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ARAB FEDERALISM

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ABSTRACT

The persistence of the question of Arab unity renders the search for future roads, and the study of possible developments in the light of feasibility and limitation, a need as well as a responsibility. However, before discussing tomorrow's prospects one ought to learn the lesson's of yesterday's experiences, particularly where the causes of failure in past attempts are concerned. Two experiments stand out: The Arab League, an association of sovereign states that failed mainly because of its looseness, lack of efficiency and absence of authority vested in the organization. The United Arab Republic, on the other hand, was a tight merger between two Arab states that encountered many difficulties arising from regional differences and disparities. Both experiments serve to illuminate the future path towards Arab unity.

The failure of both experiments: the loose and the tight, raised the question of federalism as a third road to Arab unity which would provide for the desired efficiency and yet be able to furnish solid grounds for flexibility where regional disparities are concerned, and prevent regional hegemony in general. Here again it was deemed necessary to look into the conditions of the "great" federalisms on the eve of federating and apply Prof. K.C. Wheare's pre-requisites of the federal system of government on the present state of conditions in the Arab World. Under "Two Suggested

Ways" the thesis discusses the "17th of April Accord" 1963 between Egypt, Syria and Iraq, and the Egyptian-Iraqi Agreement of October 1964, since both 'Agreements' suggest new roads to Arab unity, whose chances of success or failure are still under discussion and whose feasibility remains to be seen. Both ways, however point out a definite tendency towards adopting a federal system of government in future unification schemes . The concluding part discerns certain necessary changes in the Arab political conditions that would be conducive to adopting, or moving towards adopting, a federal system of government in the future.

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INTRODUCTION

The twentieth century witnessed an unparalleled scientific progress, technological break-throughs in the field of natural sciences, and worldwide ideological trends and divisions in the political domain. Technology and science rendered the globe an increasingly shrinking world where the search for larger communities, for economic, military and political alliances became a persistent necessity if not an indispensability. The European Common Market and its Communist counterpart in Europe "comecon" furnish grounds for great unities conceivable and may be realizable in the life span of the present generation. A more ambitious indicative of this trend was President Kennedy's Grand Design for an Atlantic Partnership significantly proposed during the celebration of American Independence (1963) from Europeans some two centuries ago.

For the Afro-Asians the Twentieth Century is a historical epoch marked by a three dimensional urge: Independence from colonial rule, economic development and great unities. The third part of this urge seems to be the most difficult to achieve.

The Arab national movement was animated by these kindred urges, emancipation from foreign domination, socio-economic development and political unification.¹ The corresponding ideas of independence, progress and unity jointly became the principal components of the

¹ Fayez A. Sayegh, Arab Unity: Hope and Fulfillment (New York: The Devin-Adair Co., 1958), p. 5.

total concept of Arab nationalism. Mr. Cecil Hourani defines the Arab national movement as "an effort to recreate and reintegrate the Arab community; to bring this community once more into the larger community of active and creative societies."¹ Unity seems to be a natural and logical outflow of the concept of Arab nationalism, whereby independence and unity can be seen as being self-determination and self-realization.

In his discussion on greater integration in the Afro-Asian world Prof. Rupert Emerson states, "a people profoundly united in language culture and tradition and possessing a territory not seriously encumbered by alien intrusion could certainly be expected to work together in political harness more effectively and to survive domestic and international crises with greater unity than one not so endowed."² This statement raises two questions as far as the question of Arab unity is concerned: These questions pertain to whether the Arabs are "so endowed" or not and if so why did they so far fail to "work together in political harness etc."

The first chapter in this thesis attempts to answer whether the Arabs are "so endowed" or not that is whether the Arabs are united in language, culture etc. or not. Having answered this question

¹ Cecil A. Hourani, "The Arab League in Perspective," The Middle East Journal, Vol. I (April, 1947), p. 126.

² Rupert Emerson, From Empire to Nation: The Rise to Self-Assertion of Asian and African Peoples (Boston: Beacon Press, 1960), p. 104.

the study turns to examine two experiments, the Arab League as a loose association of sovereign states, its built-in weaknesses and causes of failure, and the United Arab Republic as a unitary system of government and a valuable experiment in Arab unity.¹ In an attempt to look for a possible third phase of Arab unity and to inquire into the feasibility of a federal system in the Arab world, it was necessary to look into the pre-requisites of the federal system of government based on Prof. K.C. Wheare's study of the subject. However, the comparative study is meant merely as a guiding light on the subject and not as a normative imitateable pattern. Under "Two Suggested Ways" the thesis deals with the "17th of April Accord 1963," between Syria, Iraq and Egypt, and the Iraqi-Egyptian Agreement of October 1964. The concluding chapter deals with the question of the necessary changes in the political conditions before the question of a federal system of government prevails over future steps towards political integration in the Arab world.

It is with deep humility and trepidation that I approach this subject; the study however is no more than an attempt at scratching the surface of a question that has been largely ignored by scholars of Arab politics.

¹ There is no reference to experiments that did not materialize such as the Hashemite "Arab Union" between Iraq and Jordan and the federation of Yemen with the U.A.R.

CHAPTER I

AN ARAB NATION

A. What is a Nation?

Do the Arabs constitute a nation "united in language, culture and tradition.. etc." and thus would be able to survive domestic and international crises with greater unity? The question of unity in the Arab world pre-supposes the presence of national ties among the Arabs and thus an inquiry into the problem of Arab unity must start at the beginning: that is Arab nationalism.

Let us first ask, what constitutes a nation? "The nation," states Prof. Emerson, "is a community of people who feel that they belong together in the double sense that they share deeply significant elements of a common heritage and they have a common destiny for the future."¹ The feelings of belonging, however, corresponds to certain factors pertaining to territory language and tradition. Nationalism, like other historical movements has its roots deep in the past, the conditions which made its convergence possible had matured for centuries before they converged at its foundation. If these factors are the elements of nationhood, is it legitimate, from an academic point of view to speak of an "Arab nation?" Do

¹ Emerson, p. 95.

these elements exist? Prof. Edmond Rabbath in 1956 stressed the fact that "the Arab 'Nation' is no longer the myth that some were content to include a quarter of a century ago in the catalog of foreign importations. It is a condition rooted deeply in the feelings of the folk, through which their political aspirations are constantly channelled."¹ Arab nationalists believe that the Arab nationalist idea is the state of mind permeating the large majority of the Arab masses who recognize the nation-state as the appropriate form of political organization. To these the question of Arab nationhood is merely an academic question since this, to them, is an obvious fact. The recognition of this 'fact' did not carry with it a consensus about the method of realization of the nation state nor was it associated with a clear vision as to the conditions conducive to its materialization.

B. Unifying factors in the Arab World

1) The Arabs and the Arab World:

The Arab world consists of those lands wherein the majority of the population is Arab. It extends from the Atlantic ocean on the west to the borders of Iran on the east and from the Taurus mountains to the southern shores of the Mediterranean sea on the north to the Indian ocean and the Steppes of Central Africa to

¹ Edmond Rabbath, "The Problem of Arab Unity," Middle East Forum, Vol. XXXI (April, 1956), p. 9.

the South.¹ The component political entities are members of the Arab League plus certain parts under colonial rule in the Arab Peninsula. What are the basic unifying factors that tie the inhabitants of these lands?

2. Language

"It has been well said that mankind instinctively takes language as the badge of nationality.²" Language is not to be viewed merely as a media for expressing human wants or expressing hopes and aspirations but also as a media of thought relevant to man's spiritual being. "Above all language is both the symbol and the bulwark of people's spiritual unity."³

The Arabic language succeeded in positing itself as the universal medium of communication in the Arab World after the rise of Islam. The fact that the dialects have not developed into independent languages with any basic difference in sentence and structure and vocabulary is indicative of the "spiritual unity of the Arabs even though the Arab World has been divided politically."⁴

Prof. Bernard Lewis believes that "the survival and expansion

¹ Nabih Amin Faris and Mohammed Tawfik Husayn, The Crescent in Crisis; An Interpretive Study of the Modern Arab World (Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 1955), p. 3.

² Emerson, p. 132.

³ Faris, p. 21.

⁴ Ibid., p. 22.

of Arabic meant more than the language itself - more for example than the continued use of Latin in the mediaeval west. With the language came Arab taste and tradition in the choice and treatment of themes.¹ Dr. Rabbath indicates that Arabic language established among the Arabs "a real community of ideas and attitudes."² The Arabs dear their literary heritage; it is a source of pride creating a sense of cultural and historical unity. It was not strange for the Arab national movement to express its consciousness in terms of cultural-literary revival. Prof. Abdul-Aziz Douri points out that Arab Nationalism is a cultural nationalism.³ Mr. S. al-Husari a leading advocate of Arab Nationalism during the past three decades stressed Arabic language as being the cornerstone of Arab Nationalism. This living and enduring bond between the Arabs is growing from day to day with the spread of education and literacy.⁴ Schools, newspapers, magazines, radio television, movies and other modern means of communications facilitate the flow and exchange of ideas remind the Arabs of their brotherhood.

The importance of language subdued the question of racial descent and helped create a feeling of unity and equality among

¹ Bernard Lewis, The Arabs in History (New York: Hutchinson, 1950), p. 132.

² Rabbath, XXXI, p. 9.

³ A.A. Duri, Dirasat Fi al-Quomiyya, (Studies on Nationalism) (Beirut: Dar Attalia, 1959), p. 22.

⁴ This may mean that the gap in national consciousness of intelligentia and masses is closing.

the minorities of the area. Mr. George Antonius states "The connotation of the word Arab gradually came to mean a citizen of that extensive Arab world - not any inhabitant of it but that great majority whose racial descent even when it was not of pure Arab lineage, had become submerged in the tide of Arabization, whose manners and traditions had been shaped in an Arab mould and most decisive of all whose mother tongue is Arabic."¹

3. History and the Sense of Common identity:

A nation is shaped through the experience of elements of a common historical destiny. Indeed the nation requires a substantial degree of pre-existent unity, of actual commonness of historical experience among the people who compose it. A nation, in other words cannot be put together out of a heterogeneous agglomerations of peoples who have made no progress toward a common pattern.² History could from a certain angle be viewed, as a process of integration, a context where a sense of national distinctness unfolds and where national consciousness develops. It is a record of evolution of awareness and self-realization of nationhood. The unfolding of an idea creates through its inner dynamism and its interaction with other forces a state of mind

¹ George Antonius, The Arab Awakening: The Story of the Arab National Movement (London: Hamilton, 1938), p. 18.

² Emerson, p. 150.

favoring its implementation.

The historical impact on the Arab mind is of particular relevance as a unifying factor: "To the Arabs history is not something past, remote and dead, but something real. Arab masses know very little about the ancient civilizations which flourished in the Arab world before Islam, and know still less about the peoples who have built these civilizations. No one will ever find among the Arabs anyone who boasts of Hammabi Esarbaddun, Nebuchadzezzar or Ramses. But everyone knows something and often much about the Prophet Mohammad, Omar, Ali, Khaled and Saladin and mention their deeds with pride."¹ Most Arabs view the present political fragmentation into independent states as a "transient phase of recent intrusion,"² and would consider future unification as a return to the natural order of things. This is strongly correlated with the Arab awareness of their glorious past and their yearning or their hope for restoring their position among nations. This, as Mr. Nehru indicated, is essential for while the Indians were heading toward the modern world, "they wanted some cultural roots to cling on to, something that would give them assurance of their own worth. In every country with a growing nationalism there is this search apart from religion, this tendency to go back to the

¹ Faris, pp. 23-24.

² Najla Izzeddin, The Arab World: Past, Present and Future (Chicago: Regnery, 1953), p. 314.

past."¹ The European Renaissance was marked by a return to Greek literature and philosophy.

The Arab national movement uttered its first cry at a secret gathering of certain members of the scientific society. One of the members composed a poem in the form of an ode to patriotism. In substance the poem was an incitement to Arab insurgence; it sang the achievements of the Arabs of the glories of Arabic literature and of the future that the Arabs might fashion for themselves by going to their own past for inspiration.² The inspiration of the Arab past pointed towards a regeneration where the unified efforts of the Arabs are needed for the achievement of progress and glory. History provided the Arab national movement with the view of the possibility and feasibility of a united Arab nation.

4. Religion:

It is difficult to pass sweeping generalizations about the bearing of religion on nationalism; it may even be said that the rise of nationalism in Europe coincided with a decline in the hold of religion.

This is not the case with Arabism and Islam. The relationship is of immense importance and the contact between the two took place

¹ Emerson, p. 152.

² Antonius, p. 54.

on many fronts and in many different forms. The Declaration of the Union Accord of April 17, 1963 declared Islam the religion of the state, testified that "religion is one of the fundamental elements on which the Arab society bases its life and future side by side with all material elements which religion upholds."¹

In its relationship with Islam, Arab nationalism reveals basic differences from the Western pattern: In the West it was logical to separate nationalism from religion for the latter was foreign to European nature and history; Christianity was a doctrine of ethics preaching about the world to come in a language which was not their own and which did not express the needs of their society and which forms no intrinsic part of their history. To the Arabs Islam was not merely a doctrine for the world to come nor merely abstract ethics but also expressed their universal feelings and their outlook on life. It was the most emphatic expression on the unity of their personality where expression, feeling and thought are unified, contemplation and action, the self with destiny. Over and above that it magnificently portrayed their language and literature, the greatest part of their national history. It was not possible to commemorate one of their heroes as an Arab and neglect the fact of him being a Moslem. Indeed the relation of Arabism to Islam is not analogous to the rela-

¹ Declaration of Union Accord, Cairo, April 17th.

tion of any nationalism to religion.¹ The relation is singular and unique since the Arab national consciousness coincided with the bestowal of the heavenly message of Islam which they carried to the rest of the world. Mohammad is the Arab national hero, for he unified the Arabs gave them coherence and solidarity equipped them with faith and greatness and a humanitarian universal message. The Koran preserved the Arabic language during the Arab dark ages under the Ottoman rule and forged uniformity of outlook among the Arabs. From the sociological aspect Islam as a worldly all-embracing system contributed to Arab nationalism through its unified social system which defines individual and family relations and personal behaviour. It is also regarded by its followers as a science and a culture and a history. Widespread similarities in the Arab world such as similarity of family organization, mentality, individual and collective behaviour are to a great extent the results of Arabs being Moslems and of their being within the social and political institutions of Islam.² In spite of the fact that Islam no longer occupies a prominent place in the Arab political scene, yet as a civilization and as a mode of life and feeling and thought remains the background of the Arab national move-

¹ Michel Aflaq, Fi Sabeel al-Ba'ith, (on the Road of the Ba'th) Beirut: Dar Attalia', 1959, p. 49.

² Faris, pp. 26-28.

ment. Prof. Joseph Schacht comments on the inter-relatedness of Arab nationalism and Islam as follows: "Modern Arab nationalism would be unthinkable without Islam not only because it has grown out of it within living memory but for reasons which go back far into the past. The prophet Muhammad made Islam the first national cause of the Arabs, Islam came into being in Arabia and passed through its first decisive stages in an Arab society, the Arabs were its first supporters and carried it far beyond their boundaries. Islam has become an essential part of their mental make-up directly in the case of Muslim Arabs, and as an essential ingredient of the Arab civilization in the case of non-Muslim Arabs. It is through Islam that the great majority of present-day Arabs have become Arabs at all."¹

Mr. Michel Aflaq, himself a Christian, explains the relevance of Islam to the Christian Arab: "The Arab Christians will find out, when their national consciousness is fully brought to light and when they regain their genuine identity, that Islam is a national culture for them which they have to assimilate, understand and value as the most precious thing in their Arabism."² Thus Islam as a religion is a common bond and a unifying factor between all

¹ Joseph Schacht, "The Islamic Background of the 1960 Idea of an Arab Nation," The Arab Nation: Paths and Obstacles to Fulfillment, ed. William Sands (Fourteenth Annual Conference on Middle Eastern Affairs; Washington, D.C.: Middle East Institute, 1960), pp. 16-23.

² Aflaq, p. 50.

Arabs, Muslims and non-Muslims alike.¹

It seems that the intensification of the Islamic context of Arab nationalism and the continuous indication to the historical inter-relationship of Arabism and Islam was all the more necessary as the national movement had to appeal to the masses particularly in the more traditional societies where Islam plays a dominant role as a social force.

5. Other factors:

a) Common Struggle against foreign powers:

After World War I most of the Arab countries were subjected to Western hegemony through the mandatory system. This was not what the Arabs expected and certainly not what the Arabs asked for. They had raised arms against Turkey in order to achieve independence from foreign powers and unity among various parts of the Arab world. These hopes were recognized by the British representative in Cairo documented in the Hussein-MacMahon correspondence. This resentment against the mandatory system and powers was soon translated into resistance: demonstrations, petitions, riots and armed rebellion, in Syria, Palestine and Egypt. There was immense solidarity throughout the Arab East for any

¹ This may seem to many people more as a normative than an empirical statement. It certainly is not the case among the majority of Lebanese Christians where Arabism is opposed because of its Islamic connotations.

rebellious part expressed in money contributions, volunteers, and co-ordination. The similarity of the fight furthered feelings of unity and proximity of mentality and conditions. A common enemy is a great unifying force if not indeed an indispensable factor in the process of achievement of national unities. With Arab resistance to foreign powers came the Arab refusal to acquiesce in the political fragmentation of Arab society wrought by foreign powers in the Nineteenth Century and the first quarter of the Twentieth: "they rebelled against the post war settlement in its organic totality and rejected each of its aspects. This total rejection furnished additional vigor to the forcefulness of the Arab rejection to political fragmentation."¹

b) Common Destiny:

The Arabs did not counter in their recent history a greater challenge than the implementation of Israel in Palestine the Arab heartland. To the Arabs Israel is a foreign and aggressive presence a constant threat to the security and well-being for the whole region. Israel is a direct menace to all Arab countries which share with her a common border namely Egypt, Lebanon, Syria and Jordan, an indirect threat to the rest of the Arab world. It is still the most urgent living cause and daily reminder of the Arab common destiny. Palestine is a case or rather a cause

¹ Sayegh, p. 53.

that calls for papering over and it reminds the Arabs to play their differences down and their common interests up.

c) Stages of National consciousness:

National consciousness and the idea of Arab Unity passed through different stages which, according to Prof. F. Sayegh could be arranged in the following order: 1. Latent stage, 2. conception, 3. birth, 4. infancy, 5. youth, 6. maturity.¹

The cultural and spiritual themes of the "Arab Awakening" and the Arab revival in the nineteenth century assumed the concept of Arab community and was pan-Arab in scope. "In the beginning, the idea of Arab unity, inarticulate and rudimentary though it was, was characterized chiefly by a creative impulse and a vision reaching to the limits of the Arab world.

With world I a new phase was introduced. The Arab Revolt against the Turks envisaged a unified Arab state in the Arab East (territories under Turkish rule) together with the Peninsula. When it became apparent that the Allies intended to dismember of what was until then a united territory the Arabs resisted these schemes. Throughout the congresses held among representatives from various parts of the Arab East political unity was voiced. This marked the conception of the idea of Arab unity.

With the political fragmentation imposed by the allies in

¹ Ibid., pp. 78-80.

the post-war settlement political unity became a principal element of the Arab national cause. The fight for independence from the foreigner was also a struggle for unity, a restoration of the natural order of things.

Gradually the struggle for political unity became pan-Arab in scope "reflecting the spirit of the Nineteenth century Arab awakening, as well as the new situation of intra-Arab mobility and the budding Arab national consciousness."¹ With the nationalist creed the "metamorphosis of the idea of Arab unity was complete. What it lacked was a plan, a map of the path and the terrain."² The League of Arab States was the first attempt in this direction.

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid.

CHAPTER II

THE LEAGUE OF ARAB STATES

Origins of the League

The Arab national consciousness expressed itself in various forms of solidarity in the inter-war period, when "the popular desire for unity had been present and forceful."¹ Treaties of friendship and good neighborliness were concluded between several Arab states, thus opening up "channels which had been hitherto blocked, for cultural and economic interpretation and for freer play of forces which are slowly shaping the Arab future."² More important still were the "inter-governmental conferences held in the late 1930's for devising common policies, planning common action, or making common representation to outside Powers, with respect to specific Arab problems of concern to all Arabs, notably the Palestine problem."³ The most significant example was the London Round Table Conference of 1939 to which Britain invited the governments of Egypt, Iraq, Trans-Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Yemen to discuss the Palestine issue, thus encouraging Arab collective action.

¹ Sayegh, p. 111.

² Antonius, p. 344.

³ See Sayegh, p. 113.

The second World War accelerated the pace of co-operation, due to war considerations. Britain and the U.S. were forced to implement economic regionalism. This factor, among other things, pointed towards the possibility of organizing the Middle Eastern countries on a regional basis.

Arab officialdom was further encouraged by Antony Eden's statement made on behalf of His Majesty's government, on May 29, 1941:

The Arab world has made great strides since the settlement reached at the end of the last war, and many Arab thinkers desire for the Arab peoples a greater degree of unity than they now enjoy. In reaching out towards this unity they hope for our support. No such appeal from our friends should go unanswered. It seems to me both natural and right that the cultural and economic ties between the Arab countries, and the political ties too, should be strengthened. His Majesty's Government for their part will give their full support to any scheme that commands general approval.¹

This statement, needless to say, was dictated by the best British interests in the light of the political and military situation in the area at that time. George Kirk reports that "in June 1940 Churchill had been warned by Lord Lloyd of the risk of ignoring pan-Arab discontent; but his reply was characterized by over-confidence. The Rashid Ali putsch came as a sharp lesson to the British government, and their change of attitude was immediately reflected in Eden's statement at Mansion House on 29 May

¹ Kirk, p. 334.

1941."¹ There was a widespread hostility towards the British in the area and a rising wave of unrest. Rashid Ali's 'putsch' of 1941, was not the only manifestation of antagonism toward the British Mandate and Britain's policies in the Arab World. Palestine witnessed unprecedented uprisings between 1936 and 1938 signifying Arab resistance and discontent. The war conditions and the precarious position of the Allies in the Middle East necessitated a dramatic but none-the-less drastic and elusive appeal to the Arabs. It would have been an act of lack of political tact to oppose the Arab's yearning for unity forthrightly; the more subtle approach was aimed at "containing" the idea of Arab unity. The creation of an organization that paid lip-service to national aspirations, yet ipso facto preserved the status quo, was the cleverer road to containment, an approach which served to protect the boundaries as set by the Sykes-Picot Agreement (1916).

According to the League's pamphlet, published on the occasion of its fifteenth anniversary "it was not until 1943 that the question of Arab unity was responsibly explored by Arab leaders with a view to translating the popular yearning for unity into a concrete political reality."² This 'concrete political reality' had to be consistent with the world-wide trend towards 'regional organizations' as designed by the war victors, obviously anticipating

¹ Ibid.

² The fifteenth anniversary, Arab League Pamphlet, p. 8.

the formation of the United Nations. These regional organizations, including the Arab League were set up "in order to guarantee security and peace and regulate economic and social relations with the world at large."¹ The "responsible exploration" of the question of Arab unity by Arab leaders followed another statement by Eden. On February 24, 1943 when Eden was asked in the House of Commons whether any steps were being taken to promote a greater cooperation between the Arab states, he replied, "clearly the initiative would have to come from the Arabs themselves."²

This was the green signal. On March 30, of the same year, the Egyptian prime minister Mustafa Nahhas informed the Egyptian parliament that, "after a careful study of the British Foreign Secretary's statement"³ he decided that the Egyptian government should seize the initiative to invite the Arab governments to a friendly meeting to exchange views on the possibility of establishing an Arab union.

Foreign powers with interests in the area, i.e. Britain and France, were soon working against any real steps towards unity and embarked on a campaign for inciting dynastic rivalries, and re-awakening the fears of minorities, especially in Lebanon where the Lebanese Christians have always feared being engulfed by the

¹ Ibid., p. 10.

² Kirk, p. 336.

³ Ibid., p. 338.

surrounding Moslem states. Britain and France correctly calculated that the Lebanese would make their membership in the League conditional unless the present boundaries were legally safeguarded and embodied into the Pact. Amir Abdullah of Trans-Jordan and Nuri as-Sa'id, the Iraqi Premier, called for a 'Greater Syria' presumably under a Hashemite throne. This scheme was opposed by both the Syrian and Lebanese governments. On January 5, 1944 a Lebanese delegation arrived in Cairo. Before leaving Beirut the Lebanese premier Riyad as-Sulh stated that the talks would be based on the principle that Syria and Lebanon being independent countries would endeavour to cooperate with other countries on condition that their independence should not be infringed.¹ After a visit by the secretary-general of the Egyptian Cabinet to Saudi Arabia, King Ibn Saud delegated his private secretary Sheikh Yusuf Yasin to conduct discussions with Nahhas the Egyptian prime minister. On the following day it was announced that the talks had been adjourned until Ibn Saud's views on certain points could be obtained. G. Kirk interpreted this by saying: "it is probable that Ibn Sa'ud was annoyed with Nuri and Nahhas for not having consulted him before starting these negotiations and that he would not have taken part had the British government not urged him to exercise a restraining influence."²

On July 12, 1944 it was announced in Cairo that the Egyptian

¹ Ibid., pp. 337-338.

² Ibid., p. 338.

government had invited the governments of Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Trans-Jordan, Saudi Arabia and the Yemen to a preliminary general meeting in September. The Palestinian delegate was accepted as a full member in the Preparatory Committee in the course of its third meeting.

B. The Alexandria Protocol

The delegations met at Alexandria from September 25, 1944 to October 7 of the same year in the form of a preliminary Committee of the General Arab Conference. At the end of the meeting the Committee promulgated what has later been referred to as the Alexandria Protocol and called for the establishment of an Arab League.¹ They declared in the Preamble their anxiousness "to strengthen and consolidate the ties which bind all Arab countries and direct them toward the welfare of the Arab world, to improve its conditions, insure its future and realize its hopes and aspirations." In response to Arab public opinion the delegations agreed as follows:

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

¹ For details of the Alexandria Protocol see Muhammad Khalil, The Arab States and the Arab League: A Documentary Record, Vol. II: International Affairs (Beirut: Khayats, 1962), pp. 53-56.

The object of the League was designated as "the execution of the agreements which the above states will conclude; to hold periodic meetings which will strengthen the relations between those states; to coordinate their political plans so as to insure their cooperation, and protect their independence and sovereignty against every aggression by suitable means; and to supervise in a general way the affairs and interests of the Arab countries."

The Protocol states that "The decisions of the Council will be binding on those who have accepted them except in cases where a disagreement arises between two member states of the League in which the two parties shall refer their dispute to the Council for solution. In this case the decision of the Council of the League will be binding."

The Protocol gave to the individual states the freedom "to conclude with any other member state of the League, or other powers, special agreements which do not contradict the text or the spirit of the present (League's) dispositions. In no case will the adoption of a foreign policy which may be prejudicial to the policy of the League or an individual member state be allowed."

The Council was empowered with the right to "intervene in every dispute which may lead to war between a member state of the League and any other member state or power, so as to reconcile them." The delegations which met at Alexandria agreed to

form a subcommittee to be composed of members of the Preliminary Committee "to prepare a draft of the statutes of the Council of the League and to examine the political question which may be the object of agreement among Arab States."

Further agreements were reached concerning 'cooperation in economic, cultural, social and other matters', 'consolidation of these ties in the future.' A 'special resolution' was passed "concerning Lebanon emphasizing their respect for its independence and sovereignty in its present frontiers. The Committee adopted a special resolution concerning Palestine" reassuring it as an important part of the Arab World and pledged their full support to the cause of the Arabs in Palestine.

Mr. Cecil Hourani writing in 1947 described the 'Alexandri Protocol' as a "strongly popular document, appealing constantly to 'public opinion throughout the Arab World,' 'the Arab peoples,' and 'the Arab nation'. It was thus infused with the spirit of popular Pan-Arabism. It recognized that the proposed League was only a first step toward a still closer union."¹

Between the Pact and the Protocol

The Pact of the League, although following in general the lines laid down by the Protocol, was a weaker document which

¹ Hourani, pp. 131-132.

safeguarded more carefully and more specifically the sovereignty of the member states. Mr. Hourani explains this in the light of "constitutional changes that took place in Egypt, Syria, Lebanon and Trans-Jordan, and partly as the result of hesitation on the part of some Arab governments."¹ A comparison of the Protocol and the Pact reveals that the former envisaged a progressively increasing surrender of sovereignty, the Pact lays emphasis on its retention. For the Protocol declared that "while expressing its satisfaction at such a happy step the Committee hopes that Arab states will be able in the future to consolidate that step by other steps;" whereas the Prologue of the Pact expressed the desire of the governments in maintaining and establishing connections between the Arab states "on the foundations of respect for the independence and sovereignty of those states." The Pact dropped a clause mentioned in the Protocol that stated: "In no case will the adoption of a foreign policy which may be prejudicial to the policy of the League or an individual member state would be allowed." The Pact binds each member state in Article VIII to "respect the existing regime obtaining in the other League states, regarding it as a (fundamental) right of those states, and pledges itself not to undertake any action tending to alter the regime" whereas the Protocol contained no such clause.

"On March 22, 1945, the Preparatory Committee transformed

¹ Ibid.

itself into a Pan-Arab Conference, and approved and signed the Pact of the League of Arab States."¹

The Pact

The Covenant of the League of Arab States² was devised by Arab officialdom and signed by the heads of states in their sovereign capacity "in order to affirm the close connections and numerous ties which link the 'Arab States' and being desirous of maintaining and establishing these connections on the foundations of respect for the independence and sovereignty of those states." The signatories made it crystal clear that not only were the composing units of the Arab League sovereign states, but also that these states cherished the preservation of their sovereignty and looked upon the other members of the League in the same light.

Article I specified that the League shall be composed of independent Arab States desirous of becoming members. Article II defines the object of the League "to strengthen ties between the participant states, to coordinate their political programmes in such a way as to effect real collaboration between them, to preserve their independence and sovereignty." The article enumerates other fields for collaboration between the participant states "in accordance with the regime and conditions prevailing in each indi-

¹ Sayegh, p. 121.

² For further details of the Pact of the League of Arab States see Khalil, pp. 56-61.

vidual state," in relation to economic and financial affairs, communications, cultural affairs, legal matters, social questions and public health. The third article assigns to the Council of the League the function of giving effect "to such agreements as may be concluded between the participant states." Each state shall have a single vote. Article IV provided for committees on the subjects mentioned under Article II where non-member Arab states may participate. These committees shall be charged with the task of laying down the principles and extent of cooperation. Mediation and reconciliation between member states, should differences arise and should the contending parties have recourse to the Council to settle these differences, is provided for in Articles V and VI.

Articles VII and VIII reveal more distinctly and unequivocally the League's inherent structural weaknesses and ineffectiveness - akin to the weaknesses of the League of Nations - "decisions of the Council by unanimous assent shall be obligatory on all states participant in the League. Decisions of the League by majority (vote) shall be obligatory on those who accept them." The 'sovereign' states surrendered nothing nor committed themselves to any concession, particularly where sovereignty was concerned, "each state participant in the League shall respect the existing regime obtaining in the other League States, regarding it as a fundamental right of those states, and pledges itself not to undertake any action tending to alter that regime." (Article VIII) Article IX provided

for "those Arab states desirous of closer collaboration with each other, and stronger ties than those specified by the Covenant, have a right to conclude such agreements between themselves towards the realization of these objects, as they desire." This article merely recognized the 'right' of states desirous of closer collaboration but did not encourage such a desire, and did not aim at or envisage a closer collaboration from within the League. This recognition of an obvious and natural right was opposed by certain members of the League who wanted the new organization to bar and resist any unitary step between any two or more Arab states. Thus Philip Taqla, the Lebanese Minister of Foreign Affairs, stated in his official capacity on November 22, 1946, the following:

"Lebanon's attitude towards the question of Greater Syria has always been clear, for we do not want Greater Syria - with or without Lebanon. I re-iterate what I had said in the Lebanese Chamber of Deputies: Lebanon has joined the Arab League on the basis of her independence within her present boundaries and on the basis of the independence of each of the other (Arab) states in their own boundaries.¹

On the following day, November 23, 1946 the Syrian Acting Foreign Minister stated before the Syrian Chamber of Deputies:

We have always wanted the idea of federation or unity to be based on dignity and sovereignty, and have opposed the exploitation of this noble idea in order to undermine the independence and sovereignty of any (Arab) country.²

Article XIX provided for the amendment of the Covenant by

¹ Ibid., p. 28.

² Ibid., p. 29.

agreement of two-thirds of the League States, and stipulated that "any state which does not accept the amendment has the right to withdraw on its becoming effective." Article XVIII specified the conditions of withdrawal from the League.

D. Structural Aspects:

As we have already seen from surveying the Pact,^{that} the structure of the League is relatively simple. "It consists of a council, special committees and a secretariat-general. In the course of the ...years of its existence, ..."the League has established two additional specialized councils and several bureaus and the secretariat-general has been organized into a number of departments."¹

1. The Council

The Council of the League is the supreme body where all member-states are represented each having a single vote. The council convenes in ordinary session twice a year - in March and in October and convenes in extraordinary session upon the request of two member-states, whenever the need arises. Representatives of the member-states alternately assume the presidency of the Council at each of its ordinary sessions (Article XV). Articles II, IV-VII, XII, XIII, and XV defined the duties, jurisdiction and proce-

¹ The Arab League: Its Origin - Purposes - Structure and Activities (New York: The Arab Information Center, 1955), p. 13.

dures to be followed in order to execute those tasks which were assigned to the Council. These tasks can be summed up as follows:

- 1) Realization of the objectives of the League (Article II).
- 2) Supervision of treaties concluded by member-states falling within the competence of the League (Article II).
- 3) Cooperation with international bodies to guarantee security and peace and regulate economic and social relations (Article II).
- 4) Deliberations on international disputes which involve member-states (Mediation reconciliation and arbitration (Articles V and VI).
- 5) Determination of the conditions of participation of non-member Arab states in the work of special committee (Article IV).
- 6) Examination of the budget prepared by the Secretary-General and determining the share of the expenses to be borne by each member-state (Article XIII).
- 7) Appointment of the Secretary-General of the League and approving the appointment of his assistants, and establishing the administrative regulations for the Staff. (Article XII).¹

¹ Ibid., pp. 13-14.

2. Special Committees:

Special committees were provided for in order to facilitate close cooperation between member-states in economic and financial affairs, cultural and social affairs, communications and other matters, where members are represented and non-members allowed to participate. "The special committees are charged with the task of laying down the principles of agreement among member-states, in those matters which are within the competence of the committee in question. Such principles, formulated as draft agreements, are then examined by the Council, prior to their submission to the member-states."¹ (Article IV)

3. The Secretariat-General:

Article XII provided for a "Permanent Secretariat-General, consisting of a Secretary-General, Assistant-Secretaries and an appropriate staff of officials." The Council appoints the Secretary-General by a two-thirds majority of the League States. Articles XIII-XVII defined the functions and status of the Secretary-General.

From the Internal Regulations of the Council of the League of Arab States October 13, 1951 and the internal Regulations of the Committees of the League of Arab States October 13, 1951 and the Internal Regulations of the Secretariat-General of the League

¹ Ibid., p. 15.

of Arab States May 10, 1953, the functions of the Secretary-General could be divided into the following:¹

1. Administrative or managerial
2. Representational
3. Technical
4. Political

1. **Administrative functions:** The Covenant of the League as well as the Internal Regulations of the Secretariat-General of the League of Arab States, designate the Secretary-General as the Chief administrative officer of the organization. This invests in him the power to appoint, after due consultations with the League's Council, the Assistant-Secretaries and the principal officers of the League, and the area of responsibility of his deputies and other top assistants. He is responsible for the supervision of personnel, the budget, physical arrangements and meetings.

2. **Representational functions:** The Secretary-General "shall be exclusively responsible to the Council of the League for all acts of the Secretariat-General." He represents the League at International or other conferences and organizations, holds press conferences, issues press releases, makes public addresses and is the top spokesman of the organization.

¹ For further details regarding the Internal Regulations of Secretariat-General refer to Khalil, pp. 82-87 and 88-90.

3. Technical functions: The Internal Regulations require the Secretary-General to attend the meetings of the Council of the League and of the Committees and act in that capacity in all meetings. If he cannot personally attend, he shall name a personal representative. The Secretary-General and his staff are supposed to be the reservoir of expert knowledge. He is supposed to prepare the necessary studies, memoranda, reports, background papers, legal briefs and surveys on a range of topics.

4. Political functions: The Secretary-General uses the positions of his office to influence governments in the achievements of the objectives of the Covenant. He advocates policies and programs of actions in his reports and memoranda to the organs and members of the League. He may discuss any important issues with member governments.

The Selection of the Secretary-General

The selection of the Secretary-General is the responsibility of the Council subject to a two-thirds majority of the member-states. The Internal Regulations specified that the appointment is for five years, open to renewal.

Other bodies

New bodies that were set up after the founding of the League will be covered in the discussion on the development of the League.

E. Development of the League:

The Development of the League witnessed the introduction of new bodies and treaties of cooperation in a variety of fields: cultural, social, economic, military, as well as a number of bureaus for special purposes. Professor F. Sayegh reports that by 1958 "twelve treaties, agreements and conventions, furthering the objectives of 'coordination of policies and measures among member-states', have been concluded: the cultural Treaty, of 1945; the Treaty of Joint Defense and Economic Cooperation, of 1950; the Agreement relating to wires and letters of request, of 1952; the Reciprocal Enforcement of Judgements Agreement, of 1952; the Extradition Agreement, of 1952; the Convention Affecting the Nationality of Arabs Resident in Countries to which They Are Not Related by Origin, of 1952; the Convention of the Arab Union for Wireless Communications and Telecommunications, of 1953; the Convention of the Privileges and Immunities of the League of Arab States, of 1953; the Convention for Facilitating Trade Exchange and the Regulation of Transit Trade, of 1953; the Convention for the Settlement of Payments of Current Transactions and the Movement of Capital, of 1953; the Nationality Agreement, of 1954; and the Arab Postal Union Convention, of 1955."¹

The key to all major developments in the Arab League is the

¹ Sayegh, pp. 135-136. The respective date refers to the actual approval of each agreement by the Council of the League.

Palestine disaster where the organization proved - at a catastrophic price - its ineffectiveness and utter failure. No common policy existed on Palestine and great tension resulted from the efforts to force such a policy upon the League and its members: "So long as the League was not expected to do more than pass resolutions and make diplomatic representations the problem of Palestine elicited nothing but solidarity. But as soon as the League was called upon to act, Palestine proved a stumbling block which almost destroyed the League."¹ An attempt at greater solidarity was inevitable if only to save the League and try to face the new menace of Israel. Thus the Treaty of Joint Defence and Economic cooperation was born as a defensive measure as was the Boycott Bureau and the recent "Summit" Meetings at Cairo and Alexandria (1964).

The Treaty of Joint Defense and Economic Cooperation of April 1950, is by far the most significant development with the result of setting up two major councils: The Economic Council and the Joint Defence council.² The Economic Council is composed of the Ministers of Economic Affairs of all the contracting States or their representatives with decisions taken by majority vote. The Council's task was the fulfillment of the purposes of the Treaty. Several attempts were made within the Council to establish the Arab Common Market and Arab Economic Unity, and although

¹ George Lenezowski, The Middle East in World Affairs (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1952), p. 405.

² For further details of the Treaty of Joint Defense and Economic Cooperation see Khalil, pp. 101-105.

several members signed treaties and agreements to this effect nothing concrete came out of these agreements. It is fair to add that the Economic Council has achieved, to date, a measure of fulfillment towards greater Arab economic integration and unification, at least as far as preparing the required studies and paving the way for future plans and steps.

The Joint Defence Council was set up for the implementation of the provisions of the Treaty of Joint Defence and Economic Cooperation. It consists of the Foreign Ministers and the Defense Ministers of the member-states; decisions taken by a two thirds majority are binding on all the contracting states. However, this council did not achieve any success until the setting up of the Unified Arab military command very recently backed up by the Decisions of the Second Summit Meeting at Alexandria (Summer 1964). The Treaty of Joint Defence provided for the establishment of a Permanent Military Commission composed of representatives of the General Staffs of the Arab Armies. It was entrusted with drawing up plans of joint defense and their implementation. "Drawing up plans and implementing them" was only recently discussed with seriousness at the Summit Conferences and after Ali Amer's visits with his staff to the various Arab fronts.

In addition a number of bureaus for special purposes have been set up which include the Refugee Office and the Boycott Bureau. The Boycott bureau is one of the most efficient organs

of the League with branches in different Arab States and foreign states. It provides the Arab countries with information concerning Israeli goods and companies that conduct trade with Israel in order to implement Boycott regulations against them. The bureau also warns foreign companies and tries to advise these companies against trade with Israel. Notwithstanding its weaknesses and partial failures, the Boycott bureau is one of the few successes of the League's activities as far as combatting the Israeli presence and threat.

Evaluation:

"The first effort of the idea of Arab unity to enter into and transform Arab life was, if not complete failure, a very limited success."¹ Thus was the verdict of Professor F. Sayegh, a scholar who worked several years for the League and wrote many of its pamphlets. Dr. Nazem el-Kudsi, the ex-President of the Syrian Republic, spoke about necessary and inevitable changes that should be introduced in the Arab League in his 1950 proposals known as the Qudsi Project. Qudsi held that

the Arab League has frustrated the hopes of the Arabs. It has been prodigal in display and words and sparing in results and accomplishments. Everyone has (come) to realize that the spirit which predominates in it does not keep abreast of the realities of the age, the movement of the times, the grave nature of events, or the people's will to go ahead... The individual Arab has not felt its existence because it did not provide for any of his needs or revive in him any hope for evolution or progress.²

¹ Sayegh, p. 140.

² Khalil, p. 45.

Before going into the causes of failure and the assessment of the Arab League it is necessary to state the choice offered to the Arab States towards the end of the Second World War: "the choice, put concretely, was between a loose association among seven Arab states, on the one hand, and a closer union of four, or perhaps only two, Arab states, on the other hand... The choice was made in favor of inclusiveness, even though at the expense of cohesiveness."¹

Structural Weaknesses:

The League was the prisoner of its nature and the desires and policies of its constituent members. From what we have already seen "the League was a forum for discussion consultation and deliberation"² among sovereign states. It might be used by these states as "a network of relationships."³ The States were not willing to concede anything to the organization nor vest any authority in its Secretary-General. The central fact in the League is the sovereignty "complex" reflected in the "unanimity" requirement in collective actions or binding decisions. The words "sovereignty" "independence" "territorial integrity" and "unanimous" are ubiquitous in the Pact. Only unanimous decisions of the Council will

¹ Sayegh, p. 131.

² Ibid., p. 122.

³ Ibid., p. 121.

bind all members, majority decisions are binding on those in favor of the decision, which tantamounts to each state being bound by its own decisions (Article VII). In Article VIII the League became the defender of the status quo "Each member state shall respect the systems of government established in the other member states and regard them as exclusive concerns of those states. Each shall pledge to abstain from any action calculated to change established systems of government." The League was designed by the founding states to serve as an instrument for "cooperation" "coordination" "discussion" "conciliation" and "deliberation." The result was that no powers were vested in the League. This is all the more apparent in the powers and functions of the Secretary-General which bare a close semblance to the same post in international organizations. Even the exercise of such a limited role was brought under fire and criticized as being excessive by certain members of the League. In May 1949 the Iraqi Foreign Minister, F. Al-Jamali, criticized the Secretary-General for allowing "a return to previous regulations which vest in him 'wide' powers... which conflict with the responsibilities of the Governments themselves, allow the Secretary-General to interfere with the affairs and policy of the League, and embarrass the policy of the States concerned without his being responsible either to a people or to a parliament."¹ In his reply to the Iraqi

¹ Khalil, p. 62.

Foreign Minister the Secretary General affirmed that the powers of the Secretary General of the Arab League "are in fact less than those of the Secretaries of similar international organizations."¹ The Secretary General added that he does not possess any powers except those vested in him by the Council and has no authority on any Arab Government. The Organization of American States gave greater cohesiveness and delegated more power and esteem to its Secretary-General.

The development of the League revealed its basic failure and weaknesses. In Palestine the League unequivocally failed to bring any real unification of command or any common policies among member states, for the League lacked any means or provisions that would bring forth a unification of effort "to repulse the aggression." State sovereignty and separatedness, dynastic rivalries and personal greed or ambition were the overriding factors in Arab policies and actions against the Zionist threat: "the quarrel over the pig's meat began long before the hunt." "These rivalries and suspicions were reflected both during the arming of the Arab guerrilla forces and later during the war with Israel."² The humiliating disaster in Palestine was the decisive test which the League failed to pass:

¹ Ibid., p. 65.

² Lenczowski, p. 405.

To the extent to which the Arab League had failed to assert its coordinating influence upon the member states, it was held responsible for the outcome of the Arab-Zionist struggle in Palestine. Popular dissatisfaction with the League mounted. There were ominous stirrings of discontent with the Arab governments as well as with the League.¹

After Palestine the League witnessed three major developments: the first was the Treaty of Joint Defence and Economic Cooperation; the second was the increase in membership from seven to thirteen states; the third was the adoption of the principle of Summit Meetings on the Heads of States level and the new measures taken or rather adopted by the First and Second Summit Meetings in 1964. The Treaty of Joint Defence and Economic cooperation did not materialize or have any concrete results until January 1964 where new measures were substituted. The second development revealed the League's 'inclusiveness' merits which welded - within a loose form - the Arab East and the Arab Maghreb. The third development, which opened the door for the establishment of the Arab Unified Command and the Arab Common Market, but whose actual seriousness and reliability remains to be seen.

The League as an Institution:

The lack of authority and power in the League as an organization, and the absence of any anticipative actions and provisions for closer relationships than the Pact provides indicates the nature

¹ Sayegh, p. 144.

of the League; it was neither a federation nor a confederation for it had no derivative or delegated power characteristic of confederations. The League is an association of sovereign states based on geographical contiguity and extension related by historical-cultural-linguistic national bonds. The League is described by one of its pamphlets as being a "regional organization of sovereign states designed to strengthen the close ties linking those states..."¹ However the Arab League differs from other regional organization in that it is a national regional organization i.e. the member States are linked together by national bond.

Inspite of the tragic (Palestine) failure of the Arab League it had some success and indirect services to Arab unity. Edward Atiyah speaks of "the 'emotional satisfaction and symbolical value' generated and possessed by the League."² The League promoted inter-governmental cooperation, provided a forum for discussion, sharpened the awareness of Arab officialdom of the need for greater cohesion and brought forth a sense of belonging to the Arab Nation among the Arab Maghreb states. The League rendered an indirect service to Arab Unity when it demonstrated that state sovereignty and separateness were obstacles to unity, thus paving the way to new approaches to the realization of Arab unity.

Perhaps Professor Sayegh's verdict on the League is the fairest

¹ "The Arab League: ..." 1955, p. 10.

² Sayegh, p. 137.

and most accurate: "The first effort of the idea of Arab unity to enter and transform Arab life was, if not a complete failure, a very limited success. The League was not an embodiment of unity but at best an instrument capable of preparing the Arab States for unity."¹

¹ Sayegh, p. 140.

CHAPTER III

THE UNITED ARAB REPUBLIC

A. The Road to Unity

Writing in 1945 Professor H.A.R. Gibb anticipated, "In case the League fails the ideal will not be destroyed but the hope of attaining it by peaceful means will be weakened. Failure means for the Arabs that the leaders of the constitutional forces will be discredited."¹ It is argued that the League's failure as exposed by the Palestine disaster was almost inevitable, and that the shock of it was almost necessary to animate the Arab struggle towards greater unity and strength. The challenge was real, so much so that it was bound to elicit a profound response. A period of revolutionary ferment and political upheavals was precipitated as a result of the Arab failure in Palestine. This was first echoed in Syria in the form of angry demonstrations against the rulers. The army, encouraged by these signs of popular disenchantment, seized the opportunity of revenge, for it was the first victim of the discord and corruption of Arab politicians which caused it to feel humiliated and betrayed. The Syrian series of coups d'etat established the army as a major political institution in the area, and the Syrian example was soon followed up in Egypt

¹ H.A.R. Gibb, "Toward Arab Unity," Foreign Affairs, Vol. 24 (October, 1945), p. 129.

in July 1952, with the difference that the Egyptian coup produced a stable regime and a social revolution.

1) Egypt and Syria

The establishment of the Arab League witnessed the emergence of Egypt as a major power contender on the Arab political scene, pledged from the beginning to oppose the Fertile Crescent Unity plan energetically advocated by Abdullah of Jordan and Iraq's Nuri el-Said. Syria was the battlefield on which the political struggle was fought between the Hashemites on one hand, the Egyptians and Saudis on the other. The emergence of the Arab League was an initial defeat for Greater Syria plans. The rise of colonel Adib Shishakly (1950-54) was another setback. Yet the real battle took place after Shishakly's downfall in February 25, 1954, when civil government was restored. National elections took place in September 1954 the returns of which revealed a high number of seats for the Independents followed by the Sha'ab Party (Pro. Iraq 'rightists') the Watani Party and the Ba'th Arab Socialist Party in that order and one communist.¹

2) A Turning Point

The year 1955 was a turning point. Western pressures on

¹ "Syria" (Chronology), Middle Eastern Affairs, Vol. 5 (November, 1954), p. 374.

Syria to join the Turkish-Iraqi alliance failed due to the adamant opposition of the progressive and Arab nationalist forces. The Syrian attitude was emboldened and backed by the Egyptian attitude of opposition to foreign military alliances and the two countries signed the Egyptian-Syrian Mutual Defense Pact on October 20, 1955.

The Ba'th Party indicated in 1955 that Syria should look forward to unity with Egypt, and in 1956 made this attitude a condition to participation in the coalition government. On July 5, 1956 the Syrian parliament approved a plan for a committee to negotiate a federal union between Syria and Egypt. President Nasser declared his willingness to negotiate a federal union plan between the two countries.¹

Egypt and Syria were increasingly taking similar stands on a number of issues particularly in foreign policy. Both were pledged to a neutralist stand in the cold war, both opposed Western military pact, both cooperated with the Soviet Union which was willing to offer badly needed arms and economic aid. A number of military economic and cultural agreements were signed between the two countries.

President Nasser's popularity was steadily rising in the Arab East and Egypt was playing an increasingly greater leading role in

¹ Amin Said, Al-Jumhuriyah Al-Arabiah Al-Mutahida (The United Arab Republic) Vol. II (Cairo: Al-Babi, 1960),

Arab politics. The Egyptian Constitution of 1956 echoed its Syrian counterpart in stating that Egypt was part of the Arab Nation and would therefore look forward for steps of unification. On August 11, 1956 President Nasser declared in Cairo that "his great objective was not simply to take over the Canal, but to arouse Arab Nationalism. This was the hope about which I wrote in my book The Philosophy of the Egyptian Revolution."¹

The Tripartite Aggression on Egypt in 1956 and the so-called Syrian "crisis" of 1957 incited mutual solidarity and backing. However the internal vulnerability of the Syrian situation bestowed on the Syrian call for unity a tone of urgency accelerated by the Turkish pressures² on the borders and the internal Communist rising menace.

In a speech marking the first anniversary of the nationalization of the Suez Canal President Nasser declared that the U.S. was "trying to 'isolate Egypt from the rest of the Arab states' and destroy Arab Nationalism."³ To uphold its position and role Egypt had to pursue an activist dynamic policy and support her Arab ally: Syria. The Turkish pressures on Syria invoked the

¹ "Suez Canal" (Chronology), Middle Eastern Affairs, Vol. 7 (October, 1956), p. 366.

² These pressures took the form of military mobilization on Syria's frontiers, border incidents, and accusations of "sovietization" in Syria.

³ "Egypt" (Chronology), Middle Eastern Affairs, Vol. 8 (August-September, 1957), p. 320.

Egyptian-Syrian Mutual Defense Pact, and on October 13, 1957, the Joint Command announced from its headquarters in Cairo that "Egyptian armed forces have sent basic elements from the middle of September to Syria to reinforce her forces and strengthen her defensive capabilities."¹ On November 18 a delegation of 40 Egyptian deputies joined their colleagues in the Syrian Chamber in acclaiming a proposal for federal union between the two states.²

In January 1958 the Syrians took a series of initiatives led by Foreign Minister Salah al-Bitar towards unity with Egypt. On January 24, the Syrian Council of Ministers approved the steps taken towards uniting the peoples of Syria and Egypt. On January 27, President Nasser held a press conference in which he referred to the talks aiming at the merger of Syria and Egypt.

Two days later, on January 29 the Syrian Council of Ministers and the Egyptian National Assembly unanimously approved the merger of Syria and Egypt.

B. A New State is Born

On February 1 a historic session was held at the Kubbah Palace in Cairo where President Gamal Abdel-Nasser and President Shukry el-Kuwatly met with the representatives of the Republics

¹ Ibid., (November, 1957), p. 399.

² The proposal was a statement of principle and no details or specifications were mentioned.

of Syria and Egypt to discuss the final measures "to be taken for the realization of the Arab people's will and the execution of what the constitutions of both republics stipulate, namely that the people of each of them form a part of the Arab nation."¹ The moment was pregnant with promise and prospects: the long-sought unity glimmered on the horizon of the Arab future.

The new state was jubilantly proclaimed to be "The United Arab Republic." The participants declared their unanimous agreement on the adoption of "a presidential democratic system of government with the executive authority vested in the head of state assisted by the ministers appointed by him and responsible to him."² The legislative authority was vested in one legislative house. The peoples of Egypt and Syria were called upon to participate in a general plebiscite on the principles of this unity and the choice of the head of state which was conducted on February 22. A fabulous majority - amounting to near unanimity - of those who voted (99.99 per cent)³ agreed to the establishment of the United Arab Republic and elected Gamal Abdel-Nasser as its president. The provisional constitution of the new republic was announced to a mass rally in Damascus by President Nasser on March 5.⁴

¹ U.A.R. Yearbook, 1959 (Cairo: Information Department, 1959), p. 37.

² Ibid.

³ There was a widespread feeling of enthusiasm for the new state. Those that^{dis} approved it; it seems, did not bother to go to the polls.

⁴ For the Provisions of the Constitution see U.A.R. Yearbook of 1959,

It is essential to note that there were two main factors behind the Syrian-Egyptian merger and one secondary and vague factor. The first was the almost mystical historic longing for unity between the Arab countries stirred and nourished by Arab nationalist movements, and which was particularly strong among the Syrian masses but which was not so strong among the Egyptian masses. The second factor pertains to the foreign pressure on the area - Western military pacts and the Eisenhower Doctrine - and the Israeli menace which was a dominant factor in convincing army officers of the necessity, nay, the indispensability of uniting the Arab fronts surrounding Israel. The third factor was the vague impact of social progress envisaged by leftist forces that would be possible under Nasser's progressive leadership in cooperation with the leftist Arab nationalist Syrian groups.

The second factor and the vulnerability of the internal situation in Syria were the immediate causes behind the Syrian urgency and impatience. Thus the process of integration was denied the necessary element of preparation, the studies on the nature of initial difficulties and the set up of the necessary organs.

C. General Considerations

The new state had to fulfill a historic mission since it was declared to be the Prussia of ^{the} Arab nation, the embryo for an Arab Union that would one day embrace all Arabs from the Atlantic ocean

to the Arabian Gulf. It had to overcome the League's defect of inefficiency, yet move towards integration with caution and prudence. It was necessary to strike a balance between the two regions on one level and a balance between the various groups within Syria on the other level.

The popular indorsement and enthusiasm and the emotional enchantment that characterized the unparalleled acclaim of the masses was both an asset and a liability. The new republic was expected to work miracles almost overnight, and almost nobody was aware of the sacrifices and hardwork which the process of build-up entailed. It was necessary to uphold enthusiasm and move toward solving new problems tackling new issues, towards action and carrying out some schemes that were bound to precipitate frustration and disillusionment in some quarters. Romanticism and mystification had to be abandoned for the benefit of dealing with hard facts and facing solid problems. The new state had to encounter spontaneous thorny issues accruing from the new situation without possessing an apparatus for dealing with such problems. Thus in studying the system of government we have to bear in mind the presence of these general considerations that necessitated certain measures and complicated the matter as a whole.

One more general consideration ought to be mentioned here, it is that of Western opposition to the idea of Arab unity particularly when it started to assume a socialist content. The internal

opposition to unity and socialism received backing and help from some Arab states and foreign powers, a fact made obvious by the welcome of certain countries to the secession. Jordan's Broadcasting station had a special programme directed to Syria to cultivate opposition in the U.A.R. and help bring forth its dissolution.

D. System of Government

The system of government in the U.A.R. was defined in the Provisional Constitution. It was a blend of two systems of government: the presidential and the parliamentary systems.

1) The Executive:

a. The President:

It is not possible to understand the system of government in the U.A.R. or how the presidential powers were handled without understanding the stature and prestige of President Nasser throughout the Arab World. Nasser was, for the Arabs, and to many still is, a new Saladin; a first class statesman of international standing; a leader who achieved historical strides and victories: the toppling of a very corrupt and discredited regime; Agrarian Reform Laws; resistance to foreign pacts; participation and leadership in the Bandung Conference and the adoption of a non-aligned policy; the Arms Deal; Military Pact with Syria; the Egyptian Constitution

of 1956 which declared the Egyptian people - for the first time - an integral part of the Arab Nation; the evacuation of the last British soldier; nationalization of the Suez Canal; the moral victory against the Tripartite Aggression. Any of these enumerated achievements was good enough for any Arab statesman, but all of these plus the major step toward achievement of the historic vision of the Arabs: Arab Unity, was a phenomenal and historic achievement that only Nasser had accomplished. It is no wonder that his powers mandated in the Provisional Constitution were so extensive, and that his exercise of these powers was conducted with authority and cocksureness.

Article 44 of the Provisional Constitution vested the executive power in the President of the Republic. In this capacity he was empowered to appoint one or more vice-presidents and relieve them from their posts, to appoint ministers and discharge them from their functions; "each minister supervises the affairs of his Departments and executes the general policy drawn by the President of the Republic." The powers of the President are characteristic of a presidential system of government. There was no Council of Ministers in the juridical concept of the word; there was no collective initiation of policy on behalf of the ministers, and they were responsible for the execution of policy as drawn by the President not by parliament. They were the

President's executive assistants and by no means policy-makers.¹

Article 53 offered tremendous powers to the President "while the National Assembly is in recess, the President of the Republic may enact decrees, having the force of law or take decisions originally lying within the competence of the Assembly should the necessity arise. Such decrees and decisions must be submitted to the National Assembly at its first meeting. If, however, the Assembly opposes them by a two-thirds majority, they are no longer effective from the day of their opposition." This provision was all the more significant if we remember that the National Assembly spent most of its tenure out of session.

The President was given the right to initiate laws to oppose or to promulgate them. He was to determine by Presidential decree the number of the members of the National Assembly and their choice (Article 13) convoked the Assembly and declared the closure of its session (Article 17).

b. Executive Councils

The President would be assisted by an Executive Council in both the Syrian and Egyptian regions, "this executive council has the competence to examine and study matters pertaining to the execution of the general policy in the region."

¹ This was markedly different from the former Syrian system of government where the cabinet played a leading role.

The Executive Councils were dictated by the necessity of transition and regional conditions. No centralization could be possible before familiarization with the situation in both regions and before establishing a minimum degree of administrative unification. This arrangement facilitated the politically necessary inclusion of the political groups and forces that participated in the making of the new republic, provided for president Nasser's bid for time to study the interplay of these forces, and arrange for the necessary changes and plans for the future. The Executive Councils were later abolished when it was deemed timely and necessary to effect greater integration in both regions.

2) The Legislature:

The Legislative power was vested in a National Assembly which was to "exercise control over the acts of the Executive" (Article 14). The Provisional Constitution prescribed that at least half of the number of members must be members of the Syrian Chamber of deputies and the National Assembly of Egypt. Article 22 provided that "no law may be enacted unless approved by the Assembly." Members of the National Assembly were entitled to address to the Ministers' questions or interpellations. Any twenty members of the National Assembly "may ask" for the discussion of a general question with a view to "ascertaining" the government's policy and "exchanging views" on such a question. The National Assembly

"may express its wishes and proposals to the Government regarding several questions." Article 32 prohibited the National Assembly from introducing any amendments to the draft of the budget except with the approval of the Government. In spite of the right of the Assembly to declare a vote of no confidence in a Minister and therefore force his resignation, the Constitution made such a process a complicated one. Article 38 allotted to the President of the Republic the right to dissolve the National Assembly. In this case a new Assembly must be formed and convoked within a period of sixty days from the date of dissolution.

Thus whereas the Constitution follows a semi presidential pattern in as far as the executive power was concerned, it was closer to the parliamentary pattern as far as the relations between the Executive and the Legislative are concerned, although in both cases it was a blend of both systems of government. The Legislature was authorized to supervise the acts of the Executive, discuss policies, express wishes and proposals but not actually drawing the policy for the Executive in accordance with the parliamentary system of government. No law was to be enacted unless approved by the Assembly yet the Assembly was denied the right to introduce "any amendments to the draft budget except with the approval of the government." The President had the right to dissolve the National Assembly which complies with the parliamentary system yet the number of members and their manner of choice was left to be determined by a Presidential decree which does not

comply with the parliamentary system of government based on popular elections according to electoral districts nor for that matter with the Presidential system of government. The National Assembly was deemed necessary both as a democratic facade and as a form of controlled popular participation in government. The limited powers of the Assembly, the fact that half its members were to be appointed by the President and the power of the head of the executive to dissolve it, rendered the Assembly inferior and subservient to the executive.¹ The provisions of the Constitution did not cast any doubts as to the supremacy of the Executive.

3) The Judiciary

The Provisional Constitution declared the independence of judges, prohibited any interference in lawsuits or in the affairs of justice. Judges were to be irremovable with no authority over them save that of the law.

The Constitution did not specify the manner of appointment of judges. No mention was made as to the jurisdiction of the Judicature over political decisions of the Executive or the Legislative.

4) The National Union

Article 73 of the Provisional Constitution of the U.A.R.

¹ There is another relevant fact: the Assembly had no chance of participation due to its late emergence and its short sessions.

stated that "citizens shall constitute a National Union to work for the realization of national aims and the intensification of the efforts for raising a sound national structure, from the political social and economic viewpoints. The manner in which a union is to be formed shall be defined by a Presidential Decree."

The National Union was an extension of the already existing Egyptian organization now made to include the Syrian region to replace the dissolved parties, organize the people and mobilize their forces to work in harmony with the leadership.

E. Development

In spite of the fact that all political groups and parties - with the exception of the Communists acclaimed unity with Egypt under Nasser's leadership, they did so for different reasons and aimed at different if not indeed contradictory objectives. The Syrian political chessboard demanded skill and mastery of strategy and tactics due to the complicated interplay of forces and elements. There were several factors that impelled the Syrians to welcome the proclaimed unity: Arab Nationalism - of which Syria was the cradle - security against Turkey Israel and the foreign pressures, the desire to curb the internal power struggle and particularly the growing Communist influence and power. There was, of course, the popular admiration for President Nasser and the desire to be

under his leadership, and the urge among some army groups to become part of a stronger force surrounding Israel, thus constituting a military forceps. Some of these attitudes reflected a considerable degree of impatience with the lack of efficiency and indecisiveness in the parliamentary system, which was in fact under constant pressure prior to 1958 from the street and army barracks.

The Egyptian motivations were not exactly identical and whereas the call for Arab Unity was a popular demand in Syria, it only had limited influence in Egypt and almost restricted to the top ruling circles. Yet the Egyptians were eager to turn the scales against the Western attempts at isolating Egypt and assume a leading role in the Arab world. Moreover there was the Israeli menace which materialized in October 1956 in a military invasion. Surely the unification of the Egyptian and Syrian fronts and armies would add to Arab defensive and military capabilities vis-a-vis Israel. Egypt also feared the internal situation in Syria and thus had to accept unity in 1958.¹

Nasser had to proceed skillfully, appeasing the major political

¹ Anwar Abdul Malek in his book l'Egypt Societe Militaire, states "the establishment of the U.A.R. would not only open an opportunity for freezing the activity of the leftists (in Egypt) but would be the beginning of an investment movement and opening up of new markets for Egyptian products, employing university graduates; in short to make Syria an Egyptian province!" (from the Arabic translation; Beirut: Dar Attalia', 1964), p. 304.

forces without unduely antagonizing their political rivals. He had to include the Ba'thists in his governmental formations and invite the participation of the leaders of the military groups who advocated and helped bring forth the new state. Actually Nasser recognized from the start the necessity of eliminating Syrian army officers who were distinguished by, or according to another point of view notorious for, their affinity for politics as they unequivocally illustrated by their record following the year 1948.

The organization of Government had to be consistent with the declaration that was announced on February 5 by the Presidents of the Syrian and Egyptian Republics to their respective National Assemblies. Article 11 of that announcement stated that "an executive council will be set up in each region directed by a chairman, appointed by presidential decree, assisted by ministers appointed by the President at the recommendation of the chairman."

The formation of the first U.A.R. government was completed on March 6. There were four Vice-Presidents, two from each region, eight central ministers, and twenty two regional ministers. The Egyptian participants were familiar names who served in Egypt's cabinets prior to 1958. The Syrian participants were representatives of the main political forces in the country, most of whom occupied commanding positions in Syria between 1956 and 1958. Akram Hourani, Salah Bitar, Khalil Kallas represented the Ba'ath Party with Mustafa Kannout and representing the Ba'th military

group. Abdul-Hamid Sarraj, Ahmad Abdul-Karim and Amin Nafuri represented the Independent military group. Sabri al-Assaly and Fakher Kayyali represented the National Party. The rest of the Syrian ministers were either experts or political personalities who allied themselves with the ruling group in Syria between 1956 and 1958.

We should remember that all political parties, except the Communists pledged to liquidate their organizations in order to facilitate the task of political reorganization and in compliance with President Nasser's point of view on this issue. Given the wisdom of hindsight, into Nasser's motivation, mentality and methods, it appears that he was inclined from the beginning towards the dismantling of the Syrian political forces and influential groups to get a free hand in directing the affairs of the new state and rid himself from the burden of political rivalries and jealousies between Syrian groups and blocs. The political stature of the President, the provisions of the Constitution and the dissolution of political parties rendered the Syrian politicians powerless and helpless before Nasser.

The honeymoon between Nasser and the Syrian leaders lasted several months with minor incidents now and then. It was a period of buoyancy and optimism decorated with prospects and designs for further unification, heartened and inspired by the acclaim and enthusiasm of the Arab masses throughout the area.

There was, however, a certain degree of uneasiness inside the Executive Council in the Syrian region between Hourani, the head of the Council and Col. Sarraj who was in charge of internal security and proved to be a tough contender for power.

It seems that the organization of government according to the Executive Council arrangement was not altogether satisfactory for two reasons: first lack of efficiency; second lack of central control. The desire or rather the need for centralization was reinforced by the Iraqi coup d'etat on July 14, 1958 which abolished a regime that stood against all the U.A.R. stood for. Yet this change created a new situation which was complicated with the rise of the Iraqi Communist Party and the split that took place at all levels in Iraq as to relations and unity with the U.A.R. Economic difficulties in the Northern region was another reason for further centralization.

On September 20, 1958 the semi-official daily al-Gumhuriyya talked about the serious problems that were being faced by the Republic in planning policy for the two regions. It limited at the inadequacy of separate cabinets for Egypt and Syria without some kind of central coordinating and supervisory agency. It also complained of the lack of an over-all body responsible for policy affecting the U.A.R. as a whole.

The Presidential decree of October 8, 1958 declared a new executive structure of the U.A.R. consisting of one Central Cabinet and Executive Cabinets, also called Regional Councils, for

both regions. The total number of central ministers was twenty-three, fifteen of which were Egyptians and eight were Syrians. Ten members out of these twenty-three were army officers. The Egyptian Regional Cabinet was composed of fourteen ministers and a chairman, the Syrian Regional Cabinet was composed of fourteen ministers including the chairman. As far as numerical participation in the higher executive branch the Syrians held more than their ratio against total population would allow.

P.J. Vatikiotis in his book "The Egyptian Army in Politics" discerns three basic difficulties "during the first year of Union, which were decisive in bringing about the new executive structure of the U.A.R. 1) the difficulty of establishing uniform legislation; 2) the inability clearly to define responsibility in government and 3) the lack of proper control and supervision over the execution of presidential policy in both regions."¹

The decree designated four major ministerial committees to serve the Central Cabinet: legislative, executive, economic and general services. General policy for both Egypt and Syria was to be planned by the Central Minister concerned and submitted to the appropriate committee in the Central Cabinet for discussion before going to the President for final decision. Legislation was confined to the Central Cabinet which would supervise its

¹ P.J. Vatikiotis, The Egyptian Army in Politics: Pattern for New Nations? (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1961), p. 179.

execution by the appropriate Regional ministers. Regional Cabinets were to send their recommendations to the Executive Committee of the Central Cabinet and the President. The four committees of the Central Cabinet were made responsible to the President. By Presidential decree of October 26, 1958, all central and regional ministers were made formally responsible to the President. Nasser felt, or so it seems, that the situation called for a strong hand and coordinated planning and that it was high time for him to run the affairs the Republic in his own style.

According to A. Abdul-Karim,¹ a Syrian minister in the U.A.R. government, the formation of the Central Cabinet on November 8, 1958 aimed at eliminating the major political forces from the Syrian scene. It also aimed at creating a lack of harmony or rather dissension between the Syrian army officers, and dismissing the politically active among these officers by kicking them upstairs to ministerial ranks. The new arrangement allotted no powers or authority to the head of the Executive Council nor any duties or responsibilities to the Council as a collective body. All ministers were responsible before the President of the Republic. President Nasser promised a monthly meeting for all the ministers - Central and Executive - but the first meeting was the only one. The Syrian Central ministers were left without any specific task

¹ Ahmad Abdul-Karim, Adwa' ala Tajribat al Wihda (Lights on the Experiment of Unity) (Damascus: Atlas Library, 1962), p. 184.

until the secession.

On November 18 President Nasser issued a decree delegating the powers of Syrian Vice-President Akram Hourani to Nur ed-Din Kahhala as President of the Executive Council of the Syrian Region. Dr. Kahhala was a career civil servant, and a political and obedient person who returned to the civil service later on.

President Nasser exercised his influence not only through appointments, summoning individual ministers to instruct them, but also through special missions with a specific task to perform in the Syrian Region. On January 3, 1959 a three man mission consisting of Vice-Presidents Bagdadi and Hourani (Syrian) and Interior Minister Z. Mohieddin were delegated to Syria for an "indefinite stay" on orders from President Nasser to speed development projects in the Syrian Region. The stated purpose of the mission was considered by many people as a smoke screen since Zakaria Mohieddin had nothing to contribute as far as development projects were concerned. The inclusion of Akram Hourani was masterful for the Ba'thists would be held responsible for any grievances that were to accrue as a result of the decisions taken by the mission. The real task of this mission, according to some ex-ministers of the U.A.R.¹ was to prepare an anti-Ba'thi atmosphere and guarantee a showdown with the Ba'thists during the National Union elections.

¹ Ibid., p.215 and statements made by Salah al-Bitar in a private interview in December 1964.

On January 6 the Agrarian Reform decree was issued. Mustafa Hamdoun an ex-Ba'thi ex-officer was the Minister of Agrarian Reform in the Syrian Region and - according to the Ba'thists - had to shoulder the blame for all the flaws in these laws which were prepared in haste due to Iraq's example in this field. All the blame was directed against the Ba'th and Hamdoun was accused by the landowning classes, with secret encouragement and rumors spread by the Deuxieme Bureau, of being revengeful and unjust in executing the Agrarian Reform laws.

An anti-Ba'th propaganda campaign preceded the National Union elections on July 8 with leaflets openly distributed in Damascus against the Ba'thists who could do nothing because they were no longer organized. Their protests to Sarraj and other authorities were futile. This campaign against the Ba'th was the incident that finally brought forth the divorce between Nasser and the Ba'th on August 14, 1959 ex-Ba'thist Riad Malki was dismissed from his post as minister of Guidance in the Syrian Region.

It was not until October 21, that direct Egyptian control over Syria started when President Nasser placed Field Marshal Abdul-Hakim Amer Vice-President and Commander in Chief of the armed forces in authority over the Syrian Cabinet responsible to Nasser himself. Amer was also entrusted with the organization of the National Union in Syria. Amer was given wide powers to solve problems and execute the President's orders. Amer's

appointment dealt a severe blow to the Ba'th's influence in Syria after having been made a 'scapegoat' for all the "mistakes" and "excesses." Most of the Ba'thi ministers were without powers and felt neglected. They were not consulted on matters pertaining to policy towards other Arab states, for they held different views from Nasser on some points particularly in their opinions concerning the relations with King Saud and King Hussein with whom the Ba'th opposed any rapprochement. The Ba'th's ministers resigned towards the end of the year 1959 and were replaced on March 18 by four army colonels: Akram Dairi, Ahmad Hunaidi, Jamal Soufi and Jado Izzeddin. On May 2, 1960, A. Abdul-Karim and Amin Nafouri two Central Syrian ministers resigned because they felt they were without authority and jurisdiction and because of alleged Egyptian hegemony.

On June 5, 1960 Nasser issued a decree outlining the formation and jurisdiction of the National Union commanding cadres, and on July 18 the President of the Republic named 600 deputies to the U.A.R. first National Assembly.

In Syria, the removal of the major political forces was accompanied by a steady widening of Col. Sarraj's powers and authority. On September 19, 1960 Sarraj was appointed to the chairmanship of Syria's executive council in addition to the commanding post of the Minister of Interior to the Syrian Region.

¹ A. Abdul-Karim, passim.

Sarraj employed his security organs to intimidate the enemies of the regime. On October 24 Sarraj was appointed as chairman of the Region's Economic Organization, which was a sort of State Monopoly company in a mixed economy.

There was an increasing tendency to exchange officers and civil servants between the two regions. The Syrian army officers, already pampered by the position and prestige between 1948 and 1959, were unhappy because they were sent to faraway places with no tasks at all.¹ Those of them who stayed in Syria felt 'bossed' by the Egyptian army officers² particularly so because the commander of the First Army General Jamal Faisal had a weak personality and a strong deputy - an Egyptian - Abdul-Mohsen Abu an-Nur - who was a dynamic and dominating figure who occupies at present the rank of a vice-premier in the U.A.R.

There was a third Cabinet reshuffle in August 1961, which altered the general political set up of the regime but did not have time to materialize since it was soon followed by the coup d'etat of September 1961. The August arrangement abolished regional Executive Councils and established a unified ministerial system. And although the Syrians had an adequate proportional representation in the Cabinet, the new arrangement was not very

¹ General Hariri, see Mahader Mubahathat al-Wihda (Minutes of the Negotiations for Unity) (Cairo: ad-Dar al-Quawmiah, 1964), p. 21.

² General Qutaimi, Ibid., p. 20.

popular in Syria since it was a symptom of central and Egyptian hegemony on the Northern Region. This was followed by measures taken by marshal Amer aimed at limiting Sarraj's powers and authority which lead to the latter's insubordination and ~~dis-~~^{resignation} ~~missal~~ and thus to the weakening of intelligence activities in the Syrian Region. This relaxation was ill-timed since the July socialist decrees incited a strong reaction among the Syrian bourgeoisie and it would have been wiser to exact caution and alert rather than relaxation.

The dissolution of political parties in Syria was followed by the constitution of the National Union in imitation of the Egyptian example, where article 192 of the 1956 Constitution established such an organization. Article 72 of the Provisional Constitution of the U.A.R. stipulated that "citizens shall constitute a National Union to work for the realization of national aims and the intensification of the efforts to raise a sound national structure, from the political, social and economic points of view."¹ The declared aims of the National Union was the setting up of a 'socialist, democratic cooperative society' as set forth by the leadership of the Republic.

Actually the National Union was meant to be the governér's party not a governing party, except it was not a party but a

¹ For further constitutional provisions see the U.A.R. Yearbook

gathering to mobilize popular acclaim for the government's plans and decisions. It was a source of legitimacy since it embraced the majority of adult citizens and thus provided a claim to democratic support for the republic. It was also a harbor where the ships of political parties and groups could be safely "docked". Above all it was the embodiment of Nasser's teachings against the selfishness of political parties, and the necessity of national unity; an organization where class struggle could be liquidated, where the working classes would be grateful for the socialistic orientation of the regime and the propertied classes would be grateful for the peaceful transfer to a socialistic state which promised to respect private property and respected the upper classes as honorable citizens. Thus the National Union replaced class parties and controlled institutions which could promote class struggle trade unions and peasant cooperatives. The complicated structure, presidential appointments and jurisdiction, absence of organized political groups, the state's immense propaganda and powerful apparatus, and its secret police organs guaranteed government control over the National Union.

In Syria the elections of the National Union was preceded by a campaign of rumors and propaganda against the Ba'th party. The Communist Party was completely discredited by mid 1959. The Agrarian Reform aroused the land owning classes against the Ba'th since the Agrarian Reform minister was an ex-Ba'thist. Rumors that the Ba'thists were infiltrating the Civil Service

1957,¹ for a Union that would retain the international personality of both states. When faced with the actual emergence of the U.A.R. they reluctantly (due to internal differences of opinion) and cautiously opposed the merger in February 1958 and refused to disband their organization. They knew that Nasser would put an end to their activities and takeover political power in Syria which they previously shared and aspired to control. Khaled Bakdash, the leader of the Syrian Communist Party and its only deputy in the Chamber, failed to attend the Parliament's session in which unity was declared. In June 1958 Bakdash criticized from Prague, "the reformist policies of the U.A.R. and indicated that the U.S. backed these policies."² The attitude of the Egyptian Communists was markedly different for they were very enthusiastic about the new prospect.³ However they were very critical of the "reactionary attitude of the government" in March 1958 because of the measures taken against the communists in the trade unions elections.

The Iraqi Revolution of July 14, 1958 opened new horizons for the Communists and offered a breathing space. On July 20 Khaled Bakdash attacked "the policy of suffocation"⁴ in Syria

¹ Elias Murcus, Tarikh al-Ahzab Assiy'iah fi al-watan al-Arabi (History of the Communist Parties in the Arab Nation) (Beirut: Dar Attalia', 1964), p. 103.

² Said, Vol. II, p. 24.

³ Murcus, p. 106.

⁴ Abdul-Malak, p. 304 and also see Murcus, p. 108.

crop failures and water shortages, but which were also linked in some quarters with the policies of the state. The economic troubles in Syria caused adverse reactions in Egypt since the Southern Region was thought to be shouldering some of the effects of Syria's economic difficulties.

Before turning to discuss the attitude of the political parties and groups towards the U.A.R. it is necessary to point out that the Syria's feeling of frustration due to its part as second fiddle in the U.A.R. was augmented and enhanced by the failure of the Arab policies of the U.A.R. and by the fact that the nucleus did not gather any momentum in the drive towards greater unities among the Arabs. In short the U.A.R. was being pushed to defensive instead of offensive positions.

F. The Political Groups and the U.A.R.

1) The Communist Party:

After the famous Twentieth Congress of 1956 Communists, in the Middle East as well as in other areas, were ready to participate in "popular and national fronts" with national and progressive forces anxious to fight imperialism and Western military pacts. In the Arab East this meant paying lip service to the call of Arab unity. When the Ba'athists in Syria started pressing for Union with Egypt the Syrian Communist party called, in December

elements. Parker observed that "the National Union with its closely controlled programme of activities can hardly seem an adequate substitute to political parties'. When I was in the U.A.R. in 1960 I had the impression that no one took the National Union very seriously."¹ The same lack of seriousness and working efficiency could be ascribed to the National Assembly. These two institutions could have promoted the participation of the masses in government and thus ability and willingness to defend the regime, and would have added to the pace and reality of integration between both regions.

The alienation of the political elements was accompanied by security measure against 'disloyal' groups and opponents of the regime, which were described as police measures.² Colonel Abdul-Hamid Sarraj was the common enemy of the opponents of the regime due to his firm grip, high-hand actions³ and intimidation of all political groups. The reliance on police methods was rendered a necessity following the isolation of the masses and adherents of the regime, from political and organizational activities. The necessity was increasingly felt with the growth of internal and external opposition to the U.A.R.'s policies. The whole situation was aggravated by economic difficulties mainly due to

¹ Parker, pp. 21-22.

² See Kerr, p. 40.

³ Some of his actions included torture of the members of the Communist Party.

the people who engineered the union were counting on.¹

In a sense these developments were inevitable since Nasser depended on the bureaucracy in Egypt for the management of the affairs of the state and political control in the country, and thus it was natural for him to depend on his tested political and executive arms in implementing the Egyptian institutions and methods in Syria after eliminating the Syrian political forces and groups from the political scene. Two dangers were involved in this process: the lack of historical understanding and efficiency on behalf of the Egyptian bureaucracy, and the regional sensitivity on behalf of the Syrians. In a lengthy article,² M.H. Haikal editor- a well-known government spokesman in Cairo, analyzed its origins set-up, causes of inefficiency, and lack of conviction in revolutionary socialist programs. Their contemptuous attitudes towards the public and regional haughtiness touched off the Syrian sense of pride and blew up necessary bridges of integration and accessibility.

This fact was all the more significant in the light of the development of the National Union which failed to substitute for the political vacuum created by the dissolution of political parties in Syria. The National Union failed to mobilize the masses and build-up of socialism due to the alienation of revolutionary

¹ Ibid.

² Al-Ahram (Cairo), March 6, 1964, p. 1 in Supplement.

the Assembly's legislation. The Assembly must have been insulted when it suffered the indignity of not being consulted on the most important social legislation: the July decrees of 1961. It is said that when Anwar as-Sadat, President of the Assembly, was asked for the justification he said that the decrees comprised a revolution and revolutions are not to be found on the agendas of the National Assembly. The real reason was the government's fear that the members of the Assembly were not sincere socialists and therefore would try to amend or cancel some provisions.

A number of factors were contributing to the disenchantment of the political groups and the masses at large with the development of the new republic as far as Syria was concerned. There was, first, the implementation of Egyptian institutions, methods and organization in Syria: "it would be hard to think of any specifically Syrian element that has been worked into the overall running of the country."¹ This phenomenon carried with it another important and readily noticeable factor: the ubiquity of Egyptian officials in the decision-making circles in the Syrian region:

Many Egyptian officials are to be found at work in Damascus and indeed one gets the impression that most of the important decisions in the day-to-day government of the Northern Region are made by men from the Southern one. This has, of course, cost a lot of discontent in Syrian intellectual circles and among former politicians, and it is not what

¹ J.S.F. Parker, "The United Arab Republic," International Affairs Vol. 38 (January, 1962), p. 19 (From a lecture delivered at Chatham House on June 1, 1961).

the U.A.R. first National Assembly in accordance with Article 13 of the Provisional Constitution. There were 400 Egyptians and 200 Syrians.

Two significant events took place before the first meeting of the National Assembly: the first was the unified Budget - for both Regions - for the fiscal year 1960-61 issued by a legislative decree on July 14, 1960, and the second was the "Organization of the Press" May 24, 1960 which transferred the ownership of the press to the National Union.

The National Assembly discussed between autumn of 1960 and July 1961 issues relating to economic and social development and accepted the declarations of responsible personnel in the government. Commenting on the parliament of July 1960 Prof. M. Kerr said "whereas the 1957 Parliament (in Egypt) had shown some flickers of vitality during its brief tenure, that of 1960 spent most of its life out of session."¹

The National Assembly was supposed to represent the Legislative authority. The National Union had to relay its decisions and recommendations to the Assembly which was to legislate these recommendations after discussions and study. The Assembly was supposed to control the Executive and see to it that this branch of the government complied with the National Union decisions and

¹ Malcolm H. Kerr, Egypt Under Nasser ("Headline Series, No. 161, September 20, 1963; New York: Foreign Policy Association, 1963), p. 12.

through acts of favoritism on behalf of their ministers, were widespread. They were held responsible for all mistakes committed by the government. They could not possibly combat such campaigns since they were no longer organized. A good number of ex-Ba'thists who were candidates for July 8, 1959 National Union elections withdrew protesting the hostile atmosphere created with the help of Sarraj against the Ba'th. The results of these elections were a victory for the rightists, traditionalists and apolitical elements. This eliminated the Ba'thists as a group that could initiate, argue, and oppose policies of the government. The regime did not fully realize then the potential dangers inherent in a reactionary National Union in "a socialist, democratic cooperative" state. President Nasser admitted right after the secession that he was deceived by the reactionary forces into thinking that they would be silent and harmless.¹

The National Union failed to spread political consciousness or create popular enthusiasm for the government's socialistic measures or conduct the people's needs and wants to the government because its component elements were hostile to socialism in the thought and interests.

The National Assembly

On July 18, 1960 President Nasser appointed 600 deputies to

¹ Speech made by Gamal Abdul-Nasser from Cairo's Radio Station on the first of October, 1961.

thus undermining the call for Iraq to join the U.A.R. On September 3, 1959 the Iraqi Communist Party declared itself in favor of federal union¹ in contradistinction to the Ba'th's and Col. Aref's stress on the necessity of unitary unity. Later they invented the phrase "the immortal Iraqi Republic" to fight unionist tendencies and groups. The Iraqi events and the open hostilities between the 'nationalists' and the 'Communists' in Iraq brought forth a final divorce between the Communists and the progressive forces in the area. On December 24, 1958 Nasser openly attacked them and the Communists were hardly prosecuted in the U.A.R. Khaled Bakdash maintained in a celebration in Peking - that the Egyptian bourgeoisie ruled Syria in collaboration with Anglo-American imperialism. The Communist press in Beirut - Al-Nida' and al-Akhbar - started propagating the theory that the unity of Egypt and Syria was a conspiracy inspired by Washington designed to outflank the leftist forces in Syria. Even the "Socialist Decrees" of July 1961 were seen as measures designed "to swallow the Syrian economy and its complete destruction." The Communists acclaimed the secession in September 1961.

2) The Ba'th Party:

The Ba'th Arab Socialist Party considered, and still considers itself the main author responsible for the establishment of

¹ Marcus, p. 110.

the United Arab Republic.

Allowing for the exaggeration inevitably present in such a claim, it remains beyond doubt that the party worked in earnest and at all levels to bring about the Unity of Egypt and Syria. The party considered Arab unity as the corner stone of its call for a better Arab future and the basis of the desired society. In 1956 the Ba'th Party declared itself to be in favor of unity of Egypt and Syria as the nucleus of Arab Unity.¹ On May 4, 1956 Salah al-Bitar a leading Ba'thist declared "the road to Arab unity begins with the union of Egypt and Syria, the two more liberated Arab countries."² On the same day the Ba'th Party submitted a proposal for a Pact that should govern the policy and the relations between parties participant in the Syrian government, it included "the declaration of union between Egypt and Syria and the struggle for enabling other Arab countries to join the union which is to be considered the nucleus of comprehensive Arab unity."³ From that date onwards the Ba'th Party was keen and persistent on its call for Syrian-Egyptian unity whether in Parliament or in its newspaper or leaflets. In 1957 the call for union acquired a tone

¹ Nidal al-Ba'th (The Struggle of the Ba'th) Vol. III (Beirut: Dar Attalia', 1963), p. 171.

² Ibid., p. 182.

³ Ibid., p. 186.

of urgency due to the rising threats and pressures brought on Syria on the internal and external fronts. The Ba'th actually stated that union with Egypt was the guarantee of survival and freedom and the road to the realization of socialism and Arab unity. The ties between Nasser and the Ba'th were being steadily strengthened. Anwar Abdul-Malek states: "In Damascus the Ba'th Arab Socialist Party spread the ideas that Jamal Abdel Nasser gradually adopted after 1956 and decisively so in 1958.¹ Nasser and the Ba'th stood for drastic social reforms, Arab unity, expulsion of foreign powers from the area, neutralism and resistance to Western military pacts.

Events reinforced the tendency and desirability of closer relationships and cooperation. For both felt increasingly isolated after the Eisenhower Doctrine. It is likely that Nasser was worried by the rising Communist power in Syria, a factor that might have been present for his acceptance of the Ba'thists arguments about "ripe conditions for unity that might not last forever."² The Ba'th played a key role in the negotiations of 1957-1958 through the Syrian Foreign Minister Salah al-Bitar and some army officers who visited Egypt among the military delegations who took part in the negotiations.

According to Mr. Aflaq - in a private interview with the

¹ Ibid., p. 295.

² Ibid., p. 309.

present writer¹ - the party agreed to dissolve the organization on the implicit understanding that its members would be the vanguard in the new political organization of the National Union. As a matter of fact the internal conditions of the organization might have been a contributing factor to that decision. The party's role in bringing about the U.A.R. and its power in Syria secured its significant participation in the first U.A.R. Cabinet.

The Ba'thists discovered in the early months of 1958 that President Nasser preferred to deal with individuals and that he trusted Col. Sarraj in Syria rather than the ex-Ba'thists as a group. Thus Akram Hourani, the head of the Syrian Executive Council, was less powerful than he expected to be and claimed afterwards that all directives came from Cairo with no initiative left to the Syrians and no jurisdiction left for him personally. Some other Ba'thist ministers were either without any real task - like Mr. Bitar the Minister of State - or were severely criticized by what they considered to be unjust public accusations and rumours.

Because of the organizational existence of the Ba'th outside the U.A.R. the Syrian Ba'thists were obliged to consider their comrades' opinion where inter-Arab relations came up. Thus they opposed Nasser's temporary "appeasements" with 'reactionary' regimes and monarchs. The Ba'th's army officers were transferred

¹ Interview with Michel Aflaq, September 1962.

either to Egypt or to minor non-strategic commands.

The fact that the Agrarian Reform minister was an ex-Ba'thist exposed the Ba'thists to the wrath of the land-owning classes, and the Ba'thists were under the impression that the 'regime', meaning Sarraj in Syria, was willing to make them a scapegoat. Hourani was relieved from his post as head of the Executive Council. The National Union elections witnessed a very significant campaign against the Ba'thists and many of their candidates withdrew in protest. Riad Malki, an ex-Ba'thist and a Syrian minister, was dismissed after the elections. Some ex-Ba'thists explained the appointment of Vice-President Amer as first man in Syria as a final sign for direct Egyptian rule and the desire to eliminate all powerful groups in Syria. The only Syrian who acquired wider power was Col. Sarraj. This the Ba'thists resented by that time.¹

The Ba'thist grew increasingly critical of the U.A.R. policies and stressed that if the regime neglected the progressive elements and substituted hired people with no ideological commitments to the foundational principles of the new republic the future of the state would be jeopardised. Their views were published in Beirut's As-Sahafa.² They liked to be classified as the loyal opposition in the U.A.R. On February 22, 1960 an unsigned article appeared as

¹ This was followed by a mass resignation of Ba'thists from the Cabinet because they had no authority or ability to correct the 'mistakes of the regime.'

² Roughly from December 1959 and throughout 1960.

an editorial in *As-Sahafa*¹ explaining the importance and historical significance of the U.A.R. and the Ba'th's pride in that republic. The article stated that the U.A.R. stood against imperialism and Zionism, achieved steps in industrialization and Agrarian reform and that the revolutionary attitude necessitated positive and objective criticism. The article called for more popular initiative made possible by more democratic freedoms, more efforts for the realization of comprehensive Arab unity made possible by collective efforts and leadership and interaction between the republic and Arab revolutionary movements.

However President Nasser publicly attacked the Ba'thists when he clearly referred to them - without naming them - in the second anniversary of the U.A.R. The National Command in Beirut issued a lengthy and important secret circulation "for members only" explaining the nature of the U.A.R. regime. It attacked regional hegemony, the dependence of the regime on propaganda and police methods and its paving of the road for the comeback of the reactionary forces in Syria.² The circular emphasized the difference between being critical of the regime's methods and the idea of unity and the necessity of being faithful to the idea of unity and the actual unity between Egypt and Syria. The circular main-

¹ Michel Aflaq wrote this article.

² Nidal Al-Ba'th, Vol. IV, 1964, pp. 130-180 passim

tained that the U.A.R. was ruled by Nasser personally aided by police and intelligence, and that the National Union's function was to propagandise governmental actions and decisions.¹ The Party, as the circular explained, would not open any battle with the leadership of the U.A.R. "Whatever might be said against us"² because this would be detrimental to the national cause. However this did not speak for the feelings of many Syrian ex-Ba'thists who were embittered by personal experiences with the authorities with result that some of them stood in favor of the secession of 1961 while the party - particularly outside Syria and Lebanon - decisively and unquestionably condemned the secession. The fact that the Ba'thi officers were either discharged or "banned" to faraway posts and commands rendered the Ba'th unable to defend the U.A.R. at the critical moment. The party's explanation to Hourani's and Bitar's signature on the "secession document" is that both were not party members at that time and the party's declared position was otherwise.

3) Movement of Arab Nationalists

This movement had its origins among the Arab students of the American University of Beirut who started their organization after the Palestinian disaster.³ These students included Syrians who

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid., p. 179.

³ Its leaders included students like George Habash and Ahmad al-Khatib who are still prominent figures in the Movement.

carried on recruitment and propagation of the ideas of the organization after graduating from the University. Most of them were city dwellers from the middle and upper classes. Until 1958 they were a minor group on the Syrian political scene with no deputies in parliament and no officers in the army. They enthusiastically and whole-heartedly voted for the merger. They found a role to play in Syria after the first signs of disenchantment between the Ba'th and Nasser. They befriended Abdul-Hamid Sarraj who encouraged their limited activities in the 'Arab Society' in Damascus. Some members found their way to rather prominent positions in the National Union but nothing came out of that.

They were split over Sarraj's insubordinate attitude following his transfer to Cairo days before the secession. Some of their members lead by T. Mahainy organized a demonstration supporting Sarraj. The secession pulled the curtain on this split. They supported unity but were not strong enough to defend it against its enemies.

4) The Bourgeois Political Parties

These were parties embracing notables, rich people, and leaders who fought against the French: "they were all chiefs and no Indians." The Watni Party represented the alliance between the landlords and the merchants whereas the Sha'b Party represented the industrialists and financiers particularly those of Aleppo.

These classes voted for the merger hoping that this was the means to get rid of the Ba'thists and Syrian army officers. They were assured that private property was inviolable. They were the most outspoken sector against the Ba'th and were very happy when Nasser tried to smash the Ba'thists. The Agrarian Reform caused protests from the landowning classes which were less influential than the other sectors of the Syrian Bourgeoisie. Their hour struck when Nasser decided to nationalize the main sectors of the Syrian economy.

The Bourgeois classes succeeded in preparing the ground for the secession by protesting Egyptian 'colonization', ruin of the economy and the 'police state.' These classes staged and backed the secession.

5) The Army Groups

By and large there were three main groups or blocs in the Syrian army prior to unity: The Ba'th group headed by Mustafa Hamdoun - who played a leading role in the coup d'etat against Shishakly in 1954 and Abdul-Ghani Kannout who held a commanding military position near Damascus. The second group was called the Independent Bloc whose members held several important positions in various spots including positions in the Headquarters in Damascus. The leaders of this group were Ahmad Abdul-Karim, Amin Nafouri, Ahmad Hneidi, Jado Izzeddin, Akram Dairi and T. Awdatallah. These officers were progressive nationalists but with no clear ideological

commitment but backed the Syrian governments from 1956 onwards and were in favor of unity and Nasser's leadership. The Communist officers were allied to this Bloc and thus were able to push Afif el-Bizri to the important post of Commander-in-Chief. Because of their lack of ideological commitment each member found himself on a different track after unity although a good many of them became ministers and cooperated with President Nasser in his effort to rid the army of its political officers. The third group was called the Damascus Bloc consisting mainly of sons of well-to-do city families in contradistinction to the other groups who came from the country, sons of peasants and farmers. The Damascus Bloc was not as vocal or as influential as the other groups. The fact that it did not get itself a reputation for meddling into politics saved its members from being ^{removed} dismissed from the army during unity. The members of this group became assistants to Marshal Amer like; Nahlawi, Assasah, Kuzbari, Hindi, Abed Rabbo and others. When Col. Sarraj, Chief of Deuxieme Bureau, and the man in charge of internal security in Syria was ^{removed} dismissed from his responsibilities in the Northern Region the gate was wide open for the bourgeois officers to stage their act. The army was a main center of power where Nasser neglected class factors and considerations. He dismissed officers with political inclination but it did not occur to him that other officers were likely to get involved in political affairs when their class interests were at stake.

Social Legislation

Any analysis of the U.A.R. would be unpardonably incomplete if it fails to discuss the two most important pieces of social legislation: The Agrarian Reform and the July Decrees in 1961.

1) Agrarian Reform

On November 26, 1958 a law of Agrarian Reform was issued for the Syrian Region. The total number of land lords whose land was subject to requisitioning ^{was} 1914 owners of ba'li land and the area of ba'li land subject to requisitioning was 1,123,500 hectares. The number of owners of irrigated land whose land was subject to requisitioning was 856 and the area of irrigated land subject to requisitioning was 254,700 hectares. The compensation was fixed as being equivalent to ten times the average rent of the land for an agricultural rotation. It would be paid in form of state bonds bearing an annual interest of 1.51 redeemable in forty years.¹

Noteworthy is the fact that 1,914 owners of ba'li land subject to requisitioning represent 1% of the total owners and 856 owners of irrigated land represent 1.6% of total owners according to official statistics. The land owner was left with 300 hectares of ba'li land or 80 hectares of irrigated and orchard land or an

¹ See U.A.R. Yearbook, 1959, p. 258.

area equal to both types. There were provisions whereby the proprietor could transfer ownership of a limited specified area to his children or spouse. The law was based on diffusion of private ownership of land.

There were many motives behind the passage of the Agrarian Reform in Syria. There was first the benevolence and good will of the leadership - of 23 of July 1952 - their sympathy with the farmers and desire to effect popular following for a progressive regime. Second there was the circumstantial embarrassment following the steps taken by the Iraqi Revolution of July 14, 1958. A third factor was the practical evidence of its workability in Egypt. Fourthly, the Syrian political forces - the Ba'th and the army officers who came from peasant background - were in favor of such a step and indeed tried to legislate in the pre-58 Parliament, but could not ever enforce the Agrarian Relations Law after it was passed by Parliament. Finally there might have existed an aim of destroying the semi-feudal class and if possible diverting it towards industrialization and investments.

However, numerous factors prevented any immediate success for the Agrarian Reform. First there was an absence of technical know-how and lack of qualified administrative personnel. Second there were no preparations taken to establish cooperatives to substitute for the landlord's services and providing equipments and seeks. Thirdly - it is said - that certain administrators were revengeful in the application of the Law. Fourthly there was a

successive crop failure due to the draught that coincided with the deviation of the Unity. Finally there existed no organization to mobilize the people, spread agricultural consciousness and engender enthusiasm among peasants.

The Agrarian Reform Law, inspite of all obstacles and difficulties achieved irreversible results such as changing social relationships - with far reaching results on all levels - and raising the morale and dignity of the farmers i.e. the majority of the population. It curbed the political power of the landlords - a minute minority as we have seen, and prepared for the participation of the farmers in the social and political life. Whether this is being achieved or will be achieved in the future remains to be seen.

2) The Socialist Decrees

In July 1961 five important measures were passed, applicable to both regions of the U.A.R. Law No. 111 of July 19, provided that after certain obligatory deductions had been set aside, 25 per cent of the profits made by a company should be allocated to its employees of which 10% should be distributed to them, 5% used for regional social services and housing and the remaining 10% appropriated for central social services. Law No. 113 also passed on July 19, prohibits any director or employee of a company from earning more than L.E. 5,000 per annum. Law no. 114 of the same

date decrees that the board of directors of every company shall include a representative of its employees and another of its workers among its seven members. Law No. 117 nationalized all banks and insurance companies in both regions of the U.A.R. as well as 42 large industrial, transport, commercial, financial and land reclamation companies in Egypt and 51 in Syria. Law No. 118 decreed the partial nationalization of 82 companies and establishments in Egypt and 11 in Syria. Law No. 119 prohibited any person or corporate entity from owning shares with a market value of more than L.E. 10,000 in 143 companies in Egypt and 11 in Syria. The three laws provided for compensation in the form of fifteen-year negotiable government bonds bearing 4 per cent interest and redeemable after 10 years.¹

These were the July Decrees which set Egypt or the U.A.R. on the road of socialism. Before we discuss these decrees it ought to be clear that the "public sector" presented itself in Egypt as the crowning of the national liberation movement following the Suez Aggression; it was an affirmation of national sovereignty and dignity. Once this was introduced it tended to grow with the increasing power of the state and the progressive ambitions and schemes of the governors. The "Economic Organization" achieved the desired aims and nothing succeeds like success: why not take over the basic economic sectors since the 'Big Money' was reluctant

¹ Ibid.

to follow the pace of desired progress? This would be consistent with Nasser's desire to curb the vital economic power held by the capitalists, and would ensure social justice and diffusion of wealth in the community. The state represents the interests of the 'people' and nationalization would mobilize the working classes now that they share the results of increased productivity. Nasser had to be as good as his motto "the socialist democratic cooperative society," and consistent with the world-wide trend towards socialism and planning particularly in the underdeveloped Afro-Asian world. Professor Charles Issawi remarks "in Egypt as in other countries the growth of a modern military establishment has led to rapidly increasing absorption by the state of the economic and technical resources of the community."¹ Anwar Abdul-Malek comments "in reality we are witnessing a national build-up or rather a build up of national reaffirmation, engendered by the international situation from one side and the sharp human direct needs from another and forced to commit itself to state control; an approach inspired by forms of the happy advanced state."²

In Syria the native bourgeoisie was more deeply rooted and vigorous than its Egyptian counterpart; state intervention a more recent and restricted practice. Syria achieved a remarkable state of growth between 1945 and 1957 followed by a depression - partly

¹ Charles Issawi, Egypt in Revolution (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), p. 262.

² Abdul-Malek, p. 404.

or mainly owing to poor rainfall - after the union with Egypt. The application of the laws in Syria under these circumstances and in absence of socialist organizations and precautionary measures had dramatic consequences.¹ The coup d'etat of September 28, 1961 had unmistakable causal correlation with the July Decrees.

The economic benefits the Syrians actually derived from the union never had a chance to become apparent. Some unpopular decisions and measures were dictated by the need to conserve foreign exchange, otherwise vulnerable to depletion because of the poor yield of the major export crops. However, the Agrarian Reform Laws and the July decrees effected a permanent change in the economy over and above the historic political consequences they left in Egypt and Syria.

Mistakes and Setbacks

The U.A.R. was a pioneering experiment in modern Arab history and unification and thus had to face enormous obstacles and difficulties of gigantic magnitude and dimensions without possessing the instruments, organizations, or institutions designed to overcome such difficulties. There was a lack of clarity as to the aims and methods of the new state particularly the methods or means of achieving the purposes present in the minds of the leadership.

¹ Issawi, p. 61.

The text of the Provisional Constitution was vague on the powers and tasks of the Vice-Presidents and the head of the Executive Councils or the collective personality of these Councils and there was no common higher authority for both Regions save that of the President.

To begin with there were several disparities between the two Regions geographical, historical, social and economic. The social structures of the two countries was markedly different and the economies were by no means complementary. But above all there was no similarity in political institutions and experience and no channels were opened for interaction but rather imitation of Egyptian institutions and outlook as was the case with the National Union. It is only fair to accuse the leading political forces - the Ba'th Party in particular - of a great sin namely that of neglecting to explore the nature of the problems that would be created by such a step instead of getting enchanted or rather drunk with the wine of sentimentality that accompanied the initial victory that the event scored. No sociological study was available and the new republic had to proceed by trial and error and sometimes walk in the darkness of ignorance and faulty estimations, especially in relation to the social forces and social stratification.

At the outset Nasser had proceeded with caution in an attempt to win over the conservative Syrian bourgeoisie. This brought forth an implicit lack of confidence between Nasser and the pro-

gressive socialist forces in Syria and eventually a divorce between him and the Ba'thists and some ex-officers i.e. the groups that held power prior to 1958 which blocked the bourgeoisie from attaining political control over the government. In the absence of a socialist popular organization this meant leaving enormous influence to the entrenched middle classes. When Nasser attempted to organize the National Union these forces 'invaded' the new organization and rendered it useless as far as helping in the intended socialist build-up. On October 2, 1961 Nasser admitted that he was deceived by the reactionary forces for he was under the false impression that they will be obedient. A corollary to this admission was the self-criticism he publicly practiced in the same speech: 'after the establishment of the U.A.R. we were hit by compacency and thought everything was under control.. differences arose in the nationalist front and it was torn to pieces.' Another basic discrepancy was the important fact that whereas unity had been a popular demand, motto and hope in Syria it wasn't so in Egypt and it was largely Nasser's personality and his own pan-Arab convictions and leadership that brought Egypt into the Unity. This fact was all the more significant as he had to rely more and more on Egyptian assistants, officers and civil servants. This entailed a great danger emanating from the historical formation and role of the Egyptian bureaucracy. In his article, already referred to, Mohammad H. Haikal editor of al-Ahram¹ described the historical

¹ Al-Ahram (Cairo), March 6, 1964, p. 1 in Supplement.

formation of the Egyptian bureaucracy and its role as a tool in the hands of the exploiting ruling classes recruited from classes hostile to the interests of the masses. It acted as an insulator between authority and the people, it was an organ for the "government" not for public service. Its technical efficiency restricted to certain fields, and corruption was widespread. The Revolutionary regime of Nasser could not effect a radical change in the bureaucracy due to the absence of a revolutionary party, lack of clarity vision and depth among the leaders of the Revolution and finally no clear vision of the class struggle in society. Such a bureaucracy proved to be harmful to the causes of the regime; the interests and sentiments of the people especially when another disease was added: that of Egyptian regionalism: "To the Syrian mind, their country was being run as an Egyptian province."¹

A good deal was written by many Syrians who participated in the U.A.R. governments between 1958-1960 about the mistakes, setbacks and nature of the regime. These accounts are tarnished by personal embitterments and polemics, yet could bring some light on the subject at hand. They expressed their apprehensions in polemical pamphlets following the coup d'etat of September 28, 1961 and were generally similar:²

¹ John Major, "The Search for Arab Unity," International Affairs, Vol. 39 (October, 1963), p. 559.

² Pamphlets published by Khalil Kallas, A. Hourani, A. Abdul-Karim and Afif Bizir and are to be found in Jaffet Library, A.U.B.

1) The subordinate position given to the Syrian Region in the U.A.R. government, and Egyptian hegemony and control over Syria so much so that the Northern Region felt offended. The appointment of Marshal Amer meant direct Egyptian rule.

2) Vagueness of the Constitution, no authority for the vice-presidents or to the Executive Council as a collective entity.

3) The personal dictatorship of the President and his use of the police methods to control the governments, and centralization of powers in his hands.

4) Hostility towards the progressive forces and their gradual elimination.

5) Economic grievances - K. Kallas claimed that the five year industrialization program for Syria in September 1958 was declared without any consultation with the Syrians. He accused the Egyptians of deliberate impoverishment of the Syrian Region and of attempting to shake confidence in the Syrian pound to devalue it.¹

6) They accused Nasser of trying to liquidate the Palestine issue during the period of 1958-1961, these accusations were echoed at Chtura Conference but were refuted by Mr. Salah Bitar who had been a minister in the U.A.R. cabinet himself.²

However prejudicial these accusations, criticisms and remarks,

¹ Khalil Kallas, Aradnaha Wihda... Wa Araduha Mazra'a (We wanted it a unity... they wanted it a farm), p. 68.

² See Al-Ba'th (Damascus), August-September, 1962. It was then a weekly paper.

they remain noteworthy because they were the only ministers who wrote about the subject even if their purpose is not beyond suspicion.

The remarks passed during the negotiations and talks preceding the declaration of the 17th of April Agreement 1963 are perhaps a more sympathetic view of the errors and flaws of the merger yet nonetheless authentic and valuable.

President Nasser rightly pointed out that the enemies of the Arab Nationalist idea had an opportunity to strike it when it materialized in the U.A.R. He also pointed out that the new state inherited blocs and groups in the armed forces which tended to present problems to the leadership. Abdul-Karim Zhour - a member of the Syrian delegation - pointed out that the Ba'thists were insulted, their ministers had no real functions and the National Union did not fill the vacuum caused by the dissolution of political parties. Zhour added "the unitary state (between Egypt and Syria) did not succeed and in my opinion it is inapplicable at this stage of Arab history."¹ Nasser immediately expressed his agreement with Zhour "about the vacuum" and admitted that "it was our duty to rally the nationalist parties and groups and I also agree with (Zhour) that the unitary state is premature due to the regional feelings and factors." Zhour also pointed out the political disparities bet-

¹ Mahader Mubahathat al Wihda, p. 14.

² Ibid.

ween Egypt and Syria.¹ Syrian military officers spoke at length of the mishandling of the Syrian army by Egyptian officers who failed to understand the Syrian mentality, and about the transfer of Syrian officers to the Southern Region where they were not given their positions in contradistinction to the Egyptian officers who were transferred to Syria. General R. Quteiny stated that "as long as the regime depended on a class of officers who only cared for their jobs, we do not take an oppositional or enthusiastic stand towards unity."² Another officer pointed out a fatal mistake "the Syrian command was entrusted to people not up to the standard of responsibility; they backed the secession."³

Evaluation

The U.A.R. was a pioneering experiment in modern Arab history and as such it was bound to encounter difficulties and obstacles, and in facing these difficulties and obstacle, errors, misjudgement and miscalculations are inevitable. The fact that the secession took place points out the presence, if not indeed the abundance of mistakes and misjudgements, yet this does not rob the U.A.R. its historic significance, the richness and decisiveness of that experiment.

¹ Ibid., p. 23.

² Ibid., p. 20.

³ Ibid., p. 22.

Above all the U.A.R. 1958-1961 proved three important points:

First: that Arab unity was not a dream and an aspiration but an idea capable of materialization and realization and could be actually carried out.

Second: that Arab unity enhances the strength of the Arabs vis-a-vis the enemy¹ and in international circles and weakens reactionary forces in the Arab world.

Third: that Arab unity is popular in its aims and social content; the fact that the secession took place after the socialist measures and by people whose interests and ideas are against socialism affirmed the bond between unity and socialism.

The U.A.R. experiment serves as a guide to future Arab unity schemes as can be detected in the 17th of April Accord. The huge popular demonstrations that Damascus witnessed after March 8, 1963 calling for unity illustrate that the U.A.R. made the resort to unity a resort to an order that is accepted as being desirable and natural; for with the U.A.R. unity ceased to be a shapeless vague aspiration.

However, the true story of the U.A.R. must remain an exercise for tomorrow's scholars of history not for today's students of politics.

¹ Walid Khalidy, Falastine wa-Manteq as-Siyadat as-Siyasiah (Palestine and the Logic of Political Sovereignty) (Beirut: Dar al-Fajr al-Jadid, 1963), p. 24.

CHAPTER IV

THE PRE-REQUISITES OF FEDERALISM: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

The failure of the Arab League condemned the ruling classes in the Arab world and exposed their inability to cope with the historical challenge facing their countries. The disintegration of the U.A.R. in September 1961 raised the question of Arab Unity and future unification: how hold together diverse and disparate peoples and territories in a single political system? Modern Arab history offered two choices neither of them satisfactory, the Arab League a loose political association of states that lacked authority which was an apparent failure three years after its establishment - in Palestine -, and a strong consolidated government, highly centralized, which neglected to a large extent, regional conditions, loyalties, and disparities. The two experiments posed a persistent question. Is there a third solution? How create a government strong enough to do all the things that modern government has to do, meet the exigencies of the moment, but not so strong as to imperil regional autonomy, and not so authoritative as to overlook the diversities and feelings in the regions?

Why, someone might ask, should the Arabs unite, even if that is possible and feasible? The reasons are discussed elsewhere in this thesis, but before proceeding further to deal with federalism and its pre-requisites I would like to quote Alexander Hamilton

who tried to answer a similar question before the adoption of the Federal Constitution in the United States: "There is something diminutive and contemptible in the prospect of a number of petty states with the appearance only of union (the Arab League in our case), jarring jealous and perverse without any determined direction, fluctuating and unhappy at home, weak and insignificant by their dissensions in the eyes of other nations."¹

The basic question pertains to the realization or attainment of a political system that provides unity where unity is needed, but can ensure variety and independence in matters where unity and uniformity is not essential. The third alternative - if realizable - is the federal system of government.

A. What is a "Federal System of Government?"

What is a federal system of government? In his book "Federal Government" K.C. Wheare states, "most of those who use the term agree in this, that they have in mind an association of states, which has been formed for certain common purposes, but in which the member states retain a large measure of their original independence."² The Encyclopedia of Social Sciences states "the term

¹ Andrew C. McLaughlin, The Confederation and the Constitution 1783-1789 (New York: Crowell-Collier Publishing Co., Collier Books, 1962), p. 120.

² Kenneth C. Wheare, Federal Government (New York: Oxford University Press, 1953), p. 1.

federation is variously employed to indicate a relationship, the process of its establishment or the entirety of a complex organization that embodies it. The essential relationship involves a division of activities between the autonomous parts and the common or central organs of a composite whole."¹ It is necessary for our purposes to detect the essential features of federalism. This is possible if we examine the major contemporary federal systems of government; the task would become easier if we accept Wheare's opinion that the "modern idea of what federal government is has been determined by the United States of America."² The following conclusions can be drawn:

First: that powers are divided between a general government which in certain matters - for example, the making of treaties and the coining of money - is independent of the governments of the associated states and, on the other hand state governments which in certain matters are in their turn independent of the general government. Thus the general authority and the regional authorities are co-ordinate with each other. The general government is supreme within its sphere, but that sphere is defined and limited.

Second: Both general and regional governments operate

¹ Arthur W. MacMahon, "Federation," Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences, ed. Edwin R.A. Seligman, Vol. 6 (1931), pp. 172-173.

² Wheare, p. 1.

directly on the people.

Third: The allotment of powers cannot be altered by ordinary legislation, for there should exist a constitutional understanding defining the spheres of authority and division of powers. In the United States the Supreme Court can rule out certain acts of the Legislature as unconstitutional and therefore invalid.

Fourth: Under a federal system of government the composite units lose their previous sovereignty, the general government assumes sovereignty in its allotted spheres. The supremacy of the Constitution limits the powers and the extension of authority of the general government and prevents encroachment on the powers of the regional governments, but that does not bestow sovereignty on the composite units. For sovereignty, proper, belongs to the federal government, the supremacy of the constitution protects the division of powers, separation of general and local governments, the interpretation of powers and the process of amendment.

The intricate relationship and the complexities of the existence of co-ordinate governments separate and independent each within its defined sphere sheds some light on the question dealing with the rarity of federal government. Walter Bagehot indicated in his "English Constitution" another reason: "Federal government is rare because its pre-requisites are many."¹ What are these pre-requisites? How do the conditions in the Arab

¹ Ibid., p. 35.

world today compare with the conditions of federal governments on the eve of their federation? Do the Arabs, and does Arab society, possess what it takes to establish a working federal system of government? These questions deserve an inquiry.

B. Wheare's Analysis

In his illuminating study Professor Wheare presented the pre-requisites of federal government in the light of historical experiments and past experience of the major contemporary federal governments: U.S.A., Canada, Switzerland and Australia.

He began by stating that, "Federal government exists, when the powers of government for a community are divided substantially according to the principle that there is a single independent authority for the whole area in respect of some matters and that there are independent regional authorities for other matters, each set of authorities being co-ordinate with and not subordinate to the others within its own prescribed sphere."¹ From a consideration of this definition he proceeded to infer the sort of conditions which should exist before the federal principle is adopted. In other words Professor Wheare was after the centripetal and centrifugal forces that make federal government feasible and the factors necessary for making the system successful and workable. Thus the communities or states concerned must desire to be under a single

¹ Ibid.

independent government and must desire at the same time to retain or establish independent regional governments in some matters at least. Desire, however, is not enough, the communities concerned must have the capacities to work the system they desire.

I shall summarize what Professor Wheare considers as necessarily present factors making for the states desire to be under a single independent government, and then factors that create a desire to retain or establish independent regional governments, and then factors contributing to the capacity to make federal government a working system. We shall then proceed to compare and discuss the situation in the Arab world, and whether political and sociological conditions lend themselves to a federal system of government.

Centripetal Factors:

- 1) Military insecurity and the need for common defence.
- 2) A desire to be independent of foreign powers and a realization that only through union could independence be secured.
- 3) A hope of economic advantage from union.
- 4) Some political association of the communities concerned prior to federal union, either in a loose confederation, as with American states and the Swiss cantons, or as parts of the same Empire, as with the Canadian and Australian colonies.
- 5) Geographical proximity.
- 6) Similarity of political institutions.

"These half-dozen factors," says Professor Wheare, "all operated in the United States, Switzerland, Canada and Australia to produce a desire for union among the communities concerned."¹

Centrifugal Forces

1) The regions which desired to unite had all had a previous existence as distinct colonies or states.

2) A divergence of economic interests partly due to their previous history as independent states.

3) Great distance isolated the communities and developed a regional consciousness. In the U.S., Canada and Australia it was distance, In Switzerland it was the barrier of mountains which divided up the country into isolated communities.

4) Divergence of nationality, religion and language, that is the presence of ethnic religious and linguistic minorities, e.g. Canada and Switzerland.

5) Dissimilarity of social (including political) institutions.

6) A successful working federal model as a force of imitation.

Capacity

Factors contributing to the successful working of a federal

¹ Ibid., p. 37.

system (the classic four examples):

1) A desire for federal union among communities is a first and obvious factor which produces in them the capacity to make and work a federal union.

2) Similarity of social and political institutions i.e. the same form of government, "produces best the capacity for union."

3) Previous existence of the federating units as distinct governments.

4) Ability of the units to finance their own local governments.

5) Qualified personnel to assume the functions of government and administration in the units.

We shall in the following pages discuss these factors more fully.

C. Centripetal Factors

1) Military insecurity and the need for common defence.

This factor compels the communities concerned to stand together and accustom them to work together. The situation in the Arab World today is like the Arabic proverb, "I and my brother against the foreigner."

Military security assumes prime importance, a fact that was stressed by one of authors of the 'Federalist Papers:' Among the many objects to which a wise and free people find it necessary

to direct their attention, that of providing for their safety seems to be the first... America has already formed treaties with no less than six foreign nations and all of them, except Prussia are maritime and therefore able to annoy and injure us." However, wars, "are less to be apprehended under one general government than under several lesser ones."¹ It is no accident that Canada was united in 1867, right after the end of the American Civil War when the United States became a potential threat. The Swiss case is a clear example of federating units under military pressure. Indeed Professor B. Hart states that "most federations have owed their origin to the desire to unite the military strength of neighbours against foreign aggression."²

If the classic federations faced potential military threat, the Arabs today face actual military aggression and grave military insecurity. The birth of Israel was a result of military aggression and bloodshed; its history in the area supplies ample evidence for its previously proclaimed expansionist intentions: "From the Euphrates to the Nile." These expansionist aims and aggressive military acts seem to be the logical conclusions flowing from the following considerations: First, that Israel is or ought to be the gathering place for all the Jews, an end to the diaspora. This was once stressed by

¹ Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay, The Federalist Papers, ed. Clinton Rossiter (New York: Mentor Book, 1961), pp. 24-44.

² A.B. Hart, Introduction to the Study of Federalism (Boston Ginn and Company), 1891, p. 18.

Mr. Ben-Gourion, then Prime Minister, when he stated that life in the diaspora is sinful now that there was a restoration of the Promised Land. Thus Israel should be able to accommodate a population that is several times more numerous than her present inhabitants. This is a literal impossibility within her present boundaries: 'Lebensraum' would be needed, and there is only one possible way: to kick more Arabs out of their homes and lands across the present frontiers.

Second, the Arabs refuse to accept or recognize Israel, since it was founded on aggression and injustice with an eye on neighbouring Arab countries. To the Arabs the continued acts of aggression on the borders are a sign of Israel's expansionist and vicious nature. Israel, with foreign help, aspires to force its presence and recognition on the Arabs by means of military aggression and pressure among other things. The Suez aggression in 1956 embodied the notion, present in the Arab mind, of Israel's aggressive and expansionist nature. The belief and the actuality are equally real.

Israel's diversion of the Jordan river waters called for a collective Arab response. The 'development' projects do not only serve to strengthen the Israeli economy, bring more immigrants but also immensely strengthen its military capacity. The 'colonies' possess a strictly military design and purpose aimed at building defenses to prevent Arab military co-operation in case of war. An Arab military officer writing in 1964 states "if the Arab countries do not cooperate sincerely in the military aspects, they

will lose the coming round with the enemy and a disaster greater than that of 1948 would be the result."¹

Actually, Israel's strategy is mainly based on the assumption of isolating the Arab fronts and dealing with each Arab country alone with striking speed that would enable her to knock out one country and transfer its troops to another frontier quickly to face another Arab country.

The challenge of the waters, added to the possibility of obtaining an atom bomb, called for an Arab collective action. The initiative had to be assumed by Egypt, and President Nasser called for an Arab Summit Meeting at Cairo on January 12, 1964. The heads of the Arab States established a unified Arab military Command. The Second Arab Summit Meeting at Alexandria, September 1964, was a more serious endeavour at military co-ordination and political cooperation. The common enemy and the imminent danger helped create an atmosphere closer to brotherhood than rivalry. The Tunisian prime minister el-Baby al-Adgham introduced a plan calling for political and military unification among the countries surrounding Israel. Although the Tunisian suggestion ignored important preventive obstacles it helps illustrate the unifying influence of the presence of military insecurity and the need for common defence. Unity, many Arabs believe, is the best means for facing military aggression. In one of his

¹ Hassan Mustafa, Attawon al-Askari Al-Arabi (Arab Military Cooperation) (Beirut: Dar Attahia', 1964), p. 65.

lectures Professor W. Khalidy stressed this point by asking a rhetoric question: "Would Israel have dared divert the waters during the unity - (U.A.R., Syria and Egypt) - knowing that this would automatically open against her two fronts one in the North the other in the South. I do not think that Israel's commencement of the diversion in Lake Tiberius after the secession was purely accidental."¹

Professor Arnold Toynbee makes unity a pre-requisite for the restoration of Palestine: "If the Arabs achieve unification, their strength and influence would be greatly enhanced immediately and would be able to achieve justice to the Arabs of Palestine."² What professors Khalidy and Toynbee meant is deeply felt by the Arab masses and this conviction is most certainly of prime consideration urging unity as a pressing need and prime necessity: it is "the battle of common destiny" as Mr. M. Aflaq rightly described it. Carlson in his "Geography and World Politics states" says that, what ties the Arabs, perhaps stronger than either religion or nationalism, is the common feeling of resentment against the establishment of Israel as a Jewish state."³

2) A desire to be independent of foreign powers and a reali-

¹ Walid Khalidy, Falestine wa-Manteq as-Siyadat as-Siyasih, p. 24.

² Arnold Toynbee, Lectures by Arnold Toynbee (Arabic Translation)(Cairo: Kutub Thakafiah, 1961), p. 90.

³ Lucile Carlson, Geography and World Politics (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1958), p. 412.

zation that only through union could independence be secured.

In the Arab world there are many parts which are still ruled by foreign powers notably in the Arabian Gulf, Aden and the "occupied Southern parts of Yemen." Arab solidarity and the fight for independence strengthened Arab nationalist feeling and the desire for unity. The Arabs feel that the fragmentation of the Arab world and the creation of political sovereignties was planned by the mandatory or imperialist powers - mainly France and Britain for the preservation of their interests and influence. These entities are exposed to the pressures of foreign powers, who find it easier to influence small states. Even Egypt, by far the biggest and strongest Arab country was not immune from foreign pressure, intervention, and aggression. The Suez Tripartite aggression, the Arabs are convinced, would not have taken place at all if the Arab world had been united. The Turkish and American pressures on Syria in 1957 would have been futile, had Syria been part of a Union embracing the Arab states. The Buraimi crisis in Saudi Arabia would have had a different solution if Saudi Arabia had been part of a union that commands great armies and resources.

Indeed as long as foreign powers see the Arab states divided and separate they will continue to exert pressures and threaten the independence of these countries. This is rather obvious to a good many Arabs, who realize that the pooling of resources, material and human, solidarity and unification create strength. Weakness

invites aggression and foreign dominance; strength checks aggression and dominance and prevents its occurrence.

Israel itself is the best example of the vulnerability of the Arab states due to their weakness and fragmentation. Jordan is under permanent and persistent pressure from Israel who several times threatened intervention in case of a coup d'etat or a change of borders.¹ The Yemeni Republic was openly attacked by the Royal Air Force (Britain), not to mention money, arms, and ammunitions supplied to the internal enemies of the Republic. The Arab national movement was primarily aimed at independence seconded by unity which was realized to be the best safe-guard for independence. To the majority of Arabs separateness is weakness and "incompleteness". This feeling was captured by the masterful eye of Jacques Berque: "In my admittedly premature attempt to grasp the historic essence of the Arabs could I neglect that element latent in their impulse towards unity, that nostalgia for completeness, which requires the study itself to see things as a whole? I had no alternative but to adjust my method, and indeed my whole exposition, to so fundamental a fact."² Indeed this sense of "incompleteness" is a recurring theme brought up by the constant foreign pressure on the Arab states. Professor Toynbee indicates that foreign pressure is sensed by all the Arab

¹ Meaning unity with Syria or the U.A.R.

² Jacques Berque, The Arabs, Their History and Future, Jean Stewart, trans. (London: Faber and Faber, 1964), p. 20.

independent states, "I am afraid to say that the independence of any of these states is not safe enough."¹ This danger and the desire to help brethren struggling against foreign rule is a major unifying factor, for it is sensed that only a unified Arab army and strength could protect the Arab Homeland. This is very much fortified by the desire for neutrality as far as the international struggle between the Communist and Western camps goes. The only security is that which comes from the consolidation of the Arabs. This explains Western antagonism against Arab unitary attempts and the constant pressure exerted to prevent the materialization of any integration schemes.

3) A hope of economic advantage from the Union

Before tackling the argument of economic advantage it is necessary, nay inevitable, that we should start by stating: "Whatever else nations may be, they are not inherently consolidated economic entities nor the resultant of economic processes. Nations seek political unity in order to be able, among other things to cut back an alien encroachment and to construct their own economic unity."² Furthermore the Arab economy is not complementary in the sense that the surplus products of one country do not constitute

¹ Toynbee, p. 82.

² Emerson, p. 170.

what other Arab countries need. Yet there are definite conceivable gains and advantages - in the economic domain - to be achieved as a result of political and economic integration. These economic advantages will appear in the form of a more efficient utilization of the economic resources of the countries involved and a more efficient exchange of the products of such resources. Professor Diab's book "Inter-Arab Economic Cooperation 1951-1960" illustrated that multi-lateral and bilateral trade agreements concluded among the Arab countries lead to an expansion of the markets - in most cases preferences have been biased in favor of agricultural products. In almost all cases trade agreements aided the growth of trade between the Arab countries.¹ However, these agreements have invariably been for a duration of one year, renewable either by agreement or automatically, a fact that denied some economic benefits and greater economic adjustment due to the presence of the risk that these trade agreements might not be renewed.

The advantages of economic integration among the Arab countries - whether in the form of economic unity or common Arab Market - are - conceivably - the following:²

a) Lowering and ultimate abolition of tariffs among the Arab countries lead to further specialization of the productive resources

¹ Muhammad Diab, Inter-Arab Economic Cooperation 1951-1960 (Beirut: Economic Research Institute, American University of Beirut, 1963), pp. 72-84.

² See Diab, p. 8 on the Conference of Arab Ministers of Finance and National Economy on May 25, 1953.

of each country according to its factor endowments and comparative advantage.¹

b) Widening of markets available to Arab industries would make possible the utilization of large scale methods of production. "The removal of tariff barriers would eliminate inefficient small size plants and enable the establishment of optimum size plants that make use of economies of scale."¹

c) Establishment of an Arab market might lead to more productive efficiency in existing industries by increasing competition among firms and entrepreneurs.

d) Economic integration would inevitably bring about a harmonization of plans of economic development among Arab countries. Such harmonization would undoubtedly lead to a more rapid pace of economic development by avoiding wasteful duplication of projects and inefficient allocation of resources on an Arab-wide basis.

e) Integration would speed up the possibility of formulating a unified policy on the part of the Arab countries concerning the exploitation of their natural resources.

f) Integration would strengthen the Arab countervailing power vis-a-vis foreign importers and buyers and create a common policy conducive to the common interests of the Arabs e.g. phosphates, oil and cotton products. It would eliminate competition

¹ Diab, p. 88.

in the field of similar products now working in the favor of buyers.

However, the achievement of economic integration will be no easy task due to present differences in economic organization, fiscal systems and indeed in the economic system as a whole. Due to the establishment of political sovereignties planning was often based on regional arrangements and adjustments; economic integration would cause some adverse effects in certain regions and firms in the economic sector in the short run. The favorable long run effects on production and industrialization in the Arab countries as a whole, and the effect on the increase of the defense potential of the Arab countries vis-a-vis Israel, might eventually prove to be overriding considerations overcoming difficulties and disadvantages of the short run effect.¹

4. Political Association of the Communities Prior to Federal Union

The lands now inhabited by the Arabs were the core of the Islamic Empire ruled by the Caliphs, the Omayyads and the Abbasids, under whom the process of islamization and Arabization were at work together. The Arab character of these lands stood the tests of successive invaders and foreign domination. The Arab political structures disintegrated and the various provincial Arab regimes eventually succumbed to the Ottoman Empire in the Sixteenth Century. As

¹ The establishment of the Arab Common Market on January 1, 1965 was a major step towards possible Arab economic integration.

Professor Toynbee observes: "all Arab countries with the exception of Morocco in the west and Oman in the South East have been united in the recent past under the political rule of the Ottoman Empire."¹ The nineteenth and Twentieth centuries witnessed the progressive dismemberment of the Arab World, but found their way to some sort of political association in the shades of the Arab League in 1945. Now all independent Arab states are members of the Arab League, a fact that has bestowed on the League a national character and purpose. In spite of the greater cohesiveness and absence of a sovereignty complex among the American states prior to the implementation of the Federal system of Government in 1787, the League can perhaps qualify for Professor Wheare's pre-requisite of prior political association.

5) Geographic Neighbourhood

The 'Arab Homeland' extends from the Arabian Gulf, and Northern Iraq in Asia, to the Atlantic Coast in Africa, bulging "to embrace all of Mesopotamia as well as the peninsular sub-continent enclosed between the Red Sea, the Indian Ocean and the Persian Gulf."² The stretch constitutes a demographic continuum that has been interrupted by the establishment of Israel on Palestinian soil producing

¹ Toynbee, p. 84.

² Sayegh, p. 11.

a break between the Asiatic part of the Arab Homeland and its African counterpart. Indeed the establishment of the state of Israel was viewed by many Arabs as a Western attempt to cut the bridge between the Arab East and the Arab West to prevent integration and unity among the Arab countries. For comparative purposes the element of neighbourhood is present and communications - land, sea and air - are available though plenty of costly work and serious efforts are necessary to facilitate trade and transport. The creation of a national network of roads and rail system would give more meaning and significance to geographical contiguity.¹

6) Political Institutions

The major aspect of similarity of political institutions in the Arab World should be devoted to the failure of the Western democratic parliamentary system in most or nearly all cases, and the emergence of new institutions that are not particularly conducive to the working of a federal system. The most outstanding and immediately apparent is the ascendancy of the military in the political domain, so much so that the army has become a political institution and the army officers political leaders. This is the case in Egypt, Syria, Iraq and Yemen.² In the rest of the Arab countries the military are the allies of the ruling classes and share authority, pres-

¹ This point was the subject of discussion between the Arab ministers of communications in a conference in late 1964.

² In the Sudan prior to October 21, 1964 and partially true in Algeria.

tige and privileges with them. Lebanon, Jordan, Algeria and Morocco serve as examples. With the rise of the military and the decline of old ruling classes and institutions, new social groups have been drawn further into the political life - the urban workers through state - controlled trade unions, the peasants through land reform and state - directed co-operatives, and an enlarged technical and administrative class of younger generations.

This situation reflects itself on the nature of political organizations in the Arab countries. A one-party system is now at work in Iraq, Syria, Egypt, Yemen, Tunisia,¹ and Algeria. In Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Libya no parties are officially allowed. Yet there are common political institutions i.e. parties with branches in all these countries. There is first of all what we might call a "Nasserist" movement, now taking an organized form under the "Socialist Union" with regional versions in some Arab states.² Secondly there is the Ba'th Socialist Party, ruling in Syria and carrying on secret meetings, political presence and activities in Jordan, Iraq, Lebanon, Libya, Yemen, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. And there is the Communist parties present in varying degrees of strength in most Arab countries. One might consider these parties as an important similarity in political institutions in the Arab world parti-

¹ Tunisia is ruled and dominated by one party, Neo-Dustur Socialist Party, inspite of the existence of the Communist Party.

² Syria and Iraq.

cularly when talking about the political future and prospects in the area.

There is more similarity in the social basis of political institutions in the Arab world than there is in the political institutions themselves. This fact might lead to greater similarity in the future. The lack of similarity or the similarity in negative traits of political institutions in the Arab World presents a serious obstacle to the fulfillment of unity and might prove dangerous even after the initial stages.

D. Centrifugal Forces

1) Previous existence as distinct colonies or states

The facts here are too obvious to be stated. There are thirteen independent sovereign states, members of the Arab League and the United Nations. Indeed sovereignty, one can almost refer to it as the sovereignty complex, is the major centrifugal force and a main obstacle to Arab unity. The entities enjoy the celebrity and distinctiveness of independence, the ruling classes the power, prestige and affluence that go with political and economic power. The existence of separate entities tends to create a crust of vested interests around sovereignty that is difficult to surrender out of good will. As early as 1945 politicians and delegations from the different parts of the Arab World were desirous of retaining separate identities to ensure their own interests and preserve their power. This was the

case in the United States, for on the eve of federation G. Washington lamented "the factions spirit of the state politicians and above all the thirst for power and the banthing - I had like to have said Monster - sovereignty."¹ He went on to say that "the state officers were to be losers of power," under federalism.

"Political entities, like individuals, rarely resort to self-liquidation and suicide,"² remarks Professor W. Khalidy bearing in mind, no doubt, the Arab situation. The presence of such considerations, feelings and factors would certainly contribute to a federal structure of government in case the Arabs succeed in uniting their nation. These factors might be so strong as to prevent unity.

2) A divergence of economic interests

The causes of divergence could be traced to the existence of the Arab States as separate identities which means lack of co-ordinated planning for a complementary economy and the lasting effects thereof on the size and nature of industries, duplication and competition in products and absence of harmony in economic structures as a whole. The economies are by no means similar and vary between socialistic systems - public ownership in the industrial and commercial sectors - and free enterprise systems. Egypt, Syria and

¹ McLaughlin, p. 128.

² Taken from the introduction to the translation of Robert Bowie and Carl Friedrich, Studies in Federalism (Boston: Little and Brown, 1954), Burhan Dajani, trans. (Beirut: Ad-Dar as-Sharqiah litiba'a wa anashr, 1964), p.t.

Algeria and to a lesser degree Iraq have a state-controlled economy with an important share of industrial production in the hands of government. Lebanon, Jordan, Kuwait, Libya, Saudi Arabia have so far refrained from taking any measures of nationalization. Economic divergencies reflect themselves in the varying degrees of importance of the main economic sectors. Kuwait, Libya and Saudi Arabia depend mainly on oil production. Egypt relies on agriculture and industry; Lebanon on services, tourism, commerce etc. and Jordan on foreign aid. These divergencies tend to create markedly different levels of taxation - Egypt very high, while in Kuwait there is no income tax at all - and different financial and institutional legislation. The currencies are not the same and differ in value some being freely convertible others under systems of foreign exchange control. Actually there is more divergence in the Arab situation than is necessary or desirable for federal purposes, and there is more divergence than, say, was the case in the United States prior to 1787. The States of the Union faced certain common problems like the depreciation of the value of money. There were other serious problems like the institution of slavery, but the Arab situation is more complex and diverse.

Certain steps were taken in the direction of reducing the diversity and bringing more harmony and Arab economic unit e.g. the Council for Economic Union and the Arab Common Market yet so far no concrete applications of such schemes materialized so far.

To conclude on this point we can say that economic divergencies exist partly or mainly due to the separate and sovereign existence of the Arab States and differences in economic systems. The bested interests that clustered and prospered on sovereignty would resist centralization and close integration and in case of achievement of unity this factor would contribute to a federal structure of government.

3) Distances and regional consciousness

There is no doubt that the geographic extension of Arab World and the total area of the Arab States is greater than that of the Great Federations at the time of their adoptions of the federal system of government. The thirteen American States were certainly less spacious than their Arab counterpart 13 Arab States: members of the League; and the mountains of Switzerland do not supersede the insulatory effects of the biggest deserts in the world. Indeed the Arab world includes countries from two continents and the distance between Mascat and Casablanca is greater than that between Cairo and Capetown which cuts all along the African continent.

The Arab World is divided into four 'geographical' regions: The Fertile Crescent comprising Iraq, Syria, Jordan, Palestine and Lebanon; the Arabian peninsula comprising Saudi Arabia, Yemen and the Gulf states, protectorates and, sheikhdoms; the Nile valley comprising Egypt and Sudan; and finally North Africa including Libya, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco. In all of these "units"

Arabic is the official language, yet there are different dialects and it is often hard for an Iraqi, for example, to understand the North African dialect. The differences in dialect tend to nourish a feeling of provincialism which not merely separates the regional units, but sometimes act as a divisive factor within the same 'geographical' unit as is the case in the Fertile Crescent where the Iraqi dialect distinguishes itself sharply from, say, the Lebanese. This fact is less significant than it appears to be, for the boundaries dividing the Arab states surrounding Syria are 'artificial' lines of recent invention drawn by the Sykes-Picot Agreement to serve the interests of the foreign powers. These mandatory powers - Britain and France - pumped fresh feelings of provincialism and distinctiveness into the newly created states, and tried to invoke boundary - consciousness through a number of measures and policies, designed to preserve separate existence of sovereign entities afterwards. Nowadays one may encounter Jordanians, Lebanese, Iraqis etc stressing their belonging to their petit states instead of the nation as a whole. In the case of Jordan this is new since this state had no previous history of statehood prior to the First World War. Under the Ottomans these lands were one and did not enjoy a separate administrative or political existence according to the present boundaries. The different flags, anthems and songs, with the passage of time, forged a feeling of independence and a desire for separateness which will definitely act in a centrifugal direction.

Great distances render a unitary Arab State a sheer administrative impossibility since no modern systems of communications link the various countries together. The deserts and other obstacles limit accessibility making the desired networks an expensive and laborious project.

4) Ethnic and religious minorities

In the Arab World there are many religious minorities, the most important of which are the Christians, the Jews, the Sabians and several sects which have branched off from Islam itself, such as the Druze, the Nusayris and the Alawites. Islam is the religion of the overwhelming majority of the Arabs. The minorities were able to preserve their identities and pursue their religious practices freely throughout the Islamic period. "Tribal spirit and local pride enhanced their loyalty to their faith particularly since these religious beliefs were the symbol of their unity and outward expression of that provincialism which they jealously treasured and were very ready to defend."¹ Some of these minorities lived in remote places where they were isolated due to poor communications which enabled them to preserve their local autonomy and retain their language and religion. The Christians of Syria, Iraq and Palestine became Arabized under the influence of the Arabic-speaking Islamic majorities; so were the copts of Egypt. The Christians of Lebanon

¹ Faris and Husayn, p. 105.

revealed a lack of acquiescence partly due to their place of residence and descent and partly due to the policies of the Ottomans and European powers in the nineteenth century. The Maronites in particular were encouraged to fear the Moslem majority in the area and seek autonomy and independence guaranteed by foreign powers. To them Arab Unity carries implications of Moslem hegemony, and they tend to insist on autonomous regional status that would tend to prefer a federal system of government if even that rather than a unitary Arab government if they had to choose between the two.

The religious divergencies, however, extend to involve sectarian differences among the Moslems themselves. In Iraq divisive feelings between the Sunnites and the Shiites exist: "the Mandate power feared a unified Iraq and therefore followed a policy designated to perpetuate these differences and to invigorate the spirit of sectarianism and made it a vested interest."¹ There is a marked lack of enthusiasm among the Shiites of Iraq for Arab Unity today while the Sunnis reveal a more enthusiastic attitude. This was the case with 17th of April Accord in 1963, and it is likely that such an attitude would persist, at least ^{for} near future. Sectarianism is a centrifugal force and a divisive factor "it dissipates national efforts, drains its vitality, and diverts the attention from fundamental issues. It cuts up every Arab society into fragmentary so-

¹ Ibid., p. 111.

cial islands, creating a narrow spirit completely inimical to patriotism."¹

Although the call for Arab unity and Arab nationalism is addressed on secular non-racist grounds, some ethnic minorities, the Kurds of Iraq in particular, seem to oppose unity. The most obvious reason for such a hostility is the fact that they do not consider themselves Arabs and therefore excluded from the basis of unity and subjected to a stronger authority commanding greater armies capable of subduing any separatist movements or demands of autonomy. These ethnic minorities would rather believe that Islam was the bond that ties them to the state they live in rather than Arab nationalism e.g. Kurds and possibly the Berbers of North Africa. The feeling of distinctiveness is further reinforced by the linguistic barriers and lack of communication with the rest of the population, in addition to the backwardness of social conditions and levels of education and other forms of negligence from the central government. Before the ethnic minorities accept unity scheme they must be made to feel their full citizenship in the state they belong to now. They must also feel that unity schemes are free from racial considerations and are not meant to be an encroachment on their autonomous status. The existence of ethnic and religious minorities would act against any tendency to overpower the central government or establishment of a unitary system under the banner

¹ Ibid., p. 113.

of Arab unity.

5) Dissimilarities of social and political institutions

Great disparities exist reflecting themselves in the politics and institution of the Arab countries. The magnitude of the differences can be immediately captured by contrasting the U.A.R. and Saudi Arabia, the former a "secular" socialistic increasingly industrial republic, the latter a religious, autocratic feudal kingdom.

Inspite of general similarities in family structures and roles, there are great disparities in the sociological structures between the different communities. The Western influence - cultural and industrial effects - have touched some parts but rarely affected others. Tribalism dominates in the deserts and among the bedwins, family affiliations in the villages and party or vocational affiliations in the cities. Saudi Arabia is characterized by strong tribal spirit among the majority of the population, polygamy in marriage, male domination within the family and autocratic system of government. Family roles and modes in Lebanon are different reflecting differences in educational economic and values. A parallel line is detectable on the political level traceable through differences in political developments and temperaments. Kuwait is a parliamentary sheikhdom; Iraq a republic ruled by an alliance among military groups; Syria ruled by an alliance of a socialist party and the

army; Jordan a kingdom with parliamentary form but no democratic content (no political parties are allowed); Saudi Arabia a kingdom autocratically ruled by a religious dynasty; Yemen a young republic that has not been given the chance to develop a political system yet; Egypt a popular military regime with one mass-party and a loyal parliament; the Sudan was ruled by a military junta until October 21, 1964 succeeded by rule of a political alliance between the different groups. Libya a monarchy with a parliament - but with no political parties allowed; Tunisia a republic managed by a strong and all-embracing ruling political party headed by a strong and popular leader; Algeria a socialist republic with one-party system facing a fairly strong unorganized opposition; Morocco a monarchy with a parliament and a strong opposition whose leaders are either jailed or out of the country. The differences in political structures and types of governments create differences in political outlook and orientation among the peoples or communities concerned, and obstacles in administration education and training that are difficult to overcome. The U.A.R. experience has illustrated the difficulties involved and the lack of understanding and short-sightedness in ignoring differences of political development, temperament and outlook that exist in the various parts of the Arab World.

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institution and system of government, with no clear results as yet. There is a dangerous lack of consensus on fundamentals of government and political institutions which has so far affected the success of previous attempts of unification.

6) A successful working federal model as a force of imitation

States and nations, like individuals, look up to leading examples of their time and are tempted to imitate these examples, under the force of a working model, in the hope of achieving parity and leadership. The leading contemporary federal systems already mentioned in this treatise are among the leading countries of the world. The United States of America is, perhaps, the strongest power in history in addition to being the most affluent society on earth. It is a vast country with different climatic regions and different stocks of peoples all speaking the same language: a set of facts that strike many Arabs as being comparable to the situation in their country. There is little doubt that many Arab intellectuals are impressed by the federal model in the United States, with the assumption of the success of the relationship between the States and the Federal government by logical necessity, present in their minds, judging from the present position of the United States. To illustrate this point is not difficult; the most significant example the observer of Arab politics would know of is the call for federal unity issued by the Ba'th Party in early 1962. This document, which was distributed in leaflets, reveals the great effect of the U.S.

Federal system as a model, working and successful, to imitate.

E. Capacity

1) Desire for federal union:

The essential element to be stressed here is the presence of desire among the peoples to federate and the willingness of the social forces in command of the key power positions to lead such a historical endeavour. The difficulty here is twofold: first is the yardstick or criterion of measurement of general enthusiasm for Arab federation, and second whether those who consent know, or are ready to shoulder, the necessary sacrifices and responsibilities that such a step entrusts upon them. The Arab League proved that Arab rulers were not willing to surrender titles, self-interest and sovereignty, the U.A.R. 1958-1961 proved that whereas there was almost a hypnotic attachment or enthusiasm for unity there existed a lack of qualified leadership among Nasser's assistants, to organize the people to protect unity and help build the new system of government.

The majority of the Arab people would vote for Arab federation if the plebiscite is preceded by the proper and adequate atmosphere and preparation. Yet this does not constitute the determining factor. Unless the people are conscious of, and willing to, sacrifice and toil, are involved in such a step, with the effective historical leadership ready to organize and assume its role, popular enthusiasm will be insufficient to bring forth a working federal system. It is inevitable to state that since the cessation of

Syria from the U.A.R. and more so after the abandonment of the 17th of April Accord, 1963, the Arab political scene witnessed a period of recession in unitary sentiment. The dissension among Arab nationalist progressive forces contributed to the popular lack of enthusiasm and a tinge of despair.

2) Social and political institutions and the capacity for union

As we have already seen, the Arab countries possess in common basic similarities in social institutions and basic dissimilarities in political institutions, a fact which is likely to prove to be a major obstacle to a smooth working of a federal system. Individualism, dictatorship and lack of tolerance towards political opposition emerge to complicate any process of political compromise which is a main characteristic of the American Congressional, and, indeed, of the whole political system in the U.S. It seems certain that a standardization of political institutions in the different countries and a coordination on a national level is a necessary pre-condition to the working of a federal system in the Arab world.

3) Previous existence of the federating units as distinct governments

It is obvious that the federating units in the Arab case are not only distinct units but also sovereign governments. This fact would facilitate the work of government on a state level but would make it very difficult at the Federal level, and would prejudice

the collective spirit and service to the common good since the state delegates would have the interests of the region most at heart, at least in the short run period.

4) Ability of the units to finance their own local governments

In the majority of cases this will not be a major problem since these units finance themselves as sovereign states now. With the possible exception of Jordan and Yemen most units will be able to finance their own local governments.

5) Qualified administrative personnel in the units

Here again the problem is not acute since administrative set-ups are already established. The necessity to unify the administrative systems and to draw up common standards for appointments and qualifications would arise but would not constitute a major obstacle.

The conclusion here seems to be that there exist in the Arab World today strong features of similarity with the conditions that prevailed in the great federal systems (U.S.A., Canada, Switzerland and Australia) on the eve of their federation. Admittedly there are differences that would make imitation virtually impossible. The foregoing discussion leaves open the question of what are the changes required to effect if federalism is to be successful at all in the Arab World. Arab federalism is theoretically feasible if and when certain steps in the political domain are taken, though even then

the Arab version of the federal system would inevitably be different from all existing systems.

The comparative method in social sciences hides built-in weaknesses since "every social fact is a human fact of a place and of a time expressing a particular moment of history."¹ That is to say that even if the conditions prevailing in the Arab world were analogous to those that prevailed in the federations that Professor Wheare studied before the actual federal system was established - (which is not the case) - it does not necessarily follow that Arab federalism would be feasible in case there is an attempt to establish a federal system of government. Yet we are told that "comparisons are indispensable in the social sciences"² and to 'examine simultaneously similarities and differences' is to have guide lights in the search for social truths.

¹ Maurice Duverger, An Introduction to the Social Sciences, Malcolm Anderson, trans. (New York: Frederick Praeger, Co., 1964), p. 31.

² Ibid., p. 261.

CHAPTER V

TWO SUGGESTED WAYS

The struggle for Arab Unity assumed a new phase after the cessation of Syria from the United Arab Republic on September 28, 1961. President Nasser's courageous self-criticism after the Syrian coup d'etat and his admission of his mistake in alienating certain progressive forces in the Arab nationalist camp contributed to better relations between him and the Ba'th Party. So did the Ba'th's backing of President Nasser during the Arab League's meeting shortly after the secession at the village of Chtoura in Lebanon. Both of these forces stood against Abdul-Karim Kassem's regime in Iraq and against the Syrian regimes after the secession. When Baghdad's Radio announced the 14th of Ramadan (February 8, 1963) Revolution Nasser announced his support inspite of the fact that it was lead by the Ba'th Party. A month later the coup d'etat in Damascus was staged by Nasserist and Ba'thist army groups with the knowledge and backing of the civilian organizations of the Ba'th Party. Since the ruling groups in Egypt, Syria and Iraq professed common aims and since these were popular pressures - in Syria - for unity, the three countries entered into 'fraternal talks' on ~~March~~¹⁵ 6, 1963 and concluded by signing the "Declaration of the Union Accord" on April 17, 1963.

Ideological Framework

"Throughout their talks the delegations were inspired by their faith that Arab unity is an inevitable objective," their concept of nationalism stressed common cultural-historical backgrounds, common political struggle and destiny, common spiritual and human values, common social and economic concepts. Unity, the delegations stated, was a popular demand, the people's will the guide to their actions. The initiative, however, was assumed to belong to revolutionary groups professing faith in unity and socialism. "The three revolutions got together at a meeting-point which reaffirmed that unity is a revolutionary act which derives its concepts from the faith of the masses, its strength from their will and its aim from their aspirations to freedom and socialism."¹ Unity was conceived by the delegations as being revolutionary, popular, republican and progressive, the Union between the three countries a nucleus for an all-embracing Arab Unity, and a prelude to the liberation of Palestine.

Organization of political institutions

The three delegations outlined in the Declaration the nature of the political institutions and co-ordination of political leadership in the union: "the establishment of a Charter for National Action at which all progressive unionist, popular forces meet, and

¹ "Declaration of the Union Accord," al-Dar al-Quamiyah litiba'a wa al-nashr, Cairo.

which will define for it its principles, aims, social philosophy and will be a basis for its cooperation and unity and the liberty to form popular organizations in member states so that free popular will can find an organized means of self-expression - all within the framework of a political front comprising these popular organizations." The implications are clear: political activity would be denied to all forces that oppose unity and socialism. The unionist progressive forces were to be united within the framework of a political front and a 'single political organization bound by the Charter of National Action.' The unity of leadership in the three regions was stressed: "on the level of the Federation a unified political leadership is to be formed, which will lead and unify political action in the Federation within the framework of this Charter. Political fronts in the states or unified organizations in it are bound by decisions of the federal leadership issued by a majority." Actually the 17th of April Accord should be viewed as an alliance between two political forces in the area, Nasser and his followers with the Ba'th party then dominating Iraq and ruling Syria. Both forces claimed to envisage "the democratic alliance of the working forces of the people,- farmers, workers, intellectuals, soldiers and national capitalism" as the basis of government whose interests the regime must serve. Both of these forces denied political freedom 'for the enemies of the people' who included the following:

- a) Those politically isolated.

- b) Those tried by the revolution and convicted of being a separatist, a conspirator or a userper.
- c) All who have dealt or will deal in the future with foreign political organizations thus becoming an agent of foreign powers.
- d) All who worked or work for the purpose of establishing the domination of classes that abuse society.

This denial of freedom amounts to prohibition of political action to all groups and parties that stand for free enterprise, Western type of democracy, those who do not believe in Arab nationalism, and the Communists.

The Transitional Period

The Declaration envisaged a transitional period of twenty months would that bring harmony and coordination and eventual unification of political leadership and organizations and in other spheres and dimensions of organized social life.

Political harmony and coordination must be sought in the light of unity of leadership, outlook, orientation and values: "The leadership (in the three regions) will gradually lay down a unified political organization that will lead national, political action within and outside the Federation and will work to mobilize popular forces to enforce their will in life and to constantly lead them towards new horizons". The Charter (of National Action) will bind

all 'unionist, socialist and democratic forces' in each of the three states to form a political front with unified aims, values and principles. Although the Declaration contained a stipulation stating that the above description of future political organization "does not mean the dissolution of existing unionist parties "yet the idea of amalgamating these forces after the transitional period was present; the stipulation aimed at allaying the fears of members of the Ba'th Party.

The Declaration stipulated that the transitional period be conducted according to transitional laws promulgated by the three delegations: "A plebiscite on the Federal Constitution and the President of the Republic shall be held within a period not exceeding five months" - after the publication of the announcement. "Federal Constitutional Organizations shall have completed all their elements indicated in the Constitution within a period of twenty months." It was conceived as being a period of gradual preparation on the Federal and state levels" each region shall establish before this date the constitutional organizations it needs, in preparation for the complete establishment of all the federal organizations." During the transitional period government and authority would be a coalition between the ruling groups in the three regions: "Legislative and Executive Authority in the Federal State shall be exercised, during the transitional period by a Presidential Council which shall be formed of an equal number of members from each

of the regions,¹ chosen by the Legislative Authorities in member states since the establishment of the Federation." The Presidential Council undertakes the following:

- a) Appointment of Vice-Presidents of the Republic (a Vice-President from each region) in agreement with the legislative authority in the region during the transition period.
- b) Appointment of a President for each region in agreement with the legislative authority in the region.²
- c) Appointment of a National Defence Council.
- d) Laying down and planning the State's general policy and entrusting the cabinet with its execution.
- e) Co-ordinating public services between the regions.

The President of the Republic was allotted two major powers in addition to being the head of Presidential Council:

- a) The President of the Republic shall appoint the Prime Minister and Ministers and shall relieve them of their functions.
- b) The President of the Republic has the right to object to any decision taken or law issued by the Presidential Council.

The Federal Cabinet was to include: the Prime Minister, and Ministers for: Foreign Affairs, defence, Information and Culture,

¹ Three from each region and the President acts a chairman making a total of ten members.

² This is a unitary feature rather than federal.

Education, Treasury and Finance, Economy and Economic Planning, Communications, Justice and State Ministers.

General Rules concerning the laws, treaties and government departments stipulated that work shall continue in accordance with the existing order until amended or abrogated by the competent constitutional authority. The Declaration stressed that reference would be made in one of the constitution's transitional articles stipulating that "member-States shall agree on a programme to complete the unification of federal military or foreign or legislative or economic or cultural organizations or others." The affairs of local military commands shall be run by the authorities of the regions during the transition period deemed suitable for each region."

A Federal System of Government

A. General Principles

"The three delegations declare in the name of the Arab peoples in Egypt, Syria and Iraq the will of these peoples to establish federal unity." In Appendix I and Appendix II the Declaration outlined the basis, organization and structure of the projected Federal System of Government.

Appendix I dealt with the "State Construction and Constitutional organization." The Federal State called the United Arab Republic shall be established, composed of the Iraqi, Egyptian and Syrian Regions, accessible to any Arab Republic believing in social-

ism and freedom. Islam was declared to be the official religion. Arabic the official language and Cairo, the capital of the New State. The Federal State was allotted "full international authority," the authority of the Federal State included:

B. Authority of the Federal State

1. Foreign policy: representation, treaties, extradition, issuance of passports and visas, and entrance of aliens.

2. Defence:¹ matters of war and peace, armaments and training of forces; unified military command with local decentralization of the prerogatives of local commands directly attached to the General Command; the Defence Council and the General Command of the Armed Forces as well as the Regional Military Commands mobilisation and war industries.

3. National Security: Proclamation of martial law when the Federal State or any of the regions is exposed to danger.

4. Finance and Treasury: Federal taxes, Federal budget, issuance of treasury bills and Federal State bonds, loans, foreign and domestic, customs laws and policy "which will gradually become a tariff unity and an Arab Common Market."

5. Economy, Economic Planning and Development: a Higher Council for Planning - in industry, agriculture, trade and com-

¹ Provisions on defence were somewhat vague, there is some rationale behind this vagueness so as to leave room for flexibility on this important issue.

munications as well as coordination of economic plans of the regions - interstate trade and payments, currency, Federal banking, relations with international economic establishments, Federal industries and Joint Projects.

6. Information and National Guidance: establishment of a Central Federal Agency for federal planning of information.

7. Cultural Planning: A Higher Council for Arts and Literature.

8. Planning of Education and Scientific Research: general policies for education and research, curriculums, "guarantees for unity of thought and unionist Arab national tendencies, and spiritual scientific and moral preparation of rising generations which will build complete unity and establish a free socialist Arab society."

9. Justice and Coordination of Laws: Unified principles for justice and laws, unifying of laws in stages, Federal judiciary.

10. Federal Communications: includes all means of land, sea and air transport and federal communications such as railways, steamships, aircraft, post, telegraph, telephone, wireless and meteorology on federal level.

11. Any fresh matters in accordance with the way specified in the federal Constitution: Affairs and projects which jointly concern the three regions, exceptional authority during emergencies, execution of federal laws and decrees in the regions, arbitration among the regions.

C. Authorities of the Regions:¹

- 1) Residual powers.
2. Exercise of the jurisdiction of the federal authorities by authorization from Federal Authorities.
3. Implementation of some federal laws.

Appendix B: Structure of the Federal System: Federal Organizations and the Relations between them:

1. The National Assembly: the highest organization of the authority of the State; exercises the legislative authority. The National Assembly consists of two houses: Chamber of Deputies: consists of a number of members in proportion to the population in each region; and a Federal Council: consists of an equal number of members from each region. Both houses were to be elected by direct free elections and by general secret ballot, with a term of membership for four years. The number of the members of the Federal Council was not to exceed one-third the number of the members of the Chamber of Deputies and not to be less than one-fourth of that number. "The two Councils discuss the basic affairs pertaining to the State's internal and foreign policy and the development plans and adopt resolutions concerning them." No law can be issued unless it is approved by the two Councils, the majority of the members

¹ The authorities of the Regions are not extensive at all. The fact that the U.A.R. was a unitary regime seems to have left some impact on the Accord.

should be present for decision making.

The National Assembly elects the President of the Republic and the Vice-President; the President was given the right to dissolve any or both Councils. "The Council of Ministers shall be responsible before the National Assembly where it is subjected to a vote of confidence or non-confidence by an absolute majority.¹ The National Assembly "shall have the right to accept a new member to the Federal State by a majority of three-quarters of the members of each of the two Councils," the amendment of the Federal Constitution requires a similar majority. Finally "the National Assembly has the right to declare war."

The President of the Republic

The Head of the State and the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces is the President of the Republic, elected by the National Assembly for a term of four years. The competency of the President included representation of the State in foreign relations and ratification of international treaties, to convene and dismiss the sessions of the meeting of the Chamber of Deputies, and the Federal Council; to appoint the Prime Minister and Ministers enjoying the confidence of the National Assembly and to accept their resignation; to promulgate laws ratified by the two councils, to propose and con-

¹ Even when the Assembly passes a vote of non-confidence the Council of Ministers and Ministers shall remain in power until the President dismisses them. See below "Council of Ministers."

test laws, to appoint officers and relieve them from their duties, to proclaim a state of emergency and declare war, to lay down - in conjunction with the Cabinet - the general policy for federal affairs, to appoint judges of the Supreme Court, and grant amnesty.

The Council of Ministers

The Council of Ministers and the Ministers are answerable for their duties before the National Assembly yet they "shall occupy their posts as long as they enjoy the confidence of the President." The function of the Federal Council of Ministers is "the organization and implementation of the affairs of the Federal State," bound to submit its programme to the National Assembly for approval.

The Judicial Authority

The Declaration stipulated for the creation of "the Supreme Federal Court" and other Federal Courts whose competence would be laid down by the Constitution and the federal laws.

Regional Authorities

Similar organizations and relations were drawn on the regional level with the amendments of the regional constitution subject to a 3/4 majority of the Chamber of Deputies and the Federal Council.

The 17th of April Accord was nipped in the bud, it died before it saw the light of materialization and application. The reasons for this premature death lay in the political feud between the parties to this agreement: President Nasser and the Ba'th Party. Its failure at the initial stage points out to the presence of certain conditions detrimental to the adoption of a federal system of government, and the absence of certain requirements conducive to the establishment of such a system. Later reference will be made as to what these requirements are. There are alliances with formal reservations and others with mental reservations and a pair of allies may have different and inconsistent views, public or private of what their relationship implies. The 17th of April Accord was a case in point where the psychological factor also present. It is not an exaggeration to speak of the popular pressure that dictated the Accord prematurely and the fact that the parties to the Agreement did not carry out the new scheme illustrates the presence of various reservations and lack of agreement between the forces that signed the Agreement. The attempt of July 18, 1963 to overthrow the Ba'th in Syria forced the pace of the quarrel between Nasser and the Ba'th and dragged the differences into the open thus declaring the end for the Accord.

B. The Iraqi Egyptian Agreement

However, the abandonment of the 17th of April Accord might prove to be temporary. To many Arabs it was not only a reinstatement

of the 1958 union, but a step forward, more promising and of greater significance: Baghdad the important Arab center joined Damascus and Cairo thus opening new horizons, great prospects and almost unlimited opportunity before the realization of Arab Unity.

Following the coup d'etat of November 18, 1963 the Iraqi regime sought a political alliance with Egypt and Nasserist forces in Iraq. President Nasser was eager to back the new ruling group in Baghdad vis-a-vis the ousted Ba'th Party, still ruling in Syria. This alliance, it was felt, must be extended toward its logical conclusion: unity, or else the Ba'th Party might claim itself to be the only party or group in Iraq capable or willing to bring Iraq under the banner of Arab Unity. This is not to say that 'unitary steps' were only taken as means of avoiding political embarrassment or merely for political expediences. The most recent and decisive "unitary step" between Iraq and Egypt was taken on October 16, 1964 after many measures of "unitary co-ordination taken on May 26, 1964 related in particular to the nature of "popular and political organizations" and the establishment of the Arab Socialist Union in Iraq similar to the organization bearing the same name in Egypt.

The Agreement of October 16, 1964 was reached after several meetings of the Joint U.A.R.-Iraq Unity Council, with Presidents Nasser and Aref participation at the head of the Egyptian and Iraqi delegations. The Agreement established a Unified Political Command

"to take all practical steps to bring about constitutional unity between the two countries, within a maximum period of two years."¹ The two parties to the Agreement realized that "constitutional unity should be capable of facing up to the various difficulties which will be raised by hostile and opportunistic elements." Both quotations seem to be related to the frustrated attempt of the 17th of April and the causes of the failure of the Egyptian-Syrian unity of 1958. The parties to the Agreement were seeking to establish unity on sound foundations which they thought to be "the unification of political action, the formation of a unified political command working to set up constitutional unity in the shortest time possible and the study of the various problems confronting it, in addition to finding practical solutions... to realize and promote national unity." It is a gradual process with a single command heading towards constitutional unity after unification of the unitary political forces in the two countries. The similarity of political institutions and political orientation and outlook precedes constitutional unity and makes its success and continuity possible.

The Agreement was stated in six articles. The first article established a Unified Political Command as the highest political authority in both countries. The second article dealt with practical steps to "bring about constitutional unity" within a maximum

¹ Text translated into English by the "Egyptian Mail" October 17.

period of two years. This included steps for the realization of a political unity between the Arab Socialist Union. The third article covered the fields that the Political Command would supervise: foreign policy, armed forces and defence, economic planning, culture, national guidance and education and national security. The article further included an important item: "discussing internal affairs in the two countries, finding suitable solutions for problems and following up the execution of such solutions." The third article specified the membership of the command to include minimum of six members from each country plus the Presidents of the two republics. Article No. 4 stipulated that the Unified Political Command "will meet every two months; it may hold extraordinary meetings if necessary." The decisions of the command "will go into effect immediately upon their issuance with the exception of decisions requiring the approval of the legislative authorities in each of the two countries." The article did not mention anything about the procedure of decision taking or how the members of the Command were to be elected. Article 6 stated "This Agreement will be considered effective upon its approval by the legislative authorities in both countries."

The Iraqi-Egyptian Agreement was, in one sense, a natural fruit of the coup d'etat of 18th November 1963 which removed the Ba'th Party from power in Iraq in the name of Arab national mottoes. The leaders of the coup d'etat were nationalist officers who allied themselves to the Ba'th Party to fight Kassem's regime. They held

admiration and respect for President Nasser and sided with him as soon as their movement succeeded. President Nasser himself hailed their movement and backed it inside and outside Iraq. The new regime was criticized by some of Nasser's ardent supporters for failure to carry out any "unionist step" with Egypt. The Ba'thists accused the ruling group of having isolationist political leanings and harboring a lust for power. The regime was not altogether free from embarrassment since the Ba'thists declared before their downfall in Iraq that they were about to federate Syria and Iraq. Another factor was perhaps the implication implicit in the Iraqi and Egyptian accusation against the Ba'th as being responsible for the abandonment of the 17th of April Accord, the logical outflow of this accusation was that the two countries confessing faith to the Accord must carry on with the federal scheme.

The question here is why did both governments adhere to a gradual path to federalism. Several explanations could be cited. For one thing there was a lack of similarity in political institutions and power composition in both countries. Another explanation is the geographical gap which renders any application of unity or federalism a theoretical and costly endeavor. A third reason would be that both governments hoped that a change in Syria would alter the political realities in the area and a new situation would call to introduce new arrangements before the "Agreement" expires. Further explanations pertaining to the lack of desire for unity among

the Iraqi leadership on one hand, and President Nasser's unwillingness to unite with Iraq due to internal problems in Iraq - the Kurdish question for example - and the shaky position of the present regime on the other hand. But whatever the reasons for gradation may be, one thing seems to be certain: the idea of Arab unity need a lot of ground work in Iraq and the process of engendering unitary feelings needs time and concerted efforts. Many issues must be clarified not least among them the status of the Kurdish minority under the banner of Arab unity. The initial difficulties that stand in the way of such an Agreement suggest that any journey into Arab unity may well be an Odyssey as long slow and round-about as the original itself. The success or failure of this approach remains to be seen.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

The question of Arab unity still persists, the struggle to achieve it still continues, the search for the necessary conditions of its success challenges both the politician and the scholar. Differences in opinions and views revolve more around the framework of unity, the system of government and the nature of relations between the regions and the central government, than around the idea of unity itself in many cases.

The failure of the various attempts did not destroy the idea of unity nor did they dissuade or dishearten its adherents from following up the struggle to achieve unity among the various parts of the Arab world. However the study of the past experiments ought to illuminate the path of the future, particularly as far as the scope of possibility and limitation is concerned. The foregoing analysis sheds some light, or so it seems to me, on the nature of the reply to the key question "how to hold together diverse and disparate peoples and territories in a single political system." The failure of the loose association of Arab states - the Arab League - and of the tight merger between two states - the U.A.R. - serves to illustrate the necessity of combining relative efficiency - where efficiency and a minimum degree of centralization are needed - with flexibility - where regional differences and sensitivities are

involved. These two factors work in favor of a federal system of government which tends to provide such necessary conditions. The necessity, nay the indispensability of relative efficiency and a minimum degree of a centralization of command and power is the cardinal costly lesson of the League's structural and behavioural inability to deal with the major political challenges that faced it since its emergence. The necessity of flexibility is inescapable from the study of the mistake of overlooking regional differences, conditions and sensitivities during the Syrian-Egyptian merger.

The comparative study served to bring another condition to the surface which pertains to the minimum similarities - social and political - required for the successful working of a union of two or more formerly separate and independent political entities. A union between a feudal kingdom and a socialist republic is inconceivable, and it is futile to argue for a comprehensive scheme for Arab unity in the immediate future. A federal system of government presupposes the existence of similarity in the economic system, in the political processes and temperaments of the federating states or units. The federal legislative authority has to deal with the federation as a whole, the federal courts have to observe a unified code of laws and the constitutions of the regions cannot be in contradiction with the federal constitution.

It follows that a nucleus of two, three or four states is a necessary starting point in the march towards Arab Federalism. Since federalism reduces regional sovereignties it is reasonable

to assume that this nucleus would be composed of Arab republics endowed with similar economic and social systems with the unitary forces occupy a leading political position. Whereas the nucleus seems to be a logical necessary condition to Arab federalism, republicanism seems to be the dictate of consistency and an outcome of political realities in the Arab world. The 17th of April Accord embodies in principle the essence of the idea expressed in this paragraph. The failure of the specific accord does not necessarily mean the invalidity of the general principle. There is, however, a difference between bringing two or more Arab countries together to form a new state, and between protecting this unity from disintegration, preventing regional disputes that might lead to dislocation, and providing for the necessary human means of growth, development and promotion of unity. Agreement between the political leadership in two countries is capable of achieving the birth of a unified state, but falls short of protecting its healthy growth and development as the Syrian-Egyptian U.A.R. experiment illustrates. A unified political organization professing the same objectives and principles, animated by a common loyalty and leadership, should exist in the federating units in order to protect the new state and direct it towards the common good of the federating units. This more than any other factor should serve to prevent the inciting of provincialism on the one hand, and regional hegemony on the other.

All these conditions are based on, or rather assume one basic

condition without which federalism ceases to be feasible, and that is the condition of agreement on political fundamentals. This agreement is essential to the working, development and maintenance of the projected union. Without constitutionalism there can hardly be any hope for the sustenance of the federal structure and the due process of law. The constitution, which embodies the principles governing the social and political system, should be above the will of the government executive organs, subject to change only where the people - in accordance with the constitutional provisions - deem it fit to introduce some the required changes. The agreement should cover the political process and the various roles of the different centers of power including the abstinence of the army from meddling with politics. The crucial test of Arab political maturity and, therefore, of the possibility of Arab unity is whether such basic agreement can be achieved. The future prospects of Arab unity are for coming events to decide: one cannot judge the evolution of a dynamic situation from a static starting point. No matter how pessimistically one views such prospects, there is still a slender strand of hope drawn painfully from the web of conflicting interests, hideous fears and fatuous and immature arrogances out of which can be spun the relations of major Arab political forces in our time.

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