…unless we make [a] definite and agreeable proposal to the Sharif at once, we may have a united Islam against us.” 25 The Young Arab Committee had also successfully convinced the British officials in Cairo that: “unless [the British] can give them [the Hashemites] immediate assurance…to satisfy them they will throw themselves into the hands of Germany who…has furnished them fulfillment of all their demands.” 26

23 Karsh, p. 211.
24 Ibid., p. 218.
26 Ibid., p. 219.
While the British officials in Cairo eventually supported Hussein’s dream of an Arab kingdom, their ally the French opposed the idea completely. Specifically the French president at the time, President Poincare, did not support the creation of an Arab state.\textsuperscript{27} The French had interests in Syria, which Hussein wanted to include in his Arab kingdom, despite the fact that Syria did not have any Arab cultural or religious significance. France also had interests in Lebanon which it sought to protect.

Britain, on the other hand, eventually believed Hussein’s exaggerated claims. The Hashemites initiated talks with Cairo on the erroneous claim that they represented “the whole of the Arab nation without any exception.”\textsuperscript{28} They also overemphasized the strength of their military and support. When the British seemed to waver in their support of Hussein, he would threaten to join the Ottomans. In addition, Hussein also tried to negotiate with the Ottomans at the same time that he was negotiating with the British. Even though the British fell prey to Hussein’s claim of representing all Arabs, they still made clear his obligation to: “attach all the Arab peoples to [the] united cause and urge them to afford no assistance to [the] enemies.”\textsuperscript{29} When Hussein had successfully lobbied Britain to its side, Britain then tried to sell the idea of an Arab Nation to the French. The French, however, did not buy it.

Hussein’s only motivation for these claims rests in his desire to accumulate more land for his empire. The amount of land he could get from the British would be a lot more than he could ever wrestle from the Ottomans, even if Britain did not meet all of Hussein’s demands. Hussein kept demanding more land to ensure he received as much as possible. The exact lines of the lands offered to Hussein resulted from: Britain’s

\textsuperscript{27} Karsh, p. 230.
\textsuperscript{28} Ibid., p. 228.
\textsuperscript{29} Ibid., p. 229.
treaties with other Arab chiefs, which excluded a decent amount of the Arabian Peninsula from where Hussein ruled; Britain’s Anglo-Indian interests, which led to the inclusion of Mesopotamia; Britain’s exclusion of lands that were not purely Arab, such as the Greater Syria region, most likely due to French interests there. Sir Henry McMahon, on the other hand, wanted to give Hussein this area, claiming: “Arabs attach very great importance to inclusion of Damascus, Hama, Homs and Aleppo in Arab boundaries and have, in fact, repeatedly expressed the determination to fight for those territories if necessary.” The question of Syria’s inclusion into the Hashemite’s Arab kingdom would continue to be a source of friction.

One of Hussein’s sons, Faisal, continuously sought to gain his own kingdom as a reward for helping the British. He would meet with the British as a representative for his father, while at the same time attempting to gain his own Syrian empire. Faisal would profess the need for Arab unity, then turn around and claim that:

“Since Syria was ‘merchandise which has no owner,’ it was only natural for Britain, France and himself to ‘try to appropriate it before the others.’ The hopes and wishes of the governed, needless to say, counted for nothing, not least since there was tough opposition in the Levant to Hashemite domination in general, and to Faisal’s personal rule in particular.”

Most people in Syria remained loyal to parochial structures, such as the family, the clan, the local potentate, and religious, ethnic, social or linguistic groups. Needless to say,

30 Karsh, pp. 238-239.
31 Ibid., p. 240.
32 Ibid., p. 275.
Faisal’s attempt at proclaiming this area as one united nation did not have much support.  

Faisal attempted to secure the Syrian nation by assembling a General Syrian Congress that would preach Syrian unity ideas and the desire for Faisal as king to the Allied powers, specifically Americans, who were going to launch their own inquiry into the conditions of Syria. The people who served in this Congress came from small groups of nationalists who had fought alongside Faisal in the war. There were no elections and the group assembled was not anywhere close to representing all the Syrian people. In addition to assembling the Syrian Congress who informed the Americans of the Syrian desire for an independent nation ruled by Faisal, Faisal also used propaganda, staged demonstrations and intimidated opponents in an effort to force the ideas of Syrian unity onto the people. 

America and Britain, however, wanted nothing to do with Syria. Britain was prepared to hand the mandate over to the French. One British official in Cairo saw the matter differently. General Edmund Allenby fought alongside Faisal to try to give him his Syrian kingdom. The British officially told Allenby:

“H.M. Government cannot recognize the right of a self-constituted body at Damascus to regulate these matters, and H.M. Government, together with the French Government, are compelled to say that they regard these proceedings as null and void.” 

Allenby, still fighting for Faisal, continued to try to gain British support, but the British would not succumb.

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33 Karsh, pp. 274-276.
34 Ibid., pp. 276-277.
The British and the French had both tried to meet with Faisal at peace conferences so that he could have his voice heard by all the Allies. Faisal never showed to any of them. The French attempted one more time to have Faisal recognize their mandate over Syria, but Faisal responded too late; so the French marched their troops into Syria, easily defeating Faisal’s Arab army and took control over the country.\textsuperscript{36}

Faisal would receive a kingdom as promised by the British. One British official, Arnold Talbot Wilson created the idea of a united Mesopotamia. He preached the imperialist idea of the ‘white man’s burden,’ and from that ideology he concluded that a united Mesopotamia would be able to overcome its burdens with the help of the British. In reality, Mesopotamia had been divided into three regions for centuries. Even Faisal acknowledged that there was not such a thing as an Iraqi people. T.E. Lawrence did not even advocate for a united Mesopotamia, but rather a division into two kingdoms.\textsuperscript{37}

While Britain wanted to unite all of Mesopotamia into one country, Hussein did not like the idea. Even though he was still receiving rewards for helping the British, Hussein worked hard to incite hatred in the area towards Britain. He gave large amounts of money to the tribal leaders in a way to enhance his Hashemite standing in the area. He even had a Shiite Imam issue a fatwa against service in the British administration as contrary to Islamic law. When the British sent their own commission into the area to check on the conditions, Hussein had a group send letters to the leaders of each clan with instructions of what to say to the commission. Hussein had crafted the situation in Iraq so that the Hashemites would gain control over the area.\textsuperscript{38}

\textsuperscript{36} Karsh, p. 287.
\textsuperscript{37} Ibid., pp. 289-291.
\textsuperscript{38} Ibid., p. 294.
Eventually, the Arab revolt, led by Hussein, happened in this Mesopotamia area in 1920. Despite it being called a national revolt, in actuality it was a series of spontaneous uprisings aimed at several targets. The majority of the people in Mesopotamia remained loyal to the Ottomans and frowned upon the Hashemite revolt as an imperialist endeavor, not a nationalistic one.\textsuperscript{39}

Meanwhile in London, T.E. Lawrence wrote of Faisal as a person deserving the crown of what would become Iraq. He said of Faisal in an interview: “[He] is a mild and kindly man…He is inspired by one ambition---and that is to produce somewhere an independent Arab Government.”\textsuperscript{40} Lawrence was trying to rally the public behind Faisal; Lawrence also had his people in London lobby the government for Faisal. Even the press began to report that Faisal would be offered Mesopotamia in compensation for losing Syria. Despite Britain’s liking of Faisal, the French did not want him to rule the area after their encounter with him in Syria. Faisal’s father also would have preferred Abdullah over Faisal because of Faisal’s confrontation with the French.\textsuperscript{41}

Eventually Hussein agreed to let Faisal rule Iraq most likely because he did not want to have an upset son trying to build European powers against him or his Hashemite rule. The British official, Wilson, who originally had the idea of a united Mesopotamia, wired to London the following regarding Faisal:

“Nothing that I have heard during the last few months has led me to modify my views of unsuitability of Abdullah[,] and our experience of last few weeks in Baghdad makes it fairly clear that no local candidate will be successful in obtaining sufficient support here to enable him to make good. Faisal alone of all

\textsuperscript{39} Karsh, p. 298.
\textsuperscript{40} Ibid., p. 298.
\textsuperscript{41} Ibid., pp. 298-299.
Arabian potentates has any idea of practical difficulties of running a civilized
government on Arab lines. He can scarcely fail to realize that foreign assistance
is vital to the continued existence of an Arab State. He realizes the danger of
relying on an Arab army." 42

Clearly, Wilson had found an ideal candidate for his mandate state; one that would still
rely on Britain for assistance. That way Britain would not lose her influence or presence
in the Middle East.

To seal the deal, Faisal spoke with the British official Kinahan Cornwallis
regarding the future kingdom. Cornwallis found him to be very gentlemanly like and
loyal to Britain’s interests. Sir Winston Churchill also found Faisal favorable. Churchill
simply wanted to reduce British expenses in Mesopotamia by setting up an Arab
Government to develop the new country peacefully without demanding much out of the
British. Churchill told his other British officials:

“I have a strong feeling that Feisal is the best man, and I do not think there is
much to be gained by putting forward an inferior man in the hopes that he will be
rejected and smooth away certain difficulties in the selection of the best
candidate.” 43

In addition to Faisal’s manners, the British found it logical to want Faisal for the throne
because they believed that “local opinion would never agree on a local candidate.” 44 The
British believed that the majority of Mesopotamians would welcome an outsider as their
ruler. In terms of choosing Faisal over his brother Abdullah, T.E. Lawrence claimed:

42 Karsh, p. 303.
43 Ibid., p. 307.
44 Ibid., p. 309.
“In order to counteract the claims of rival candidates and to pull together the scattered elements of a backward and half civilized country, it was essential that the first ruler should be an active and inspiring personality. Amir Abdullah was lazy, and by no means dominating.”

The British eventually endorsed whole-heartedly Faisal as the future ruler of Iraq. They did not inform the French of their decision. On August 23, 1921, the British crowned Faisal as the king of Iraq.

Faisal was the more ambitious one of Hussein’s sons. His other son, Abdullah, wanted to gain a kingdom for himself too. In September 1920, he led hundreds of tribesmen from Mecca to a town called Maan, on the northern tip of the Arabian Peninsula. Officially, he claimed to be responding to Syrian nationalists in Transjordan who were trying to drive the French out of Syria. In reality, he moved tribesmen there to make his presence known for a future kingship.

The British had withdrawn their troops from the Transjordan area after the Ottomans’ surrender and left it to Faisal to administer as a province of his Syrian kingdom. The fall of Faisal’s short-lived Syrian kingdom had created a power vacuum in Transjordan. The British wanted to fill this power vacuum in order to prevent the French from gaining control of the area and also to prevent general anarchy. The British then faced the question of what to do in terms of incorporating Palestine and Transjordan into the same governing system because Transjordan technically included Palestine.

However, Sir Henry McMahon had excluded Palestine in his notes to the Hashemites because it lies west of Damascus. The other part of Transjordan fell within the
boundaries laid out by him to the Hashemites and therefore should have its own independence.\textsuperscript{48}

The British eventually settled on the idea of an independent existence for Transjordan. Naturally, they needed to find a leader for the new country. Abdullah came into consideration since he had established himself in Maan and showed no intention of returning to Mecca. Abdullah also spread anti-French and Hashemite propaganda in an attempt to win the local population to his side, and also to please the British. According to Churchill, “the British needed to harmonize their policy in Transjordan and Mesopotamia.”\textsuperscript{49} Having Abdullah as ruler of Transjordan would be conducive to this since his brother Faisal ruled Iraq. Most British officials did not like the idea of Abdullah as a ruler, but they considered him the least of all evils. Especially with the British’s desire to quickly fill the power vacuum, they did not have many options.\textsuperscript{50}

The British sent troops back into Transjordan to secure the area under the guise of preventing Bedouin raids into Palestine, halting the anti-French activities and reopening the road to Mecca for Muslims making their hajj. Abdullah’s appointment by the British was to be temporary. He was to stabilize the Transjordan as a way of easing “its development into an autonomous province of Palestine.”\textsuperscript{51} Abdullah, however, used this opportunity to create his own empire. Prior to Abdullah’s official appointment, Churchill said of Abdullah:

“The Emir Abdullah has promised to work with us and for us to do his best to restrain the people from anti-French action and to form, with [British] assistance,
a local administration which can later on be handed over to a native Governor of less consequence than himself.”

In addition, Abdullah was informed that he would have to recognize British control over his administration prior to his appointment. Abdullah, however, took advantage of what had been given to him. Originally, he wanted Palestine to be included in his kingdom, not because of any nationalistic reasons, but rather because he wanted a kingdom comparable to his brother’s kingdom of Iraq. The British could not give him both because of McMahon’s letter excluding the area to the Hashemites, so Abdullah took what he could get and became king of his own empire, which came to be known as Jordan.

The Hashemites received a large amount of land for helping the British during World War I, despite their misrepresentation of Arabs and their double dealing with the Ottomans. The Hashemites were never satisfied with the lands given to them and voiced their complaints of being robbed of Arab land by the British. The Hashemites had no reservations about keeping quiet of their grievances. This complaint soon became the crying voice for all Arabs. The anger directed towards Western powers and specifically Britain, soon laid the foundation for Arab nationalism.

Arab nationalism views Arabs as “a single nation bound by the common ties of language, religion and history.” Arab nationalism differs from European ideas of nationalism because Arab nationalism:

52 Karsh, p. 324.
53 Ibid., pp. 322-324.
54 Ibid., p. 344.
55 Ibid., p. 345.
“springs from the Muslim feeling of brotherhood enjoined on them by the Prophet Muhammad in his last public speech. It differs therefore from a great deal of European nationalism and patriotism. Although Arabs are naturally attached to their native land their nationalism is not confined by boundaries. It is an aspiration to restore the great tolerant civilization of the early Caliphate.”

Arab nationalism itself is not inherently violent because nationalism is not a violent ideology. Nationalism only becomes a violent ideology when one nation tries to impose its will over another state. Nationalism then becomes imperialistic and it is this type of nationalism, or rather imperialism, which gives the ideology of nationalism a violent stigmatism. Imperialism creates violence because it denies other nations of their rights to nationalism. Imperialist leaders have “the desire to dominate foreign creeds, nations, or communities, and to occupy territories well beyond the ‘ancestral homeland,’ that contains the inevitable seeds of violence – not the wish to be allowed to follow an independent path of development.”

The violence that seems to accompany Arab nationalism is the result of both imperialism and tradition. Violence has always existed in Arab lands well before Western powers became involved over there. Arab society has always existed on a parochial and imperial system. From the time of Muhammad to the end of World War I, the Middle East has seen the rise and fall of three universal empires. Each empire had the imperial drive to conquer as much land as possible. This tradition of great, imperial empires combined with the inner forces of parochialism and local patriotism caused the

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56 Karsh, p. 345.
57 Ibid., p. 347.
downfall of the Ottoman Empire and has also contributed to the current frustrations of Arab society since the Ottoman fall.\textsuperscript{58}

The Hashemites and the British both served imperialist interests by negotiating with each other. The Hashemites wanted as much land as possible to create their own kingdom, while the British wanted to have as much influence in the region as possible. The British were quite aware of the local divisions and parochialism that existed in the region; but the Hashemites’ claim also coalesced well with their imperialist dreams. In the end, the British chose to pursue:

“an attempt to build up around the ancient capital of Baghdad, in a form friendly to Britain and to her Allies, an Arab State which can revive and embody the old culture and glories of the Arab race, and which, at any rate, will have a full and fair opportunity of doing so if the Arab race shows itself capable of profiting by it.”\textsuperscript{59}

Britain’s other option was to keep the Arabs divided among their local provinces, similar to what the Turks did under the Ottoman Empire.\textsuperscript{60}

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\textsuperscript{58} Karsh, pp. 348-349.
\textsuperscript{59} Ibid., p. 353.
\textsuperscript{60} Ibid., pp. 352-353.
\end{flushright}
Chapter 2:
The Rise of Secularism and Arab Nationalism
After the lands of the Middle East had been divided into states and the imposed leaders took control of the countries, little coups happened here and there eventually replacing most of the imposed leaders. During this time the Arabs began to assimilate into their new countries and nationalities. Along with new countries, Arab intellects began to modernize and attempted to transform Arab culture. Poets such as Iraqi Buland Haidari, tried to revolutionize Arab poetry and modernize the Arab culture of literature. This generation of Arabs lived in the 1940’s and 1950’s before the arrival of Arab nationalism. A lot of people during this time did not observe religious rituals or go to Friday mosque services regularly. The secular political and cultural world defined this generation and Beirut served as its capital. Their culture consisted of: “the politics of nationalism, the call of Arab modernity and the American pop culture.” While Arab intellects basked in this short period of liberalism, soon after its fall they began to lament the inability of the Arab culture to succeed.

Many new political parties began to emerge during this time period both in response to the new call for modernization and in reaction to the new ways which challenged the long held cultural norms. The Syrian Socialist Nationalistic Party was founded in 1932 by Anton Saadeh, a Greek Orthodox Lebanese. The political party revolved around the idea of “secular territorial Greater Syrian Nationalism” with the ultimate goal of reunification of all the lands of the said Greater Syria: Syria, Lebanon, Israel and Jordan. Many of the members of this political party consisted of Greek Orthodox and other Christians who did not benefit from Lebanon’s political system. It

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also attracted other minority groups such as the Shiia and the Druze. Secular territorial nationalism appealed to these minority groups because it theoretically offered them an equal political standing.64

Michel Aflaq and Salah al-Bitar created the Baath Party in the 1930’s as a result of the influence of communist ideas. The Baath party focused on pan-Arab nationalism and non-Marxist socialist ideas. It saw secular Arabism as the solution to their generation’s problem. The Baath party attracted those from the 1930’s generation who were not satisfied with the current social and political culture, those who wanted to change the traditional styles of leadership and those who wanted an all-embracing ideological approach to their problems. Sunni Muslims liked the party because of its pan-Arab ideology and because of its ideas on Arab socialism.65

When the Baath party won power in Syria it began to change into a political party for an oppressive regime. The regime that won power under Baath ideology became preoccupied with power and survival. The regime consisted of the minority Alawis, who only compose 10% of the Syrian population. The Alawis may have ideologically used the Baath party to gain power but the regime sure did not act in accordance to the party’s ideals. The overrepresentation of minorities in the Baath party irked the majority Sunni Muslim Syrian population. The Alawis have maintained political power for a long time in Syria because of its extreme repressive measures against those who speak against the government.66

In Iraq, the Sunni Arabs came to power under the same ideology of Baathism. The changing of the party to a more repressive one once the Sunni Baath gained power

64 Rabinovich, pp. 2-4.
65 Ibid., p. 4.
66 Ibid., pp. 4-5.
mimics the Syrian situation. After 1968, the Sunni Baath government became dominated by family members from the Iraqi town of Tikrit. The Sunnis in Iraq only comprise 20% of the population. The attraction of the Baath party to minorities cannot be overstated. The ideology has allowed minority groups to monopolize power in Syria and Iraq for decades. 67

The Muslim Brotherhood in Syria emerged as the answer to the Baath party for the Sunnis. The Muslim Brotherhood represented the community and nation of Islam for all Sunnis, but specifically those in Syria. The Brotherhood had the ultimate goal of having an Islamic government ruled by Shari’a in Syria. In the view of most minorities, the Sunni Muslims believe they have the right to divine rule over all Arabs. The Christians, Shiites and other forms of Islam harbored feelings of resentment and envy towards the Sunnis. This is the reason why the aforementioned parties emerged in the Arab Middle East. 68

The historically powerful Sunnis felt humiliated and defeated by their ‘inferiors.’ The Sunnis who had once thought in universal terms now began to think in ethnic terms. Many Sunnis joined the Muslim Brotherhood not because they necessarily accepted the fundamentalist ideology but because they viewed it as the only authentic and effective way of preserving their Sunni majority. The Muslim Brotherhood in Syria views the Alawis as non-Muslim and as a minority. The Sunnis appall the idea of being ruled by a secular, non-Islamic government. The Muslim Brotherhood in Syria gained enough political power to scare the Baath Alawites. In 1982, the Syrian government ordered the bulldozing of the towns of Homs and Hama in response to supposed Muslim Brotherhood

67 Rabinovich, p. 6.
68 Ibid., p. 11.
activity. This act of the Syrian government served warning to the Sunni majority that dissent would not be tolerated.\(^69\)

The political parties that emerged during this era professed secular or religious ideals, but in reality the people who adhered to these parties only followed them as a way for their group to gain power. The parties may have been created with lofty ideas of socialism and Arab nationalism, but eventually the power hungry ethnic groups in the Middle East used these parties as a way for their group to gain power. The reality of the situation after a short ideal period led to the true intellectuals of the modernization period becoming completely disoriented with the Arab race.

One such great literary figure, Khalil Hawi, symbolized what most Arab intellectuals from the modernization phase felt after the 1967 war with Israel: “He loved the Arabs greatly, but he hated their contemporary impotence and weakness.”\(^70\) Khalil Hawi came from a Greek Orthodox family. This minority was at the forefront of secular politics in both Syrian and Arab nationalist movements. Naturally Hawi dove into this secularized culture. Greek Orthodox along with other minority Christian sects from the Arab lands produced a class of writers who enhanced the Arabic language through their works. The Christian minority sects along with Sunnis embraced the modernization and secularization of this time.\(^71\)

Along with secularization and modernization emerged the concept of Syrian and Arab nationalism. Anton Saadah, a Greek Orthodox who returned to Lebanon from Brazil, began to advocate a militant brand of Syrian nationalism in 1947. Saadeh started the Parti Populaire Syrien, a political movement with fascist tendencies to advocate an

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\(^69\) Rabinovich, pp. 11-12.
\(^70\) Ajami, The Dream Palace of the Arabs, p. 29.
\(^71\) Ibid., pp. 28-42.
identity based on being Syrian. Since he came from a minority, he emphasized the universality of his idea. Being Syrian applied to all groups inside of Syria, it did not discriminate based on religion. Saadeh’s most loyal followers naturally came from religious minorities who had always been oppressed under a Sunni Muslim majority; the Greek Orthodox, the Druze, the Protestants, and some Shi’ia. Saadeh’s party admired Hitler because during World War II: “The German wrecking havoc on Europe was doing to the colonial masters of the Levant, the British and the French, what the people here could not do for themselves.”72 Saadeh’s secular Syrian nationalist party had offended the Arab-Islamic history of Syria and the government eventually put him to death.73

While Saadeh launched a Syrian nationalist party during Hawi’s youth, Hawi became a follower of Arab nationalism. Hawi had admired Saadeh in his younger days, but he became engulfed in Arab nationalism, which embraced the whole Arab race and not just Syrian society. While in college, Hawi became a fan of Nietzsche because of Nietzsche’s ideas of anticlericalism, individual will and the unknown future. Nietzsche’s philosophy encouraged those who wanted to rebel against the old Arab ways and establish a new future for the race. People like Hawi, the modernizers, favored philosophy while the older Arab world still held onto their culture of custom, culture and parental authority. This newer sect of Arabs had a strong conviction that Arab culture could easily be remade into a modern one similar to the West. As strong as that conviction, was also the realization that Arab unity would most likely not happen, despite the dire want of it because of the previously mentioned ways of power hungry ethnic groups using the parties as a way for them to gain power. The Arabs still relied on their

72 Ajami, The Dream Palace of the Arabs, p. 58.
73 Ibid., pp. 50-65.
clans and tribes as a way of survival, not unity of their race. Hawi once said: “Let me know if Arab unity is achieved; if I am dead, send someone to my graveside to tell me of it when it is realized.” Hawi died in 1982 and no one has yet to approach Hawi’s grave.

Right before Hawi died, he became very depressed about the Arabs. The modern, secular culture he grew up in had not been able to save the Arab culture from returning to its dark days. He began to view the Arab awakening as an idea that “covered up the total backwardness of Arab society.” Arabs had not really understood how the West worked when they preached their views of modernization and secularism, hence the rampant corruption and isolation of religion that eventually caused its downfall. Hawi eventually killed himself shortly after Israel invaded Lebanon in 1982 because “the invasion was a stain of shame on the country’s being.” The great hope Hawi had once held for the Arab race had run completely dry.

Egypt serves as an example of how the Arabs began to desire independence from the European colonial powers. Once the Egyptians had gained their complete independence from British influence in 1952 due to the Free Officer Revolution, a new political ideology began to fill the ideological vacuum, that of Arab nationalism. Arab nationalism emerged in Egypt because the leader of the movement, Abdul Nasser, had helped create the Free Officers and had led the revolution against the British controlled government. Since he had been the one to free the Egyptians completely from Britain, he had the stage to lead the Arab people and Egyptians in whichever direction he chose.

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74 Ajami, The Dream Palace of the Arabs, p. 84.
75 Ibid., pp. 69-80.
76 Ibid., p. 92.
77 Ibid., p. 99.
had their attention because he had been the first leader to free an Arab country from the Europeans, so any ideology he professed would most likely immediately gain the following of all those Arabs who had wanted freedom from the colonial powers. The tracing of Egypt’s history from the days of Muhammad Ali to the present day leader demonstrates how Egyptian society changed and how Arab nationalism emerged.

Egyptians because of their location began to gain autonomy from the Ottoman Empire. Due to the weak Ottoman state, Mamluk beys in Cairo became the source of administrative and financial authority, as opposed to the sultan’s representatives. In 1798, the French under Napoleon, invaded Egypt and defeated the Mamluks at the Battle of the Pyramids. The new leader, Muhammad Ali, headed the first program of state-sponsored Europeanization of the military and state institutions in the Middle East. Muhammad Ali built Egypt into a military and economic power and opened Egypt to diplomatic and commercial contact with Western Europe. Since Ali could not win the Mamluk’s cooperation, he destroyed them via massacre. Muhammad Ali also introduced an intensive higher education program oriented toward Western subject matter. He accepted the printing press in 1828 and allowed for newspapers to be distributed. In order to pay for his military, Muhammad Ali would have to exploit Egypt’s resources to their limits and make sure the central treasury system obtained the maximum level of revenues available. To obtain more money, Muhammad Ali confiscated the iltizam lands and placed a tax on the waqf revenues administered by the ulama. The waqf system of tax exemption of Islamic religious endowments for charitable purposes was deriving the state of revenue. By breaking the power of the waqf holdings and gaining control of the revenues, the state increased its control over land and revenue and reduced the wealth and
Muhammad Ali also reorganized the central administration, which focused on Muhammad Ali’s absolute authority. From him, there was a system of delegated power that at the most rested in functionally different ministries. Muhammad Ali’s recreated Egypt as a European colony; however he distanced himself from the Egyptian people and their native culture. Ali’s educational system created a new class of native Egyptians who began to assume power in bureaucratic posts, thus creating a class of native Egyptian elite who had the capabilities of ruling the Empire.\(^{78}\)

In the following century, Egyptians became more and more frustrated with the power of Europeans over native Egyptians. Europeans exploited Egypt for their own economic growth and employed leaders of Egypt who did not pay much adherence to the Islamic nature of the country. The following two rulers were European educated, and although native Egyptians, ruled much in accordance to European desires. In 1876, Ismail the Magnificent introduced Mixed Courts which helped control Europeans to an extent. Previously, foreigners were tried under foreign courts for matters in Egypt and were rarely found guilty. The Mixed Courts were governed by French civil code and staffed by judges appointed to lifetime positions. This way, judges could rule free of political pressure on matters of commercial and civil cases involving foreigners. In 1884, he created the National Courts, which dealt with Egyptians in matters of civil, commercial and penal law. They too operated on the French civil code and employed European judges. The Egyptians’ system of justice came to be staffed by all Europeans.

and governed according to European law. The Shariah courts still existed; however their jurisdiction was limited to areas of personal status and waqf, and the government limited the power of the ulama. Ismail effectively Europeanized the urban centers of Egypt, his crowning moment happening in 1869, with the completion of the Suez Canal. Ismail spent enormous amounts of money on projects to Europeanize the country, fueled mainly by cotton; however, his spending got out of hand and when he dismissed two financial controllers in an attempt to maintain financial independence from Europe, the European leaders had Abdul Hamid II depose him in 1879.79

During this time Ahmad Urabi led a brief national movement against European interference in Egypt’s finances and against the autocracy of the khedive (monarch-like leader) by establishing constitutional limits on his authority. Urabi represented a national hero because he fought against foreign interference and because he came from the Egyptian peasant class. He had studied at al-Ahzar, an Islamic university and then joined the army. He represented the peasant population whose labor and taxes produced wealth for Ismail’s projects. He also represented the impoverished rural discontent against tax-exempt foreigners and wealthy local landlords. Urabi’s riots against foreign interference resulted in the British occupying the Suez Canal zone on September 13, 1882 and resulted in British occupation until 1956. Egypt’s European controlled government and Westernization policies alienated the majority population. Only people educated in Western, European schools could effectively work for the government. Local, Islamic educated people had a tough time finding jobs in their own country. A huge gap emerged between the Westernized, European ruling elite and the Islamic, impoverished Egyptian population. To the Egyptians, Westernization meant conscription in Muhammad Ali’s

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79 Cleveland, pp. 92-99.
Europeanized army, working for Ismail’s Europeanized projects; and it meant heavy taxes and poverty; it meant Egyptian locals working for wealthy, foreign landlords. The Egyptian people, the Egyptian culture, the Egyptian religion had been abandoned in favor of Westernization and it destroyed the majority of the Egyptian population.  

During British occupation, the status of Egyptian locals did not improve one bit. Lord Cromer, who oversaw Egypt, told London that direct British guidance was needed for several more years. His main objectives included restoring Egypt’s credit by meeting debt payments and promoting political tranquility by supporting the khedive and discouraging political opposition. Cromer’s investment in public works benefited large landholders, but neglected the majority peasant population. The British formed exclusive clubs and societies which strengthened tensions within the Egyptian ruling elite, who thought they could govern their country just as well as the British, if not better. Ironically, Cromer did little to suppress the press and newspapers began to spread the idea of Egyptian independence. Mustafa Kamil published one of the leading newspapers, al-Liwa, which emphasized British evacuation. Kamil began to move away from the idea that Egypt had Islamic bonds to the Ottoman Empire to the idea of Egyptian patriotism, arguing that Egypt was a unique territorial entity with its own special characteristics and urged its inhabitants to give Egypt their deepest affection. Egyptian opposition to British rule increased upon the death of Tawfiq (the khedive under Cromer) when his son Abbas II took over power. Although educated in Switzerland and Vienna, Abbas wanted Egyptian independence and directly challenged Cromer. He provided funds for anti-British newspapers such as Kamil’s. When Cromer resigned in 1907, his successors, Gorst and Kitchener tried to regain Egyptian confidence by opening up the political

80 Cleveland, pp. 99-102.
administration and by passing laws to give Egyptian peasants more power. However, it was too much, too late and failed to gain Egyptian sympathy. Political groups began to emerge in 1907, consisting of Egyptian intellectuals and activists. The Constitutional Reform Party formed under Shaykh Ali Yusuf, an al-Ahzar graduate who advocated Egyptian independence within an Islamic framework. The People’s Party was headed by Lufti al-Sayyid and advocated a more cautious approach to independence, emphasizing the need to prove self-governing capabilities first. It also introduced the idea of secular liberalism. The National Party, under Mustafa Kamil, demanded immediate British evacuation and emphasized Egyptian patriotism. The British occupied Egypt in 1882 and during the Cromer years restructured Egypt’s political, economic and social structure to benefit them, not the Egyptians. Cromer emphasized that the Egyptians were incapable of self-governing and sought to reduce Egyptians’ influence by limiting their education.  

In 1918, seven prominent Egyptians founded a delegation, wafd, whose goal was complete independence of Egypt from Britain. The founder, Sad Zaghlul, grew up in rural Upper Egypt and had been educated through the European-style education system. He had gained wealth and prominence as a Europeanized lawyer, judge and government administrator. He appealed to the mass rural people because he was one of them. In 1919, the British exiled him because he was creating political agitation. Riots and demonstrations followed, which led to a deadlock between British and Egyptian authorities, the final result being a declaration of independence in 1922. Egypt’s experiment with democracy did not function ideally. The nature of the constitution gave extensive powers to the king, which created an institutionally weak legislature. King Faud could dismiss governments whenever they disagreed with him. The British still

81 Cleveland, pp. 103-108.
interfered with Egyptian politics, mainly for economic reasons, which undermined the parliamentary system even more. The Wafd and other small political parties never compromised or respected oppositional ideas, which further weakened the parliamentary system because no decisions or compromises could be reached. Thus, political life revolved around a continuous struggle for power between the Wafd, the monarchy and the British. Most of the governments lasted very short times and failed to address social or economic problems that faced most in Egyptian society, outside of the elites. In 1936, Egypt, or rather a Wafdist government, signed a treaty with Britain which allowed for Britain to station troops in Egypt in order to defend Egypt against Italian expansion.82

King Faud died in 1936 and his son Faruq replaced him. King Faruq continued the indulgences and favor for secular institutions that his father had. The political elite argued amongst themselves while the rest of Egypt became more and more isolated. While political leaders Europeanized society, many Egyptians became alienated and offended that their political leaders had omitted Islam from politics and from the society which they were trying to build. As the elite leaders continued Europeanization and focused on their own political struggles, the rest of the Egyptian population began to seek refuge with organizations that operated outside of the government. These organizations sought practical solutions to economic and sustenance problems and provided for their spiritual needs. Most of them were Islamic organizations. The most popular being the Muslim Brotherhood, started in 1928 by Hasan al-Banna. It believed that the social and political rebirth of Egypt would be tied to the restoration of Islam as the guiding force in society. The current ills of Egyptian society could be traced to the replacement of Quranic principles by secular and political organizations. However, although he wanted

82 Cleveland, pp. 193-197.
reimplementation of Shariah, he advocated for Muslims to take advantage of the technological advances made in the twentieth century without feeling guilty of compromising Islamic values. He believed that restoration of Shariah should be open to interpretation within the current time frame so that it could address the needs of a modern society. He wanted an Islamic order, not an Islamic state, which would, because of its Islamic basis, ensure social justice, economic well-being and political harmony. The Muslim Brotherhood and its followers founded primary schools which combined religious instruction with scientific and technological training. They established free medical clinics and set up soup kitchens for the poor. The organization offered material assistance, communal associations and spiritual comfort for the many Egyptians who had been alienated by the elite, secular Egyptian society.83

During World War II, Egypt’s political leaders did not fully embrace the Allied war efforts, as they maintained relations with the Axis powers in case the Allied powers lost. The British decided that they wanted a Wafdist government and so issued King Faruq an ultimatum in 1942, in which Faruq decided to implement a Wafdist form of government instead of fleeing. The British felt that the Wafd party leader Mustafa al-Nahhas would cooperate better than Faruq with the British war efforts. Al-Nahhas’s government implemented long time needed social and labor legislation. He also encouraged the formation of the Arab League, a loose confederation of Arab states. The Arab League originally promoted regional economic, political, and cultural cooperation amongst the states. It quickly became a place where Arab states expressed their disapproval over the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine. Thus a formal institution

83 Cleveland, pp. 197-200.
formed in 1945 began to organize feelings of pan-Arabism which becomes a very powerful political force.\textsuperscript{84}

In 1952 a group of junior military officers, known as the Free Officers, took over the government. The leader, Gamal Abd al-Nasser, represented a majority of rural Egyptians, as he grew up in a poor rural village, and when older felt alienated by British occupation and by the ruling elite, who grew richer as the poor became poorer. The Free Officers had roughly the same beginnings, and they formed a six point program to guide the government after their takeover, which included: the destruction of British colonialism and the removal of its Egyptian collaborators, the elimination of feudalism, the ending of the political control of the state by foreign capital, the establishment of social justice, the formation of a strong national army, and the creation of a healthy democratic life. The Free Officers had no predetermined views on political organization or ideological orientation. When they gained power, they created the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC), led by Nasser, which served as the executive body of the government. They responded to situations as they arose, and in this way they gradually formed their ideology and political organization. The RCC effectively established control over society and political opposition by forcing King Faruq into exile, by banning anyone who held office between 1946 and 1952 from doing so again, by banning all political parties and by banning the Muslim Brotherhood, after they attempted to assassinate Nasser. A constitution created in 1956 expressed a commitment to the abolition of imperialism and feudalism and to the establishment of a strong army, social justice and a democratic society.\textsuperscript{85}

\textsuperscript{84} Cleveland, pp. 202-204.
\textsuperscript{85} Ibid., pp. 303-308.
Nasser became a symbol of Arab independence. He signed a treaty to give Sudan their independence, as he did not care much about retaining it. He kicked the British out of the Suez Canal and nationalized it. He refused to join the Baghdad Pact, claiming it was an extension of imperialism designed to keep the Arab countries in the embrace of Western powers. He also initiated a plan to build a second dam across the Nile at Aswan. He signed an agreement in 1955 with Czechoslovakia for Soviet arms in exchange for cotton. He refused to allow the West to dictate his country’s orientation and future. In 1956, when Israel, Britain and France attempted to attack Egypt on the Sinai Peninsula, the US and the Soviet Union made them withdraw, and Nasser effectively turned this into an Egyptian victory over the imperial powers. He also maintained control of the Suez Canal. He became the leader in the Arab world for pan-Arabism and pan-Arab unity. In 1958, Nasser created the United Arab Republic with Syria, which seemed to be a major step towards Arab Unity; however, Egypt became dominant and the UAR fell apart in 1961. Nasser kept cordial relations with the United States, while at the same time strengthened relations with the Soviet Union. He maintained a general policy of neutrality and sought to play off the super powers for his own benefit.86

Nasser used the concept of socialism only for pragmatic reasons, not because of ideological beliefs. He emphasized industrial development and nationalized most foreign-owned companies. His reforms helped the economic and social standing of the middle class peasants, which provided the basis of Nasser’s support. Nasser maintained most power in his hands, while forming consultative bodies for the sake of democracy. He did not employ the same amount of oppressiveness and brutality that the shah’s regime in Iran did. He tended to guide the popular will from above, rather than dictating

86 Cleveland, pp. 308-316.
harshly. The Nasser regime granted equality to women, who became active participants in the new nationalized economy. Nasser also reformed the education system; however the newly created schools could not keep pace with the soaring population growth and increased enrollment. He abolished tuition fees at universities and promised government jobs to all those who graduated. This ideally worked well, but because of the increased enrollment many students became upset when they had to settle for low-paying civil service jobs and had weak employment opportunities upon graduation. Nasser also attempted to keep Islamic institutions from maintaining political independence. He reorganized Al-Ahzar University by forcing it to implement four, nonreligious faculties in 1961: medicine, engineering, agriculture and an Islamic women’s faculty. Nasser’s government prepared Friday mosque sermons so that the sermon always included references on the compatibility of Islam and Nasser’s government. Nasser gave the Arab people hope, he had successfully become independent of foreign powers, he reorganized society with socialist policies and he improved the lives of many middle-class peasants. He made Egyptian society accessible to all Egyptians. While he limited the role of Islamic institutions, it was more to keep them in line, to prevent them from becoming dominant and opposed to all secular institutions. He set up a secular government, although somewhat authoritarian, that most Egyptians embraced because it did not abandoned the Arab culture, which included Islam.⁸⁷

Nasser lost a lot of his support when Egypt lost the 1967 war with Israel. When he died in 1970, Anwar Sadat assumed power. Sadat inherited economic and diplomatic problems from Nasser. He toned down relations with the Soviet Union in an attempt to regain more cordial relations with the United States. However, amidst student

⁸⁷ Cleveland, pp. 316-322.
demonstrations opposed to his government, Sadat and Syria decided to attack Israel, so that Sadat could regain Arab confidence and recognition. Sadat regained land in the Sinai Peninsula and quit there because he had achieved his goals; however, the US helped rearm Israel, who launched a counter-attack that resulted in a huge, embarrassing Arab defeat. Arab politics employed the use of oil to get Israel to withdraw from Egypt. OPEC announced in 1973 that they would reduce oil production by 5% a month until Israeli forces withdrew from occupied Arab territories. This led to the massive oil crises in 1973 and 1974, which set oil prices soaring. In 1975, Secretary of State Kissinger, along with Israel and Sadat, negotiated a document, Sinai II, in which Israel had to withdraw from western Sinai.88

Egypt had been the leader of Arab nationalism. It serves as a microcosm of the Arab world in terms of how Arabs felt and how Arab nationalism emerged in other colonial states as well. Egypt served as the base of the emergence of Arab nationalism as well as the decline of it. After the loss of the 1967 war with Israel, Arab nationalism lost most of its followers and momentum. Arab nationalism did not help the Arab world as much as people had hoped. In response to this failure Islamic movements began to emerge. Arabs had tried something completely new and had abandoned a large part of their religious identity. With its failure, many Arabs began to return to their old ways of religion, thinking that their abandonment of it had caused the Arab world not to succeed under a secular ideology such as Arab nationalism.

88 Cleveland, pp. 374-376.
Chapter 3:

The Response to Arab Nationalism
With the advent of Arab nationalism, Arabs began to form their own identity. They no longer wanted to be under the submission or cultural influences of their European colonizers. Beirut became the new capital of this rejuvenated Arab world. It was a city comprising two contradictory Arab realms: those who embraced modernization and those who detested the new liberalism.\(^{89}\)

Arab nationalism emerged for a short while under Nasser. While it offered false hope to many that the Arabs could unite to defeat the West and Israel, the realities spoke of something quite different. By the 1980’s, Saudi Arabia had become one of the wealthiest countries in the world because of oil, Lebanon was in the midst of 15 year long Civil War and Egypt had made peace with Israel.\(^{90}\) The Arabs would never be united because each country wanted to seek for itself its own opportunities to succeed without regard to their neighbors.

Oil money had divided the Arab world between those who could participate in the new era of modernization and those who languished in poverty. The wealthy Arab states did not share their wealth either, despite the huge disparity between them and the poorer ones. The Persian Gulf countries and Saudi Arabia were the Arabs who would benefit from this new shift of order due to oil wealth. Where it had once been Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq, who led the Arab world, it was now the so called desert Arabs.\(^{91}\)

In addition to the new wealth oil created for these desert states, oil also caused an influx of Americans and Brits. The Western culture began to challenge the once standing moral order among the Arabs in these states. One Arab author, Abderlrhaman Munif, observed that the oil wealth quickly gained by the Gulf States was temporary and easily

\(^{89}\) Ajami, *The Dream Palace of the Arabs*, pp. 118-119.
\(^{90}\) Ibid., p. 123.
\(^{91}\) Ibid., pp. 123-125.
depleted; the oil wealth also built a dependant world and a consumer culture. This new capitalist society, according to him, even altered the relations of Arabs with their neighbors. Munif also made the prediction that when the oil wealth disappeared, these Arabs would be left feeling lost and confused. Basically Munif found these new societies to be extremely shallow and temporary. 92

The way the Gulf Arabs only worried about their own societies and not other Arab states, widened the rift between those who benefited from oil wealth and those who did not. The ones who benefited from the oil wealth had no problem purchasing weapons from the West or other technological gadgets. Meanwhile, Palestinians still faced the long struggle of obtaining some sort of a homeland. Those countries who gained from modernization embraced it, those who did not have the opportunity eventually turned towards Islamic radicalism. 93

Islamic radicalism emerged mainly in response to the failure of Arab nationalism to solve the problems of the Arab world. Once it failed, a new ideology had to replace it, and Islamic fundamentalism rose to the occasion. Egypt, Arab nationalism’s birthplace, had suffered a number of humiliating defeats: the failure of the United Arab Republic between Syria and Egypt, the 1967 war with Israel, its eventual peace with Israel, Sadat leaving the Levant and the Gulf to their own problems, and their eventual dependence on America, whom they had earlier revolted against. Perhaps the greatest defeat of Arab nationalism came when tiny Israel defeated all the Arab powers in six days. 94

After the defeat of 1967, the Arabs made three tries to recover Arab political life. First, the Palestinian movement emerged immediately following the defeat. The

93 Ibid., pp. 128-130.
94 Ibid., p. 131.
Palestinian movement claimed to have all the answers not only to their problems, but also for all the other problems in the Arab world. The followers of this movement believed that guerilla warfare, wars of national liberation or revolutions would be what would deliver the Arab world from all their problems and weaknesses. The Palestinian movement would eventually free the whole Arab world. The Jordanians dealt the initial blow to this movement by bombing Palestinian refugee camps in September 1970.\(^95\)

Secondly, the Arab political life now revolved around the conservative oil states of the Gulf region. These states have assumed that the Arabs would become consumers of the Western lifestyle, that because of this new wealth the Arab world would become de-radicalized and that this would eventually lead to the conclusion of the Palestinian problem. These Gulf States had to face the reality that their wealth was not going to change other Arab state’s problems if they did not make a viable effort to help them. They also had to come to the realization that the religious conservatives held their societies in contempt, despite their vast amounts of wealth.\(^96\)

Finally, the revolt of Shiism produced a whole new order in the Arab world. Khomeini’s revolution marked the turn of events in the Arab world from secular and modernized to religious and conservative. Khomeini successfully gained the following of those groups excluded by Arab politics with his claim about Arab nationalism: “It was a Sunni dominion dressed in secular garb.”\(^97\) The Shiites, religious and oppressed, had successfully revolted against the secular and privileged. The Shiites in almost all Arab countries had long been oppressed by the Sunni Arab nationalism movement: the Shiites in Iraq, the Shiites in Lebanon, as well as those in the Gulf. The Shiites claimed to be the

\(^{95}\) Ajami, *The Dream Palace of the Arabs*, pp. 131-132.

\(^{96}\) Ibid., p. 133.

\(^{97}\) Ibid.
Prophet’s correct way under Islam. Shiite peasants and clericals began to offer to society what Arab nationalism had avoided: redemption and deliverance. The Shiite’s revolt symbolizes even the historical initial revolt against the Sunnis who had acquired earthly political power after the Prophet died. 98

Ghassan Kanafani’s story *Men In The Sun* offers an illustration of the Palestinian problem in Arab society. Kanafani uses several motifs to criticize the Arab culture and in particular the Palestinian problem. Kanafani emphasized that the Palestinian problem could not be solved unless taken into account with the Arab World’s social and political situation; therefore, he critiques the Arab world through his characters and motifs.

Kanafani describes the Palestinian travelers’ feelings to demonstrate the severity of the Palestinian issue. He begins with Abu Qais’ feeling of attachment to his homeland. Abu Qais lies on the ground to hear the earth beating, which for him is his homeland’s heart. When his neighbor mocks him by telling Abu Qais it’s the sound of his heart, Abu Qais responds: “What wicked nonsense!...Have you forgotten where you are? Have you forgotten?” 99 Saad, Abu Qais’ friend, ridicules him for not wanting to go to Kuwait: “You have needed ten big hungry years to be convinced that you have lost your trees, your house, your youth, and your whole village.” 100 Most Palestinians have to immigrate to other countries in an attempt to find jobs. Everyone else seems to have moved along, to have forgotten, but Abu Qais has difficulty with the idea of leaving his

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100 Ibid., p. 26.
homeland. When he does arrive in Basra, he arrives with “all the humiliation and hope that an old man can carry.” 101

Assad, the second traveler, has already attempted to flee to Kuwait, only to have been deceived by his smuggler, who abandoned him half way through the trip after Assad had already paid. Arab countries did not want Palestinians, so many of them had to illegally immigrate into wealthy counties such as Kuwait, where they could find work. Assad wants to go to Kuwait because he needs to make money. The third traveler, Marwan, wants to travel to Kuwait because his brother, Zakaria, has stopped sending his family money from the country since marrying there. All of the travelers feel ghurfa (longing for one’s homeland) even though they are surrounded by their fellow Arabs. Abu Khaizuran, the final smuggler, is in a unique situation because he is stuck between his identity as a Palestinian and the opportunity to make money and advance off the situation of his people.

The Palestinians are so desperate that they all ask themselves if death or prison is better than the way they live. Saad’s comment that eventually motivated Abu Qais to travel to Kuwait is: “Die! Who says that isn’t preferable to your life at the moment?” 102 When Assad was abandoned in the desert during his first attempt to go to Kuwait, he ponders: “If they had taken me to the desert prison, Al-Jafr, at H4, I wonder if life would have been kinder than it is now.” 103 Abu Khaizuran, questions his situation when he lost his manhood and everyone was telling him it was better than dying: “No. It’s better to be dead.” 104 Marwan does not explicitly mention death, but when the professional smuggler

101 Kanafani, p. 27.
102 Ibid., p. 27.
103 Ibid., p. 31.
104 Ibid., p. 53.
told him he needed more money, “the last threads of hope that had held together
everything inside [Marwan] for long years had been snapped.” 105 All of the Palestinians
need Kuwait to improve their lives; the travelers need to arrive there so they can make
money to send home and the smuggler, Abu Khaizuran, needs the money he makes from
taking people into Kuwait.

Kanafani attacks Arab society by mocking tradition and honor. Assad needed
some money to travel to Kuwait, so he asked his uncle. His uncle gave him the money,
even though the uncle knows not many people succeed in Kuwait. He gives Assad the
money anyway because he wants Assad to “make a start, even in hell, so that [he’ll] be in
a position to marry Nada.” 106 Of course Assad only wants the money, as he thinks: “Who
told him that he wanted to marry Nada?” 107 Assad’s uncle wants him to marry Nada
because he and Assad’s father had recited Fatiha on the same day Assad and Nada were
born. Because of the coincidence, Assad’s uncle “considered that was fate.” 108 Arab
society, as represented by Assad’s uncle, believes in fate, whereas Assad, the one
removed from Arab society, considers it ridiculous that he has to marry someone simply
because they were born on the same day and the two parents recited Fatiha.

Fate is also the reason Marwan’s father gives for divorcing his wife and
abandoning his family for a deformed woman with money. Marwan’s father left when
Zakaria quit sending money home to support the family. Marwan wanted a concrete roof
on his head and financial stability so he left his family to suffer on their own. Marwan’s
father claims that: “I have had no choice in the matter. It is something that has been

105 Kanafani, p. 36.
106 Ibid., p. 32.
107 Ibid., p. 33.
108 Ibid.
decreed for us since the beginning of creation.” As if Marwan’s father did not have the option of working to support his family instead of taking the easy way out and marrying a wealthy woman.

Kanafani criticizes Arab nationalism through Abu Khaizuran’s suffering. Khaizuran had lost his manhood fighting for his country, aka, the Arab cause. He has trouble accepting it as a worthy sacrifice for his country. He ponders: “And what good had it done? He had lost his manhood and his country, and damn everything in this bloody world.” Later in the story he also asks: “And what good did patriotism do you? You spend your life in an adventure and now you are incapable of sleeping with a woman! And what good do you do? Let the dead bury their dead. I only want more money now, more money.” Khaizuran had fought for his country, made a sacrifice by losing his manhood and now he does not even have a country anymore. In addition, he has even lost his moral character because now he only wants money. Patriotism, or Arab nationalism, had failed him, and now he has nothing.

Kanafani critiques Arab politics through his representation of the fat man. The fat man essentially represents Arab politics under Arab nationalism. Arab leaders thought themselves to be strong and powerful, and the fat man represents power and wealth. The first fat man in the book is the professional smuggler at Basra. He absolutely refuses to bulge on his price quota. When Assad tells the fat man he will pay when he arrives in Kuwait, the fat “man looked at him from under his heavy eyelids, asking stupidly: Why?” Assad informs him that is because the guide will take the money and run away

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109 Kanafani, p. 44.
110 Ibid., p. 53.
111 Ibid., p. 64.
112 Ibid., p. 29.
before he gets there. Likewise, the Arab states have run away from the Palestinians. They leave the Palestinians in refugee camps yet claim to fight for their cause. The professional smugglers leave the Palestinians on the side of the road or in the middle of the desert, kind of similar to refugee camps.

Assad’s professional smuggler who eventually abandoned him, “he lied to him. He took advantage of his innocence and ignorance, tricking him…”113 Arab nationalism lied to Palestinians when it said it would regain the homeland for the Palestinians. Arab nationalism claimed the Palestinian cause, but in reality it used the Palestinian cause to gain more power. Ironically, sometimes the Arab powers would help the Palestinians, like in a war against Israel, but they spent so much time bickering amongst themselves that they could not win. Similarly, the professional smuggler in Basra wants to help Assad because he looks sick; “If you are ill, tell me. I may be able to help you. I have many friends who are doctors. Don’t worry, you won’t pay anything.”114 The smuggler will help the traveler with medical attention, but that’s about it unless money is involved. The money of course helps the smuggler gain more financial power. For Marwan, he was told: “that when he came to stand in front of the smuggler he must be more than a man, and show more than courage, or they would laugh at him, cheat him, and take advantage of his sixteen years.”115 Likewise, Palestinians needed to stand up to the Arab powers so they would not take advantage of them. At the time of the writing of the book, the Palestinian problem would have been around for 14 years, assuming it had started with the creation of Israel. The Palestinian refugees would have been around the same age as Marwan.

113 Kanafani, p. 30.
114 Ibid., p. 35.
115 Ibid., p. 36.
Assad seems somewhat drawn towards the fat man when he tells Abu Khaizuran: “The fat man seemed kindhearted. I liked him.”\textsuperscript{116} Similarly, Arab nationalism seemed kindhearted towards the Palestinians because it claimed to fight for the Palestinian cause. Abu Khaizuran replies: “Ah! The fat man doesn’t cross the frontier with you, and he doesn’t know what happens.”\textsuperscript{117} Arab nationalism only goes as far as to proclaim the Palestinian cause, but it does not cross the line between talking and action. Abu Khaizuran also tells Assad: “You think that the fat man has the power to do everything.”\textsuperscript{118} The Palestinians put too much faith into Arab nationalism to deliver them from their suffering.

The other occurrence with a fat man is when Abu Khaizuran confronts Abu Baqir at Mutlaa. Abu Baqir claims to know for a fact that Abu Khaizuran slept with a dancer; “Don’t lie…Haj Rida has told us the story from A to Z.”\textsuperscript{119} The story is not possible because Abu Khaizuran has lost his manhood. The fat man claims to know something about Abu Khaizuran, about why he is late from Basra. Arab nationalism claims to know what the Palestinian people want. The Arab people try to motivate the Palestinian people to fight for something that is almost impossible (returning to their homeland, i.e., the destruction of Israel).

Another critique of Arab culture is the role honor plays. All of the smugglers have sworn on their honor that they will deliver the travelers. But they never do deliver the travelers. Assad tells the smuggler at Basra: “Leave the subject of honor for another

\textsuperscript{116} Kanafani, p. 54.
\textsuperscript{117} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{118} Ibid., p. 55.
\textsuperscript{119} Ibid., p. 68.
time. Things go better when a man doesn’t swear by his honor.”

Likewise, Abu Khaizuran swears on his honor that he will take Abu Baqir to meet Kawkab, the dancer, next time he goes to Basra. Of course, he does not know the dancer and swearing on his honor means nothing. The value of honor in the Arab world means nothing.

Kanafani uses the character of Abu Khaizuran to mimic those who claim to care about the Palestinians, but in reality, do not. Abu Khaizuran seems to want to help the travelers because he offers a lower price and tries to make it to the lorry before they die from heat. However, after they die, it becomes clear he was planning on them dying before the trip even begun. “Before he went to take his lorry out of Haj Rida’s garage, he told himself that he wouldn’t bury them. He would throw the three corpses into the desert and return home.”

He feels pity for his companions after they die and wants to bury them, but finds a pleasing alternative: to dump the bodies where someone else will discover them and bury them. Arab culture pities the Palestinian problem, but they want someone else to take care of it. They do not want the responsibility of fixing it themselves. Abu Khaizuran throws the bodies on the ground, takes the money and watch, and then starts to leave. As he feels his conscience weighing against him, he looks back towards the bodies and sees nothing, “the glance simply set the thought ablaze so that it began to burn in his mind.”

Arabs take what they can gain from the Palestinian cause, and then find ways to ease their consciousness about the Palestinian problem.

Kanafani writes *Men in the Sun* as a critique of Arab society, culture and politics through his use of characters and motifs. He writes especially to mimic Arab

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120 Kanafani, p. 50.  
121 Ibid., p. 72.  
122 Ibid., p. 74.
nationalism’s handling of the Palestinian problem. As Abu Khaizuran leaves, he asks the question: “Why didn’t they knock on the sides of the tank?”\textsuperscript{123} Well probably because no other Arab would hear or help them.

Egypt is a bourgeois state within the Arab World and has always enjoyed a higher standing than the other Arab states. “It had a relatively developed economy and sophisticated cities, its exposure to the liberal ideas of Europe had put it decades ahead of the rest of the Arab world and its literary and cultural output far surpassed the achievements of other Arabs.”\textsuperscript{124} Egypt, as a leader of the Arab world has many responsibilities in terms of other Arab countries which can drag Egypt into many problems in terms of protecting and helping other Arab states.\textsuperscript{125}

Egypt’s role of power and leadership in the Arab world changed after October 1973, however, as other Arab countries that had always been inferior to Egypt began to gain more power and wealth than Egypt due to oil. With the change of power that happened in the 1970’s, Egypt became the center of debates within the Arab world of whether or not other Arab countries should support or oppose Egypt’s choices and decisions. Egypt had the most Westernization of any of the other Arab states; some of the other states would support Egypt’s decision to remain friendly to the West, while others would detest it. Egypt had both President Nasser and President Sadat, who both had to try to revive Egypt after a military defeat and who also attempted to bring Egypt into the world as a modern civilization.\textsuperscript{126}

\textsuperscript{123} Kanafani, p. 74.
\textsuperscript{125} Ibid., p. 92.
\textsuperscript{126} Ibid., pp. 94-96.
After the 1967 War with Israel, Nasser had trouble to face at home in Egypt. He had carried the country far in terms of Arab nationalism, but now that the ideology had failed he had to deal with the consequences. Despite the fact that Egypt had just suffered a major defeat in part thanks to Nasser’s empty ideology, a lot of people in Egypt still held an aura around him. Nasser now had to worry about securing economic aid from the oil states to help deal with the loss; he also became aware of the rising threat of radicalism emerging in the Fertile Crescent region.  

In August 1967, Nasser attended a summit with other Arab leaders in Khartoum. The delegates from the newly emerging radical states attended as well, those from Algeria, Iraq and the PLO. While at the summit, Nasser told two delegates from these radical states: “Egypt was on the verge of breakdown, that there were plots and schemes in the military and dissatisfaction among the population, that he was not sure he could keep things under control.” In other words, he was telling the delegates to please keep the radicals from infiltrating Egypt.

The volatility of the time resulted in a split between supporters of the Nasser regime and the students. The conflicted erupted into full fledged student protests in Alexandria and Mansura, where the army had to quell the violence in 1968. This new generation of the students had become much more aware of how the regime acted thanks to the spread of education and literacy, more knowledge of the outside world and the June 1967 War. The students were now holding the regime accountable for the current state of affairs in Egypt and the failure of Nasserism.

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128 Ibid.
129 Ibid., pp. 100–102.
One of the main conditions contributing to the student riots was the economic situation in Egypt of the time. The increase in the availability of university education had produced a large number of college graduates that the economy could not support. These students had been taught that higher education would help them advance with their lives and career, a Western concept. Once they did what they had been told, they had extreme difficulty finding jobs. What the students had been taught as a key to success had failed them. Another Western idea had offered false hope and had ultimately failed with the Egyptians.\textsuperscript{130}

In the midst of the economic and political turmoil that had arisen post 1967 War with Israel, the Palestinian movement began to emerge and directly challenged Egyptian prominence. In 1968 the Palestinians began to act on their own by proclaiming the beginning of a guerilla war for national liberation. Previously, the Palestinians had always relied on the Egyptians and Nasser for support, but now they moved past Egypt.\textsuperscript{131} Egypt had begun to shrink from its once leading role in the Arab world.

Nasser’s legacy provided inspiration to Qaddafi over in Algeria to stage his own revolution. Qaddafi’s situation worked out better than Nasser’s because Qaddafi had a smaller population and more wealth to sustain his country’s conditions. Nasser had a lot more people in Egypt and much more poverty to handle during his reign.\textsuperscript{132}

The defeat of Arab nationalism and Nasserism reverberated throughout the whole Arab world. Politics began to appeal much more to emotions and feelings than concrete policies. Politics now began to focus on survival, anxiety and possible future crises in the Arab world. Many Arab intellectuals began to criticize Nasser and the Arabs for

\textsuperscript{130} Ajami, The Arab Predicament, pp. 103-104.  
\textsuperscript{131} Ibid., p. 105.  
\textsuperscript{132} Ibid., p. 107.
following a blind ideology such as Arab nationalism. The Arab world had thrown its weight behind an empty idea of nationalism which did nothing for the Arab countries except to waste resources in war with Israel.  

Egypt tried to regain its influence in the Arab world under Sadat with the October War in 1973. Many Arabs refer to this war as a victory for the Arabs, even though they lost the war. The Egyptians had a lead for a couple days, but for them that was all they needed to feed their hungry egos. The October War served to fix the devastating defeat in 1967. Then President Sadat attributed the victory to “the accomplishment of an ancient, homogenous people that had lived on the same plot of land for seven thousand years.” Sadat and Egypt were trying to regain their position in the Arab world by reminding the other countries of Egypt’s advantages: a centralized authority, a homogenous population and a peculiar sense of nationalism. Sadat fought the October 1973 War to gain his own legitimacy. He wanted to be known as something more than Nasser’s successor; he gave the Egyptians a sense of victory again.

Sadat accomplished much for Egypt that many Egyptians refuse to acknowledge. In reality, he bettered their livelihood more than Nasser. Sadat’s style of daring diplomacy did not set well with his population, especially his negotiations with Israel. Sadat made the Egyptians face the truth with Israel and did what he saw to be the best course of action. Sadat acted like a father figure for his defiant children and made them see the reality of the state of Israel as it was.

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134 Ibid., p. 114.
135 Ibid., pp. 113-114.
136 Ibid., p. 123.
Sadat also turned towards America for support of his country. American support was another aspect many Egyptians did not like about Sadat. While Egyptians liked thinking of the West and maybe importing some of the Western customs, Egyptian society also clung to its history and its religion. Egypt did not know which way to go, with the West or against the West. Western ideas of secularism had already died in Egypt with the fall of Arab nationalism and the defeat of the 1967 War. Sadat’s willingness to embrace full-heartedly the West and Western ways put him at more odds with his nation.\textsuperscript{137}

The American connection to Egypt made by Sadat offers Egypt economic protection and a sense of security because Egypt knows it has a powerful nation looking out for it. America has money and what Sadat considered a civilized society, so courting the US became a success for Sadat, especially compared to what the other Arab states had to offer. Sadat stood on his own in the Arab world, doing what he perceived to be in Egypt’s best interests, not necessarily what his Arab neighbors thought. Taking such a big step alienated Egypt from the support of the more conservative Arab countries.\textsuperscript{138}

Sadat eventually paid with his life for the distance he placed between his people and himself. While Sadat tried desperately to Westernize Egypt, he also had an aura of corruption around his head. Sadat’s attempts to pull Egypt out of the failure of Nasserism did not work. In the end, in October 1981, a Muslim activist shot Sadat and proclaimed: “I shot the Pharoh.”\textsuperscript{139} Sadat ignored Egypt’s Arab and Islamic identity because he wanted Egypt to become integrated with the West and the modern world. He focused more on Egypt’s glorious pre-Islamic history, which many Muslims regard as Jahilliyah,

\textsuperscript{137} Ajami, \textit{The Arab Predicament}, pp. 125-126.
\textsuperscript{138} Ibid., pp. 129-130.
\textsuperscript{139} Ibid., p. 155.
the age of ignorance. His countrymen had had enough of modernization and Westernization.

Sadat’s assassin, Khalid al Istanbuli, represented a larger portion of opposition to Sadat. They opposed Sadat on the basis of his lack of interest in Islam, Arabism and a movement authentic to Egypt. For Istanbuli, Sadat failed to remain in his Egyptian-Arab-Muslim world and failed to keep a safe distance from the West. The Muslim Brotherhood, formed by Sayyid Qutb under Nasser offered an alternative to the failures of secular, liberal nationalism. Qutb’s Muslim Brotherhood offered an authentic and native movement for Egypt. Whereas Nasser and Sadat largely relied on Western ideas and concepts, Qutb’s came from within the Arab world. 140

According to Qutb, Egypt belonged to the Islamic world and any alternative explanation would fail. The Muslim Brotherhood offered pamphlets and magazines emphasizing moral conduct and services the Brotherhood offered to Muslims during the Egyptian government’s abandonment of the religion. The Brotherhood preached a message of faith and integrity and offered an ideology (Islam) comforting to the many Egyptians feeling alienated from the regime. The Muslim Brotherhood treated every Egyptian as an equal and invited them to participate in activities, whereas recent government had made all the decisions without much input from Egyptian citizens. 141

Egypt had tried to implement foreign, Western ways and these ways ultimately failed them and left Egypt isolated from much of the Western world. Due to this failure, a yearning for authenticity emerged. Egyptians had learned that superficially imposed ideologies did not last long.

140 Ajami, The Arab Predicament, p. 133.
141 Ibid., p. 134.
Many other Arab countries do not like what they see in Egypt. They see a country that is not revolutionary or religious enough. Egypt has always been a country with great stability in terms of regimes. Egyptians yearn for a change, but are not willing to go to the extreme as to overturn the whole country. This in between attitude does not set well with the other Arab states that are either very revolutionary or very conservative. The Arab countries have become very fragmented as can be seen with their attitudes towards Egypt. The Arabs, however, do not like to accept this.142

An example of the Arab’s fragmentation is the Palestinian movement that emerged after the 1967 war. The Arab states had a hard enough time with Israel; they by no means had the ability to help the Palestinians with their problems, other than word of mouth. Yassir Arafat rose up to lead the Palestinians on their own independent path in dealing with Israel. The Palestinians had been bombed by the Jordanian government, kicked out of Lebanon by Syria and pretty much despised by all other Arab countries. Of course the leaders of the Arab countries claimed to be fighting for their cause, but these same leaders would not even offer Palestinians a place to live or an attempt to integrate within their society.143

In the Arab world, “the state is the dominant politicoeconomic reality: It protects the wealth of a people from outside claims; it separates them from others who are claimed, protected, and ruled over by other states.”144 Religious belief and loyalty to the Arab state are replacing the ideas of Arab nationalism. There exists a huge disparity between the wealthiest and poorest Arab states, a ratio of forty to one in terms of per capita income. The Arabs obviously do not care that much about one another if wealth is

142 Ajami, The Arab Predicament, pp. 139-140.
143 Ibid., p. 142.
144 Ibid., p. 143.
so unevenly distributed. After the 1967 war, wealthy, conservative oil states would financially help their fellow radical Arab states on their own terms. The radical states could no longer speak idealistically of liberal nationalism; they had to face reality of the Arab world and Arab order.\textsuperscript{145}

Khalid al Istanbuli, Sadat’s assassin, gave his reasoning for assassinating Sadat: Sadat had to be killed so that God could rescue Egypt from its confusion, friendship with the Zionists and the relaxation of morals from the West and its influence. The source of evil had been killed, but the Egyptian regime did not take a sharp turn. Instead, Hosni Mubarak followed Sadat, and the Egyptian government continued, but with more distance from the West.\textsuperscript{146}

The man who had influenced Istanbuli the most was not a high official within the Islamic religion, but rather a free-lance preacher named Mohamed Abdul Salem Farag. Farag had written a pamphlet called ‘The Absent Obligation,’ which contained reasons for killing a person such as Sadat. He also had recruited the potential conspirators who worked together on Sadat’s assassination. Farag had no official Islamic certification or recognition as a leader; he simply preached what he believed and thought. This new form of Islam began with Sadat’s assassination. Whereas beforehand, there were a limited number of Muslims who held sway over the population in leadership positions, now virtually anyone could.\textsuperscript{147}

Most of the people at the time who supported Istanbuli’s deed came from urban centers in Egypt and were young, in their twenties. The people discontented with Egyptian culture and politics had found a way to communicate their views and feelings

\textsuperscript{145} Ajami, \textit{The Arab Predicament}, pp. 144-146.
\textsuperscript{146} Ibid., pp. 155-159.
\textsuperscript{147} Ibid., p. 157.
towards all the changes gripping Egypt for the past twenty years. Sadat could not tolerate dissent or opposition; he had tried repeatedly to please the Islamic fundamentalists, but at a certain point he drew the line. Sadat had ordered a massive wave of arrests on Islamic fundamentalists whom he felt he could not tolerate in his regime. One of those men arrested was Istanbuli’s brother. Already disillusioned with the regime and now having a personal reason to hate Sadat, he snapped and felt that only assassination of Sadat would help his problems.148

Sadat drew a fine line between what he would tolerate from the Islamists and what he would not. Despite his repressive means at keeping the radicals at bay, Sadat did help Egypt gain American foreign aid, receive land concessions from Israel following the October War and also deterred the country from Arab nationalism. Sadat chose the West to follow the course of Arab nationalism; perhaps this course was too much for the country. Arab nationalism had done enough damage and alienation, allying with the West only made this problem of alienation worse.149

When Mubarak took power after the assassination of Sadat, he enjoyed all the benefits that Sadat had secured without himself having to risk alienating the population. He did not withdraw Egyptian recognition of Israel because he claimed he would abide by legal treaties, i.e., the Camp David Accords. Mubarak could also communicate with other Arab countries more easily since he was not the one who had made the initial peace with Israel. Mubarak could also enjoy American aid without the consequences for the same reason as the Israeli peace. Mubarak did and still does not govern with the same

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148 Ajami, The Arab Predicament, pp. 159-160.
149 Ibid., p. 161.
amount of drama as Sadat did. He does not make such drastic changes; he prefers to stay the course. 150

The peace with Israel became such a big deal in the Middle East because of the symbolism behind it. Arab governments do not want to acknowledge the strength of Israel’s military because it concedes that their civilization is more backward, less advanced. 151 Also, when Arab states participate in the process of making peace with Israel they enjoy support from the West while still maintaining stability at home. By staying in the middle, the Arab states avoid war with Israel and also war at home with other ethnic groups within their country. If a minority power is ruling a country and that power makes peace with Israel, then the majority would most likely accuse them of being traitors and try to overthrow the government. Likewise, if the Arab governments outright oppose Israel, they lose support from the West.

When Anwar Sadat came to power in Egypt he continued with Nasser’s program of modernization, but without the Arab nationalism part. Sadat helped Egyptians recover land in the 1973 war with Israel, made peace with Israel and secured economic aid from America. He dismissed Arab nationalism and did what he thought to be the best for the country. While Egyptians gladly recovered the land and accepted American foreign aid, they ignore Sadat’s accomplishments in all that he has done for Egypt. 152

Sadat loved the West and wanted Egypt to adhere to Western values, while he himself did not rule as a Western democratic ruler should. He became authoritarian and left no room for the intelligentsia who threatened his rule. He imprisoned Islamic

151 Ibid., p. 164.
radicals whom he feared would overthrow the regime. His inability to connect with all aspects of Egyptian life is what eventually caused his downfall.

The man who shot Sadat, Khalid al Istanbuli, came from the part of Egyptian society who did not like Sadat. Istanbuli had attended Christian schools in his youth and was not particularly involved with political Islam, but his older brother was. His older brother had been picked up by Sadat in a massive wave of arrests against the Islamic radicals. Istanbuli’s section of society wanted to keep the West away from Egypt. His brother’s arrest pulled the final string for Istanbuli. After he assassinated Sadat, he claimed: “I shot Pharaoh.” He made this claim because Sadat, in his opinion, had turned away from Egypt’s Muslim roots and preferred to focus on Egypt’s secularism.

The Islamic radicalism that began to emerge during Sadat’s years came into existence because Sadat had tried to allow for some degree of religious freedom, as long as it was not radical. The Egyptian state had drawn a fine line between acceptable limits of Islamic fervor. These theocrats were able to fill voids in the state structure with their ideas gained a large following from the lower classes and newly urbanized Egyptians. Sadat did so in an attempt to have some religious sanction to his activities and his rule. The secular ruling elite and class to which Sadat belonged did not have the same leverage among the poor and newly urbanized because his class was one of Westernization and capitalism. His class took advantage of all the benefits made to them by Westernization and prospered economically from it. Those who were weary of Westernization and did not want it did not prosper and landed in Istanbuli’s camp.\footnote{Ajami, The Dream Palace of the Arabs, p. 206.}

Another prolific Egyptian fell prey to the Islamic theocrats trying to remake Egyptian culture was Naguib Mahfuz. Mahfuz became a target because most people held
him in high esteem, his fame all over the world, his Nobel Peace Prize by infidel judges, and most troublesome to the Islamic radicals, his endorsement of the peace with Israel.¹⁵⁴ Such has been the fate since in Egypt of those who would endorse the peace with Israel and those who embrace the West, according to the Islamic radical point of view.

When Mubarak succeeded Sadat in 1981, he created an autocracy claiming it to be a democracy. While the United States gives aid to Egypt, it tends to ignore the Egyptian leader’s internal politics. This only further alienates those repressed by the government. Furthermore, Mubarak in the 1990’s reformed Egypt economically so that it could become fully integrated into the globalized world. This has alienated a number of Egyptians who chose not to embrace the rapid changes taking place in Egypt.

Iran’s history from the days of the Qajar dynasty to the Shiite revolution serves as an effective example of how a country of Shiites can become radicalized against the West and why they wanted and had a Shiite Revolution. During the Qajar dynasty, the religious elite gain independence from the government and eventually gain the population’s support. Since the Qajar shahs made no claim to divinity, the Shia ulama became the source of interpretation on issues of law and religion. Religious people who had an extensive knowledge of the Islamic law and religion became recognized as mujtahids, which qualified them to exercise ijtihad (interpretation).¹⁵⁵ Shia Muslims began following a mujtahid and accepted his rulings on legal and religious matters. They also began to hold his rulings higher than the shah’s. When the number of mujtahids rose, a hierarchical system emerged where mujtahids with high qualities of learning and understanding and deserved to take precedence over their peers gained the title of marja

¹⁵⁴ Ajami, The Dream Palace of the Arabs, p. 211.
¹⁵⁵ Cleveland, p. 110.
al-taqlid, the source of emulation. This became better known as ayatollah, the eye of God. The people came to accept the rulings of the independent religious elite because they believed the mujtahids’ rulings were closer to the will of the Hidden Imam than those of the shah’s. The Qajar shahs ruled as absolute monarchs, surrounding themselves with the pomp and elegance like their predecessors. The land was administered based on tribal principalities. The leaders, known as uymaqs, gained more power when the state had a weak shah. The tribal chieftains and government officials would exploit the peasant class’ land holdings and turn the peasants into laborers in the absence of a strong shah. The religious establishments survived independently because they had financial autonomy, thanks to the mandatory zakat payment from Muslims and through tax exemption from religious lands, waqfs. In 1891, the Iranian people revolted against the shah when he granted an English company the right to produce, sell, and export Iran’s entire tobacco crop. The shah, Nasir al-Din, granted more capitulatory privileges and economic concessions to Britain and Russia in an attempt to play them against each other. Russia occupied northern Iran and Britain southern Iran; both used Iran as a buffer state for the imperial, colonial interests.

The shahs aimed at modernization and an extravagant court lifestyle. This desire for wealth put the country into debt, as Iran could not manufacture goods as cheaply as Europeans. In 1906, a group of bazaar merchants, ulama and reformers instituted a constitutional government with a parliament, the Majlis. They created a constitution to limit the power of the shah and to redirect the country towards the religious conservative side. The constitution named Shiism as the official state religion and implemented Sharia

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156 Cleveland, p. 111.
157 Ibid., pp. 111-117.
Law as the official law of the land. Problems arose because secular and Islamic Law are not compatible on gender equality and on Muslim to non-Muslim relations. The people listened mainly to the religious authority so they did not always know the truth. In 1908, Muhammad Ali restored royal authority in Tehran and plunged Iran into a civil war. During this time Britain and Russia occupied Iran. A colonel in the Cossack Brigade named Reza Khan eventually brought Iran under his control and in 1925, he declared himself shah.

Reza Shah embarked on a rapid modernization campaign, most likely trying to imitate Mustafa Kemal, or Ataturk. However, he did not fully reform all aspects of the country, rather it was selective reformation. He did not revise the constitution; rather he left it as was and just ignored the parts that did not suit his policies. He ordered universal conscription for all adult males; he expanded the state bureaucracy and patronized good, loyal leaders. He forced Westernization and centralization by deploying the army to establish state authority over the tribal leaders. He forcibly disarmed them, confiscated their lands and restricted their migration patterns. He secularized state institutions and introduced a new civil code modeled on France. He ignored the Supplementary Fundamental Laws which prohibited the enactment of laws that contravened Sharia Law. Reza Shah passed a law in 1932 which eliminated the ulama’s right to register legal documents and in 1939 the state seized all waqf lands. Reza Shah improved the status of women and encouraged their participation in national life; he prohibited sexual segregation in public places. He made the most successful reforms in education by opening Tehran University in 1935, a secular higher level institution and awarded 100 students scholarships to study abroad in Europe. This helped create a similarly minded
bureaucratic class. Reza Shah raised tariffs on imports and introduced direct taxes on consumer items to collect more money. This practice however, made it even harder for the poor as their relationship with their landlord remained one of exploitation. He tended to ignore the countryside and allowed the peasants’ condition to disintegrate. Reza Shah became annoyed with Britain and France and formed a close alliance with Germany to counter their influence.  

Muhammad Reza Shah was a weak ruler with little knowledge of how to maintain influence. In the 1940’s, Muhammad Mossadiq became a popular spokesman for the Iranian people. He supported a parliamentary democracy and opposed all foreign intervention in Iran, which economically had impoverished most of the population while allowing a few to gain enormous wealth. Under his leadership, the National Front formed, which consisted of both traditional and modern middle classes who united in their hatred of foreign influence and opposition of extreme royal authority. He called for the nationalization of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (AIOC), which employed Iranians only as laborers. In 1951, the Majlis nationalized the oil company and invited Mossadiq to become prime minister. When Britain declared a boycott of Iranian oil, Mossadiq severed relations with Britain. Mossadiq also reduced the size of the army, purged the officer corps and introduced land reforms. Mossadiq, however, did not have enough money and when the National Front began to disintegrate in 1953, the Tudeh party, a socialist party introduced by the Soviets, gained power. In 1953, a group of military officers, with help from the US, overthrew Mossadiq and reinstated a royal dictatorship.  

\[158\] Cleveland, pp. 185-190.  
\[159\] Ibid., pp. 288-292.
When the shah came to power, he instituted the SAVAK, secret police, to repress all those who had opposed his reign previously. The SAVAK ruthlessly repressed all opposition. In response, several protests broke out against the shah and a religious leader, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, began to denounce the shah for corruption, for neglecting the oppressed masses and for compromising Iran’s sovereignty. Khomeini represents the ability of the independent religious establishments to mobilize the masses by applying Islamic principles to current conditions. He appealed to the public’s deeply embedded hatred of foreign interference and corrupt shahs. The shah used an extensive court patronage system, controlled appointments of civil bureaucracy and expanded the armed forces. He idealized the West and tried to imitate them; this offended Iran’s cultural integrity and national sovereignty because the Shah was trying to imitate the West. In 1963, the shah introduced the White Revolution which focused on land reforms and literacy rates. The land reforms essentially freed sharecroppers from allegiance to their landlords and a rapid urbanization emerged as many people from the countryside moved into the cities looking for work. He also improved internal transportation and improved education and healthcare. In 1967 and 1975, he announced laws that gave women greater legal equality in marriages. His reforms however, ignored the will of the people and ignored Iran’s Islamic past. He focused on secularization and the reforms he enacted, although appealing to Western eyes, became offensive to Iranians. He tended to emphasize the Pahlavi dynasty as the heir to the pre-Islamic Acheminid and Sasanian dynasties. He hardly had any political legitimacy because he was placed into power by foreigners, whom the Iranians had grown to despise, he ignored Iran’s Islamic past, ignored laws from Iran’s constitution, repressed all political opposition via the SAVAK;
he introduced modernization, yet he could not keep pace with enough employment opportunities. He cared about his wealth and reputation in the West.\textsuperscript{160}

When the educated and literate population could not find jobs, these people began to join opposition groups and some joined radical ideological groups. Since they could read and write; they could easily spread the beliefs and propaganda. Iran’s population began to deepen their religious beliefs because religion was the only thing comforting and familiar to them in this time of radical westernization and urbanization. People began associating westernization with corruption because of the shah’s practices. In 1975, the shah introduced a single party organization, the Resurgence Party, and the government began reducing the role of Islam in daily life and instead glorified the monarch at its expense. With the rise in oil prices in 1973 and 1974, the shah wastefully used the oil wealth to glorify his reign instead of spreading it evenly among the population. While the government sought to completely secularize the country, it would not touch the mosques in an effort to accommodate the religion. However, the mosque became the only place people could openly criticize the regime. As a result, the political parties which survived and proliferated were those preaching Islam.\textsuperscript{161}

Ironically some of the first people to speak against the shah were Westernized urban professionals and students from the new secular universities. They capitalized on the point that Amnesty International made in 1977, criticizing the regime for its violation of human rights and its torture on political opponents. One of these Western-educated reformists was Mehdi Bazargan, who founded the Freedom Movement in 1961. He insisted that Islam itself was a reformist ideology and that it should be incorporated into a

\textsuperscript{160} Cleveland, pp. 293-299.
\textsuperscript{161} Ibid., p. 424.
modernization program that was progressive yet distinctly Iranian. He believed that Iran should have a secular government, but it should not abandon Islam. He recognized Islam as a necessary component and opposed the shah’s intensive secularization programs which alienated the whole Iranian society. A member of Bazargan’s Freedom Movement, Ali Shari’ati, also educated in Paris, began preaching at a religious meeting hall in Tehran from 1967 until his arrest in 1972. Shari’ati advocated a reform that combined Marxism, Shiism, revolutionism and Iranian patriotism. He emphasized that Shiism was an active faith that required its adherents to oppose injustice and to assert their cultural heritage in opposition to complete Westernization. He denounced the secularism, censorship and corruption of the shah’s regime. The professional religious establishment did not necessarily believe in a radical change of government. A large number did not believe it was the clergy’s place to partake in politics. Another group coincided with the Freedom Movement program. Only a small percentage demanded fundamental change by overthrowing the government and creating an Islamic state controlled by the ulama. This militant and more intransigent group was led by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. Khomeini charged the shah with selling Iran to US interests, which was destroying Iran’s Islamic identity. In 1971, he published a book *Vilayati -I Faqih: Hukomat-I Islami*, which stated that an Islamic state modeled on the Koran and the community of the Prophet, could realistically be created and that men of religion, because of their knowledge of Islamic law, should manage the affairs of the state. Most of Iranian society did not favor such a radical change, but the movement gained momentum partially in thanks to the mosques and mostly in thanks to the shah’s complete abandonment of Islam.\(^{162}\)

\(^{162}\) Cleveland, pp. 425-428.
In 1978, a newspaper published a scandalous attack on Khomeini. This prompted students and bazaar merchants in Qom to take to the streets in protest. The government responded by dispatching the SAVAK, which killed many students. The religious clergy seized this opportunity to place this political movement within a religious context. The leading ayatollahs told the Iranian people to attend mosque on the fortieth day to commemorate those students who had lost their lives in Qom. This follows the Islamic tradition of forty days mourning after the death of a friend or family member. Now the ayatollahs had control over the direction of the protests, since now it had an Islamic context. As social unrest and demonstrations began to mount, the shah unwittingly slowed down the economy via wage freezes and cancellations of projects. This only allowed for the urban working class to become upset and dissatisfied with the shah, so this class now joined the students and bazaar merchants in the streets. The ayatollahs used the most sacred Shiite holiday, Muharram (the ten days that commemorate the death of Imam Husayn) as the date for protestors to take to the streets, breaking the ban on demonstrations the shah had instituted, to demand the overthrow of the shah and the return of Khomeini. These protests took on a religious aura, as the people held white shrouds, signifying the martyrdom of Ali and Husayn, meaning that they would too sacrifice themselves for the cause of Islam. The military this time, abandoned the shah, as no Muslim could ever fire on another Muslim during this holiday. The religious authorities had successfully manipulated the population on the basis of religion to achieve their own political desires for power and control. It should be noted that during Muharram, Shiites often become very dramatic in their re-enactment of Husayn’s martyrdom and become very emotional. This made it that much easier for the religious
establishment to build on these emotions in the demand for the return of Khomeini. On January 16, 1979 Muhammad Reza Shah fled the country and on February 1, Ayatollah Khomeini took control of the government.163

Khomeini fired and later ordered the execution of everyone who had served under the shah. He named Mehdi Bazargan prime minister and ordered him to restore administrative order and economic stability. He and his cabinet of moderates encouraged the formation of secular governing institutions. However, a parallel ruling organization, known as the Council of the Islamic Republic, the supreme administrative and legislative body in the country, vetoed any secular proposals by Bazargan. Bazargan resigned a couple months later out of frustration of the radical religious institution which did not allow for any changes other than those that coincided with their conservative version of Islam. In May 1979, Khomeini ordered the formation of the Revolutionary Guards, which consisted of impoverished men from urban areas, to squelch any opposition to the Khomeini revolution. The revolutionary tribunals, established in February 1979, consisted of religious judges who passed judgments on former government officials and sought revenge against anyone who had supported the shah and against anyone who opposed Khomeini. Also in 1979, a group of ayatollahs in support of Khomeini established the Islamic Republic Party; it gained the support of the ulama and the urban and rural masses who could gain much from the restructuring of Iran into an Islamic republic with a focus on social justice. A national referendum in March 1979 approved the replacement of the monarchy with an Islamic Republic. The Assembly of Experts restructured the government’s original draft and produced a constitution that required all of Iran’s laws and regulations to be based on Islamic rules and standards. The

163 Cleveland, pp. 428-430.
constitution placed ultimate authority in the hands on non-elected officials, most of them ulama. Khomeini became the supreme Islamic jurist, selected by appointment, to serve as the leader in the absence of the Twelfth Imam. He had the power to rule on qualifications of candidates for president and to confirm the president’s election. Basically he used religion to give himself complete control over the country. 164

After the collapse of the centrality and authority of Egypt in the Arab world, the Shiites began to rise to prominence capitalized by the Iranian Revolution. During the 1980’s, the Shiites began to rise to power in Lebanon because when Israel invaded southern Lebanon in 1982, Israel effectively removed the Palestinian Liberation Organization, but also left a power vacancy in the region. The Shiites rose to the occasion and began to build their own power domain. Ayatollah Khomeini had awakened the desire for Shiite dominance, and Israel helped expand that dominance. Before Israel’s invasion of southern Lebanon, the Palestinians and the Shiites had fought among themselves, culminating in a war in 1985 in West Beirut between the two. The Shiites attacked Palestinian refugee camps in an attempt to remove them from the area. 165

No country in the Middle East wanted the Palestinians. The Arab world would use the Palestinian cause to justify their feelings towards the West, but when it came down to actually doing something for the Palestinian refugees, the Arab world left them to themselves. After the Palestinians had been bombed in Jordan by the Jordan government, they moved their headquarters (the PLO) to southern Lebanon, where they remained until Israel’s invasion.

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164 Cleveland, pp. 430-433.
Another effect of the Shiites call for unification was the Iran-Iraq war which began in 1980. After Iran had successfully achieved an Islamic Revolution, the Shiites wanted to spread their new revolutionary ways to the rest of the world. Iran had always wanted to conquer the southern part of Iraq, which is largely Shiite. Reigniting a border dispute with Iraq over the area pushed Saddam’s limits. Saddam, under the bonds of Arab nationalism, changed the war from one of religion to one of race. For Saddam, it was Arab versus Persian; for Iran, it was Shiites versus Sunnis. The two countries fought for eight years, losing millions of men and succeeded in gaining nothing.\footnote{Ajami, The Dream Palace of the Arabs, pp. 137-138.}

During the chaos of the 15 year civil war in Lebanon, Syria had sent troops into Beirut to check the power of Hizbollah and Yasser Arafat’s PLO. Syrian President Asad did not withdraw the troops until forced to do so under U.N. mandate 1559 at the beginning of 2006. Syria kept their troops in Lebanon in an effort to control the country for Syria’s economic benefit.\footnote{Ibid., p. 139.}

The Islamic Revolution had helped spur an Islamic revival against modernization. While at the beginning it offered hope to those oppressed, it eventually fell apart from a movement having anything to do with Islam. A well respected Arab intellectual, who goes by the name Adonis, had his own analysis of the Islamic situation. He predicted that just as Arab nationalism led to the emergence of the officer class, so would the Islamic revival lead to the armed jurist. Adonis knew the history of Islamic revolts and how most of the ‘liberators’ turned into ‘oppressors’ under the guise of their new values and social institutions. The Islamic revolt did not spread down to the Gulf States like originally hoped by other Shiites. The revolution remained in Iraq because the Arabs reverted back
to their cultural ways of thinking of survival, that of the clan. In this respect clan ties proved stronger than religious ones across the region.  

The Shiite uprisings did not happen in places like Saudi Arabia or the Gulf States because the Shiites there realized they needed the protection of the kings in order to survive. The Shiites in these countries, rather than rebelling against the majority populations, sought out contracts between them and the ruling power. In return for their loyalty to the state, the Shiites received the right to work and the right to property. Although not very idealistic, especially by Khomeini’s standards, this situation has been why the Shiites in these countries have remained very stable and content enough not to rebel.

After the Iranian revolution had been contained, Saddam Hussein began to rise to prominence in the region. He had fought a bloody war against Iran for nearly a decade, claiming that religion and politics did not mix. He proudly espoused his Baath party principles. Saddam had used the rhetoric of Arab versus Persian for his Iran-Iraq war and had played on the concept of Arab nationalism, or rather had used the concept of Arab nationalism to achieve his own personal goals.

For centuries, the region of Mesopotamia had been the wealthy part of the Arab world, home to ancient civilizations and intellectual prosperity. With the new set up of the Middle East and the advent of oil, it was now the Gulf States who became the prosperous ones. They became exceedingly wealthy while their northern neighbors suffered from poverty. The Gulf States also had a relatively peaceful formation; they did not have to fight the bloody anti-colonial struggles that the Northern Arab countries had

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168 Ajami, The Dream Palace of the Arabs, pp. 142-149.
169 Ibid., p. 154.
170 Ibid., p. 171.
to fight. When all had failed for the Northern Arab states, including Arab nationalism, the Gulf States became easy scapegoats, especially for Saddam.

Such being the situation, Saddam believed that the area of Kuwait, with all the oil fields, rightfully belonged to his Arab empire. Saddam invaded Kuwait in an attempt to benefit his country in terms of oil profits. The Americans came to defend the Kuwaitis and drive Saddam back to Iraq. Desert Storm put a final end to any remnants of Arab nationalism still remaining with Saddam and his Baath party. The failure of Saddam to conquer Kuwait also broke his countrymen. They had to either face “the enemy in the front [or] the execution squads at their backs.”171 Given this situation, a lot of Iraqis tried to make a run for it; they were sick of Saddam’s ideology which achieved nothing. Saddam had first waged a war against Iran for a decade and then tried to conquer Kuwait. Both missions achieved nothing other than the status quo and the loss of millions of Iraqi soldiers.

The Americans pulled out of Desert Storm quickly. They did not want to have another Vietnam. America liberated Kuwait and left; it did not go further in terms of the situation within Iraq. The Americans did encourage the Shiites to rebel against Saddam and they attempted to overthrow him. However, without American backing and due to the division of Arabs, the revolt failed. Saddam has always been suspicious of the Shiites, especially during the Kuwait war because he worried about the Shiites helping the Shiites in Kuwait. Saddam turned the Iraq-Kuwait war into a Sunni versus Shiite ideology. The result on the Shiites as a result of this attempted rebellion was merciless mass killings in the Shiite areas to repress them back into submission.

The Shiites were not the only group Saddam oppressed; he also severely repressed the Kurds because he suspected rebellion. Saddam’s government in Iraq operated on the basis of keeping any possibility of rebellion to a bare minimum. Saddam had always suspected the Kurds of defecting with other Kurds in Iran, most importantly during the Iran-Iraq war, when Saddam murdered about 180,000 Kurds by gassing their communities in Northern Iraq.

After Desert Storm, Kuwait became dependant on American power for protection. Even though its people resented the fact of foreign dependence, they needed American protection against people like Saddam.¹⁷² Likewise, America benefits from the relationship with the Gulf States because of oil. The people in the Arab world struggle with the idea that they have to rely on America for support because they want to be independent of foreigners. After the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, America has become the sole superpower left in the world. As such, small states within the Middle East who need protection from aggressive neighbors and who also have oil gain an automatic friendship with America and the West. Even though they might not like it, they have no other option given the current circumstances in the Arab world.

¹⁷² Ajami, The Dream Palace of the Arabs, p. 186.
Chapter 4:

The Islamic Response
After the defeat of the 1967 war with Israel, the Arabs fell into the temptation to retreat back into their old traditions because of the amount of stress on them to respond to this defeat, especially with the way Arab nationalism had been built as a great cause and ideology for the Arab world. For the Arabs, their swift defeat by tiny Israel insulted their whole way of life. Arabs had to take a step back and reevaluate their ways of life. 173

Arabs tried to find many reasons for their defeat. One prominent reason among intellectuals was the failure of the Arabic language to revolve. The Arabic language had the same form as it did one-thousand years ago. Unlike other languages, it had not changed so that people might be more able to express themselves and communicate clearly. Rather, mastery of the Arabic language depended on one’s mastery of style, not necessarily one’s knowledge of the language. The language evaluated people on their ability to master the style and prose of Arabic; people could not be evaluated based on their ideas. The Arabic language distracted the Arabs from political leaders with promising ideas and plans and attracted Arabs to leaders who could romanticize the language. Thus, these intellectuals linked political reform with the reform of the Arabic language. 174

Other Arab intellectuals such as Sadeq Al-Azm, place the blame on the inadequacy of the Arab social and moral order. With the Arab’s defeat, people began to question the worth of the current social order. Azm points out how Russia made the most of its defeat in 1905; how society responded by radical politics and eventually the Bolshevik Revolution, which transformed the old social order. Such a happening, Azm

174 Ibid., pp. 33-35.
reasons, should have happened in the Arab world; however, Arab officials and critics tended to place the blame elsewhere rather than take responsibility for the defeat.\textsuperscript{175}

Because of the tribal culture of the Arab world, Arab society had difficulty confronting the modern state. The modern Arab states did not have the institutions or societal bonds that Western nation states had. This left most Arabs at their own individual fears of the future. They did not have the same feeling of belonging to a nation as many Westerners have. Arab society’s attempt at modernization was always middle of the road; they could never fully commit themselves to one idea or movement. In order for a society to transform, or revolutionize, the society has to be behind a movement one-hundred percent. Since the Arab world could never make up its mind, it never evolved or changed.\textsuperscript{176}

This critique of Arab society by the intellectuals led to the post-1967 radicalism that occupies the minds of some Arab intellectuals. According to Azm, “tradition must be overthrown if people are to overcome their anxieties and inadequacies.”\textsuperscript{177} The post-1967 radicals attempted to look into Arab society for the reasons why Arab society had failed, as shown by the 1967 war with Israel. This set the stage for new forms of ideologies to emerge, since Arab nationalism had been defeated.

An example of a movement that failed because of the Arab’s inability to commit to an ideology is the Ba’th party. The people who created the Ba’th party formed it based on European ideas of nationalism as an answer to the problems of the Arab world. Idealistically, the Ba’th party was to base social relations on love. In reality, the rulers who claimed Ba’th ideology became very authoritarian and used the military to keep

\textsuperscript{175} Ajami, The Arab Predicament, p. 38.
\textsuperscript{176} Ibid., pp. 40-42.
\textsuperscript{177} Ibid., p. 44.
other sects quiet. Tribal loyalties had existed for centuries and no new ideology was
going to change that. As the rulers grew increasingly authoritarian, the lofty ideas on
which the Ba’th party rested began to fade away. The rulers of the Ba’th party only cared
about securing offices for their relatives and securing their clans position as a ruling
power. The Ba’th party even split, so that the Ba’th party in Syria hated the Ba’th party
in Iraq. The ruling powers would try to eliminate other tribal rivalries while in power.
The Ba’th party essentially became an extension of the tribal rivalries of Arab society.¹⁷⁸

While a certain part of the Arab population had rebelled against religion during
the modernization era and the Arab nationalism era, a lot of people had not. As ideas of
nationalism spread, so did its relation with Islam. The fundamentalists argued that the
Arabs had lost the war because they had lost their faith in Islam and because they had
deviated from their religious ways. In the fundamentalist point of view, the modern
world is waging a third crusade against the Arabs. The third crusade takes the form of
political independence; instead of using armies, this crusade tries to penetrate the mind of
the Muslim and to rearrange it. In this fundamentalist view, the Western world is trying
to defeat the Muslims with their ideas and culture.¹⁷⁹

One fundamentalist, Muhammad Jalal Kishk, claimed this third crusade by the
West against the Muslim world. In his view, the West had imported ideas such as
Marxism and secular nationalism in an attempt to divide the minds of Muslims so that
Europe would be able to conquer the Muslim world and mind. Kishk blames the new
military elites who emerged in the new nationalistic states for their part in securing as
much wealth and power as possible, and then dividing that wealth and power among their

¹⁷⁸ Ajami, The Arab Predicament, pp. 50-53.
¹⁷⁹ Ibid., pp. 61-62.
own clans as opposed to the whole Muslim world. Kishk also lays blame with the intellectual radicals, such as Adonis and Sadeq al-Azm, for undermining the foundations of belief, importing foreign doctrines and creating a culture of moral uncertainty and chaos which eventually led to a factionalized society; those who wanted modernization and the West, and those who did not.\(^{180}\)

According to Kishk, revolutions must be authentic for each society. For the Islamic world, Islamic movements that originate from the social conditions in the Muslim world are the only movements that can claim any type of authenticity. Kishk uses the situation in Algeria, where Islam played a key role in kicking out the French, as proof of the authenticity and power of a united Islam. Kishk’s viewpoint obviously relies heavily on the clash of civilizations model. He relies on the belief that Muslim Arabs are being threatened with extinction as justification for his harsh approach against the West.\(^{181}\)

Organizations such as the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt should not be viewed as setbacks or negative forces because the group works “a praiseworthy constructive endeavor to build a modern society on a basis of humanity and justice.”\(^{182}\)

Both Kishk and the Muslim Brotherhood preach a populist Islam. This type of Islam is an active and militant brand of faith that believes any legitimate rule must be Islamic. The populist Islam appeals to the mass of poorer people living in the Arab world. This type of Islam also deeply opposes corruption and inequality which characterizes most Arab societies. It widens the rift between the secular ruling elite and


\(^{181}\) Ibid., pp. 67-70.

\(^{182}\) Ibid., p. 71.
the poor Muslim majority. Coupled with the situation of the ruling elite, this form of Islam became very popular among the poorer classes of Arab society.\footnote{Ajami, \textit{The Arab Predicament}, p. 73.}

The conservative fundamentalist Islamists had a more radical goal of liberating the Muslims from the capitalist and socialist systems that ruled the world. These Muslims believed that secularism had developed in the West and that the idea of separation of church and state came from the West as well. Islamic society was not meant to be under the influence of the West. They look towards Islam’s emergence out of Arabia and how the prophet Muhammad served as both a religious and political leader, so the separation of church and state made no sense to the Islamic world.\footnote{Ibid., pp. 74-75.}

One such leader living in Beirut, Salah al Din al Munajjid, wrote a book decrying nationalism and Marxism, both on which he placed blame for the decline of the Arabs. Specifically he pointed towards Nasser and the Ba’th Party because each offered a false doctrine of hope. Munajjid also claims that Zionism and Communism were both ways for the Jews to solve their problem and to serve Jewish interests. Munajjid’s lashing at the Jews demonstrates how some forms of radical Islam seek to place blame on old enemies to justify their defeat and current situation. Blaming someone else other than themselves makes it easier for them, yet also slows any potential improvement of the situation because they will not recognize their problem.\footnote{Ibid., pp. 76-78.}

The creation of Israel and Israel’s success in the Six Day War showed Arabs that religion and modernity could work together. The previous calls for a secular state as a way to modernity had been disproved. Israel was both more scientifically advanced and

\footnote{Ajami, \textit{The Arab Predicament}, p. 73.}  
\footnote{Ibid., pp. 74-75.}  
\footnote{Ibid., pp. 76-78.}
more religious than the Arabs. Israel served as both an example and as a challenge to the Arabs.\footnote{Ajami, The Dream Palace of the Arabs, p. 81.}

After the defeat of the 1967 war, the radical Arab states who had espoused the ideas of Arab nationalism had suffered a humiliating defeat. The more conservative Arab states had remained for the most part out of the picture. The conservative states now had more money and more prosperity because of oil than the radical states. The radical states now had to rely on the more conservative ones for support because they had lost everything in the name of Arab nationalism. Empowering the more conservative states shifted the power structure in the Arab world from the more liberal states to the conservative ones.\footnote{Ibid., pp. 83-85.}

Radical Islamic groups began forming in response to the Westernized, secular regimes that alienated the people. In Iran, the US backed shah ignored Iran’s Islamic past, he emphasized its pre-Islamic roots and distanced himself from the population. In Egypt, the British-supported kings tended to do the same. Only in Saudi Arabia did Western powers not intervene in the formation of the government. Although the Saudi regime has become more and more repressive, it is the only country out of the three that has not had a huge political overthrow of power, mainly because Ibn Saud established a kingdom on his own initiative and because he shared the wealth of the kingdom. In Iran and Egypt, the citizens saw the Europeanized elite becoming richer and richer while they themselves had to struggle to survive each day. As the people became more and more impoverished, they began looking towards radical groups for material support and for spiritual support. As the major cities in Iran and Egypt became more Europeanized, the
people who moved there from a rural, Islamic background suffered a major culture shock. They left their conservative surroundings and entered into a very liberal and modern environment which contradicted their Islamic background.

Radical Islam has sky-rocketed since the 1970’s in response to the failures of Western-style governance, as its leaders distanced themselves from Islam and did not economically provide for the people. This kind of Islam, which blames all outsiders as infidels for all the ills of Muslim society, and whose remedy is the closing of those societies to modernity, is the fastest growing version of Islam in the world. Poor political and economic conditions have only made it that much easier for Islamic radical groups to grow. Most Arab states have an ‘island’ of secular, autocratic leaders and another ‘island’ of religious authority. They bargain with each other so that the autocratic leadership can stay in power as long as the mullahs get monopoly over religious practice and education. This system has not been forced to modernize because most of these states have a lot of oil. Oil money and foreign aid has allowed the governments to continue functioning as such without ever opening their economies or modernizing their education systems. When oil money decreased, more impoverished people resort to Islamic radicalism. When these groups began to attack the government, the government expelled them but did not change the radical religious schools. Economically, these countries need to modernize to survive, but doing so threatens their religion, as preached by the religious authorities, who have a bargain with the rulers. It’s

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188 Rushdie, Salman, “Yes, This Is About Islam.” From Coursepacket by Professor Kathleen Bailey, Boston College, Spring Semester 2005.
a vicious cycle that only leads to an increase in poverty, dictatorship and religious anti-modernism.  

The Arab states have had to increase their repression on their local populations after the 1967 war with Israel because they still needed to prove to their populations that they could run the state effectively. They had no room for radicals who spoke against the state or the states’ tactics. The authoritarian regimes became even more authoritarian. Any possible threat of dissent had to be demolished so that other factions within the state would not follow suit and eventually cause the collapse of the whole state infrastructure.

Ayatollah Khomeini was able to cause such a shift in the Muslim world because his themes of: “the power of the foreigner (read the American) in Muslim life, the wicked ways of the privileged, the sanctity of the disinherited who rise up to inherit the earth free from the hold of oppressors, the right of Islam to rule and to dispense with secular governments of the monarchic and republican varieties” had a strong resonance with the majority of the Iranian population who had been isolated from Iran’s version of westernization.

Saddam Hussein rose to power in Iraq on the back of Arab nationalism. A lot of the Arab world admired Saddam because of his strict leadership and the ideals he preached of Arab nationalism. He brutally suppressed the Kurds and the Shiites while Arab leaders in Beirut, Amman and Cairo ignored his wrongdoings. Saddam held such leverage that he eventually decided to challenge American influence in Kuwait. Saddam led his troops into Kuwait claiming Arab and Sunni supremist ideals. The swift defeat of

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190 Friedman, Thomas L. “Breaking the Circle.”
192 Ibid., p. 11.
his army, 100,000 Iraqi soldiers killed in a very short and one-sided war, finally began to break the last remnants of Arab nationalistic ideas.\textsuperscript{193}

The rise and fall of Egypt “epitomizes the possibilities and limits of Arab history.”\textsuperscript{194} Egypt had been the leading Arab country during the era of Arab nationalism and now it suffers like the poor Arab countries. The conservative Gulf States have gained prominence because of their oil wealth. These countries share enough of their oil wealth with their citizens to maintain stability and contentment among the minority sects. “Better sixty years of tyranny than one day of anarchy, goes an Islamic maxim, better the sultan you know than the one you don’t.”\textsuperscript{195} This historical attitude towards leaders in the Arab world is also a reason why the Arab world never fully revolted when given the chance during the era of Arab nationalism.

Islamic fundamentalism that supposedly is sweeping the Arab world is more in response to the realization that the Arab states no longer have the same amount of power as they did five centuries ago. Western culture advances in the area, along with the Arab world entering the global economy, perfectly complements the return of Islamic fundamentalism. When an outside culture, such as the West, begins to influence the Arab world, people either respond to it by embracing the new changes or by crawling back into long held traditions. The Islamic fundamentalists feel threatened by the West’s way of life and fear losing their own; this is why they focus more on tradition and purity of their ancestor’s ways. When people in a society become so focused on returning to tradition, they often overkill that tradition and misuse it. The return of strict tradition to an area is most often a sign that the tradition is about to end. They use the tradition as a last minute

\textsuperscript{194} Ibid., p. 17.
\textsuperscript{195} Ibid., p. 26.
source of authenticity to try to evade the integration of their societies into the world economy and the West.\textsuperscript{196}

The results of the Six Day War had all the ingredients of a revolutionary situation: “military defeat, internal exhaustion, the disaffection of intellectuals, a generation gap that was rapidly turning into an abyss, scathing critiques of the most sacred facets of a culture’s life.”\textsuperscript{197} Despite all the ingredients, nothing really happened. For a brief three years, a lot of people placed their bets on the Palestinian movement. However, most Arab states did not care that much about the Palestinians. Because of the despair caused by the 1967 War, many people would follow whatever movement offered them hope. Jordan and eventually Lebanon with the help of Syria expelled the Palestinian Liberation Organization from their countries, in the most brutal ways. In Jordan, the troops who bombed the Palestinian refugee camps thought of the fight as one between the king, who claims descent from the Prophet, and the atheist, foreign, Palestinians. They framed it as believers versus unbelievers. This usage of Islam as a political authority completely destroyed and contradicted any notions of Arab unity, or Arab responsibility for the Palestinians.\textsuperscript{198}

The radicals who had challenged the Arab order only lasted a brief six years between the 1967 and 1973 wars with Israel. The new Arab dominant order formed by Saudi Arabia and the oil states had preserved a conservative type region. Secular nationalism had merely been a scapegoat for the Arabs:

“Nowhere has this type of nationalism resulted in an escape from economic dependence and underdevelopment. The only achievements of the great Arab

\textsuperscript{196} Ajami, \textit{The Arab Predicament}, pp. 172-173.
\textsuperscript{197} Ibid., p. 174.
\textsuperscript{198} Ibid., pp. 175-177.
nation in the field of power politics and national prestige have been the work of the oil potentates – the most fundamentalist and conservative of Muslims – in selling their oil with the haggling of skilled businessmen and technocrats (but whose keffias, agals, and abayas enable them to be associated with Bedouin tradition). As for the ideal of the united Arab nation, it has grown even harder in the face of the evident development of regional nationalisms (Egyptian, Algerian, Moroccan, and so on) to maintain that its realization is hampered only by the “plots” of Israel and “imperialism.”\footnote{Ajami, The Arab Predicament, p. 189.}

The conservative Arab states had gained the new power in the Arab world through their use of oil and business techniques. The radical states that had been hotbeds for Arab nationalism had lost their power.

In Lebanon, the Maronite Christians decided that they no longer wanted to be considered Arab. The National Pact of 1943 stated that the Christians would accept that Lebanon had an Arab face as long as the Muslims would not pursue the concept of Arab unity. The Maronites had formed an alliance with Israel in 1967; this marked their decision to part with the Arab system, as an alliance with Israel was the ultimate blow to the Arabs. The Maronites thought of themselves as a different, higher breed than the Arabs. Whereas originally the Maronites wanted majority rules for the country, since they were in the majority, they now had formed an alliance with Israel because they felt themselves to be in the minority. Despite the fact that the governmental system had originally been based on proportional representation, the Maronites did not want the
system to be updated because the Muslims would now have the majority. This type of thinking caused a fifteen year civil war in Lebanon.

In two cases, that of Palestine and Lebanon, any concept of Arab unity had been smashed. The Arab nations were too concerned with their own power and wealth to give anything more than lip service to the Palestinian movement. The Maronite Christians thought of themselves as being superior and different than Arab Muslims, even though they both lived in the same region and Maronite Christians had been a part of the Arab world since the beginning of their existence. The idea of Arab nationalism was simply a myth; it obviously had no evidence as Arabs within their own countries could not even get along because they still focus on old, historical divisions.

Saudi Arabia has been successfully able to balance commitments to both the United States and the Islamic world. Saudi Arabia inherently possesses the highest degree of religious authority because it contains Mecca and Medina, host cities to the prophet Mohammed. The United States maintains a relationship with Saudi Arabia because of Saudi Arabia’s massive amount of oil. The Saudis maintain a relationship with what most Islamic radicals would consider an infidel state because the Saudis believe that their relationship with the Americans could be maintained without influences of Western culture.

Saudi Arabia, in addition to the other oil wealthy states of the Gulf region, maintains a relationship with the United States because of their desire for technology and weapons from American culture. It is selective Western cultural adaptation; they take what they want from American culture without realizing that in order for the technology

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201 Ibid., pp. 200-201.
to work to the benefit that it has in the United States, they need to import all aspects of American culture. These Arab powers wanted technology in hopes of bringing Arab culture out of its backwardness. However, along with the technology purchased from the West, there also come the foreigners who know how to operate the technology. This reminds the countries that even though they are trying to use Western methods to pull up their society, they still depend on the West.\textsuperscript{202}

Some powerful interests in the Arab world were overwhelmingly drawn to America and American interests; others completely revolted against the idea and drew further back into their Islamic culture. Both sides’ willingness to either go with or against the new idea demonstrates the culture’s vulnerability and future surrender. Neither side wanted to maintain the current situation; the two options were either further forward or further backward. New wealth in the Arab world encouraged those who had it to modernize and forget about the poorer ones. Their interests in foreign ideas and affairs and their embarrassment of their backward sectors gave Islamic fundamentalists the base to revolt against them and their Western counterparts. And in terms of which one has more authenticity, tradition has the upper hand because tradition can “assert itself and its uniqueness at a time when technology is seemingly blurring the distinctions between cultures, when models of development tantalize people with promises that in the end they fail to deliver.”\textsuperscript{203} The Islamic fundamentalism is the Arab response to the successes of the West. It is authentic to the Arabs and the only way they feel they can assert their culture’s greatness.\textsuperscript{204}

\textsuperscript{202} Ajami, \textit{The Arab Predicament}, pp. 202-203.
\textsuperscript{203} Ibid., p. 207.
\textsuperscript{204} Ibid., pp. 206-208.
The new form of Islamic fundamentalism and radicalism is more dangerous than previous Islamic conservatives because it points to the errors of those who claim to be following Islam. The wealthy Muslims of the Gulf States and of Saudi Arabia spend much of their young lives in the United States receiving education and living according to American culture and norms, while their poorer counterparts back home still live in poverty. This type of divide is where the new Islamic fundamentalists take aim. Arab society will not reform with the money gained from oil wealth because all the capital is fleeing to the West and to America; none of the higher educated class wants to remain in their old, backward countries. They want to benefit from the West as much as they can, while still claiming to be Muslims.205

The failure of the state elites to reinvest into their societies has been one reason for the increase in resurgent Islam. The state’s authoritarian ways and blocking of ideas contrary to their Western interests is another. The moderate revolutions attempted from the top have failed and the Western world keeps closing in on the Arabs and their culture. The Western culture and ideas come into the countries because the countries own elites invite them. The fact that those who do not want to embrace the West have to deal with it now in their own countries increases their anxieties and their desire for a form of rebellion that will reassert their culture. Islamic fundamentalism offers the most authentic way of rebelling.206

The relations between the state and society in Arab-Muslim countries are contradictory towards each other. The privileged elite class wants to integrate with the West or at least wants to modernize so that their ruling class can gain the benefits. They

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205 Ajami, The Arab Predicament, pp. 209-211.
206 Ibid., p. 212.
do not, however, bestow these benefits on the majority of their populations. The vast
majority of people living in these countries find Islam the most convenient way to rebel.
Islam gives religious justification to the way they feel. Islam speaks against corruption
and all the other evils committed by the ruling class at the expense of the non-elite class
of the population. Minority sects form these ruling classes in Syria, Lebanon and Iraq.
The unequal access to state power serves as a continual grievance for these populations as
they turn to Islam for answers.  

The forms of opposition to these governments has taken root in mosques because
of the religious tone of the rebellion and because most ruling elites would never touch a
mosque. The ruling elites know that if they disrupt Islam their reign of power will be
over. The elites have to allow some form of dissent in mosques in order to keep their
monopoly of power. They have to balance the amount of dissent tolerated in mosques
with their control of power in order to prevent a revolution or coup d’etat. The Iranian
Revolution had so much success because most of the people had had enough of the
corruption, foreign influence and unequal distribution of wealth under the shah. The
majority populations in most countries in the Arab world resent the ruling elites who do
little for the rest of the country. The ability of the ruling elites to balance their benefits as
a ruling class and the amount of freedom or social services to the population is what
determines the success of a governing class in the Arab-Muslim world.  

Political and economic power allows a ruling class to define the culture of the
time. After 1973, Islamic fundamentalists directed their dissatisfaction at the cultures
towards: foreign entrepreneurs, the ‘collaborators’ who help the Westerners, and the

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ruling authorities who allow Westerners to do business in Arab countries. The fact that Westerners benefited from Arab lands while the majority of the populations in those countries did not because of the ruling class built up resentment among the majority of the population towards the current ruling system in their countries. Islam serves as a consolation to these ills because of the issues of inequality, injustice and authenticity. The ruling class would not share its wealth with the majority of the population and their wealth came from foreign sources, the West. Islam became a way for people to address their grievances from an authentic, respected viewpoint.\textsuperscript{209}

The reason the Islamic fundamentalists reacted to the influences of the West in their countries was because the Westernization of their culture did not include the social system that allowed the West to succeed, the ideas of political freedom and liberalism that accompanies the West, and the arts, books and counterculture that also comprises the West. The West in the Arab world comprises materialism only. The real West includes a mix of ideas, techniques, technologies and social institutions. In other words, the Arab world wants a shortcut to the successes of the West. The Arab political elites who encouraged Westernization only wanted the benefits from the West’s type of lifestyle; they did not want all the conditions that solidified the base for Western existence.\textsuperscript{210}

Arabs have turned to Islamic fundamentalism because it is the ideology they know best. It serves as an effective weapon to counter Westernization. The Arabs want an authentic version of their own way of living because they feel their world has been created and controlled by others. In addition, the media and human rights organizations constantly broadcast the barbarity or backwardness of their countries and ways of life.

\textsuperscript{209} Ajami, The Arab Predicament, pp. 220-221.
\textsuperscript{210} Ibid., pp. 243-244.
To cope with this type of judgment and living situation, Arabs either try to embrace and succeed with the West or they retreat back into their ancestral ways of living in an attempt to find an authentic form of their culture that challenges those people who judge and scrutinize them. Islamic fundamentalism affords that authenticity and also judges against those who criticize the Arab – Muslim way of life.\textsuperscript{211}

\textsuperscript{211} Ajami, \textit{The Arab Predicament}, pp. 250-251.


Rushdie, Salman, “Yes, This Is About Islam.” From Coursepacket by Professor Kathleen Bailey, Boston College, Spring Semester 2005.