# A B S T R A C T


The Dynamics of the Arab Unity Movement 1945-1963

By: Norma E. Sharara-Hobbs

Department of Islamic Studies

McGill University

Master of Arts

This study envisages the analysis of the political dynamics at work in the Arab countries towards unification. As an interpretive essay rather than an exhaustive history on unity, it gives a logical account of the failure of unity up to 1963, based on background data dealing with previous unionist attempts. Particular attention is given to the last attempt recorded in the Minutes of the Unity Talks (Mahādir Muhādathāt al-Wahdah) held in Cairo during March and April, 1963, which aimed at the establishment of a tripartite union of Egypt, Syria and Iraq. The above document was utilized in the original Arabic to sustain the thesis that the collapse of the unity talks derived not from ideological differences but rather from power politics, whereas the inability to unite is the consequence of the lack of a national philosophy and a true political community.

# RÉSUMÉ

La dinamique du mouvement d'unité arabe 1945-1963

Par: Norma E. Sharara-Hobbs

McGill University

Licence ès lettres

Le but de cet essai est d'analyser la dinamique d'unification politique à l'oeuvre dans les pays arabes, plus qu'une histoire à fond sur l'unité. Cette étude vise à interpréter et donner une relation logique sur l'échec des entreprises unionistes jusqu'à 1963, selon les données historiques concernant ce processus. Le dernier de ces projets, dont le Procès-verbal des négotiations sur l'unité (Mahādir Muhādathāt al-Wahda) en est témoin, mérite une attention particulière. Les discussions ont eu lieu au Caire pendant les mois de Mars et Avril, 1963, et ont envisagé l'établissement d'une union tripartite renfermant la Syrie, l'Iraq et l'Egypte. On s'est servi du procès-verbal en langue arabe afin de défendre la thèse, que l'échec de négotiations sur l'unité était le résultat de la politique du pouvoir, plutôt que de divergences idéologiques; tandisque l'incapacité chez les Arabes de s'unifier, répond à l'absense d'une philosophie nationale et d'une communauté politique réelle.

# THE DYNAMICS OF THE ARAB UNITY MOVEMENT 1945-1963

by

Norma E. Sharara-Hobbs

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research of McGill University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts.

Department of Islamic Studies
McGill University
July 20, 1977

# PREFACE

The preoccupation which the question of Arab Unity has elicited among Arabs and those outsiders interested in the Arab world continues to prompt us to search for at least one more aspect of the problem, if not to find a conclusive answer. Given that unity remains an ideological concept rather than a tangible reality, to better understand it one must delve into the interplay of ideology and political tactics in Arab affairs. These two questions constitute the backbone of Mr. Malcolm Kerr's book. The Arab Cold War 1958-1967 - A Study of Ideology in Politics, Second edition, which draws on much of the material covered by this essay, but has a different scope and intention.

Our object is not to produce an exhaustive history on unity nor propose theoretical answers of universal validity, but rather to offer an interpretive essay on the political and ideological dynamics at work in the Arab Unity Movement in the light of existing theory, in order to better understand the underlying reasons for its failure or success. The premises utilized to bring the movement into focus and the focusing on the movement itself differ from the general approach taken so far by those concerned with the study of Arab unity.

In linking the success of unity with the existence of a political community and a national ideology we offer another answer to the extant question on the viability of unity and provide a basis for the analysis of Arab politics on two levels: the interplay of ideology on the socio-political differentiation and stratification on the one hand, and the search for political community and unity on the other.

Unity has approached reality on two occasions: in 1958 with the Syro-Egyptian merger, and in the spring of 1963 with the proposal for a tripartite union, which was discussed in twenty meetings. Since the second attempt was but an echo of the first, and our main concern is the understanding of the political events which lead to the search for unity, the starting point goes back to the late 1940's and the end is the failure of 1963.

The sources utilized range from articles collected from the Arab press, Egyptian and Syrian publications, standard periodicals and pamphlets to books in Arabic and other Western languages whose subject matter is relevant to this study. The main source, however, is the Mahāḍir Muḥādathāt al-Waḥdah (Minutes of the Unity Talks) published by Al-Ahrām in Cairo in July, 1963, after the collapse of the negotiations for the tripartite federation.

There is doubt as to the veracity of the statements reproduced therein for, according to Syrian sources, the Egyptians tampered with the transcriptions.[1] That is beyond helping. Whatever version may be available in Syria was not available to the author.

The Egyptian version of the Minutes has been translated into English by the British Broadcasting Corporation which published it in the Summary of World Broadcasts, Part IV, in several issues over a period of as many months in 1963. It can be consulted in the British Museum in London. No copies are available because of a small stock.

A partial translation also appeared in Arab Political Documents, 1963, pp. 75-217. Malcolm Kerr deals with the Cairo talks in Chapter iii (pp. 63-101) of his book, but although he states in the preface that the material was drawn exclusively from the Mahāḍir, he actually utilized --with few exceptions which he acknowledges--the APD translation. In a footnote on page 63, he also admits not having seen or utilized the BBC translation.

References to the Mahāḍir and excerpts of the APD translation also appear in Syria under the Ba'th by Itamar Rabinovich (pp. 59-74) and in Political and Social Thought in

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[1] See the statement by a spokesman of the Syrian National Revolutionary Council refuting the version of the Minutes as published by the U.A.R. in Al-Ba'th, Damascus, July 14, 1963 and Arab Political Documents, 1963 (APD), ed. by Walid Khalidi and Yusuf Ibish (Beirut: Slim Press, 1964), pp. 309-10.

the Contemporary Middle East, edited by Kemal H. Karpat (pp. 275-94).

Rather than provide one more translation, and considering that the scope of this study goes beyond the exclusive analysis and translation of the Minutes, the author chose to translate excerpts from the Mahāḍir whose content was considered relevant to the subject of this essay.

The translation was done with a fair degree of adaptation to suit English idiom. No particular merit is claimed other than following the text at least more faithfully than the APD translation, which consistently splices and compounds into one unit several statements expressed by one individual without regard for sequence of utterance, intervening remarks by other participants, or omissions of a paragraph or more in the course of a given speech, e.g., the interventions of 'Abd al-Karīm Zuhūr, APD p. 141 and Mahāḍir p. 141/1,2; Ṣalāḥ Bīṭār, APD pp. 144-45 and Mahadir, pp. 149-50; and Shibli 'Aysamī, APD p. 153 and Mahāḍir, pp. 161/3 and 162/1,3.

With the exception of Arab geographical entities, and names of Arab authors whose works in English or French are quoted in the footnotes, the spelling of Arabic names has been adapted to conform to the system used by the Department of Islamic Studies at McGill University.

Norma E. Sharara-Hobbs

Montreal, Canada
July, 1977.

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## INTRODUCTION

In the light of contemporary political events, Arab unity has often appeared as a mere façade, a slogan bandied by the leaders of the area seeking to gain the support of the Arab world. Not only is unity questioned, but also whether there is an Arab ideology, historical ontology (as the basis for nationalism and ideology), or individual Arab states, not to mention an "Arab Nation," and an "Arab Unity Movement."

The Arab states, like most undeveloped countries, are transitional societies where ideological ferment is the fuel for political action. The principal source of this ideological upsurge is, on the one hand, social dislocation and the crisis of identity reflected in a new pattern of socio-political differentiation and stratification, and on the other, the search for political community. Arab thought comprises roughly (and in varying degrees) the four categories accepted as general characteristics of ideology: a philosophy of history, an analysis of the individual's present stage of development, a projection into the future, and a plan for action.[1]

That history has been reinterpreted in order to create pride in the past and confidence in the future, does

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[1] L. H. Garstin, Each Age is a Dream: A Study in Ideologies (New York: Bouregy & Curl, 1954), p. 3.

not deny its ontological aspects.[2] However faulty, Arab ideology has striven to reassess the position of the individual in society to give him a political identity which would serve as the basis for the nation-state. Ideology has also attempted to consolidate the social content of the political state by introducing the idea of social and economic justice, a determining factor for political action, and as a corollary, ideology acted as a modernizing agent by introducing and re-adapting new ideas to indigenous forms and values, thus providing an enlarged cultural and intellectual milieu.

Obviously, these are but political beginnings. All currents of thought have had a common background, and as different aspects of the same continuous process of change, they have remained interrelated, but separate. Nationalism and socialism are in themselves ideologies of transition whose basic function is to establish a modern political organization; this in turn, may eventually change and rejuvenate society, but there has been no success at creating a modern political system nor is there any consensus yet about the ways to achieve it or the form it may take. Until then, ideology is bound to remain confined to the task of creating a modern state, unified or otherwise, instead of entering

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[2] Leonard Binder, The Ideological Revolution in the Middle East (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1964), pp. 107-11, questions the existence of an Arab historical ontology as basis of nationalism. Given that ideology is based on an ontology which has changed with historical conditions

the stage of true ideological development.

On the other hand, an outright denial of the existence of an Arab "entity," "world" or "nation" would be cynical and insultingly critical, as some writers are, e.g., Elie Kedourie, who reduces the concepts of "Arab world" and "Arab nationalism" to the status of mere slogans because "they are not a known political entity with tangible or definable interests." [3]

The Arabs' instrospective view of themselves is as varied as that of the Western analysts. Generally speaking, there is a discernible process of change from an Islamic political perspective towards a nationalist-democratic preference. Western democracy, however, is an extraneous substance in the make up of Arab traditional society. In that respect, the rise of nationalism has been intimately connected with the continued difficulty in using democratic ideology to justify "democratic" institutions.

According to Anwar 'Abd al-Mālik, "the contemporary Arab appears to be predominantly a re-conqueror of identity: the identity of the national community, and by implication,

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and that the spirit of modern age is rationalist, ideology is inimic to nationalist thought. Because of the different stage of development between East and West, the above applies to the West only.

[3] The Chatham House Version and Other Middle Eastern Studies (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1970), p. 229.

the identity of his own subjectivity torn in the same degree as the humiliation of the population."[4] A common idea is the linkage of Arab introspection with Western imperialism. The starting point appears as a negation of "The Other" (i.e. the West) characterized by rejection, anger, resentment and frustration in the first stage; the second stage follows the "irreversible and incredibly complex process of national building." 'Abd al-Mālik's optimistic view is that once the disengagement (from the shackles of tradition, imperialism, poverty, etc.) is complete, the route will be different and autonomous: future West-East encounters will be richer and more authentic.[5]

Less optimistic but more provoking is 'Abdallah Laroui's claim that the Arab countries exist in "a particular, temporal category: le futur antérieur," in that neither past, present or future are lived as such. He contends that ideology is a projection into the future of events already past because it has no autonomous historical colouration.[6] This definitely stands against 'Abd al-Mālik's notion of the autonomous dialectical development of ideology, a phenomenon which he claims is akin to developing societies entering the nationalist stage in the XX c.[7]

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[4] Anouar Abdel Malek, La pensée politique arabe contemporaine (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1970), p. 28.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Abdallah Laroui, L'idéologie arabe contemporaine (Paris: François Maspéro, 1970), p. 66; cf. Binder, Ideological Revolution, p. 81.

[7] Abdel Malek, La pensée, p. 15.

Most contemporary Arab writers agree on the authenticity, genuiness and creative characteristics of Arab thought, but Laroui's notion of a futur antérieur, of a future already sketched elsewhere, which the Arabs are incapable of rejecting, explains both the eclecticism of thought and the gap between social reality and self-identity in the Arab countries.[8] It also belies any claim to authenticity, for "the real individual of Arab society does not exist now, but in that future 'already glimpsed.'"[9]

In the present stage, the search for identity has not ended. In its passage from political Islam to national liberation, Arab thought has most strenuously worked at establishing the basis for the reconquest of identity and the definition of power and authority as prerequisites to Arab unity.[10] This process is still in progress, for the relationships between Islam and state, democracy and nationalism, populism and modernizing elitism are unresolved questions, just as is the relationship of the individual to the state and to subjective commitments. Theory prescribes that political identification set the limits of the political community in personal (e.g. the Jews before the creation of Israel) if not in territorial terms. However, "the practical re-

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[8] Laroui, op. cit., p. 66

[9] Ibid., pp. 68-69.

[10] Within these categories, worth mentioning are Muḥammad Rashīd al-Riḍā, Muḥammad 'Abdu, Ḥasan al-Bannā, Shuhdī 'Aṭṭīya al-Shaf'ī, Ḥabīb Burgība, Muṭā' Ṣafadī, Aḥmad Luṭfī al-Sayyid, Sāṭi' al-Ḥuṣrī, Michel 'Aflaq, and 'Alāl al-Fāsī. The list is not inclusive and the choice is personal.

quirements of running a modern state have so far outrun the need for subjective sentiments of loyalty." [11]

"Political community," as understood in Western political philosophy, presents one of the most risky propositions in the Arab context. If we accept Laroui's assertion that the Arab individual is still in the making, then it follows that the political community is also an unfinished product. What really is at stake is the definition of that community; should it be essentially rational or conventional? Should it be more than the aggregation of individuals professing a common identity? Should one, on the other hand, accept the Ba'thist romantic notion postulating that the Arab nation exists because of the "natural" unity of all persons? This by no means would resemble the traditional ummah, for in the romantic view the nation is but an extension of individual identities, whereas the Islamic nation comprises the entire body of the true believers (mu'minīn). The ummah has the advantage of its continuity in history, but could not truly reconcile the disparate elements of present-day Arab societies, nor could it meet the challenges of the present time. [12]

So far, the concept of the ummah has served as a point of reference for the identity resolutions of individual Muslims throughout Muslim history, but as an institution, it has

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[11] Therefore, identity has not surpassed traditional molds, Binder, Ideological Revolution, p. 15.

[12] Erwin I. J. Rosenthal, Political Thought in Medieval Islam (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958), p. 86.

shown little political efficacy, for it does not determine the limits of the political community. However, Islam and politics have been reconciled by rendering Islam a part of the wider Arab national identity (as 'Aflaq does). Thus, a nationalist ontology can be determined by using historical --rather than religious--Islam as the basis for reconciliation.

The politicisation of Islam was never complete but it eased the transition towards the emergence of nationalism as a secular ideology after World War I.[13] This phenomenon was most apparent in Syria because of her mixed society and Western-educated groups. The emergence of nationalism was in fact a continuous process operating at several levels. Politically, it urged integration around a new political authority, the creation of a nation with an identity and national consciousness of its own, and a nationalist ideology capable of defining future goals and guidelines. Socially, it attempted to integrate all social groups and communities into the new system by developing a national identity and a new sense of community. The scheme naturally threatened traditional values and loyalties, but an effort was made to incorporate the new ideas--when feasible-- into the value

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13 Nationalist stirrings were apparent throughout the XIX c. but it was not until the emergence of Pan-Turanism and the catalysis operated by the war, that the nationalist movement became a practical reality. See George Antonious, The Arab Awakening (Philadelphia: J.B. Lipincott Co., 1939), pp. 97-98 and 106; cf. Feroz Ahmad, The Young Turks (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), pp. 154-55 and Abdel Malek, La pensée, pp. 10-11.

system of the new political structure. Eventually, each Arab "state" developed along particular lines. The gradual hardening of regionalism was encouraged by the policies of the Mandate, and thus the fission, rather than the fusion of the Arab countries was ensured.

Whatever the shortcomings, Arab nationalism was at least effective as a liberating force against colonialism, but it has yet to produce an Arab polity. The failure to synthesize the two infra-structures, socio-political and ideological, resulted in the co-existence of a traditional culture and a secular sub-culture conflicting within the state. The nation-building process[14] has been slowed down both because of this dichotomy, and the fact that Arab nationalism has been unable to provide a link between abstract ideas and identity sentiments. As a result, "there is a greater weakness between nationalism and the historically defined personal identity than between Islamic philosophy and nationalism."[15]

During the inter-war period, the ideology behind the nationalist movement entered a gradual but perceptible process of radicalization because of the sudden encroachment of Western rule and civilisation upon Arab society. The Arabs

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[14] Gustave E. von Grunebaum, Modern Islam: The Search for Cultural Identity (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1962), p. 221, denies the existence of this process. He founds his opinion on Rashīd Ridā's reasoning that the Arabs place religious above national allegiance, and therefore, are incapable of building a secular nation. The final word belongs to historical development.

[15] Binder, Ideological Revolution, p. 92.

did not merely exchange masters: the Mandate policies traumatized and dislocated the philosophical, cultural, psychological and social basis which had been preserved under Ottoman rule.

Up to World War II, the stress had been set on emancipation rather than unification, but the appeal of unity, though far from realization, showed profound historical and emotional roots in Arab life,[16] and as a notion, it seemed to provide a common link expressed in the sharing of complex religious-cultural ethos of a civilisation that was associated with a vast political dominion.

Just as nationalism had its origin in Syria, Unity was first called for there as a reaction to the "balkanization" brought in the wake of World War I when Jordan, Palestine and part of Lebanon were carved out of the Syrian province.[17] The coalescence of two major factors provided the right conjuncture for the first meaningful consideration of unity: the shift in British policy (spurred by the abortive revolt led by Rashīd 'Alī against English rule in Iraq) towards supporting Arab unity (May 29, 1941),[18] and the defeat in Palestine which resulted in the creation of Israel.

Though several schemes were considered, the final choice was a loose association wherein every state retained

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[16] Eliezer Be'ri, Army Officers in Arab Politics and Society (Tel Aviv: Praeger-Pall Mall, 1970), p. 381.

[17] Robert W. Macdonald, The League of Arab States (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965), p. 33.

[18] George Kirk, The Middle East in the War (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1953), p. 334 and Macdonald, op. cit., p. 33.

its autonomy. The League of Arab States (May 11, 1945) has been viewed as the first materialization of unity by some, but others, like Nabīh Amīn Fāris, have considered that the Charter of the League "completed and consummated the 'balkanizing' of the Arab world." [19] There is more than a grain of truth in this, and it was not the last time that the idealistic drive towards some sort of unity would subside in the face of practical politics. [20]

As stated previously, Syria's motivation for unity was her aim of regaining national cohesion by overturning the effects of the Mandate, i.e., regionalism, communal struggles and the general instability attributed to the imposition of artificial frontiers. On the eve of independence, Syria faced two dilemmas: a nationalism devoid of socio-economic content and a revolutionary community devoid of a genuine nationalist outlook. The Ba'th party came at this particular juncture and provided a programme which combined political fervour and social revolution. [21]

To Egypt, on the other hand, unity appeared as the only means to create a whole Arab entity endowed with suf-

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[19] Dirasāt Arabīya (Arab Studies) (Beirut: Dār al-'Ilm lī'l-Malāyīn, 1957), p. 106.

[20] At that stage, comprehensive unity was unfeasible because the Arab countries were not independent as a whole, and membership was restricted to independent states. Macdonald, op. cit., p. 42.

[21] Mohamed Shafi Agwani (Muḥammad Shafī Ajwānī), "The Ba'th: A Study in Contemporary Arab Politics," in The Contemporary Middle East, edited by Benjamin Rivlin and Joseph Szyliowicz (New York: Random House, 1965), p. 459.

ficient natural resources, and to achieve economic complementarity, so that the Arabs might be able to face the Cold War and the global politics of blocs.[22] Therefore, one should view Egypt's gradual "Arabization" not strictly as the consequence of a revolution in attitude or political and cultural identity, but rather as a response to the realities of power politics.

Doubtlessly, what was needed was an independent Arab approach to national and international affairs based on Arab interests and aspirations; most politically conscious Arabs were aware of the necessity for a national ideology, and, after the Palestine war, for unity and modernization.[23] Since the political was viewed as an aspect of the economic, socialism became a necessary adjunct of democracy and nationalism; the magnitude of the task required the mobilization of vast resources and leadership, which the army was to provide both in Syria and Egypt.

At the time when the fundamental requirements of the Arab renaissance called for the restoration of the dialectics of ideas--an integral part of the social dialectics present in the new national structure--the national movement and the opposition to it hardened and provoked a "freedom crisis": undemocratic, authoritarian means were imposed for the "de-

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[22] Abdel Malek, La pensée, p. 24.

[23] In Arab parlance, "modernization" variously implies "full sovereignty," "economic progress" and "social reform." Ibid., p. 21.

fense and protection" of the new independent countries.

However disorganized, the process towards unity was set in motion by the Ba'th; the attempts at theorization continued despite the military dictatorships which dominated Syrian politics from 1949 to 1954.[24] A second phase, "revolutionary nationalism," appeared in Arab politics with the advent of the July, 1952 revolution in Egypt. Its two main objectives, internal progress and reform, and expanded foreign influence,[25] gave a new dimension to army rule as the agent of unity, modernity and administration.

But it was not until 1955 that the Egyptian leadership resolved to choose between "Egyptianism" and "Arabism"; prior to the Bandung Conference, the motto had been "unity of the Nile Valley" rather than "Arab unity."[26] This move was a matter of urgent state policy to counteract Iraq's commitment to the Baghdad Pact.

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[24] To this period (1940-1950) belong countless introductory works inspired by the necessity of political action which at best are synthesis based on extrapolations and typologies, and at worst are hasty, specious and devoid of objectivity. More often than not, "nationalist" or "unitary" writings are but propaganda in the interest of conflicting ideologies within and against the Arab world wielded by rival parties and individuals. See Sylvia G. Haim, editor, Arab Nationalism: An Anthology (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1962); Kemal H. Karpat (ed.), Political and Social Thought in the Contemporary Middle East (London: Pall Mall Press and New York: F. A. Praeger, 1968); Nicola Ziadeh, "Recent Arabic Literature on Arabism," Middle East Journal, VI (1952), 468-73 and Nabih A. Faris, "The Arabs and their History," Middle East Journal, VIII (1954), 155-62.

[25] Cecil V. Crabb Jr., Nations in a Multipolar World (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1968), pp. 459-60, 462.

[26] Don Peretz, The Middle East Today, 2nd. edition, (New York: Rinehart & Winston Inc., 1971), p. 145.

Both Baghdad and Amman had attempted to lead the unification movement but their plans had been defeated by the adoption of the Arab League which thereafter was skilfully used by Egypt as a vehicle for her foreign policy. The crux of the problem was compounded by the question of leadership and the lack of a national ideology in the sense that doctrine was not widely accepted. [27]

Egypt's involvement in the politics of Arab nationalism was asserted in the 1956 Constitution which declared the country for the first time "a sovereign, independent Arab state," and the Egyptian people "an integral part of the Arab nation." [28] Suez consolidated Egypt's commitment and at the same time provided an area for Big Power rivalry, accelerated and sharpened local mutual subversion and propaganda wars, and with the emergence of 'Abd al-Nāṣir as leader of the Arab world, precipitated a fierce struggle over leadership--in particular with Iraq, before and after the 1958 revolution. The leadership issue eventually determined the emergence of intra-regional blocs following different ideological precepts. [29]

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[27] This problem persists, for there is no consensus even on essential questions as "Arabism" and "nationalism." The Islamicists reject the secularization of nationalism, and the Modernists claim that Arabism, as understood by the Islamicists, is not nationalism. See Hazim Z. Nuseibeh, The Ideas Of Arab Nationalism (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1956), and Fayez A. Sayegh, Arab Unity: Hope and Fulfillment (New York: Devin Adair, 1958).

[28] The Constitution of Egypt, 1956 (Cairo: Shaab, 1956), p. 1.

[29] Panayotis J. Vatikiotis, Conflict in the Middle East (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1971), pp. 18-19.

The dialectics of thought and politics in Syria and Egypt reached a confluence of interest in 1957: both embraced a radical, revolutionary nationalism which called for socialism and non-alignment; both were interested in curbing Hashimite power (whence their coalescence in opposing the Baghdad Pact), and both had an interest in carrying out the spectacular feat of unity. [30]

Ba'thist activism gained full momentum after the resumption of civilian rule in 1954, and it was to the party's credit that the unionist theses were diffused throughout the Arab world. Nāṣir, carried along by the wave of events, adopted these theses and lent them the pathos of his unique personality and thus, Nasirism came into being. The crowning of the unionist movement was the creation of the United Arab Republic in 1958, an event that was both welcome and premature in the historical and practical context.

Nāṣir's implementation of policy during the union was faithful to ideological precepts so far taken for granted but not tested; [31] the eventual break-up of the union in 1961

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[30] Leonard Binder, "Radical Reform and Nationalism in Syria and Egypt," Muslim World, (April-June, 1959), 96-104 and 213-31.

[31] In theory, socialism was an extension of nationalism aimed at consolidating the power of the modern state through the internal re-organization of the productive forces and the re-assignment of roles and responsibilities, with the idea of creating a participant society. In practice, the socialization in Syria was viewed as an expression of Egyptian imperialism. See Fayez Sayegh, "The Theoretical Structure of Nasser's Socialism," in Middle Eastern Affairs No. 4, edited by Albert Hourani (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), pp. 20 ff.

showed that ideologues and leaders had devoted their attention to proving that unity already existed, but forgot, or ignored the obvious question of how to make it a meaningful reality. [32]

This, perhaps, was the most forceful integrative phase of Arab nationalism, which became a doctrine of political action with two major exponents: the Ba'th and President Nāṣir. Despite the renewed efforts to crystallize Arab thought into a cogent ideology, and despite the apparent radicalization of political action, neither party was capable of providing a creative idea of human commitment in order to achieve unity. The increasing role of the military in politics meant a radicalization of means--undemocratic as a whole--to secure and maintain power, rather than a different and original way of exercising and organizing power.

The re-assessment of thought following the secession in 1961 did not provide a solution for the key issues of leadership and the old problem of defining Arab nationalism. Therefore, whether chiliastic or pragmatic, as 'Aflaq's and Nāṣir's ideologies may be qualified, their confluence was power, which they sanctified with the mantle of traditional authority. Charisma, rather than the abstract personality of the state was still the most effective means to validate ideological or political actions.

Post-secessionist politics (1961-1963) in Syria showed

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[32] Sayegh, Arab Unity, p. 81.

a propinquity towards regionalism rather than unionism. The 1958 union underlined the particularism of Syria as an entity and a political personality, but incapable of defying--and much less of modifying--the accepted ideological tenets, the Syrian ideologues and leaders failed to codify facts into theory. Likewise, the rigidity of thought plus the self-righteousness assumed by Nāṣir as the "offended party," precluded the development of a fresh approach and rational reassessment of unity and its collateral doctrines.

As early as 1938, Constantin Zurayq pointed out that no Arab national renaissance was possible without a national philosophy that would establish goals and methods of achieving those goals. That could be achieved only by

> considering carefully the means and the ends involved, by defining the meaning of nationhood and nationalism, establishing the special traits and characteristics of the Arab nation, and making manifest its special place among the nations and the role it has fulfilled in the past...and /will/ fulfill in the future... [33]

Those requisites had not been satisfied in 1963 when union was sought again by the Ba'th, nor have they been up to date. The unionist forces operating within each one of the Arab countries (specially Syria and Egypt) did not envisage the fulfillment of a set of goals specified in a definite plan; they blindly and emotionally sought unity as the means to achieve the so-long awaited renaissance, but without paying

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[33] Qusṭanṭīn Zurayq, Al-Waʿy al-Qawmī (National Consciousness) (Beirut: n.p., 1940), pp. 19-22, quoted in Shimon Shamir, "The Question of a National Philosophy in Contemporary Arab Thought," Asian and African Studies (Jerusalem: Israel Oriental Society, 1965), p. 1.

due attention to the practical implications of unionism.

Whether by instinct or compulsion, in 1963 the Ba'th once more embarked upon the unionist wagon. The new scheme called for a tripartite union involving Syria, Iraq and Egypt. Whence the series of meetings which were recorded in the Minutes of the Unity Talks. Cairo was the chosen seat because President Nāṣir remained the uncontested leader of the Arab world, whereas the new Ba'thist leadership in Syria and Iraq had not even consolidated its power. Union, as a result, was merely a pawn offered in exchange for Nāṣir's recognition of the new regime.

The discussions did not result in the codification of political events which might have bridged the gap between theory and practice, nor did they produce a comprehensive plan for unity. In essence, the Unity Talks simply reflected the differences of practical purpose between Nāṣir and the Ba'th; most relevant, however, is the realization that ideology per se is not a determining factor when the challenge of leadership is present. A distinction between precept and action is not discernible: the use of authoritarian means is generally condoned in carrying out "democratic ends." Ideological distinctions, when clear, are based on clichés or slogans, but more often than not are but a host of blurred impressions ranging from the definition of "peasant" [34] to the metaphysics

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[34] According to the U.A.R. Charter, peasant is "one who owns one-fourth of the maximum allowed by agrarian reform," p. 137. This definition ended a lengthy discussion on the subject. Maḥāḍir Muḥādathāt al-Waḥdah (Minutes of the Unity Talks) (Cairo: Al-Ahram, 1963), pp. 199/3 and 200/2, hereinafter referred to as "Maḥāḍir."

of authority, self-identity, freedom, etc.

We take for granted that the dynamics for a Unity movement--however inchoate--are present in the Arab world in that a series of organized activities by groups working concertedly towards unification do exist; what is lacking so far is the unifying element of a national philosophy. Based on the above, the thesis of this essay is that in the absence of a national ideology and a true political community--Egypt being a qualified exception--unity can not be achieved. Neither can the supra-national institutions called for in the merger of several individual states be instituted, when political identity and mass political participation are non-existent.

The failure of unionism is therefore not to be attributed to ideological differences among the participants, but rather to power politics pursued within the framework of undeveloped, transitional societies. Related elements such as leadership, democracy and freedom are not viable propositions either due to the organization of government, where power and authority still retain their traditional characteristics. Consequently, we must stress the peculiar power arrangements and the characteristics of rule from the perspective of the leadership and other governing groups, namely, the army.

Although leadership was the real source of contention, ideology coloured every utterance and move, as recorded in the Minutes. We have attempted to make a comprehensive survey of

the events preceding and leading to the 1963 Unity Talks in the light of power politics and the ideology governing each of the parties concerned. Our aim, as stated in the Preface, is not to propose theoretical answers of universal validity, but merely to examine a particular situation on the basis of existing theory.

Part I deals with the genesis of the contemporary unionist movement, i.e., from the League of Arab States to the Syro-Egyptian Union of 1958, the secession of 1961, and the subsequent events leading to the attempted re-union in 1963. Given the predominant role attributed to ideology, in Part II we quote and reproduce in traslation excerpts from the twenty meetings held in Cairo during March and April, 1963, in an effort to show the participants' true attitude towards unity and ideology as a whole.

Part III analyses the relationship and attitude of the army vis-à-vis ideology and society, based on the Minutes and political events in the Arab East. The conclusion sums up the views expressed throughout this study and advances some conjectures concerning both the basis for the failure or success of unity in the Arab world.

# PART I

# THE DYNAMICS OF UNITY
# 1945-1963

## I. THE BACKGROUND OF UNITY

The political and social ideas which have been expounded by all Arab leaders derived basically from the political needs of a changing society. The catalyzing action of the world wars resulted in the precipitate of nationalism which had long been suspended in the historical process of the Arab peoples. Along with nationalism, unity emerged as an ideal and as a policy.

Although nationalist manifestations were apparent already in the XIX c. it was only on May 29, 1941, that the question of unity was first seriously introduced by the then British Foreign Minister, Sir Anthony Eden, in an attempt to channel and direct the nationalist Arab upsurge through institutions compatible with British interests.[35]

During the spring of 1943, Nūrī al-Sa'īd or Iraq published his "Blue Book" which contained a plan for the immediate federation of Syria, Palestine, Lebanon and Jordan, under the sponsorship of the United Nations. The plan was submitted to Britain's Minister of State in Cairo and circulated to the Arab leaders.[36] Following the example of al-Sa'īd, the Amīr 'Abdullah of Trans-Jordan presented a plan for a "General Arab Federation" (generally known as the "Greater Syria Plan"), which would comprise Palestine, Trans-Jordan,

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[35] Macdonald, The Arab League, pp. 33-35.

[36] Muhammad Khalil, The Arab States and the Arab League: A Documentary Record, Vol. II (Beirut: Khayat's, 1962), Document No. 4 and pp. 9-12 for portions of the plan in English translation.

Syria and Lebanon, and would be headed by the Amir as a first step. The second step envisaged the formation of the "Arab Federation" comprising Syria, Iraq and other Arab states willing to join. The federation was to have a common foreign policy, defence, economy and education. The presidency of the council of the federation was to be rotated among the member states.[37]

Both schemes naturally ran counter to the interests of Egypt and Saudi Arabia who opposed any possibility of enhancing Hashimite power. Following the extended series of bilateral discussions, the Arab states convened at a conference on September 25, 1944, at Alexandria, where the basis for the creation of the Arab League was laid. On May 11, 1945, the Pact of the League of Arab States came into effect.[38]

The choice of a loose confederation instead of a unitary state (with central political authority) or a federation (with a central parliament and an executive committee with full political power over federal issues) underlines the deep political differences which existed against unity even before independence was achieved. The ultimate goal of an all Arab comprehensive unity was not inserted; thus, regionalism was sustained, for any subscriber could appeal to the

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[37] Khalil, The Arab States, Document No. 5. The basis for the plan was the findings of the King-Crane Commission of 1919, the Resolution of March 8, 1920 (on the unity of Syria) issued by the Syrian General Congress at Damascus, and the futile British attempts to settle the Palestinian problem.

[38] Macdonald, op. cit., pp. 37 and 42.

Pact to reject any attempt to ammend the status quo.

In the appraisal of Elie Kedourie, the Pact of the League "proved to be a device designed not so much to bring about Arab Unity, as to keep the 'so-called Arab states' at arms length from one another," [39] but in fact, no one expected or aimed at total unity. The internal instability of the Arab League is an inherent characteristic of regional organizations: internal stress is only moderated by the degree to which the member states assign realistic priorities to objectives that can be obtained only through the organization.

These priorities were mainly concerned with the preservation--or enlargement--of each individual state, a reflexion of the unpreparedness of the Arab leaders to relinquish newly-won status or obliterate their nascent states in the service of Arab unity. It was only natural to promote nationalist policies to rally the people to the government's support, and enhance national identity.

Arab disunity was not altered even by the ensuing "common struggle" against Zionist forces, the shock of the Arab defeat in Palestine, and the ultimate creation of Israel (1948) in the midst of Arab lands. The military defeat brought in its wake a reassessment of Western liberalism --characteristic of the pre-World War I generation--now

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[39] The Chatham House Version, p. 228.

transformed into bitter disappointment because of the inefficiency and corruption of parliamentary democracy. The leadership paralysis that resulted from the defeat, and the rejection of liberalism as a political and practical ideal, opened the door to an unforeseen political actor: the army.[40] To the rising generation recruited in the army, the apparent virility of socialism and even fascism exerted greater attraction than the decaying Western-type democracy which was never able to take root in the area by the time this generation was ready to assume political responsibility. As a result, the process of consolidation, a necessary prerequisite for true political emancipation, advanced along uncertain notions of radical reformism with authoritarian and socialist overtones.

## POLITICAL EMANCIPATION

### Syrian Politics 1949-1956

The decade following the creation of the Arab League was to see the consolidation of several Arab states and the rearrangement of social and political forces within each one of them. On March 30, 1949, Husnī al-Za'īm initiated in Syria the endemic military coup d'état pattern

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[40] Hisham Sharabi, Nationalism and Revolution in the Arab World (Toronto and New York: D. Van Nostrand Company, Inc., 1966), p. 58.

which would eventually spread throughout the Arab world.[41] Za'Im's accession to power marked a fundamental and permanent change in Syrian political alignments.[42] In following a pattern of competing for the allegiance of the army officers, Syrian political parties, as a whole, enhanced the political orientation of the Officer Corps, and ultimately provided the army with an easy avenue to power.

During the period 1949-54, there were three outstanding issues which shaped Syrian politics: the questions of political activity, which became increasingly restricted to the dictator in power and his allies; the tendency towards absolutism, the use of "plebiscitary democracy" to legitimize a de facto regime; and the question of union with Iraq, which had remained a major consideration since 1928.[43] Civilian political groups and military rulers increasingly clashed on accout of those questions, and the public at large was denied the benefit of democratic institutions and balanced government.

Given the "anti-rightist" character of Za'Im's coup, union with Saudi Arabia and Egypt was discussed in Damascus

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41 Arnold Hottinger, The Arabs (London: Thames and Hudson, 1963), p. 255, mistakenly records the date of the coup as 1947. See Sharabi, Nationalism, pp. 56 and 62 and Keesing's, Vol. VII (1949-1950), 9520.

42 P. J. Vatikiotis, The Egyptian Army in Politics (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1961), p. 150.

43 Ibid., p. 151.

for the first time as a means to offset the expansionist designs of Iraq and Jordan upon Syria.[44] Colonel Sāmī Hannāwī deposed Za'īm in August, 1949, because he favoured union with Iraq, and was ousted in turn by Adīb Shishīklī six months later, allegedly to prevent a merger with Iraq.[45]

Shishīklī's innovative achievments at the outset of his rule, as well as the opportunism of most civilian political leaders, assured his government a longer life span. The new constitution adopted on September 5, 1950, which declared Syria "a sovereign Arab republic, and part of the Arab nation," introduced a charter of human rights with socialist overtones along with economic concessions to the public. These measures temporarily soothed more militant rising groups like the Ba'th and the Communists, but deepened the distrust of rightists like the Sha'b party.[46]

The period 1950-1952 was characterized by the struggle between the Ba'th-infiltrated army and the dominant Sha'b party, a game which Shishīklī fomented. Once secure in power, the dictator predictably banned all political parties (April, 1952) in favour of a single mass organization, the National Movement for Arab Liberation (Harakah al-Tahrīr al-'Arab)

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[44] Maurice Harari, Government and Politics in the Middle East (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1963), p. 123; cf. Philip Hitti, Syria: A Short History (New York: Collier Books, 1961), pp. 231-36.

[45] The leaders of the three coups were teammates in the very first one; Za'īm was executed and Hannāwī, murdered.

[46] The Sha'b is variously referred to as the "People's" or "Populist" party. See Pierre Rondot, "Tendences particularistes et tendences unitaires en Syrie," Orient, V (1958), 143.

created in December of that year.[47] The guiding ideology of the party was Pan-Arabism, which it diffused by means of the slogan "Evolution, Permanent Emancipation, National Sentiment and Arab Unity."[48] The propagation of this new political myth beyond Syria's frontiers marked a significant change in the development of Arab politics.

Mounting opposition to the regime soon was evident in both army and civilian groups; Shishīklī first purged the Ba'thist elements in the army and upon the manifestations in the North against his mass organization, ordered the arrest of all political leaders in January, 1954. The following month, a coup led by Colonels Muṣṭafā Ḥamdūn and 'Abd al-Ḥamīd Sarrāj put an end to Shishīklī's regime. The dictator resigned and went into exile in Saudi Arabia.[49]

Shishīklī's rule was transcendental in that more coherent measures for the economic and political reconstruction of Syria were introduced, a greater degree of internal unity was achieved and, with the creation of the National Movement, a more permanent ideology was set at work in the do-

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[47] The resignation of Akram Ḥūrānī as Minister of Defense in May, 1950, created a cabinet crisis which enabled Shishīklī to neutralize the Sha'b with the support of the army, owing to the party's alleged support of unity with Iraq. Vatikiotis, Egyptian Army, p. 153.

[48] These concepts were later reformulated by the Ba'th, which gave them a real ideological content.

[49] Rondot, op. cit., p. 144 and Simon Jargy, "La Syrie, province de la RAU," Orient, VIII (1958), 22, give the date of the coup as December, 1953, but Vatikiotis mentions February, 1954, which is correct (Egyptian Army, p.154).

mestic and Arab spheres. In this respect, Syria was the first agent of Arab unity in the post-war years, and Egypt, the beneficiary.

The coup against Shishaklī was instrumental in bringing a rapprochement with Cairo, because it was specifically oriented against Iraq. Union with Iraq remained a useful excuse to carry on a coup. The repeated intervention of the army in politics (four times in four-and-a-half years), responded to the steady erosion of conservative power and parliamentary politics. The "old guard" was disorganized, undisciplined and out of tune with the new political demands of the population at large and the new potential leadership.

During the inter-war period, the politics of the conservatives followed the "bloc party system," designed to safeguard sectional interests and protect their class' s privileges and status.[50] Because of the oligarchy's monopoly of power and their politics of connivance with the colonial authorities, parliamentary democracy was scorned by the new younger generation represented by the doctrinal parties of the 1930's and 1940's (the Ba'th and the Communist party among them), and distrusted by the people. To a large extent, that state of affairs contributed to the failure of political democracy in the Arab world and paved the way for the military coup as the only means of effecting the transition to power.[51]

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[50] Sharabi, Nationalism and Revolution, p. 59.

[51] Ibid., pp. 57 and 59.

In Syria, as in Egypt, 1954 brought a significant change in politics: after the fall of Shishiklī, there was no return to the old pattern of Syrian politics. New elements entered the scene led by the Ba'th of 'Aflaq and Ḥurānī,[52] to whose ambition and cunning, plus the following he had in the army and among the peasantry, much of the party's success was due.[53]

No single party was strong enough to form a government, so an interim cabinet was formed by Nationalists, Populists and Independents to prepare for the autumn elections. The elections were so hotly contested that no party won sufficient votes to form a cabinet. A coalition headed by a professional politician, Fāris al-Khūrī, was a compromise for the time being.

Although the Ba'th obtained only eleven per cent of the vote against seventy per cent of the rightists, it was able to exert considerable influence thanks to Ḥūrānī's position as Speaker of the Chamber, the popularity of its radical, nationalist ideology, and its ability to control the disorganized moderate parties.[54]

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[52] The Ba'th merged in February, 1953, with the Syrian Socialist Party of Akram Ḥūrānī. Jacob C. Hurewitz, Middle East Politics: The Military Dimension (New York: F. A. Praeger, 1969), p. 147.

[53] Itamar Rabinovich, Syria under the Ba'th 1963-1966 The Army-Party Symbiosis (Jerusalem: Israel Universities Press, 1972), p. 9.

[54] Maurice Chevallier, "Forces en présence dans la Syrie d'aujourd'hui," Orient, IV (1957), 179-80 and Vatikiotis, Egyptian Army, pp. 154-55.

The Ba'th also derived its success from the expectations it aroused by the promise of change inherent in its socialist theses. So long as the traditional system of power prevailed, the new army and political cadres had no opportunity for advancement. But the party was not alone in the pursuance of socialism and national vindication. In fact, the Ba'th soon found itself isolated and threatened by several foes: the Communists, because of the similarity of their programmes; the National-Socialists (old Syrian Popular Party) because they stood for the Greater Syria Plan; the Muslim Brethren, because of their opposition to the Ba'th's secularism; the Conservative wing because the Ba'th threatened the status quo and their interests.[55] As a result, the party emphasized its daring politics.

Conscious that access to political control in Syria would largely depend on the acquisition of a military, rather than a civilian constituency, all parties--and the Ba'th in particular--courted the army and thus succeeded in dividing army sympathies and creating intra-party conflict.

After the autumn elections, political power gradually passed into the hands of left-wing forces at the expense of conservative elements. The Sha'b, which had dominated the political scene between 1949 and 1952 was utterly defeated, and the Ba'th and the Communists replaced--to a large

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[55] Rondot, "Tendences...," p. 145 and Vatikiotis, Egyptian Army, p. 155.

extent-- the blocs of landed "aristocrats" and wealthy businessmen, religious and tribal chiefs, with their own emerging middle class composed of civil servants, craftsmen, professionals and young army officers.[56]

Internal political divisions conditioned the orientation of Syria's Arab policy: the conservative bloc hoped to maintain power by allying itself to Iraq or at least avoid the severing of relations with Baghdad. On the other hand, the Left hoped to attain power more easily within the pro-Egyptian unionist camp; the clash between these two tendencies--conservative and revolutionary--provided a fertile ground for the growth of Nasirism on Syrian soil.

That state of affairs continued into the years 1955 and 1956, when the struggle for power was confined to the radical coalition of Ba'th, Nationalists, and Independents, led by Ḥūrānī, 'Asalī and 'Azm respectively. Although the army did not participate forcefully, it received the attention of these groups and the Communist party.[57] The confluence of external pressures and internal turmoil precipitated the radicalization of Syria's Arab and foreign policies to a degree that rendered them compatible with those of Egypt.

In the conjunction created by the Baghdad Pact (1955), four factors precipitated the consolidation of pro-Egyptian

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[56] Vatikiotis, Egyptian Army, p. 155.

[57] Ibid., pp. 155-56.

and anti-Iraqi sentiment in Syria: the Israeli attack on Gaza (February, 1955); the fear of annexation by Iraq; the new "Popular Front" headed by Shukrī al-Quwatlī and resolutely oriented towards Cairo because of the influence of a greater proportion of the Left, in particular the Ba'th and the Communists;[58] and Egypt's campaign against the Pact.

By defeating the Baghdad Pact, Nasirism proved itself a force beyond the limits of intra-Arab rivalry and the representative of Arab independence vis-à-vis Western imperialism. Nāṣir's themes of Pan-Arabism, Unity, Non-Alignment and Neutralism were diffused in Syria in a consistent manner by the Ba'th.[59]

Once the conflict between the Ba'th and the National-Socialists (Ḥizb al-Qawmī al-Ijtimā'ī) was overcome, Syria regained some stability after the August 1955 elections, when Shukrī al-Quwatlī was appointed President.[60] This interlude was of short duration: Quwatlī was soon under the pressure of Moderates, Independents and Conservatives, all of

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[58] The Front came into being because the Ba'th took advantage of the animosity created by the Baghdad Pact to exert pressure on Fāris al-Khūrī until he resigned on February 7. The Communists participated within the National Unity bloc in the September elections. Walter Z. Laqueur, Communism and Nationalism in the Middle East (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1961), p. 61.

[59] Patrick Seale, The Struggle for Syria (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 311.

[60] The National-Socialists were outlawed on May 7, 1955 on account of the murder of Col. 'Adnān Mālikī, Deputy Commander of the army and sympathizer of the Ba'th. The ensuing political crisis precipitated the evolution towards union. George E. Kirk, Contemporary Arab Politics (new York: Praeger, 1961), p. 92.

which sought to oust the government and replace it by a coalition where they would be represented. Forced by the circumstances, Quwatlī took the Ba'thist stand in an effort to counteract his opponents. His action brought Syria one step closer towards Egypt.

## The Politics of Nasirism

The factors that mold a military regime vary in accordance with the characteristics of the society in which it evolves. In Egypt, centralized rule is a tradition derived of geo-political factors; in more recent times, economic change was usually sponsored by the ruler (e.g. Muhammad 'Alī, the Khedive Isma'īl), while social mobility was negligible because of the rigid hierarchy of society. The rehabilitation of Egypt as a genuine political community was as difficult in the early 1950's as it was in 1887 when Lord Cromer took charge of the country's destiny.[61]

"Black Saturday" initiated the chain of events leading towards the military takeover. King Fārūq dismissed the elected Wafd government, imposed martial law, dissolved parliament and postponed elections indefinitely. When he chose to rule by decree, the only prop to support him was the army, so when Nāṣir and his group decided to take over (23 July), his task was considerably eased.[62]

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[61] Nadav Safran, Egypt in Search of Political Community (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1961), p. 50.

[62] Anouar Abdel Malek, Egypt: Military Society. Vintage Books (New York: Random House, Inc., 1968), pp. 34-37 and 44-46.

The "Free Officers" was a small elite without a coherent ideology and totally ignorant of the art of government. Their slogan, "Union, Discipline, Work and Liberation," reflected the most obvious problems of Egyptian society. But, the enthusiastic radicalism of the new leaders did not find an echo among the passive population; the absence of mass participation predisposed the system against the adoption of a more liberal government and eased the imposition of a plebiscitary democracy.[63]

Contrary to Syria, where the army allied itself to the political party of its preference, Egypt's Free Officers abolished all political parties and thus altered forever the pattern of domestic power politics. Political life was reorganized and channeled through the Liberation Rally (Jan. 23, 1953), a single mass party and organ of the elite in power. The proclamation of the Republic (February 10, 1953) established Egypt's new legal identity and enabled her to pursue negotiations with Britain regarding the evacuation of the latter's forces.[64]

Muhammad Najīb, a respected elder officer, was given command, while Jamāl 'Abd al-Nāṣir, architect of the coup, became Secretary General of the party. Najīb and Nāṣir symbolized the old and new faces of Egypt. In the political

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[63] Jean and Simonne Lacouture, Egypt in Transition (New York: Criterion Books, 1958), p. 150 and Vatikiotis, Egyptian Army, pp. 76-82; cf. Anwar Al-Sa'ādat, Revolt on the Nile (London: Wingate, 1957), pp. 16-24.

[64] Abdel Malek, Military Society, pp. 91-92 and Vatikiotis, Egyptian Army, p. 82.

struggle that ensued, Nāṣir made good use of the propaganda apparatus at his disposal and emerged as the uncontested leader after Najīb's resignation in March, 1954.[65]

In the course of time, the original twelve members of the Free Officers changed from a military group into a ruling elite, and thus constituted the exclusive policy makers in the new regime. In domestic policy, the new rulers broke sharply with the old regime (land reform, political reorganization, economic and cultural reform, etc.), but in foreign policy they remained committed to the five post-war cardinal principles: eradication of the British forces, leadership in the war against Israel and in the Arab unity movement, neutralism vis-à-vis the East-West confrontation, and modernization of the armed forces.[66]

The modernization of the army did not deal solely with new equipment: it envisaged a comprehensive change in organization, ideology, operation and service. Merit replaced class privilege. In general, the regime's new orientation exemplified the shift from a generation patterned on French juridical thought (1880's to 1940's), to a new one based on Anglo-Saxon values, that is, English practical individualism replaced French rational individualism.[67] Therefore,

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[65] Muhammad Naguib, Egypt's Destiny (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1955), pp. 176-77; Vatikiotis, Egyptian Army, p. 90 and Jean Tusan, "Propagande et orientation nationale en Egypte," Orient, IV (1957), 126.

[66] Hurewitz, The Military Dimension, p. 125.

[67] Francis Bertier, "L'idéologie sociale de la révolution égyptienne," Orient, VI (1958), 50-51.

society began to be redelineated following an organic conception, while Fabianism coloured the economy.[68]

As the domestic scene was taken in hand, the junta's overriding priority was to establish a relationship of equality with Britain. This was achieved by the October, 1954 Treaty. The long overdue move, coming too late, was not meant to reinforce Anglo-Egyptian relations, but it achieved Egypt's autonomy and ratified Nāṣir's power at home.

1954 thus marked a turning point in the orientation of Egyptian policy. The Arab unity cause, which was indecisively handled within the League, now found a forceful and persuasive champion as Nāṣir set out to redesign his Arab policy. In his speech of July 23, 1954, the leader stated that his government "was favourably disposed towards establishing relations with other Arab or any member state of the Afro-Asian Bloc."[69] But the opportunity to do so was lost in the crucible of events set off by the signature of the Baghdad Pact and the Pentagon's arms embargo on Egypt on account of her refusal to participate in the collective security system designed by Secretary Dulles.[70]

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68 See Georges Rousseau, "La politique et l'économie de Nasser," Orient, I (1957), 17-35.

69 President Nasser's Speeches and Press Conferences (Cairo: Shaab, 1954), p. 76.

70 John C. Campbell, Defense of the Middle East - Problems of American Policy, Revised edition (New York: F. A. Praeger, 1960), Chapter v, "The Origins of the Baghdad Pact," pp. 49-62.

The Pact opened a real conflict of interest; the Egyptian leadership saw the fact of its conclusion, not its terms, as a breach of the solidarity of the Arab League and a threat to Egypt. Nāṣir was obliged to adopt a daring and aggressive foreign policy in order to neutralize Iraq and the Pact. The Afro-Asian Conference of Bandung (April, 1955) provided him with an excellent forum to state Egypt's espousal of neutralism and non-alignment vis-à-vis the Great Powers, and to further denounce the alliance system as an imperialist device. The arms deal with Czechoslovakia on September 27, 1955, and the subsequent violent but effective campaign against Iraq (with Saudi Arabian political and financial support), constituted landmarks in the hard-policy course set out by the Egyptian President.[71]

The test of strength between anti-Pact forces and British influence centred in Jordan. Egyptian agitation and Saudi money sounded the knell of Britain's tutelage of Amman. The English Commander, Glubb Pasha, was dismissed and the Anglo-Jordanian Treaty terminated. Finally, Egypt established her own alliance system through bilateral treaties with Syria, Saudi Arabia and Yemen. The treaties provided for a common (Egyptian) command which Jordan also accepted in October, 1956, although without signing the treaty.[72]

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[71] Campbell, Defense of the Middle East, p. 55.

[72] Ibid., pp. 59 and 229.

Egypt's relations with Britain and the United States steadily deteriorated during 1956. Nāṣir's recognition of Communist China (May, 1956) and the decision of the two Western powers to withdraw the promised financing of the Aswan Dam (July 19, 20), strained all diplomatic contacts. Nāṣir answered with the dramatic nationalization of the Suez Canal on July 26.[73]

The nationalization of the canal exacerbated the tension with England, which, in addition, greatly resented Egypt's collusion with the subversive groups acting in Kenya and Zanzibar and her opposition to the Baghdad Pact; Nāṣir's support of Algeria's F.L.N. was not well received by France, and Israel stood to profit in territorial gains from any armed conflict against Egypt. Whence the tripartite aggression launched on October 29, 1956, which naturally entailed the confrontation of the United States and the Soviet Union and their concerted action to neutralize the affair.

The cease-fire (November 6-7) and the final evacuation of the invading forces (December 22) provided a happy ending. Instead of defeat, Nāṣir faced victory: he gained diplomatically what he had lost militarily. Domestically, colonialism was truly eradicated and an important economic source secured. Internationally, 'Abd al-Nāṣir was recognized as the fore-

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73 For the detail of events, see Keesing's, Vol. X (1955-56), 14452, 15002, 15016-17, 15041-42, 15045, 15125, 15127 and 15252; Herman Finer, Dulles over Suez (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1964), and Ahmad Abul Fath, L'Affaire Nasser (Paris: Plon, 1962).

most leader of the Arab world, and a champion of nationalism, non-alignment and anti-colonialism.

With the final withdrawal of Israeli troops behind the old armistice line the crisis reached its end. Peace was restored, but in the context of the world balance, the status quo was not reinstated. The debacle of Britain and the advance of Soviet influence in the area forced the United States to adopt an urgent policy, the Eisenhower Doctrine, which caused a new re-alignment of forces in the Arab world.

The conflict of interests in American and Soviet policies influenced in varying degrees the politics of the Arab states. The rapprochement with Syria was an element in the over-all Egyptian policy designed to render ineffective Dulles' policy of containment (which had been emphasized by the Baghdad Pact), rather than to establish Leftist or Communist regimes in Syria, as was hoped by the Soviet Union and feared by the United States.[74]

The Soviet Union seemed content with neutralizing Syria, but the United States clearly wanted her as an ally. Syro-American relations worsened in 1956 because of President Quwaṭlī's visit to the Soviet Union followed by that of Khālid al-'Aẓm (Aug. 6, 1957) to negotiate financing of infra-structure projects, and the violent anti-Western dem-

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[74] François Laurent, "Aspects nouveaux de la pénétration soviétique au Moyen Orient," Orient, IV (1957), 149.

onstrations on account of Suez. American sources began speculating upon the "satellization" of Syria and its possible role as "bridgehead" for Soviet domination in the Middle East.[75]

Although Syria reaffirmed her neutralism, the orientation of her foreign policy was decidedly radical and pro-Soviet, while her internal policy caused the reversal of the equilibrium of forces active until then.[76] As the year ended, the evolution towards union with Egypt was accelerated by several factors: the careful purge of influential individuals and the withdrawal of parties long associated with power (such as the Sha'b) and whose conservative politics were oriented towards Iraq and the West; the acute political instability fostered by the continuous cabinet crises and complots;[77] the weakening of the army because of factionalism, resignation and purges of officers associated with the conservative parties; and, most significant of all, the comeback to power of the Ba'th in June, 1956.[78]

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[75] Chevallier, "Forces...en Syrie," p. 179 and Campbell, Defense of the Middle East, pp. 213-14.

[76] That process dated back to 1954, when the intrusion of the Left altered the traditional distribution of power by dividing the electorate. The crisis was accentuated by the splintering of important groupings like the Independents, Nationalists and Populists into smaller parliamentarian coalitions. The Left was divided as well.

[77] Between the overthrow of Shishūklī in February 1954 and the merger with Egypt in February 1958, seven cabinets were formed in Syria. Hurewitz, The Military Dimension, p.146.

[78] Vatikiotis, Egyptian Army, p. 158.

In pursuing its unionist policy, the Ba'th took advantage of the climate of enthusiasm which the Suez affair generated concerning Nāṣir and unity. Aware of its lean following in the Syrian electorate, the party had to capitalize on the ingrained republicanism of the Syrians to stir thorough disapproval of a merger with monarchical Iraq, and on the deeper feelings of nationalism to emphasize the dangers of Western imperialism as well as the necessity for Arab solidarity to counteract it.

Oblivious to the fact that Nāṣir's regime had no place for other distinct political entities, the Ba'th unwittingly set a course which inexorably led Syria into Egyptian arms. The ultimate conjunction of events in the coming year (1957) eased the way for the unionist forces led by the Ba'th which were swept into the circle of Nasirism.

## The Syro-Egyptian Confluence

The gradual falling of Syria into the sphere of influence of Egypt closely responded to the rise of Nasirism as a political and ideological force, as well as the events which gave it momentum. The process, which implied the acceptance of Nāṣir's Arab and foreign policy, started in 1955 with the rejection of the Baghdad Pact and the signature of the Mutual Defence Pact with Egypt and Saudi Arabia in October, 1955. On July 5, 1956, the Syrian Parliament ap-

proved the creation of a committee to seek union with Egypt; economic ties were established through a series of agreements (Sept. 21, 1956; Sept. 3, 1957 and Nov. 13, 1957), and finally, in November, the parliaments of both countries agreed to draw a plan for union.[79]

As stated previously, these developments were conditioned by the re-alignment of forces within Syria; public opinion was unanimously pro-Nāṣir, and the Egyptian regime was on the alert for new opportunities to assert its leadership of the Arab unity cause in order to keep up the momentum of its past successes. On the Syrian scene, the political impasse that followed the disintegration of the traditional nuclei of power, as well as the rift and power struggle between the Communists and the Ba'th, provided the right juncture where a special combination of circumstances could suddenly turn the vague idea of Arab unity into a political fact.

The precarious hold that the Ba'th had on power grew weaker, contrary to the party leaders' expectations. Although the Ba'th was part of the ruling coalition, its electoral strength did not increase. This fact naturally posed a serious threat to the ambitions of the party, which was caught in the process of a political radicalization evolved from the multiple clash of internal factors among themselves and of external factors, both inter-Arab and international.

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[79] Basic Documents of the League of Arab States, I (Cairo: Shaab, 1959), 17-20 and Campbell, Defense of the Middle East, p. 136.

The process of confluence came to its end in 1957.[80] Egypt's foreign and Arab policies had suffered a serious setback because of the adherence to the Eisenhower Doctrine of Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Iraq and Lebanon. This was King Sa'ūd's scheme, for it was in his interest to maintain the existing equilibrium of rival forces as a gurantee for the survival of his dynasty. Riyad did not welcome the nationalization of the canal because it threatened the free passage of its oil, nor did it agree with the pro-Soviet and anti-Western stance of Nasirism as well as the revolutionary republicanism it preached. Going along with Egypt, Syria rejected the Doctrine and as a result, became a coveted prize on account of her strategic position.[81]

Soviet aid was Syria's only option; this brought the intensification of U. S. pressure against her and the Soviet warning against any interference in the Middle East and in particular, Syria. These actions led to the implementation of the Doctrine with massive arm shipments to Jordan and Iraq, and to the war scare with Turkey because of the latter's concentration of troops on the Syrian border (presumably following Washington's cue). The crisis was artificially sustained (Sept. 8-21) and was finally eased first by the abrupt and disconcerting statement from Washington denying the "Sovietization" of Syria (Sept. 10), and secondly, by the dis-

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[80] Marcel Colombe, "Sur une évolution récente," Orient, IV (1957), 144-51, gives a good appraisal of the situation.

[81] Marcel Colombe, "L'Égypte et le nationalisme arabe," Orient, V (1958), 130-31.

embarkment of Egyptian troops in Latakia (Oct. 13).[82] The issue eventually died in the United Nations forum.

The ultimate effect of the affair was the failure of U.S. policy, the affirmation of Soviet influence, Arab solidarity around Syria, and the redress of Nāṣir's setback. Internally, the crisis brought Syria to the brink of disintegration as an organized political community. The ruling coalition was the uneasy mixture of two vieing parties, the Ba'th and the Communists, with the Democratic Bloc of Khālid al-'Aẓm as a buffer.[83]

The final reshuffling of forces resulted in two main blocs: the pro-Cairo one led by Ḥūrānī and Sarrāj, and the pro-Moscow group led by al-'Aẓm and the Communist leader, Khālid Baqdāsh. The Ba'th, deliberately opposed to the Communist party, maintained a precarious hold on power. Threatened by the combined pressures of its pro-Western neighbors and the rightist parties on the one hand, and the Communists on the other, the Ba'th had no option but to boycott the November 15 elections (it already knew there was no chance of winning the legislative elections of July, 1958). The party's view was that an electoral campaign might have des-

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[82] Marcel Colombe, "Après Suez: le Moyen Orient entre Washington et Moscou," Orient, IV (1957), 188; cf. George Kirk, "The Syrian Crisis of 1957 - Fact and Fiction," International Affairs, XXXVI (1960), 58-61.

[83] The Democratic Bloc was not a party or a movement with a given socialist ideology or an explicit programme, but rather a parliamentarian grouping of wealthy, influential men no different from those of the Sha'b. Chevallier, "Forces . . .en Syrie," p. 183.

troyed the consensus--albeit superficial--about the union, without which Nāṣir would never consent. At stake was also the Ba'th's coveted position as ideological mentor of the future union.[84]

The advocacy of a socialist orientation in Egypt after Suez, eased the transition towards a policy more in keeping with the Ba'th; the party's trilogy of "Arab Unity, Freedom and Socialism," was practically incorporated into the domestic and Arab policies of Nāṣir. Egypt's "Arabization," on the other hand, responded to the growing manifestation of popular solidarity with Cairo in the Arab countries, the Ba'thist campaign for Arab unity and Nāṣir (especially after Suez), and the influence exerted by the two main sectors which shared in the economic power of the country: namely, the army-run Economic Agency and the great industrial and financial bourgeoisie represented by the Miṣr Conglomerate and the Bank of Egypt. All welcomed the availability of external markets to impulse the Egyptian economy.[85]

When the proposal for the union was formally presented in November, 1957, the young officers, the technocratic groups and other members of the leadership urged Nāṣir to accept. In the end, probably the fear of a radical, Communist Syria and its disruptive effect on domestic politics (the

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[84] Malcolm Kerr, The Arab Cold War 1958-1967, 2nd. ed., (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), pp. 14 and 16.

[85] Abdel Malek, Military Society, pp. 115 and 123.

Egyptian Communist National Front had been revived after Suez), was as important as the materialization of Arab unity for Nāṣir to go along with the project.[86]

The "Communist factor" was undoubtedly instrumental but not determinant in bringing about the union.[87] To the extent that Egyptian apprehension of isolation was real and that the fulfillment of the long preconized Arab unity idea was essential to the Ba'th's continued predominance in politics, accommodation was desirable to both parties. Furthermore, had there been no popular support whatsoever, the whole scheme would never have gone beyond the stage of verbal propaganda as was to be the case in 1963.

In practical terms, the union with Syria spelled a great victory for Nāṣir: it was the fulfillment of an ideological tenet and an invaluable asset in intra-Arab and international dealings. The temptation of achieving unity on his own terms overcame all reservations; the Ba'th had called for a Federal Union but was constrained to accept instead a unified state with Nāṣir as President, and the injunction to

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[86] Abdel Malek, Military Society, pp. 123 and 126.

[87] We believe this factor has been overemphasized by most Western scholars on the contemporary Middle East, such as Lacouture, Kerr, Seale, Campbell and Rondot. Leonard Binder is closer to the truth when he says that union in Syria was "an idealistic solution evolved out of political impasse." (Ideological Revolution, p. 146). Kamāl Muruwa, "Yā 'Uqalā' al-'Arab, Ittahidu," (O Arabs of Sound Mind, Unite!) Al-Hayat (Life) Beirut, September 22, 1963, goes as far as to suggest actual collusion between the Ba'th and the Communists, since 'Afīf al-Bīzrī, a Communist, was among those who concluded the union. Extract in Karpat, Political and Social Thought, pp. 269-70.

have all political parties dissolved in favour of the new National Union, which was already taking shape in Egypt.[88] On February 1, 1958, 'Abd al-Nāṣir and Shukrī al-Quwatlī, President of Syria, hailed the new United Arab Republic which was ratified by plebiscites in both countries four days later. All Arab states were invited to join them in a union or a federation.[89]

The U.A.R. was received with misgivings in the Arab world and abroad; the Soviet Union chose to make the best of the situation by recognizing the new state on the day it officially came into being. The United States followed suit three days later, thankful perhaps of the fact that Syria would not be "Sovietized" so long as Egypt's independence from Moscow lasted.[90]

Nāṣir's appeal to neighbouring states to join the union went unheeded because most of them still upheld a traditional and more pro-Western sort of nationalism and because of sheer power politics: no one hastened to relinquish power on behalf of 'Abd al-Nāṣir. At any rate, the U.A.R. held the initiative.

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[88] The National Union was formally created in May, 1957, and played its part in the elections of July, 1957 for the first Egyptian Assembly. Vatikiotis, Egyptian Army, p. 105.

[89] For the text of the proclamation, see Sayegh, Arab Unity, pp. 225-27.

[90] Campbell, Defense of the Middle East, p. 137.

## II. THE REALIGNMENT OF FORCES

## 1958-1963

In response to the Syro-Egyptian union, Jordan and Iraq joined their kingdoms to form the Arab Union (Al-Ittihād al-'Arabi) on February 14, 1958. This combination had the potential advantage of a strong economic base in Iraq's oil industry, but its life expectancy was more closely related to the political staying power of the Hashimite kings. Nāṣir received the news scornfully and predicted the union's early demise.

The Hashimite move tended to solidify ideological differences and to emphasize the division of the two blocks: one pro-Western and monarchic, the other socialist and republican. The Arab Union failed to attract the two key non-aligned states, namely, Lebanon and Saudi Arabia; consequently, its political impact was minimal.[91] This was exemplified by Yemen's choice to join the Syro-Egyptian camp on March 8.

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[91] In Arab governmental circles, the dominant opinion was that the two unionist schemes had destroyed the equilibrium of forces and would only succeed in worsening the traditional rivalry between Cairo and Baghdad. See Al-Hayat (Life) (Beirut) Editorial, February 16, 1958, p. 4; Al-Nahār (The Day) (Beirut) "Al-fitnah fī'l-ālam al-'arabi (The Schism in the Arab World), February 1-6, 1958; Al-Kifah (The Balance) (Beirut), issues of January 17 and 23 and February 6 and 26, 1958 for a Marxist view of the affair; and Muhammad Hassanayn Haykal, "Mā fī'l-Ittihād al-'Arabi," (What the Arab Union is About), Al-Ahrām (Cairo), February 15, 1958, p. 1.

The Charter of the United Arab States (Ittiḥād al-Duwal al-'Arabīya) symbolically established a tripartite nation with a common foreign policy, army and provisions for a free exchange of populations.[92]

That the new President of the U.A.R. still held the initiative and ample confidence in his position was evident a month later in the violent press and radio campaign unleashed against King Sa'ūd. Coming at a time when the king's policies seemed to be leading to financial chaos at home, it precipitated a crisis in Riyad which resulted in Sa'ūd's resignation in favour of his brother Faysal. The change was made in the interest of the royal family and the country, not of 'Abd al-Nāṣir or Arab nationalism.

The effects of the U.A.R. were next felt in Lebanon, which was the victim of political pressure from within and without. The clashes between pro-Nāṣir and Phalangist forces brought the country to the brink of civil war and radicalized politics as a whole. Two events further upset the equilibrium of forces in the area: the bloody coup which finished the Iraqi monarchy (July 14, 1958) led by the "Free Officers" under the command of 'Abd al-Karīm al-Qāsim and 'Abd al-Salām Muḥammad 'Arif, and the disembarkation of U.S. marines in Lebanon (July 15) allegedly at the request of President Shamūn. The American intervention resulted in the political

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92 Basic Documents of the Arab Unifications, Document 2 (New York: Arab Information Center, 1958), 6 and Sayegh, Arab Unity, pp. 241-44.

alienation of Lebanon, the further deterioration of U.S. policy in the area, and the affirmation of the U.A.R.'s leadership and stability.[93]

## THE CAIRO-BAGHDAD RIFT

The Iraqi Free Officers were total neophytes in matters of government, planning and policy, and certainly had to deal with a far more chaotic situation in a less united country than the Egyptian revolutionaries faced six years before.[94] Of the political forces at work, the Communists and the Ba'thists were the most active. Already in 1955, the Ba'th had established a branch in Iraq with a radical nationalist following composed of army officers and progressive civilians whose platform was exclusively Arab unity. This group inadvertently allied itself with extremist left-wing groups which later impaired the Ba'th's freedom of action.[95]

Intra-army bickering produced a fluid situation conducive to chaos, which the Communist party soon took advantage of to speedily organize the country, albeit to suit its own purposes. The Ba'th was not as effective; the only pos-

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[93] Campbell, op. cit., pp. 134-145 and Marcel Colombe, "Panorama du trimestre," Orient, VI (1958), 20.

[94] The composition of the regional command at Baghdad was never officially published; Uriel Dann notes as probable members Fū'ād al-Rikābī, 'Abdallah al-Rikābī, Hāshim Jawād, Mahdat Jum'a, Ayyād Sa'īd Thābit, Tālib Ḥusayn Shabīb, 'Alī Ṣāliḥ al-Sa'dī, Faysal Ḥabīb al-Khayzarān, Khālid 'Alī al-Dulaymī and Karīm Maḥmūd. (Iraq under Qassem [Tel Aviv: Praeger-Pall Mall, 1969], p. 72).

[95] Vatikiotis, Egyptian Army, p. 157.

sibility it had for the promotion of Arab unity was rousing the street and the students, but it was soon evident that the Communists had Qāsim's support, and therefore, outmatched Ba'thist resourcefulness in achieving any headway with those tactics.[96]

Momentarily, Iraq's denunciation of the Baghdad Pact[97] and the demise of the union with Jordan seemed to signify the beginning of a new era and of a policy more compatible with Egyptian goals: a Mutual Aid Pact with Cairo was announced and on July 19, 1958, 'Arif headed a delegation to Damascus where Arab unity was stressed but no operational provisions or measures for implementation were mentioned.[98] Later, in October, a highly publicized Covenant for Arab Cultural Unity was signed, but it was not ratified until March, 1959, when it had become a dead letter.[99]

The members of the Iraqi junta did not long remain united. Almost immediately they precipitated a struggle for power which lost them the chance of developing collective leadership and the techniques of group decision. Within two months of the Republic's founding, Qāsim and 'Arif quarreled; within three months, Qāsim had 'Arif imprisoned and had become the dictator in turn.[100]

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[96] Dann, Iraq under Qassem, p. 145.

[97] Actual withdrawal from the Pact did not occur until March 24, 1959; the Treaty was due to expire on February 24, 1960. Ibid., p. 184.

[98] Ibid., p. 73. [99] Ibid., p. 75.

[100] Hurewitz, Military Dimension, p. 148.

The rift between 'Arif and Qāsim was also reflected in the army. Caught in the web of plots and intrigues akin to that sort of internecine power struggles, Qāsim first tolerated and then cooperated with the Communists perhaps because they appeared to be the only trustworthy allies against the Ba'thist and pro-Nāṣir forces in the army (allegedly led by 'Arif) and the public, and because their "Popular Resistance Force," a militia designed to neutralize "the enemies of the revolution," seemed to support the dictator and provided a degree of stability during the initial period.[101] Later on, this para-military force was to prove inimical to the security of Qāsim.

The Communists next move was to organize all professional and bureaucratic groups, as well as farmers and workers, on a national basis. By the spring of 1959, these groups almost constituted a second governmental system capable of wresting power and authority away from the regular governmental agencies.

The alliance with the Communists brought Qāsim instant support among his partners' coreligionists and other radical Arab nationalist groups outside Iraq, because for the extreme Left, the Iraqi regime presented a different prospect: the democratic and liberal alternative, against the dictatorship of Nāṣir. The consolidation of the Communist party in Egypt

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101 Charles D. Cremeans, The Arabs and the World - Nasser's Arab Nationalist Policy (New York: F. A. Praeger, 1967), p. 167.

early in 1958,[102] and its alliance with the Iraqi Syrian Communist parties posed a direct threat to the U.A.R. The situation in Iraq deteriorated rapidly during December; Ba'thists and Nasirists were jailed and 'Arif's followers in the army were cashiered. Afraid of the possible effects of the Iraqi politics on Syria, Nāṣir made a major shift in policy with his speech of December 23, 1958, which unleashed a nation-wide repression of the Left--in particular the Communist party--which he accused of undermining the union and of collusion with imperialism and Zionism.[103] Mass arrests of Communists occurred on January 1 and again in March, 1959, following the aborted and bloodily suppressed Mosul uprising led by Col. 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Shawwāf.[104]

The Shawwāf revolt enabled Qāsim to purge the army thoroughly. The operational capacity of the army was seriously impaired, but since there was no war in the offing, and the army had been appeased through substantial increases in benefits and pensions (Law of January, 1959), no major crisis ensued on that account.[105]

By mid-1959, the struggle for supremacy between Qāsim and the Communists began to take shape. The dictator had failed to implement land reform or acquiesce in the legalization of the trade unions and peasant societies requested by

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[102] Two minor Marxist parties formed the United Egyptian Communist Party which merged with the Egyptian Communist Party of Workers and Peasants on Jan. 8, 1958, to form the Egyptian Communist Party. Abdel Malek, Military Society, p. 126.

[103] Ibid., pp. 127-28 and Cremeans, op. cit., p. 168.

[104] Dann, op. cit., p. 128.

[105] Ibid., pp. 149 and 182.

the Communist party; the latter's growing dissatisfaction was aggravated by the indefinite deferment of two key issues: the right for the party to function legally, and its participation in the government.[106]

Qāsim remained adamant and lashed at the Communists with verbal attacks which further strained their mutual relations. An attempt at temporization in early July was followed by the Kirkuk massacre (July 14-16). Though the Iraqi dictator maintained the upper hand for the time being, a measure of stability was imperative for his regime to survive. As a result, Qāsim promised anew to legalize political party life at the beginning of 1960. This influenced the Communists' decision to risk accepting the truce.[107]

With the proclamation of the "Arab and Kurdish Republic," and the return from exile in the Soviet Union of the Kurdish leader, Mulla Muṣṭafā al-Barzānī, Qāsim patched up the Kurdish question and attained a degree of national integration which allowed him more manoeuvrability at home and in the Arab arena.[108] Controlled restoration of political life was finally granted in January, 1960, by permitting three parties to operate, among them the Democratic Party of Kurdistan, for obvious reasons. Late that year, the "Kurdish policy" was

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[106] Dann, Iraq under Qassem, pp. 201-02, 204.

[107] Ibid., pp. 207, 213, 219, 223 and 252.

[108] Hurewitz, Military Dimension, p. 156.

reversed and all parties were abolished anew; these measures formed part of a general effort to curb the Communists throughout Iraq.[109]

The drive against the Communists was prompted by the widespread popular reaction which had set in against them as early as October, 1959, and the continued criticism of the regime both at home and in the Arab countries. Despite the pressure against it, the Communist party continued to regard the regime as "watanī" (nationalist) and essentially good because of its opposition to "imperialism" (i.e., Western alliances) and union with the U.A.R., a vital question for the party given Nāṣir's staunch opposition to Communist activity.[110]

In the end, the party was gradually eclipsed first, because it failed to achieve legal license and second, because of the banning of its licensed press, the Ittiḥād al-Sha'b (The Union of the People) in June, 1960. Deprived of its organ of expression and ostracized by the regime, the Communists were finally rendered ineffective.[111]

Guided by his able Foreign Minister, Hāshim Jawād, Qāsim gradually reinstated a policy similar to that of the

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[109] Hurewitz, Military Dimension, p. 156; for a detailed account of the Qāsim-Communist struggle, see Dann, Part II, "The Communist Challenge," pp. 93-304.

[110] Dann, op. cit., pp. 93-94.

[111] Ibid., p. 279.

U.A.R., but designed to safeguard the sovereignty of Iraq and to strengthen the Arab League as the nexus and basis for intra-Arab relations. This move further put Nāṣir's leadership in check, for he could no longer claim to be the sole repository and defender of Arab unity, nationalism and positive neutralism. Qāsim supported unity in the abstract, but otherwise considered the creation of the U.A.R. as an expression of Egyptian imperialism. The confrontation between Nāṣir and Qāsim could neither be avoided nor solved; the rivalry for leadership was too strong an obstacle for the realization of the promise of unity introduced by the union in 1958. Instead, 1960 and 1961 saw a return to the idea of solidarity among independent states as an alternative to union.[112]

The sustained pressure on Nāṣir forced him to take conciliatory measures vis-à-vis conservative states in an attempt to isolate Iraq within the Arab League, but it was to no avail. Internationally, Egypt tried to offset Soviet support of Qāsim's regime by courting the United States. Though modest, this shift in alignments caused dismay among the most militant pan-Arab groups outside and inside Syria, specially the Ba'thists, who promptly accused Nāṣir of collusion with the forces of reaction. Events in Iraq and the open war between Qāsim and Nāṣir, inevitably undermined Syria's placid acceptance of union as imposed by the Egyptians; divisive and

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[112] Cremeans, Arabs and the World, p. 170.

separatist propaganda in Syria therefore became possible.[113]

The original euphoria had long given place to disenchantment and irritation because of the encroachment of Egyptian modes and institutions plus the natural difficulties akin to the experiment. The union had been beset by three specific problems: economic integration, which envisaged the harmonization of two systems diametrically opposed to one another, i.e., Egyptian statism vs. Syrian laissez-faire; legislative, administrative and financial integration, not only because of the difference of tradition, style and currency, but also due to physical distance; and the delicate problem of controlling Syrian politics in the army and among civilian groups.[114]

The decree of 1958 calling for the restructuration of the U.A.R. made sense politically from the standpoint of administrative statesmanship, but not within the sphere of Syrian particularism. President Nāṣir was thus faced with a risky proposition; his imposition of a series of drastic economic and political measures aiming at the total subordination of the "Northern Province" to Cairo was largely dictated by events in Iraq. The National Union was still the best means to achieve that goal, but it meant the defection of the Ba'thist forces, engineers of the union.

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[113] Vatikiotis, Egyptian Army, p. 174.

[114] Ibid., p. 114.

Nāṣir could not at first rely on military controls; therefore, he was forced into a rapprochement with the old populist, nationalist and conservative elements. His next move was the appointment of his right-hand man, 'Abd al-Ḥakīm 'Amr, as Governor of Syria in October, 1959, granting him total control. This implied the suppression of the Syrian Executive Cabinet (and with it any pretension of civilian participation) and the retrenchment of 'Abd al-Ḥamīd Sarrāj as "delegate in chief" in Syria. 'Amr's task was to assure Syria's political obedience by achieving the success of the National Union and with it, the implementation of economic and political integrative measures.

The Ba'th naturally opposed the above scheme, for the success of the National Union would automatically spell the party's demise, but the officer corps looked to Nāṣir's and 'Amr's authority as a remedy for their suicidal factionalism. They seemed to act under the assumption that under the union, with an essentially military regime, their own paramount position would be preserved.[115]

Despite the decree of March, 1958 abolishing all political parties, the Ba'th continued to be active, and gradually drifted into actual though unadmitted opposition to Nāṣir's policies. The slogan "Correction within the Union for the

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[115] Rabinovich, Syria under the Ba'th, p. 15, and Vatikiotis, Egyptian Army, pp. 118-19.

Union's protection," virtually voiced open revolt and a loud criticism of the Egyptian President's rule. That policy alienated those party members identified with Nāṣir's regime and precipitated the splintering of Ba'thist forces into opposing factions.[116] That notwithstanding, the Ba'th refused to discontinue its activities because it realized that the officer corps in Egypt--and possibly in Syria--had transformed itself into a ruling group with identifiable interests which it sought to translate into public policy. The party did not intend to voluntarily permit the monopoly of political life by the army.

At stake were the success of the Union in terms of Nasirist goals, and the survival of the Ba'th and its ideology. As engineers of the union, the Ba'thists became the center of public disaffection in Syria, a fact which prompted Nāṣir to withdraw support from the party during the first U.A.R. elections held on July 8, 1959, and grant it, on the otherhand, to conservative elements. As a result, the party obtained 250 seats out of a total of 9,445.[117] Ḥūrānī protested on behalf of the Ba'th, but to no avail.

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[116] 'Abdallah al-Rimāwī of Jordan and Fū'ād al-Rikābī of Iraq voiced their opposition to the party's directive strongly enough to be expelled by the party's Third Congress in 1959. Another group refused to follow either 'Aflaq or Rimāwī, and Ḥūrānī and his faction first participated in the union (Ḥūrānī was the only Ba'thist still in power) and later advocated a radical anti-Nāṣir policy. Rabinovich, op. cit., p. 22 and Vatikiotis, Egyptian Army, pp. 168 and 170.

[117] Rabinovich, op. cit., p. 17.

'Amr, meanwhile, went ahead with the organization of the National Union in Syria, and thus caused the disruption of the Ba'th-army alliance and the end of Ba'thist supremacy which had lasted during the first year of the union. Reaction and opposition were inevitable.[118] The Syrians increasingly complained against the unwelcome nationalization of resources and institutions, the inadequacy of the National Union to fill the vacuum left by the abolished political parties and the general inability of the Egyptian executive apparatus to rule the "Northern Province."

The mass resignation of Ba'thist leaders on December 25, 1959, emphasized the contrasting interpretations of Nāṣir and themselves regarding the terms of the unity agreement and its implementation.[119] Objections to the National Union scheme grew louder; many Syrians did not welcome the establishment of a socialist cooperative society, an avowed purpose of the Union's program, and also felt that they did not lack a vehicle for the evolution of a new ideology. The Ba'th specially felt that it filled that role.

In practical terms, the party had been entirely neu-

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[118] Ḥūrānī, 'Asalī, 'Aflaq and Biṭār acted as the main civilian leaders and were sustained by their army sympathizers Sarrāj, Ḥamdūn, Qannūṭ and Nāfūrī; upon the break-up of the alliance, Sarrāj's influence was predominant. Vatikiotis, Egyptian Army, p. 115.

[119] Ibid., p. 118.

tralized, for it could not continue to participate in the decision making even for Syria. After the ousting of the party, the secession was a matter of time.

## TOWARDS SECESSION

After the secession of the Ba'thists, the Egyptian press began to admit the difficulties faced in Syria, and the real reason for Marshall 'Amr's mission; the fact that separatist propaganda centred in Syria was publicly recognized. The establishment of a general policy required central control from Cairo over mass media, army and institutions. As an instrument of control under 'Amr, the National Union was "a functioning entity," but it failed as "an instrument of policy" because it operated by decree, not by consensus.[120]

By the end of 1959 and during 1960, 'Amr, the Minister of the Interior Sarrāj, and the bureaucracy constituted the government of the "Northern Province," an arrangement which could hardly provide adequate support to the U.A.R. in a geographically and politically removed country. The discontent of the influential elites was echoed by the people at large. The more idealistic elements who expected all kinds of good things to follow union were finally disappointed, and the more practical minded who counted on the union's making some economic problems easier and adding to Arab strength were equally dissatisfied.

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120 Vatikiotis, Egyptian Army, p. 120.

The situation was worsened by the drought which hit the country during three seasons, thus turning Syria from an exporter to an importer of wheat and adversely influencing the economy.[121] The Syrian business community was doubly affected: first by the slump created by the drought, and secondly by the cramping effect which resulted from the encroachment of Egyptian centralization upon the traditionally free system of Syria. Other groups as the landed oligarchy and tribal units were just as disturbed. The application of the Agrarian Reform Law (October 1, 1958) and the abolition of special tribal legislation and jurisdictional autonomy were never accepted by those concerned.

The agrarian reform was adopted in Egypt as an economic and social measure and an instrument of desired political change; being a rather homogeneous society, Egypt did not require any tribal legislation, but Syria presented a totally different situation. The economy depended to a large extent upon the productivity of the big estates, and as concerns the tribal groups, it was rather impossible to legislate them out of existence. Even the armies, which were supposed to get along "like brothers" were suspicious of each other and jealous of their respective prerogatives. Egyptian officers maintained a superior position and were accused of highhandedness in relation to their Syrian counterparts.[122]

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[121] Cremeans, Arabs and the World, p. 171.

[122] This subject was amply discussed and acknowledged during the 1963 Unity Talks. See Mahāḍir, pp. 12/1,2, 16/1,2,3, 17/1,2 and Cremeans, op. cit., p. 171.

## The Opposition and the Government

The U.A.R.'s greatest difficulties were in the field of government. Syrian society had been represented in the conglomeration of political parties abolished by the new regime, and had no real opportunity of participation because the National Union offered "a debating society" as a substitute for real party politics.[123] As a whole, the repression of all political criticism and participation, the gradual strangulation of the substantial bourgeoisie and the control of the economy by Egypt tended to reaffirm the old particularisms of Syrian society, particularisms which were finally accepted as the expression of Syrian sovereignty.

The socialization campaign met with the bourgeoisie's fierce resistance in Egypt as it did in Syria. Plannification was opposed by the Miṣr Trust; as a result, most of the measures taken were ineffective, for in a mixed economy as the Egyptian, plannification cannot succeed without the backing of private capital.[124] The regime's policy of conciliation vis-à-vis the industrial and financial bourgeoisie which had emphasized the protection of private property, free enterprise and the cooperation between private and public capital, was abandoned early in 1960. Nāṣir opted for the dismantling of a class which represented a serious obstacle to

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[123] Cremeans, op. cit., p. 171 and Simon Jargy, "La Syrie à la veille d'une nouvelle expérience," Orient, X (1959), 19-32.

[124] Patrick O'Brien, The Revolution in Egypt's Economic System (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 125.

the hegemony of the military regime. The Miṣr holdings and those of the Central Bank were nationalized on February 13, 1960, but the pressure exerted by those groups did not end there.

Egypt's perspectives in 1961 were not reassuring; despite intense organizational programs undertaken during the second five-year plan (1955-61), the nationalization of private and foreign capital, and the considerable foreign aid received, productivity remained at a low level and capital lay dormant. Worse yet, the galoping demographic explosion annulled whatever gains might have been made, and put a serious strain on the country's resources.[125]

Drastic measures had to be taken to correct a drastic situation. As concerns Syria, Nāṣir's total ignorance of the country seemed to have been the major obstacle in devising more comprehensive or adequate political and economic policies. The basis for the "democratic and cooperative socialism" was the Constitution of 1956 which did not follow any special system common to other countries, but rather fitted the peculiar necessities of Egypt. But Syria was another country and a different one, in every sense of the word.

The new provisional constitution of 1958 worsened matters because of the contradiction inherent in Articles IV and V, the first instituting economic plannification and state capitalism, and the second defending the inviolability

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[125] Abdel Malek, Military Society, p. 150.

of private property.[126]

Though difficult to prove, it is probable that the Egyptian bourgeoisie might have influenced its Syrian counterpart--directly or indirectly--by its entrepreneurial policy or financial measures to repudiate the union, given that their interests were equally threatened by the socializing programmes of the state. In fact, the only weapon the Egyptian bourgeoisie could successfully wield against Nāṣir to make him come to terms was to exert political and economic pressure on the sensitive spot, Syria.[127] Be it as it may, the bases for conflict were strengthened by the ensuing domestic policies of the regime.

Secession

The systematic opposition which most of his domestic policy encountered in Egypt and Syria, finally forced Nāṣir to take more drastic measures; that he chose to implement those measures first in Syria points to the fact that it was the beginning of an experiment within a general plan to dismantle the bourgeoisie of both countries. Starting in February, a series of decrees effectively transferred the power attached to property and economic policy from the bourgeoisie to the regime, which finally came into a position of un-

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[126] The Provisional Constitution of the U.A.R., 1958 (Cairo: Shaab, 1958), pp. 3-5 and U.A.R. Yearbook, 1960, (Cairo: Shaab, 1961), pp. 42-50.

[127] See Simon Jargy, "La Syrie, province de la RAU," Orient, VIII (1958), 27.

challenged hegemony in Egypt; the results in Syria were to be different.[128]

Political events continued to test President Nāṣir's policies and ideology; beset by internal and external problems, he was forced to join forces again with conservative rulers, this time on account of the Kuwait affair (June 1961). According to principle, the U.A.R. should have welcome the annexation of Kuwait by Iraq: it was in the cause of unity, of republicanism and socialism, but in practice it meant giving Iraq the means of becoming an economic and political power in the area. So, in keeping with their national interest, Egyptian soldiers marched along Saudi-Arabian, Jordanian and British troops in the name of self-determination."[129]

The Kuwait incident only intensified what had become an open struggle on the international stage involving Iraq, Egypt and the Soviet Union. Because of the threat posed against the U.A.R. by the Communist parties operating in Egypt, Syria and Iraq and Qāsim's connivance, Nāṣir publicly accused the latter of "treason to the Arab unity cause," and

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[128] The decrees of February and March nationalized all foreign banks and imposed currency restrictions which virtually paralyzed all economic activity in Syria. The most crucial decrees, however, were those of June 6, July 19 and especially July 20 which confiscated all banks, insurance companies, light industries, etc. Keesing's, Vol. XIII (1961-1962), 18181-82; Al-Ahrām, Cairo, July 21, 1961, p. 1, and Abdel Malek, Military Society, pp. 152-54.

[129] Benjamin Shwadran, "The Kuwait Incident," Middle Eastern Affairs, XIII Nos. 1 and 2 (1962), 2-13 and 43-53.

"subservience to a foreign power" (i.e., the Soviet Union). Likewise, Qāsim accused Nāṣir of interventionism in Iraq's internal affairs, domination of the Arab League and subservience to Western imperialism.

So far as Arab unity was concerned, it was evident that unionism and nationalism could not provide the ideological solidarity among the new Arab leaders needed to overcome vested interests in existing sovereignties, specially as regards two long-established centers like Baghdad and Cairo. Syria remained the bone of contention, and given the growing discontent with the union, she grew more vulnerable to disruptive overtures.

Nāṣir could ill afford a major breakdown or political defeat in Syria; as the tension mounted, he grew increasingly touchy over the Syrian Communists, who had never been reconciled to the union, and over the Iraqi regime which he thought substantially influenced by the Communists (apparently overlooking their rift with Qāsim) and whose disruptive propaganda in Syria suggested it had designs upon her.

Nāṣir's pronouncement on the task of liberating all Arab countries "not as a privilege, but as a responsibility," further curtailed the popularity of his regime. Since the new policy aimed at subverting conservative regimes by granting support to dissident forces, the general reaction was to accept Qāsim's solidarity principle instead of Nāṣir's union-

ism, both because of political interest and ideological compatibility.[130] Thus, Nāṣir's Arab policy again failed to fulfill his ultimate aspiration: make of the U.A.R. and himself the rallying point for a greater union.

The setback in his Arab policy prompted Nāṣir to reinforce his grip on Syria. If as a tactician the President had an uncanny instinct to react under pressure, as a strategist he failed to understand the subtleties of the Syrian temperament and reaction concerning his style. The further bureaucratization of the regime (August decrees), the centralization of rule corresponding to the abolition of all regional institutions (September 24), the resignation of 'Abd al-Hamīd Sarrāj (September 26) as Vice-President and Minister of the Interior, and finally, the amendment to the 1958 Constitution (Sept. 28) incensed the Syrians as a whole and left Nāṣir without any prop in Syria.[131]

The Syrian merchant and landed bourgeoisie--politically more significant than the Egyptian because it was still re-

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130 Marcel Colombe, "Panorama du Trimestre," Orient, XVIII (1961), 7-10.

131 In a cabinet reshuffle following the July decrees, Sarrāj was appointed Vice-President on Aug. 16 and transferred to Cairo. Sarraj's objective was to control the Syrian Committee for the National Union, so 'Amr "reorganized" the committee in order to purge Sarrāj's supporters. As the President took 'Amr's stand against Sarraj, the latter resigned. See Paolo Minganti, "Il distacco della Siria dalla Repubblica Araba Unita," Oriente Moderno, No. 10-II, Vol. 41 (1961), 675; Keesing's, Vol. XIII (1961-62), 18437 and Cremeans, op.cit., p. 172.

presented in the army--[132] joined forces with the estranged politicians and those dissatisfied and frustrated army officers who resented their secondary position vis-à-vis the Egyptian Corps and the fact they had had no power within the union. A swift coup in the accustomed pattern put an end to the ill-starred experiment on September 28. Predictably enough, there was general condemnation of the coup among the Arab states; Qāsim even offered to mend fences and assist Nāṣir in crushing the revolt, but no action was undertaken.[133]

Nāṣir's first impulse was to suppress the revolt by force, but in a judicious move refrained from doing it in order "to spare the shedding of Arab blood by Arabs."[134] Following the initial shock, Egypt mounted a fierce propaganda campaign which was to keep the Syrians in a state of demoralized confusion. Nonetheless, the new Syrian government wiped out all the economic reforms dictated by Egypt;

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[132] Rabinovich, op. cit., p. 18, alleges that in Egypt Nāṣir's policies hit a politically powerless bourgeoisie because it was composed of foreigners and minorities. That applies only to the period between 1952-56, for the Miṣr and 'Abbūd interests were all held by a national bourgeoisie which, until 1961, acted as a co-governing body because of the enormous power it derived from its control of sizable portions of the economy. Cf. Abdel Malek, Military Society, Chapter iii, "Dismantling of the Bourgeoisie," pp. 150-66.

[133] Keesing's, Vol. XIII (1961-62), 18439.

[134] President Nasser's Speeches and Press Interviews, 1961 (Cairo: Shaab, 1961), Broadcast Address of September 29, p. 161.

the policy of laissez-faire was reinstated along with all the old parties and politicians with the exception of the Communist party which continued to be banned.[135]

The failure of the union unveiled several myths and pointed to serious shortcomings. First, it emphasized the vagueness of Arab unity as an ideological concept which could not become a concrete reality because it emanated and was almost entirely sustained by the personality of 'Abd al-Nāṣir. Consequently, the success or failure of Nasirism in the Arab and international context, tended to affect the stability of the U.A.R., which more than a political reality was an extension and a myth forged by Nāṣir's charisma.

Secondly, it was evident that solidarity did not exist as a commitment to an inclusive Arab nation--as Nuseibeh observes--but to each one's own country.[136] Therefore, even when Syria and Egypt professed to share the same ideology, each one understood and accepted it in different terms and within a different context, despite the fact that on the international plane that ideology was projected as a single idea. The same applied to economics and politics.

Third, the failure of the National Union underlined the difficulties inherent in mass participation and politicisation. The problem resided in the fact that the importance of the "masses" as a political factor increased more

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135 Keesing's, Vol. XIII (1961-62), 18440 and Simon Jargy, "La Syrie d'hier et d'aujourd'hui," Orient, XX (1961), 70.

136 The Ideas of Arab Nationalism, p. 48.

quickly than their experience in political action and even more so as regards their interest or capacity to effectively participate in politics.

Fourth, the secession denied that "equal problems necessitate equal solutions." The application of Egyptian solutions to Syrian problems could not have been more unwelcome and inappropiate. Fifth, the crucial question of unified leadership: was it Arab, Egyptian or Syrian? It ought to have been defined beforehand. While the military in Egypt maintained an articulate, cohesive political leadership, the Syrians were plotters instead of mediators or arbiters of the tumultuous internal strife among the civilian parties and themselves. Without a unified leadership in Syria, Nāṣir had no real partner to deal with. Satisfying one entity meant displeasing another.

Last, but not least, was the hollowness of the belief in a "single Arab nation," for nobody really believed in it or was committed to it. The U.A.R. was supposed to be the initial nucleus for the rest to rally around and thus constitute that Arab nation; yet, instead of support the union received scorn.

As a whole, international and inter-Arab pressures plus the role as "foremost leader of Arabism," influenced, conditioned and ultimately restricted Nāṣir's choices in devising a congruent policy concerning Syria. The union needed time

--and calm--to mature. The confluence of interests of international and Arab power politics heightened the pressure and tension around the U.A.R. and, to a large extent, was responsible for the extremist measures which weakened, rather than strengthened the union.[137]

Unfortunately, most of the above factors remained unaccounted for; the notion of the single Arab nation persisted as well as the facile charge on imperialism and reaction as the true causes for the break up. These myths continued to colour and determine the politics of the Arab scene as a whole and of the two estranged partners in particular, a fact which inhibited the possibility of a more constructive dialogue and future understanding.

## Post-Secessionist Politics

### Syria

The situation in Syria was far from settled on account of the permanent division of social and political groups within themselves and in their mutual relationships. The most immediate effect of the union and secession was to underline Syrian particularisms and to reinforce that distinctiveness in terms of national identity and geographical entity. This was a change of utmost importance, but it failed

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[137] See Stephen Longrigg, The Middle East (London: Gerald Duckworth & Co. Ltd., 1963), p. 197 and M. Palmer, "The U.A.R.: An Assessment of its Failure," Middle East Journal, XX (1966), 50-67 for a different assessment of Arab disunity.

to be expressed in ideological terms because no one dared challenge the doctrine of Pan-Arab nationalism and unity.

Post-secessionist politics in Syria presented an almost identical picture with those of 1954, in that the same individuals, parties and slogans were present, but with a significant difference: although the coup of 1961 had been backed by the same forces as that of 1953, it did not have the Left's orientation but that of the nationalist forces from the Moderate wing. Both the Sha'b and the Independent parties increased in popularity because they had opposed military rule traditionally, but in the context of 1961 the maintenance of civilian rule appeared more hazardous than in 1954, precisely because the goal of the civilian parties was still that of ousting the military from government.[138]

The alliance between the conservative forces and the army was short lived; the confluence of aims stopped with the secession. Despite the announcement on October 2 that general elections would be held, by October 9 all political parties were formally banned.[139] The army was in the process of reorganization, and as a result, its ability to influence civilian politics was restricted because of the lack of an effective leadership. The coalition of officers led by Nahlāwī, who had carried the secession coup, soon disintegrated; those officers who cooperated with Egypt detached

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[138] For the detail of individuals and conservative parties involved, see Keesing's, XIII (1961-62), 18437 and Jargy, "La Syrie d'hier...," p. 70.

[139] Keesing's, XIII (1961-62), 18439-40.

themselves prior to the secession and thus were readmitted, but those who had participated fully or identified themselves with Egyptian rule (like Sarrāj) were barred from politics. At any rate, whether in exile or in Syria, those officers constituted a strong pressure group for either reunion or improved relations with Egypt.[140]

As a whole, the Syrian officer corps continued to lean towards leftist policies and socialist ideas. For that reason, they still sympathized with Nāṣir's foreign and Arab policies, irrespective of the recent failure. This factor proved crucial in immediate developments. 1961 gave way to 1962 without having shaken off the atmosphere of chaos.

Political instability persisted during 1962; the resignation and appointment of cabinets seemed to be the rule rather than the exception. Although Nāṣir recognized the fait accompli of the secession on October 5, 1961, he nevertheless stated that his government would not recognize any Syrian regime until "the people had a say concerning their political future."[141] This in fact meant that so long as anti-Nāṣir forces ruled Syria their legitimacy was to be in doubt.

The Syrians variously--and unsuccessfully--attempted to neutralize, outbid or distemper Nāṣir with more "compre-

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[140] Mabādir, p. 126/1 and Rabinovich, op. cit., pp. 20 and 30.

[141] Keesing's, XIII (1961-62), 18439.

hensive" plans for unity, closer ties with Qāsim and conservative regimes, and by contesting his right to speak in the name of Arab nationalism and unity. The Egyptian President sustained his attack and effectively kept the Syrian scene in disarray.

On March 28, the army again intruded upon the political scene after putting down the "corrective" coup led by Naḥlāwī who, according to Lu'ay al-Atāsī, had approached various factions urging them to recall the union (despite his having led the seccessionist coup!) or face revolt, obviously hoping to receive Egyptian support in the meantime. As this did not occur, the plotter submitted to a force sent from Damascus.[142]

After the Naḥlāwī coup, and a series of purges and quarrels, the officer corps decided to consolidate and harmonize its forces in order to be able to take matters in hand. Representatives from all regions and major units converged at Homs where a Congress was held on April 1, 1962, to discuss army interests and strategy in politics. Among the decisions reached to was to exile Naḥlāwī and the Damascus faction, restore the civilian government and call for union with "liberated states" rather than the immediate return to union with Egypt. No decision was taken concerning those unionist and Ba'thist officers who had been kept out

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[142] According to al-Atāsī, the coup was bound to fail because Naḥlāwī counted only with the support "of elements of no consequence" and faced the opposition of the main army factions. Maḥāḍir, p. 126/2.

of politics after September 1961.[143]

The new choice for Premier was Bashīr al-'Azma, a moderate unionist who was easily imposed by the army.[144] 'Azma attempted a shift in policy more agreeable to Cairo; the policy, however, failed to placate Nāṣir and was discarded.

Just as the officers were steadily strengthening their clout, the Ba'th conspicuously receded into the background in what amounted to a tactical retreat led by 'Aflaq. Conflict arose between 'Aflaq and Bīṭār on the one hand, and Ḥūrānī on the other, because the first wished for reunion with Egypt on a more equal basis and the second rejected that possibility outright; Ḥūrānī decided to participate in the government and ultimately seceded from the Ba'th on June 18, 1962.[145]

Syro-Egyptian relations worsened on account of Ḥūrānī's renewed invectives against Nāṣir and his policies and plummetted when an allegedly Egyptian-inspired plot was exposed on July 28. Syria brought a complaint against Egypt to the Arab League meeting at Shtura (Lebanon) held in September.† After ineffectual discussions, Egypt threatened to withdraw from the League, then walked out of the meeting and ignored

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143 Rabinovich, Syria under the Ba'th, pp. 33-34.

144 The ultra-conservative Ma'rūf Dawālībī was his predecessor. Kerr, Arab Cold War, pp. 50-51.

145 Ibid., p. 49.

† The Egyptian Delegation was composed of three Syrians in exile, a slight Syria was quick to acknowledge.

the organization for more than a year; Syria dropped its complaint and was plunged into one more cabinet crisis which ended with 'Azma's resignation and the appointment of the seasoned Khālid al-Azm.[146]

Meanwhile, Ba'thist activity had not been entirely curtailed because the government was hard pressed to gain at least the tolerance of "progressive" and pan-Arab elements which, to a large extent, remained unchecked. The party had no clear-cut policy until conditions defined themselves in Syria and elsewhere in the Arab world. 'Aflaq continued to oppose the separatist regime to escape incrimination once the political odds changed in his favour; unionism and socialism remained his motto.[147]

Working backstage, 'Aflaq had kept what remained of the party in a position to take the lead in the reinception of a unionist, revolutionary government. His first political overture in this context was his statement of February 21, 1962, where he criticized his own mistakes and those committed during the U.A.R. period, and proposed a return to a federal union. The implicit intention was to call for a rapprochement with Nāṣir, whose acquiescence was necessary to put the Ba'th back into the unionist orbit. Nāṣir demurred and demanded that the party be rebuilt on entirely new basis as a prerequisite for any new dealings with him.[148]

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[146] Rabinovich, op. cit., p. 35 and Kerr, Arab Cold War, p. 52.

[147] Rabinovich, op. cit., p. 37.

[148] Ibid.

## Egypt

The effects of the secession in Egypt were less traumatic than in Syria, for the latter had virtually been left without a government. The main impact of secession was on ideology, whose very basis--Arab unity--had sustained the union and now lay shattered. Most myths were left untouched; the reassessment of dogma was confined to the indictment of "reaction" (raj'īya), "opportunism" (intihāzīya), and "provincialism" (iqlīmīya) as the main obstacles to unity. But the main myth concerning the "Arab nation" was retained along with the belief that all diversities were "artificial" or "of incidental importance." The simplistic slogans of "Liberation, Unity, Socialism and Revolution" continued to be viewed as adequate to fulfill the masses' needs and desires.[149]

No allowance was made for the possibility of Egypt's responsibility for the break up of the union. Nāṣir's only detraction was admittedly having "consorted with reaction." Blame was squarely set upon the Syrians whom Nāṣir deemed unworthy of Egyptian "sacrifices" because of their voluble and unreliable nature.[150] As a result, in Egypt as in Syria, the opportunity to translate political events in ideological terms was wasted because of dogmatic fixations.

Since secession marked the first retreat of Nasirist Arabism in terms of Egyptian prestige and power, Nāṣir

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[149] Kerr, Arab Cold War, p. 31,

[150] Ibid., p. 43 and Abdel Malek, Military Society, p. 159.

abandoned the policy of moderation in favour of one of rabid revolutionarism against conservative and monarchic governments. In keeping with this new commitment, Nāṣir had his army units removed from Kuwait, severed relations with Yemen and launched a devastating psychological warfare on Syria.[151]

The new Egyptian policy was systematized in the Charter of May, 1962, according to which Egypt was to become the model for all Arab revolutionaries for the liberation and unification of the Arab nation.[152] The pursuance of "ideological purity" was taken to the extreme with Nāṣir's military adventure in the Yemen. This action solidified the clashing interests of the Arab contenders and crystallized the formation of seemingly irreconcilable blocs.

At the beginning of 1963, the erstwhile partners were more split than ever, for Egypt continued to ignore the Syrian regime. Disunity prevailed in general; Iraq recalled its ambassadors from countries which recognized Kuwait, and therefore had no links with any Arab country. Further divisions resulted from the Yemen civil war: Egypt, Syria, Iraq and Lebanon recognized the new Yemen Republic, while Saudi Arabia and Jordan supported the royalist faction. Unity seemed farther away than ever, but the expediency of the coup was soon to change the political horizon.

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[151] Kerr, op. cit., p. 37 and Carl Leiden, "Egypt: The Drift to the Left," Middle Eastern Affairs, XIII No. 10 (1962), 290-99.

[152] Vatikiotis, Conflict in the Middle East, p. 21 and Cremeans, The Arabs, p. 179.

## Towards Reunion

The first victim of a coup was Qāsim, who thanks to his erratic and irrational policies had managed to alienate all political support to his regime. Of the Arab population, both Sūnnī and Shī'ī communities were thrown together in mounting hostility to the dictator on account of the regime's harsh policies and their own political neutralization. Pro-Nāṣir and Ba'thist forces were also waiting for a suitable opportunity to redress the status quo, and the costly and ill-conducted campaign against the Kurds produced the right conjuncture of national disarray and economic chaos conducive to revolt.

With the reversal of his Kurdish policy in 1960, Qāsim fueled the most volatile controversy in Iraqi politics and one which was crucial to the political stability and territorial integrity of Iraq. The Kurdish nationalists equated their progressive political disqualification with communal discrimination; consequently, they were easily drawn to Barzānī. Qāsim's foolish attempt to incite rival tribes against Barzānī, the replacement of Kurdish troops by Arab forces in Kurdistan as well as the mass arrests of Kurds and indiscriminate violence on Barzānī guerrillas and village sympathizers, convinced the hardy Kurdish leader of the advisability of creating an autonomous state.[153]

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[153] Hurewitz, Military Dimension, p.157.

Early in 1963, the Barzānīs held Kurdistan in their grip more firmly than ever before; discontent was rampant among the Iraqi population and army, so the end of Qāsim did not come as a surprise. The Ba'th branch and the army faction under 'Abd al-Salām Muḥammad 'Arif were responsible for the coup (Feb. 8, 1963) and the cease fire with the Kurds.[154]

Syria followed suit on March 8 with a coup carried out with little direct Ba'th participation, for the key positions in the army were held by independent and non-Ba'thist unionist officers who nonetheless chose the Ba'th as a political vehicle.[155]

The Ba'th's fortunes had improved somewhat after the Fifth National Congress (held in Homs in May, 1962), where 'Alī Ṣāliḥ al-Sa'dī, an influential Iraqi politician, endorsed 'Aflaq's approach to Egypt and Arab unity as stated in the latter's declaration of February 21.[156] The party had been reformed along "purist" lines, but it was by no means unified. In 1963, 'Aflaq's new party and the Socialist-Unionists (Al-Waḥdawīyūn al-Ishtirākiyūn) constituted the unionist opposition to the secessionist government. The party

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[154] Peace was doomed because the Barzānīs had already crystallized their demands: full territorial autonomy, a fair share of public revenue and the withdrawal of Iraqi troops from Kurdistan. These terms proved unacceptable to the Ba'th regime which resumed full-scale war against the Kurds in June, 1963. Hurewitz, Military Dimension, p. 157.

[155] Those responsible for the coup belonged to a secret military organization--Tanẓīm 'Askarī (Military Committee)--affiliated to the Ba'th but distinct from it. Rabinovich, Syria under the Ba'th, p. 49.

[156] Ibid., p. 37.

had no connection with a third group the "Qutriyūn" (Regionalists), which supported the existing order and operated within it. This group evolved out of the Ba'th branches in the Northeast provinces (Latakia, Hauran and Deir al-Zor) but did not represent a coherent organization or had a definite platform.[157]

Two more splinter groups were formed by a group of ex-Ba'thists who maintained close relations with the party but did not rejoin either the main branch ('Aflaq's) or the other two groups (Socialist-Unionists and Regionalists), and Hūrānī's faction, which cooperated fully with the government and opposed 'Aflaq and the Socialist-Unionists.[158]

A National Revolutionary Command Council (Al-Majlis al-Waṭanī li-Qiyādah al-Thawrah), staffed with military officers and civilian politicians was established in both countries; Ṣalāḥ al-Bīṭār was invited to preside as Premier. The Council announced its intention of reviving the union, this time with Syria, Egypt and Iraq. 'Abd al-Nāṣir cabled his congratulations and for the first time since the secession, formally recognized the Syrian government.[159]

In a gambit aimed at placating Nāṣir and easing the road towards negotiations, half the places in the cabinet

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[157] The Regionalists were led by Fā'yiz al-Jasim, Yusuf Z'ayin, Munīr al-'Abdallah and Ibrahīm Makhus, who acted independently from 'Aflaq and continued to operate during the 1958 union. Rabinovich, op. cit., pp. 39-40.

[158] Ibid., p. 40.

[159] Kerr, Arab Cold War, p. 57 and Rabinovich, op. cit., p. 52.

were distributed among the leading members of unionist groups which, on the whole, viewed Nasir as their leader and Arab unity as their only goal, and independent individuals.[160] Dissension and conflict were the logical outcome, for the cabinet's hard core of Ba'thists had no intention of relinquishing total control both at home and in the negotiations for unity.

The following events exemplified a characteristic pattern of the Ba'th's erratic and inconsistent politics: torn between its fidelity to idealistic goals and its strategy designed to seize and hold power, the party was to fail once more as a governing body and as a union partner. Although committed to a representative and democratic system in its constitution, the party nevertheless recurred to strong-arm tactics and authoritarian repression vis-à-vis non-Ba'thist groups.

Leaving a divided house behind it, the Ba'th marched again towards Cairo bearing the stigma of the secession. The positions of Nāṣir and the Ba'th remained the same: they were political contenders rather than compatible partners. The conflict remained one of personalities and leadership. Thus, the Cairo Talks were to open another chapter in the history of intra-Arab rivalries. The meetings convey the particular clash between 'Abd al-Nāṣir and the Ba'th and the

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160 The participant groups were Nihād al-Qāsim's United Arab Front; Sāmī al-Ṣūfān's Socialist Unity Movement and Hānī al-Hindī's Arab Nationalist Movement. Kerr, op. cit., p. 59.

overt and covert struggle for power increasingly dominated by a third actor: the army. Also shown by implication is the general political effervescence and the passionate search for political identity and answers to common problems and questions in the Arab world.

# PART II

# THE CAIRO UNITY TALKS

## III. THE ASSESSMENT OF FORCES

The over-all conception of unity in 1963 was a compound of nationalist ideals and practical failure, distilled from the events leading to and culminating in the secession of 1961 and its aftermath. Resentment and ideological bias were still alive and coloured all political decisions. The notion of "manifest destiny" continued to influence Egypt's self-image as the natural center for unity, Arabism and socialism.[161] This notion was both a dogmatic stand and a tactical move designed to hold the initiative and carry on a pre-emptive action in order to avoid the possibility of being out-manoeuvred or isolated.

President Nāṣir's "unity," therefore, cannot be extricated from his global political conception or the power struggle in the context of the Middle East. His was not a clear-cut ideological stand but a series of criticisms based on past grievances mainly caused by the break-away of Syria.

Secession depicted inter-Arab alignments in black and white, that is either revolutionary or reactionary, for despite the many and undeniable mistakes committed during the union, President Nāṣir failed to recognize his share in the responsibility for the fiasco. Moral responsibility was entirely thrown on the Ba'th party instead of reassessing

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[161] Muṭā' Ṣafadī, "Fī falsafah al-dawla al-'arabīya al-nahḍawīya" (On the Philosophy of the Progressive Arab State), Al-Thaqafa al-'Arabīya (Arab Culture), Beirut, April-June, 1959, pp. 13-14.

the causes for the fiasco.

The re-estructuring of ideology implied its radicalization and the end of the policy of moderation. The new premise was the denial of any concessions of principle and the freedom of cooperation with like-minded groups only. This isolated but vehemently revolutionary position generated again a high-pitched enthusiasm for Nāṣir at home; so long as his new policy achieved nothing, it was accepted in Egypt and tolerated abroad.

The ideological stand was redesigned in somewhat Leninist-Stalinist lines, the concept of unity being subject to a reaccommodation. Egypt was differentiated as "a state" and as "a revolution," the first complying with diplomatic and official channels, the second being free to appeal directly to the people. In synthesis, post-secessionist policy was that of a re-dedication to domestic revolutionary development and isolation from neighbouring countries.[162]

The major internal changes were economic (massive nationalizations) and political. The former National Union was replaced by a tighter organization in the Arab Socialist Union, and political ideology was embodied in the Charter of National Action, heretofore Nāṣir's ideological bible.[163]

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[162] Kerr, Arab Cold War, pp. 39-40; cf. Cremeans, op. cit., p. 176 and Muhammad Hassanayn Haykal, "Mudhakirāt fī al-siyāsat al-Miṣrī" (Notes on Egyptian Politics) (Cairo: Maktabat al-Nahḍah al-Miṣrīya, 1963), pp. 4-8.

[163] Muhsin Ibrahim, "Arab Socialism in the Making," Arab Journal, Vol. I No. 2-3 (Spring-Summer, 1964), 15-25; excerpt in Karpat, Political and Social Thought, pp. 214-16.

Nāṣir's unionism rested on a new slogan: "Unity of Purpose" (wahdatu-l-hadaf) instead of the former "Unity of Ranks" (wahdatu as-saff) which allowed cooperation with regimes of diverse internal orientation. The idea behind it was to present a united front vs. external dangers and/or pressures. This shift in policy was criticized by most Arab states on the grounds that it had wrecked Arab solidarity.

In his speech of February 22, 1962, Nāṣir clarified the issue stating that "unity of ranks" based on different purposes would drive the entire Arab nation into danger, and that "unity of purpose" could be conducive to "unity of ranks."[164]

Rising from failure, Egypt's posture had to be one of defiance and, at the same time, had to support itself on ideological premises intended to justify and sanctify its own expediency. With the restoration of the "revolution for export" policy, unity was also given a revolutionary character; it was not to be any more the result of contractual agreements but rather the "right of the Arab people," and "the restoration to its natural state of the same and unique nation torn apart by its enemies (i.e. secessionists, reactionaries, etc.) against its own wishes and interests."[165] The inference is that to attain unity (as well as freedom and socialism), one had to resort to revolution, not to evo-

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[164] President Nasser's Speeches and Press Interviews, 1962 (Cairo: Shaab, 1962), p. 29.

[165] U.A.R. Charter of National Action (Cairo: Shaab, 1962), p. 12.

lutionary reformism as in the previous phase (1958-1961).[166]

The secession challenged not only the ideology and the adequacy of the U.A.R.'s previous institutional arrangements and procedures, but more seriously so, it questioned Nāṣir's leadership and the whole notion of Egypt's "manifest destiny." In fact, Nāṣir was misled in believing that the former expansion of Nasirism implied pan-Arab acceptance of Egypt's foreign policy as an accurate reflexion of pan-Arab ideology. The Egyptian leader did not seem willing to accept that Arab unity and Nasirism did not constitute one equation, and that Nasirism was just the manifestation of pan-Arab feeling. Consequently, he upheld the right for Egypt as a "revolution" to remain the nucleus for unity and assume leadership for the Arab countries.

Such was the Egyptian stance prior to the Talks of 1963. Unity seemed to be both a concrete, viable institutional possibility and a political means to assert Egyptian leadership. But despite the Charter's dicta, no provisions were made for a logical scheme or definite guidelines whereby unity might be achieved. The events following the coups in Iraq and Syria (Feb. 8 and March 8, respectively) opened new opportunities which were wasted in old gambits. The Ba'th and Nāṣir were to become again improbable partners.

The Ba'th had consistently stressed the contrasting

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[166] George Lenczowski, "The Objects and Methods of Nasserism," in The Modernization of the Arab World, edited by J. H. Thompson and R. D. Reischauer (New York: D. Van Nostrand Company Inc., 1966), p. 204.

interpretations of Nāṣir and themselves concerning the questions of the ideology and implementation of unity. The party signified its protest in 1959 by withdrawing from the union and ratified it with the secession. That action, however, forfeited the party's right to participate in the decision-making process during the union and impaired its political image and chances for leadership. As stated before, the Ba'th survived with difficulty and in obscurity; the army, on the other hand, continued to be represented and gradually achieved control of regional institutions.

The conjunction of 1961 enhanced the army's prerogatives; it rose from a "client" position to that of senior partner and potential ruler. Contrary to the army, the Ba'th was in a slump and continued to be the target of Nāṣir's propaganda as a secessionist vilain, notwithstanding the fact that it was the army, in collusion with the conservative factions, which carried out the coup.[167]

In the light of events, the Ba'th was forced to maintain a purely defensive strategy less effective than Nāṣir's propaganda in that it had no control of the mass media. Consequently, ideological premises such as unity remained pretty much the same as they were prior to the union because they did not have to be accommodated to a new policy as it was the

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[167] Ḥūrānī and Bīṭār signed the Secession Manifest, but although Bīṭār later repudiated his action, this caused a faction led by Sāmī al-Ṣūfān to leave the Ba'th in protest and form the Socialist Unity Movement. Kerr, op. cit., pp. 48-49 and 61.

case in Cairo.[168]

Unity as a theoretical premise had been from the start an inherent element of the Ba'th's political solutions; the party was instrumental in speeding up social and political synthesis in the Fertile Crescent by mobilizing the masses for nationalism, socialism and unity, a process that lasted for over a decade. But, like Nāṣir, the Ba'th failed to produce a comprehensive system to carry out those premises.

Syria's internal disarray and the Ba'th's craving for power was as great in 1963 as it had been in 1958. The party's position was no less precarious in that it had been seriously weakened by its forced absence from active politics and the defection of a sizable number of its members as well as the transformation of the upper echelons of the Syrian army, which no longer accorded the Ba'th the role of a senior party.

Furthermore, the ban on political parties had precluded any unity of action among civilian politicians tending to prevent the ensconcement of the military in power. As for the army, despite its chronic involvement in politics it was unable to provide a stabilizing influence because of its periodic struggles and purges which in the long run inhibited the creation of a durable governing elite. This was partial-

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168 Aflaq's definition of unity as "a revolutionary struggle independent of political and governmental negotiations and agreements (which) must be undertaken by the people in order to acquire substance," stands in contradiction with any attempt at unity through the formal channels the Ba'th usually chose.( Fī Sabīl al-Ba'th, pp. 172-74).

ly corrected with the creation of the "Military Committee" (Tanẓīm 'Askarī), a secret organization supposedly modelled on the Ba'th's principles and ultimately designed to turn the army into "a defender of the party's thought." The Committee had jurisdiction over all military matters and was responsible for passing those decisions to the National Command of the Revolutionary Council for legal implementation.[169]

The Committee had obviously very definite schemes and goals whose aim was to institutionalize its control of the army, and by extension, of Syria, but was keenly aware that the opportunity had not yet arrived for it to act in an uncontested manner; therefore, a junior partner had to be chosen. The cabal maintained itself in touch with 'Aflaq and the Quṭriyūn, but despite its dislike for the Ba'thist leader chose him on accout of his prestige, long standing in Syrian politics and most important perhaps, because of 'Aflaq's presumed "influence" in Baghdad via Sa'dī.[170]

Although the party was yet to be re-organized, 'Aflaq accepted the Committee's offer; the Ba'th was thus confronted with a dangerous and explosive system of indirect rule exerted through military cliques which increasingly demanded greater participation. 'Aflaq was aware that this party was superior in organizational power and prestige to all the unionist groups included in the cabinet and could therefore

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[169] Rabinovich, Syria under the Ba'th, p. 57.

[170] Since nothing definite is known about the pre-coup arrangements, it is impossible to determine whether these negotiations preceded or followed the coup.

dominate the new regime by means of the best run civilian and military faction, plus the support and cooperation of the 'Arif regime in Iraq. He was not blind, however, to the pitfalls involved in his unequal association with the military: army support for the Ba'th was tenuous, the party could not rely on a solid and sizable electorate either in Syria or Iraq, and last, but not least, the Ba'th would ultimately be the responsible party in drawing a positive policy vis-à-vis Egypt and was likely to bear the brunt of defeat should that policy fail.[171]

Yet, 'Aflaq could not pass the offer over for fear that other party might accept and force the Ba'th into obscurity. His behaviour is understandable, specially when it is considered that an opportunity for an enlarged union was at hand, and that the party still viewed itself as the ideological mentor and unionist champion of the Arab world. What is not clear is the position of the Committee, for it is alleged that its members were not inclined to participate in the unity talks that were to take place in mid-March.[172] Neither is it clear how many of the ten officers included in the National Council were members of the secret cabal, for they seemed to represent three different trends in the dominant military group: Lu'ay al-Atāsī, Ziyād al-Ḥarīrī,

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[171] Kerr, op. cit., pp. 59-61 and Rabinovich, op. cit., p. 50.

[172] Rabinovich, op. cit., p. 61.

Ghassān Ḥaddād and Fahd al-Shā'ir belonged to the "independent progressive wing"; Muḥammad 'Umrān, Ṣalāḥ Ijdīd[+] and Major Mūsā Zu'bī represented the Ba'th; Muḥammad al-Ṣūfī, Rāshid Quṭaynī and Fawwāz Muḥārib represented the Nasirites.[173]

Whatever the odds, the Ba'th made once again Arab unity a top priority. The inclusion of Iraq was a deliberate move to reinforce the party's bargaining position vis-à-vis Nāṣir and at the same time conciliate him. But far from allaying the President's misgivings about the Ba'th the inclusion of Iraq increased them, for he feared being crushed between the "hammer and the anvil,"--to use his own expression--that is, the Syrian and the Iraqi Ba'th.

Unity with Iraq seemed at first more feasible but was in practice more elusive. A long, outstanding record of mutual distrust and animosity based on a traditional geopolitical struggle centred on Syria divided Cairo and Baghdad. Even under the sway of the Ba'th few Iraqis were tempted by the possibility of a total merger with Egypt; the Nasirist faction advocated full union with Egypt, but it was a minority. The new strong man, 'Abd al-Salām Muḥammad 'Arif

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[+]Local pronunciation for "Jadīd."

[173]Major-General Ḥarīrī had no party connexions and was reputedly the leader of the Syrian coup. With the exception of Ijdīd and Zu'bī, all the members of the NCRC participated in the Unity Talks. Key positions were held by Ṣūfī (Defence) and Quṭaynī (Deputy Supreme Commander), thus giving the Nasirists a distinctive presence in the army's supreme command. See Kerr, op. cit., p. 58, Rabinovich, op. cit., pp. 52 and 54 and Mahādir, pp. 7, 51 and 129.

simply paid lip service to unity while keeping a close watch on pro-Nāṣir officers who attempted to overthrow his regime on at least three occasions.[174]

It is possible that the Iraqi majority favoured a loose federation drawn more or less on the lines suggested by 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Bazzāz, i.e., a federation with an international personality but composed of autonomous, regional states.[175] Unfortunately, this policy was not brought to the fore during the Cairo meetings as the platform for the new ruling junta; instead, the Iraqi delegation mutely accepted the notion of Arab unity as presented by the Ba'th and President Nāṣir.

Thus, the quest for Arab unity was renewed in Cairo not because it had been the seat of the former union, but because 'Abd al-Nāṣir remained the dominant figure in Arab politics, and both Syria and Iraq were painfully aware that no union that excluded Egypt had any chance of survival. On the other hand, given that the main actors were the same (i.e., the Ba'th, Nāṣir and the army), the conjunction of circumstances evolving from the political behaviour of each one of them was bound to reflect the same tensions, clashes, misunderstandings and miscalculations which were apparent in the former union and which, to a large extent, had been responsible for the rush and for the failure.

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[174] Hurewitz, The Military Dimension, p. 149.

[175] Al-Dawlah al-muwaḥḥadah wā'l-dawlah al-ittiḥādīya (The Federal State and the Unitary State), 2nd. edition (Cairo: Dār al-'Ilm, 1960), pp. 84-89.

The Ba'th did not seem to realize that a new process was beginning and that it had been in power scarcely a week, hardly enough to take domestic matters in hand, not to mention rushing into a major international operation. The inclusion of Nasirist forces within the cabinet was perhaps an expedient measure to placate Nāṣir, but politically unsound, for it undermined Ba'thist power from within by destroying any possibility of consensus and cohesiveness. The paradox repeated itself insofar as the Ba'th was concerned: it negotiated for unity not out of a position of strength but rather to counteract its own weakness vis-à-vis its political opponents.

'Aflaq seemed to entertain hopes for a successful triangular operation in which Iraq would counteract Egypt, and the political stakes involved would act as a deterrent for domestic groups to alter the status quo. But Iraq's position was not stronger. The month-old government had hastily concluded a truce with the Kurds which had not yet reestablished the peace, not to mention the mutual lack of confidence which might never be rebuilt even in the best of circumstances. The turmoil left by Qāsim could not be cleared in thirty days.

The unpreparedness of the Syrian and Iraqi regimes, Nāṣir's dogmatic rigidity and the definite difference of approach to theory and the method of implementation compounded

the problems facing unity. The fact that Arab nationalism, unity and the myth of the single Arab nation went unchallenged despite the lessons of the secession, not only tendad to complicate the problem of concrete intra-Arab relations, but also produced an ideologically-induced paralysis and a weapon for subversive propaganda among regimes. At the inception of the Cairo Talks the three actors involved had allegedly the same goal but actually pursued nothing but power. Egypt had been and continued to be a serious contender for the leadership, and the only one to have a deliberate and mature Arab policy. Most crucial was the Ba'thist motivation for unity, namely, power on its own terms. The aim was eminently a matter of practical, not ideological politics. The Cairo meetings, however, provided the basis to at least agree to disagree.

## FIRST ROUND. SECESSION: A BASIS FOR UNITY?

At the outset of the unity talks, the domestic situation of the three prospective partners was not conducive to hopeful results. As stated previously, Egypt was undergoing practical re-indoctrination socially, politically and economically; Syria was in the throes of a serious economic crisis coupled with the political uncertainties that accompanied the coup, and Iraq had the Kurdish rebellion looming

on the horizon. The rush towards union seemed, in the circumstances, premature and upsetting.

That notwithstanding, the talks were initiated on March 14 and were held in three rounds: the first (March 14-16) comprised five meetings involving the three delegations, which were entirely devoted to the analysis of the previous union. Worth noticing is the conspicuous absence of the Ba'th leaders Michel 'Aflaq and Ṣalāḥ Bīṭār as well the stand-by attitude of the Iraqi delegation.

The second round (March 19-21) consisted of five Syro-Egyptian meetings attended by 'Aflaq and Bīṭār; of special interest is the head-on confrontation between the Ba'thist leaders and Nāṣir concerning ideological questions. The third round (April 6-14) consisted of ten meetings of which the first two were devoted to settle the Syro-Egyptian ideological confrontation, and the rest dealt with the bargaining for the union with the participation of the three delegations.

First Meeting (March 14)

The failure of the previous union cast an ominous shadow on the proceedings of 1963; the theme of the secession was a constant ritornello and a source of bitterness and embarrassment for the participants. Nāṣir chose to make the former union and secession the foundation for the first round

of meetings. He put forward four basic questions before considering any sort of union with Iraq and Syria: the examination of the previous union record; the lessons to be derived therefrom; who was the real government of Syria, and with whom was he to negotiate? What were the Ba'th's views on the organization and program of a future union?

In a long exposition, Nāṣir outlined his basic position, stressing the fact that Egypt was and had always been unionist but would not bear another secession; that cordiality existed between Cairo and the new Baghdad regime but not with Syria on account of five years of "difficult relations"; that Egypt would not join Syria and would not even continue the discussions if the Ba'th ruled the country:

> In my opinion, the Ba'th turned against and joined the forces which fought the experiment of the union and which led the way to secession. . . the party attempted to influence events here in Egypt during the critical period after the secession, which I consider a crime. . . and asked for union without 'Abd al-Nāṣir . . . if the interest of the Arab nation dictates a union without Nāṣir, this can also be settled. . .[176]

The President's calculated offensive was tactically correct; his blunt attack surprised and threw his adversaries off balance, so he could renew his attack more forcefully:

> What, then, is being asked? Is it a union or a federation? Is it a real or a ritual union? Do you ask for a union to be implemented forthwith or for a union to be deferred?. . . And what is going on now in Syria...a revolution or a coup d'état? Who rules, the army or the cabinet? Is the government in Ba'thist or nationalist hands?[177]

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[176] Mahādir, pp. 9/2,3 and 10/1.

[177] Ibid., p. 10/1.

The above questions were partially answered; had frankness prevailed, the talks would have been called off. The responsibility for the secession was pinned onto "racialism" and "rightist reaction" by Rāshid Quṭaynī who also assured Nāṣir that within the army "contacts had been made to stem the secessionist tide," that the present Revolutionary Council "was formed by all elements who had jointly carried the revolution," and that the Council had declared from the beginning that the army had no interest in power.[178] He added that "a trustworthy personality" headed the cabinet (Bīṭār), that strong measures had been taken to eliminate "non-Arab nationalist elements" from the army, and that "there was an urgent desire not to carry on prolonged discussions in order to avoid postponing the union."[179] Finally, he gave an inaccurate answer to Nāṣir's key question:

> As for the President's question, "Who rules Syria?" the answer is that it is a temporary central committee of the State Council which deals with political guidance and general planning. This committee met yesterday and decided to initiate talks--not negotiations--with you concerning a federal union. . . . I speak on behalf of the Headquarters and the army, in the hope that a committee may be appointed immediately to lay down the basis on which these countries may be united for a thousand years.[180]

Ḥarīrī, in turn, conceded that the secessionist coup led by Nahlāwī was "treacherous" and that "reaction" had held power but stressed the decisive role of the army on the March

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[178] Muḥādir, p. 11/1; my italics.

[179] Ibid.

[180] Ibid., p. 11/2.

28 counter coup and the march towards union, which was a "matter of life and death." Ṭālib Shabīb, of the Iraqi delegation, pointed to Communism, Kurdish racialism and sectarian divisiveness as the culprits in opposing union with Egypt. Yet, he truthfully mentioned that Iraq and Egypt had very often been set at odds with one another "in the fulfillment of an old imperialist scheme." [181]

Nihād al-Qāsim dismissed as unimportant the only true basis for unity, i.e., public support, stating that "the emotions of the people were not essential" although "one should take them into consideration"; he also dismissed internal and regional problems which, in his opinion, should not delay the union because "public opinion would not tolerate it." [182] This paradoxical behaviour was shared by civilian and military politicians alike: the masses were the excuse and the basis for slogans, but were dismissed as a party in the making of political decisions which certainly affected them.

Nāṣir insisted on getting answers to his questions and finding out the extent and characteristics of Ba'thist rule. After playfully stating that they were "all suffering from a complex about unity" because of "too much talk about it," Nāṣir decided to review all the circumstances involved in the past experiment "not to settle accounts" but in order to understand and draw a benefit therefrom." [183]

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[181] Mahāḍir, p. 11/2,3.

[182] Ibid., p. 11/3.

[183] Ibid., p. 12/1.

The President pointed to four major questions which in his opinion, caused the union to founder: the exploitation of regionalism which first appeared with the Ba'th; the rivalry between Syrian and Egyptian officers because of the latter's "airs of superiority"; the resignation of the Ba'th cabinet members which constituted a premeditated act of sabotage (though he later conceded it had been a mistake just as much as his own hasty acceptance of it); and the disruptive factor created by the chronic factionalism of the Syrian army which had been "inherited" by the U.A.R.[184]

Despite Quṭaynī's avowal to the contrary, Nāṣir reaffirmed that the Syrian army was still run by cliques, but declined to comment on the obvious fact it was the army which had declared and carried out secession, nor did he attribute it importance: "At any rate, what is relevant is the controversy between the Ba'th and the U.A.R.; the strain started because of the decay of the party..."[185] Almost as an afterthought, Nāṣir said that he would refer the matter (i.e. the proposal for union) to the Presidential Council before he could give a full reply, because "he had not known the purpose of the Syrian and Iraqi delegations beforehand." Thus, he stalled for time and at the same time stressed the patron-client relationship which the talks should observe.[186]

Nāṣir shifted again his line of attack. He proceeded to desultorily question the Ba'th's stand on unity, freedom,

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[184] Mahāḍir, p. 12/1,2.

[185] Ibid., p. 12/2.

[186] Ibid., p. 12/2.

socialism, etc., and finally blurted out that inwardly everybody was searching for a federation while talking of "total union"; to his renewed question of whether the Syrian Government was Ba'thist or not, both Ziyād al-Ḥarīrī and Nihād al-Qāsim avowed it was a national coalition, but 'Abd al-Karīm Zuhūr revealed that although the government was not Ba'thist, the Ba'th was "a partner along with other nationalist elements from both civilian and military alignments."[187] Nāṣir reiterated his stand vis-à-vis the Ba'th:

> For the second time I state clearly that if the Syrian government is Ba'thist, I am not prepared to discuss unity anew with them, for I consider them [responsible] for having caused the disruption of the union in 1958. But if the government is a national one. . . then I am ready for discussion. . . on the basis of the study of the previous union.[188]

The question at the base of the President's most overriding suspicion was introduced thereafter:

> Is the idea behind the tripartite union to counterbalance the U.A.R. by Iraq--as the Ba'th used to say--so that Egyptian dictatorship may not occur? Are these political manoeuvres? Is the purpose [of the union] a party manoeuvre, two Ba'thist voices against the Egyptian one?[189]

'Abd al-Ḥalīm Suwaydān and Zuhūr denied such a possibility, but only Zuhūr expounded boldly and clearly the Syrian Ba'thist position while making in the way all sorts of denunciations against the many shortcomings of the previous union both on political and economic matters. He reminded

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[187] Maḥāḍir, p. 12/2,3.

[188] Ibid., p. 12/3.

[189] Ibid.

Nāṣir of the indifferent handling of complaints by 'Abd al-Ḥakīm 'Amr during the union, as well as the secondary position of all Ba'thists within the government. He aptly pointed out the inadequacy of the National Union to fill the political vacuum left by the abolished parties, and went on to defend his party's ideology:

> . . . The concepts of socialism, freedom and unity are essentially Arab, and therefore, Syrian. . . The party is proud that these slogans which appeared fifteen years ago, are now the slogans of the Arab nation. . .[190]

In the course of his exposition, Zuhūr decried parliamentary democracy as a "bourgeois democracy where votes are usually bought," but nonetheless declined to unconditionally endorse the Socialist Union and the Egyptian system; he stated that the reorganization of the Socialist Union, rather than the Charter, was the important question: "We are looking forward to seeing the results of this experiment whose source is popular democracy." In the same frank vein, Zuhūr conceded that socialism had really been tested only in Egypt and that it served as a model for the Arab states, but he rejected the way it was implemented in Syria during the union. In his opinion, the previous union model and Egyptian socialism were unsuitable for Syria. He went on to request the adoption of a federation with special committees designed to study the peculiarities of each country in order to "avert any collision among partners."[191]

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[190] Mabādir, p. 13/1

[191] Ibid.

Nāṣir agreed that there had been a political vacuum, that it had been essential to unite all parties and national factions and that the previous union had been premature. On the question of leadership, the President argued that he had consulted Akram Ḥūrānī, in his capacity as representative of the Ba'th, regarding all ministerial appointments and the make-up of the cabinet as a whole, and that despite the fact that the Ba'th had been "a mere party to a ministerial coalition," and therefore "did not represent the government of Syria." He added that no law or recommendation had been approved in Egypt before the Syrian Executive Council had done so (supposedly power was vested in the Syrian Council because at the time there was no central government); given the power arrangement of the union, that argument was meaningless.

As for disbanding the political parties, Nāṣir claimed that such an action had been decided upon by the Syrian officers who had proposed the union to him, and that when the plans for the National Union had been discussed, the officers and Ḥūrānī were present and neither had voiced any objection.[192]

Nihād al-Qāsim retorted: "I heard that al-Ḥūrānī had almost no jurisdiction, and that he was aware the President did not grant him any privileges whatsoever." Nāṣir hotly denied Qasim's remark, and, quite unnecessarily, added an elaborate explanation of the politico-administrative set-up pre-

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[192] Maḥāḍir, p. 13/2.

vailing during the previous union.

'Alī Ṣāliḥ al-Sa'dī refuted Nāṣir's arguments and stated that Ba'thist policies and goals had always been clear and that it had been the government (i.e. Egypt) who set up its information media "for the service of al-Maṭrudīnī, al-Rikābī and al-Rimāwī," all of whom were considered the President's stooges in Syria and Iraq. Sa'dī adopted a more conciliatory tone and assured Nāṣir that the orientation of the Ba'th was the same as his, and that the party, once purged of elements like Ḥūrānī, would follow his decisions. His host answered simply that when he had dealt with the Ba'thists, all had followed Ḥūrānī's leadership.[193]

The meeting ended with ineffectual motions and a final broadcast of a short statement indicating the names of the participants, and that unity had been discussed, there being no major discrepancies, and that the meeting would be resumed at noon next Monday.

Second Meeting (March 15)

President Nāṣir resumed the subject on the former union and Syria's failure to uphold it. Nihād al-Qāsim defended Syria pointing out that the entire governmental apparatus was responsible for all the mistakes and that it was unjust to choose individuals or groups as the guilty parties. Nāṣir ignored Qāsim altogether and continued to hammer on the guilt

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193 Mahādir, p. 13/2,3.

theme because it gave him a psychological advantage over the Syrians and Iraqis: it was a calculated move to test their reactions and keep them at bay with his relentless thrust and retreat action.[194]

As a result, the Syrian officers brought their grievances into the open and showed in the process their collaboration with secession owed much of its success to the apathy of most of the cadres and the connivance of the rest with the conservative groups. In a lengthy exposition, Rāshid Quṭaynī stated in detail the sundry matters which had caused friction between Syrian and Egyptian officers:

> . . .Practically everyone. . .conducted himself in the Egyptian army as another 'Abd al-Nāṣir [and] obliquely suggested to his superiors that he was sent on special missions and for specific purposes . . . This conduct created mistrust. . . The Syrian officers. . . became somewhat apathetic, so when secession took place on September 28. . . they had no incentive to oppose it. . .[195]

Nāṣir acnowledged having heard those arguments on Radio Damascus and read about them in the Syrian press as stated by Aḥmad 'Abd al-Karīm, Akram al-Ḥūrānī and Amīn al-Nāffūrī but held out and defended his mainstay idea: "Union must join political leaderships together; that is more important than a union of states."[196] That would logically imply his position as primus inter-pares, and as seen by the Ba'thists, their gradual and ultimate eclipse. There ensued a series of

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[194] Mahādir, p. 15/2.

[195] Ibid., p. 15/2,3.

[196] Ibid., pp. 15/3 and 16/1.

accusations and rebuttals dealing mainly with the grievances of the Syrian army and the abuses of Egyptian bureaucracy and secret service. Among the most remarkable disclosures was Quṭaynī's remark that Syrian army officers sent to Egypt were not given the same rank as was given to Egyptian officers in Syria, and that the group of officers who had been trusted and given the most important commands turned later to abet and lead the secession, such as 'Abd al-Karīm al-Naḥlāwī, a fact which Nāṣir himself acknowledged.[197]

Ḥarīrī referred at length to the general chaos which reigned during the transition period and after concerning the handling of administrative matters and problems affecting the Syrian military personnel in Egypt;[198] Shā'ir complemented their remarks with a pointed criticism on the lack of coordination between the two armies:

> Whenever the Syrian and Egyptian officers met to draw up or execute any plan. . . the proposals of the Syrian officers, though often valuable and logical, were opposed by the Egyptians. . . Sometimes those proposals would be approved but would then be shelved or forgotten. . . thus, time used to be wasted.[199]

Muḥārib ratified that the mistakes committed against the Syrian military corps were directly responsible for the secession, since the army retained the striking force.[200] For a group not interested in power politics, the officers were most conclusive in stressing their indispensability

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[197] Mahādir, pp. 16/1,3 and 17/1.

[198] Ibid., p. 16/1,2.

[199] Ibid., p. 17/1

[200] Ibid., p. 17/3.

as the mainstay of power and political strength which a lasting union requires.

Zuhūr was the lone civilian to raise a very important issue: the pitfalls inherent in the transplanting of Egyptian bureaucratic centralization to either Syria or Iraq, where institutions of that sort did not exist, and the negative effects of that bureaucracy on the army, the government and the public at large. He expounded on the ill-advised policy of using the secret service (which had been Sarrāj's sole domain) instead of relying on governmental institutions; his most serious accusation caused a stir:

> There was always the feeling. . .that the Egyptian government was looking about for agents. . . and was not anxious to deal with revolutionaries. . .
> . . . . . .
> However, to rely exclusively on the secret service is very dangerous. This service is. . .merely a force which aids popular organizations, and since the latter did not exist, the service became dominant. . . Little confidence was placed in the Syrians. . .[201]

Nāṣir was naturally insulted by the explicit accusation of having maintained a police state and used agents to subvert the political affairs of his former partner but dismissed the question as a mere slander "which had been used from the beginning as a means to destroy the union."[202] As he challenged Zuhūr to produce at least the name of one Egyptian agent in Syria, several were mentioned by Sa'dī, who affirmed they were paid agents: Amīn 'Iz al-Dīn, who

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[201] Mahāḍir, pp. 17/3 and 18/1.

[202] Ibid., pp. 18/3 and 19/1.

worked as an employee at the Office of Arab Affairs and had sometime served as Labour Attaché in Baghdad; Ḥaqqī Ismā'īl Ḥaqqī, expelled from the Ba'th on account of his activities; the painter Ṭūfān, who ridiculed the Ba'thists with caricatures; Fū'ād al-Rikābī, who allegedly published anti-Ba'th propaganda; and Sa'īd al-'Aryān, reputedly an agent provocateur who disseminated anti-Ba'th propaganda throughout Syria.[203]

President Nāṣir first feigned surprise and outrage, but soon counterattacked effectively. He reminded the Ba'thists that Egypt had paid considerable sums of money to the Syrian and Iraqi Ba'th--allegedly a total of 70,000 E.P. within a period of six months--which were handed to Michel 'Aflaq. Shabīb clarified that it had been Kamāl Rif'āt, who had received the money which eventually was sent to Iraq.[204]

Having made his point, Nāṣir added that Egypt had paid all political refugees--Ba'thists or not--a regular salary, but "had not asked for anything in return," because the U.A.R. considered it its national duty, being, as it was, "the base of the Arab struggle."[205] The President reiterated his regime's willingness to accept "unity of objectives" and support a national front as a step towards union: "I am eager for a nationalist-unionist regime to arise--not a nationalist-secessionist regime intent on destroying the U.A.R."[206]

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[203] Mahāḍir, p. 19/1,2 .

[204] Ibid., p. 21/2,3 .

[205] Ibid.

[206] Ibid., p. 22/1.

At the closing of the meeting, President Nāṣir managed to retain the upper hand as the "offended party" and the Ba'thists had renewed their vain attempts to mollify him.

Third Meeting (March 15)

Nāṣir asked again who ruled Syria: "What I mean is, with whom are we to negotiate? And we ask our Iraqi brothers the same question, who rules Iraq?"[207] By skilfully taunting the Iraqi and Syrian delegations, the President learned of the distribution of forces within the Ba'thist cabinet and the Revolutionary Council as well as the degree of cooperation between the two Ba'thist branches, a goal he had not reached in the previous meeting:

Nāṣir: . . . A union in which there are two Ba'thist votes to the UAR's one. . . and especially since the Ba'th, as you claim is one party. . . is. . . unfortunately, out of the question. . . union with the whole of Syria is welcome, but not with the Ba'th party.[208]

Shā'ir: . . . In a cabinet of twenty ministers where thirteen are of a different orientation, and seven are Ba'thist, the party would be in a minority. . . For us, both the Ba'th and the Arab Nationalists are nationalist parties. . . We do not make distinctions among the different /political/ elements present in Syria, for all are Arab and have an equal share in the government. . .

Nāṣir: I am sorry. . . I did not mean to offend.[209]

Shā'ir: The revolution's objectives were not laid down by civilians but by military men with civilian consent. . . When the military revolution broke out, it was not linked with any party, individual

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[207] Mahāḍir, p. 27/1.

[208] Ibid., p. 30/1.

[209] Ibid., p. 30/2.

or faction, but rather followed a purely Arab direction.[210]

Nāṣir: Those are nice words, Fahd (Shā'ir), but when you come to vote in what you call your collective leadership. . . the eleven will outvote the nine. . .[211]

Shā'ir: None of the military men are Ba'thists or belong to any party.[212]

Nāṣir: . . .I must allay my suspicions. . . If the Ba'th is in the majority in the Council. . . then it rules.

Shā'ir: This means there shall be no union with Iraq.

Nāṣir: No, I am prepared to enter a union with Iraq . . . I hope that the Iraqi delegation will take my words to apply only to the Ba'thists I dealt with in Syria during the union.

Shā'ir: Iraq, as a party, is ideologically linked with Damascus. The party's headquarters are there, and 'Aflaq is the chairman, so how can the two parties be separated?[213]

Nāṣir: I am afraid that the Syrians would set the Iraqis against us.

Shabīb: . .They can always do so outside the Council, even though they may be in a minority inside. . . If Syria unites, it must do so with all its Ba'thists, nationalists and all other nationalist elements. . .[214]

The Egyptian leader avoided committing himself with a definite answer by restating his willingness to unite with a Syrian National Front rather than the Ba'th. He continued his subtle prompting and obtained Zuhūr's candid admission of the Ba'th's internal disarray:

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[210] Mahādir, p. 30/3

[211] Nāṣir pointedly addressed everybody on a first-name basis but he was deferentially addressed as "Mr. President," or "His Excellency."

[212] Mahādir, p. 31/1; my italics.

[213] Ibid., p. 32/1

[214] Ibid., p. 32/2.

> The Ba'th in Syria is decidedly in the grip of a severe crisis. . . After the secession and because of it. . . the party fell to pieces completely . . . problems were patched up with one exception: the secessionist Ba'thists, who had no place in the party! [215]

This news rounded up the Syrian scene for Nāṣir and gave him a clearer insight into the political affairs of the Ba'th, or so he thought. Ḥarīrī expressed his confidence in the support that both civilian and military men professed the protracted union, and Sa'dī frankly remarked that the Syrian Ba'thists were more intent than their Iraqi colleagues on carrying out the union, for the Iraqis "still had doubts."[216]

Shabīb pointedly stated that Nāṣir's association with the Ba'th was in fact more secure than with Iraq because they had been partners, whereas he had dealt with the Iraqis for only two sessions. Sa'dī insisted on having Nāṣir give an answer to the proposal for a federal union drafted by Bīṭār, a proposal which, in his opinion, dealt realistically with the internal situation of the three countries, but had no satisfaction.[217] Shabīb complained in turn that the Ba'thist criticism of the U.A.R. had not been discussed because Zuhūr had not raised the point, nor had Nāṣir clarified, replied or accepted whatever was said in that regard. Nāṣir dismissed the issue with a digression on the slander campaign which had been organized against the union and concluded with

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[215] Mahādir, p. 32/3.

[216] Ibid., pp. 33/3 and 34/1.

[217] Ibid., p. 34/3.

the remark he should very much like to know the members of the Revolutionary Council to set his mind at ease.[218]

Fourth and Fifth Meetings (March 16)

Although the question concerning the nature of the Syrian government and the composition of the Revolutionary Council had apparently been settled in the previous meeting, conflicting rumours and statements had renewed Nāṣir's misgivings, so he declared he could not enter upon a union without knowing who ruled Syria.[219] The President confronted Zuhūr with his previous statement that there were seven Ba'thists in the government, but Zuhūr evasively declared that nothing had been decided yet.[220]

Likewise, the Iraqi delegates, Sa'dī and Shabīb, avowed total ignorance about the alleged seven members; Shabīb added that the Iraqi delegation did not know "even five military members of the Syrian Revolutionary Council." In other words, the future partners and fellow Ba'thists pretended to ignore their respective power set up, and would only mention the most obvious personalities such as Ḥarīrī, Atāsī, Quṭaynī, 'Aflaq and Bīṭār.[221]

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[218] Mahādir, p. 35/3.

[219] Ibid., p. 37/2.

[220] Ibid., p. 38/1.

[221] Ibid., pp. 38/3 and 39/1.

Nāṣir regarded the whole affair as a breach of confidence and Zuhūr complained that the President pounced on his remarks, an unfortunate choice of words which incensed Nāṣir and extended the matter into a heated argument. With the argument settled and sure of his position, the President took a deliberate step in announcing his proposal for a conditional union comprising two stages separated by a three- to four-month period; he proposed (a) a four-month union between Egypt and Syria clearly stating the dates on which both the first and the second stages would be completed; (b) a union between Syria and Iraq later to be joined by Egypt;[222] and (c) a union "without 'Abd al-Nāṣir."[223]

To explain his sudden acceptance of a union including the Ba'th, Nāṣir craftily stated that the party was after all "to the advantage of the nationalist cause" and that the Front to be created would at any rate unite all nationalist forces and thus would oppose any secessionist schemes. The game was Nāṣir's, for he well knew that the Ba'th and not the Front would be the dominant political body in Syria and Iraq.[224]

The President's expectations were fulfilled when all of his proposals were rejected; all parties avowed that their goal was the tripartite union, although nobody really wanted

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[222] Mabādir, p. 40/1,3

[223] Ibid., p. 41/2.

[224] Ibid., p. 40/3.

it or at least not on Nāṣir's terms, which they knew they would be compelled to accept. Yet, no one attempted an honourable exit for fear of losing face before Arab public opinion:

> Bazzāz: Mr. President. . . your proposal reflects your being influenced by given circumstances. . . it would appear before Arab public opinion. . . that you wanted a union. . . which was not extensive enough [and] which did not sufficiently take into consideration the different reactions in the countries concerned. . .
> . . . . . .
> It can be said that this policy would not encourage the pan-Arab union spirit which is the goal of the Arab nation.[225]

Shā'ir pointed out that Egypt had always been regarded as the focal point of Arab nationalism and that Nāṣir had made comprehensive Arab unity the issue of his policy and speeches; he ended his intervention with an appeal to Nāṣir to agree to a tripartite union.[226] Zuhūr added a flattering remark stating that Egypt headed a whole historical process and therefore had to take up the lead. He proposed to restore the union in a new form later to be joined by Iraq, but Nāṣir did not allow himself to be mollified. He availed himself of the opportunity to discuss the sensitive issue of his Syrian supporters. He remarked that the Ba'th had not agreed in the past or present with any unionist groups (Nasirist, of course) and therefore a new commitment on the basis of the previous union would ensure the repetition of the fiasco. This was a dialogue of the absurd, for no one expressed openly

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[225] Mahāḍir, pp. 41/3 and 42/1.

[226] Ibid., p. 42/3

his own aims but each one knew the other's true desires.

Nāṣir rejoined: "If this union can live for four months, I think it will be all right. But if the Syrian Ba'th is going to follow its old policy, then we shall clash."[227] He ended with a dubious statement:

> ". . . No agreement with the Ba'th /is possible/ . . . there may be a five, seven or perhaps twenty per cent chance of agreement among us, so let us try. . . in case of failure, no major disaster will ensue. . . If we again start sniping at each other, then we can very simply declare to the people that we could not agree and that is that. . .
>
> . . . . . .
>
> If four months pass without incident, then we can turn to our Iraqi friends and confidently ask them to join. . .[228]

The fifth meeting was of short duration (less than half an hour), and immediately followed the previous meeting to which it was a supplement. Two main issues were further discussed: the first dealt with the leadership of the Syrian Ba'th party concerning areas where ambiguity and doubt existed between the U.A.R. and the Ba'th, in an attempt "to clear the air" between them. This motion was made by Ṣāliḥ al-Sa'dī, Vice-Premier and Minister of the Interior of Iraq, and was recorded in the minutes of the fourth meeting.

The second point dealt with the necessity for the delegations to return to their respective countries to discuss the progress of the talks at that particular stage. Finally, President Nāṣir introduced the draft of a statement to set

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[227] Mahādir, p. 44/1.

[228] Ibid., p. 45/3.

the date for the next meeting which would open a new stage after formally closing the first round of talks.

## IV. THE DISAGGREGATION OF FORCES

### SECOND ROUND. HAMMER AND ANVIL POLITICS

The previous meetings had made it abundantly clear that the rift between the Ba'th and President Nāṣir could not be bridged; the secession represented more than a political blunder a personal insult to Nāṣir, who, instead of conciliation used self-righteousness to deal with the Ba'thists. The second round was mostly devoted to the thrashing of past and most recent grievances between the old partners. The 1958 union and the secession were once more analyzed and guilt was variously allotted among individuals and dissident groups no longer associated with the Ba'th.

The main questions under discussion were: Egypt's revised ideology and implementation of domestic policy (meetings 1, 4 and 5); collective leadership and mass political organizations (meetings 1-5); and political and constitutional unity vis-à-vis intra-party relationships (meetings 4 and 5).

First Meeting (March 19)

The discussion of the 1958 union and its shortcomings entailed the analysis of the National Union and its inadequacy as a popular base for the union. This enabled Nāṣir to introduce his new tactical slogan of "unity of ob-

jectives" as opposed to his previous "unity of ranks." In glossing over the past experience, he even admitted his mistake in abolishing all political parties instead of disbanding "only those which differed from the ruling revolutionary vanguard."[229] This was a platitude, for the remaining parties were all reactionary and conservative, the Communist and the Ba'th parties being the only ones fitting into the "revolutionary" category.

The second distinction made by the President was between union as a result of political action (as in 1958) and union as a revolution. He stressed the fact that he had insisted on a federation but had been forced to accept total union; the opposite was the truth, but Bīṭār did not argue the point. Nāṣir described the former union as "a salvage operation," in that "the warring groups were ready to fly at each other; the government, which included men mutually antagonistic, had had no unity of aims among its members" so it was left to Egypt to rescue Syria from its own politicians.[230]

The third consideration stated by Nāṣir was the necessity of settling all differences in order to have common objectives; to that end, he recommended restraint from "unearthing incidents and allotting blame," something he had been performing since the opening of the talks. He refused

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[229] Mabādir, p. 54/3

[230] Ibid.

to rush into a quick union and introduced a fourth condition, namely, the unification of political activity and leadership prior to union.[231]

Michel 'Aflaq's intervention was half-hearted; instead of advancing his views on collective leadership, he reminisced about the union in an effort to justify his party's actions:

> . . . Our resignation. . .was meant to be a warning both to the people and to the government. . . the dangers we saw were very real and we chose to resign in order to draw attention to them in no uncertain manner. . . As for our contacts with Egyptian ministers and army officers. . . I hoped that they would also resign in sympathy with the Ba'thists. . . this was in October or November of 1959 . . .from our resignation till the secession, a period of nine months, we were subjected to a barrage of slander, insults and persecution. .

Nāṣir: By whom?

'Aflaq: By certain organs.

Nāṣir: But this slogan about "organs" was your own invention. . .[232]

While the unity talks were in progress, the activities of the Ba'th in the home fronts were aimed at suppressing all rival unionist groups inspired or supposedly paid by Nāṣir himself. This was a natural and essential goal for the establishment of the party's supremacy in Syria and Iraq, but in the face of the negotiations it was hardly conducive towards union. 'Aflaq's justification of past policy was a roundabout way to express his concern and the party's

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[231] Maḥāḍir, p. 59/2.

[232] Ibid., p. 60/1,2,3.

vis-à-vis Egyptian centralization. Al-Atāsī availed himself of the opportunity to remark that "history may repeat itself," and added that "rumours, insidious transactions and furtive campaigns" had been and were responsible for the clash among unionist groups, the Ba'th being excluded. Nāṣir warned that "any setback or destruction of the status quo" would lead to the wrecking of the union, but Atāsī justified the repression of Nasirist groups on the grounds that they were not serving the true aim of the revolution, namely, the tripartite union:

> Thus, when demonstrations break out carrying Your Excellency's pictures and the flags of the U.A.R.. . .their action in effect is contrary to the slogan of the revolution which is tripartite union. . . On that account, I was forced, having permitted such demonstrations for three . . .or four days, to forbid them. . . on the grounds that they would lead to confusion in our ranks and to our ultimate ruin. . .[233]

Nāṣir diplomatically accepted the move as an expedient measure dictated by the transitional stage, and thereafter embarked on an academic discussion with Atāsī on whether the unionist demonstrations were spontaneous or as Atāsī avowed, "engineered" by a single individual by the name of Yusuf Mazāḥim (presumably under Egyptian pay).[234]

Bīṭār and Shā'ir vicariously defended the sincerity of their unionist endeavours, and Atāsī ratified those vows with his statement:

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[233] Maḥāḍir, p. 63/2,3.

[234] Ibid., pp. 63/2,3 and 64/3.

> . . . There are certain people who, for personal benefit, exploit Your Excellency's name. . .
> . . . . . .
> Our slogan before the 14th Ramaḍān revolution was the restoration of the U.A.R. and our organization was oriented accordingly. But the 14th . . . brought a new factor, Iraq. . . which also appeared ready. . . to join the union. . . and complement it to form a new Arab state. . . that would constitute the nucleus for a greater union . . . this is our objective.[235]

Bīṭār undertook the defense of the party's line that the road to unity was federation, not union, on the grounds that federation did not mean the isolation of Syria from the U.A.R., but rather "the restoration of the union by the people" and not "through a coup" which would simply revive the old union.[236] He argued that the opposition of the Arab Nationalist Movement (referred to as Qawmīyīn), and in particular of Nihād al-Qāsim and 'Abd al-Wahhāb Ḥmūd* to the tripartite union scheme was based on the fear that it might constitute a purely Ba'thist move, and the fact that some groups thought that Iraq was not yet ready to join the union, and therefore, the delay was not warranted.[237] The general premise of the Ba'th was voiced by Shā'ir: the tripartite union was but the beginning of the future Arab nation, in itself the major goal of the party.[238]

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235 Mahādir, p. 65/3

236 Ibid., p. 66/1.

* Local pronunciation for "Ḥammūd."

237 Mahādir, p. 67/1.

238 Ibid., p. 71/3.

Second Meeting (March 19)

During this meeting, Bīṭār continued the defense of his party's policies. He claimed that the previous union had failed because of a "conspiracy of criticism which had had two objectives: the destruction of the ideological basis of the union so that it would be impossible to restore it, and the justification of the tactics for such a campaign." This campaign had supposedly been conducted with "the backing of big money, Arab reactionaries, imperialism and Communism."[239]

In what amounted to a plea for toleration, Bīṭār recognized that the Ba'thists had "passed through some painful days during the union," and had indeed clashed with Nāṣir. Nonetheless, he stressed the fact that the party did not deserve the treatment it received, that "any blow against the Ba'th had been a blow against the union itself," that the party had spurned any participation with the seccesionist government, and that since revolutionary potential and ideology existed in Syria, both could have been developed and government could have been organized on those lines.[240]

Nāṣir quickly retorted that no Ba'thist had ever proposed before the union to have the progressive parties or groups play a role in it. His reminiscences about the union

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[239] Mahādir, p. 71/3

[240] Ibid., p. 72/2

underlined the flimsy basis on which it had been built:

> . . . You knew more about Syria than I. . . I did not know everybody. The first time I visited Syria was after the union. . . and then you surmised at first that I and Akram Ḥūrānī were conniving--and this I came to know later-- . . . but no one voiced his opinion. . . frankness never existed between you and me. . . In the course of ten days we were driven into a union; the army officers came on the 15 of January and you followed on the 16. . . on the 1st. February we issued the proclamation . . . followed by the plebiscite. Has a union ever been fashioned with such characteristics and in the midst of such circumstances? [241]

Bīṭār alleged that the President had always paid more attention to individuals than to the party, but Nāṣir reminded him that the understanding had always been to have the party dissolved, a fact which both 'Aflaq and Bīṭār had often ratified.[242] Whence the Ba'thist explanation:

Bīṭār: We wanted to form a new party, Your Excellency.

Nāṣir: That is an entirely different matter. . . you did not mention it. . . Are you asking me to look into a crystal ball to find out what is going on in your mind?!! [243]

Bīṭār maintained that the foundation for the new party had actually been laid out, and that he and 'Aflaq had pleaded with Nāṣir to form a unified leadership. Nāṣir retorted that most of his past dealings with the Ba'th had been through Ḥūrānī and Bīṭār, who at the time used to speak ill of each other to such an extent that Nāṣir had asked himself "How can I trust a party whose leaders' opinions of each

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[241] Maḥāḍir, p. 73/2.

[242] Ibid., pp. 73/2 and 74/1.

[243] Ibid.

other are so low?"

Bīṭār: Your Excellency could have foreseen what was to come. . .

Nāṣir: Am I a prophet to foresee?. . . when the party's leadership was such. . . one could deduce it was filled with plots and counterplots. . .
. . . . . .
I imagined that the party was undergoing such a crisis that you yourselves wanted its dissolution.[244]

Bīṭār argued--accurately--that if the intelligentsia of the two countries had coalesced within the National Union, the unification of leadership and the merging of the "bases" (population) might have taken place. Nāṣir ridiculed this contention remarking that it would have been impossible to achieve that goal had they applied Bīṭār's proposals, which had stipulated the formation of a secret political committee with absolute powers.[245]

The implementation of Ba'thist policy was bound to undermine the basis of the union for, given the nature of the U.A.R.'s government, the party's interests ran counter to Nāṣir's aims. This was exemplified by 'Aflaq's recollection concerning the list of candidates handed by the Ba'th for the National Union, out of which some should be selectioned. The list was rejected allegedly because it attempted to give the cabinet "a Ba'thist colouring" and "provoke the other parties." Nāṣir admitted it was he who had made that charge,

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[244] Mahāḍir, p. 74/1,2.

[245] The committee was to be formed by Bīṭār, 'Aflaq and Ḥūrānī plus three Egyptians, including President Nāṣir. Ibid., p. 74/3.

and that Aḥmad 'Abd al-Karīm and 'Abd al-Ḥamīd Sarrāj, when asked for their opinion, had recommended "shelving the Ba'thists."[246]

The discussions drifted to the intrigues, counter-intrigues and sundry political moves which occurred immediately after the secession, until Nāṣir suggested to "leave the past and begin anew on the basis of trust and unity of objectives."[247] Leadership was inconclusively discussed; nothing was resolved, and most of the proposals went unheeded. At the closing of this meeting, Nāṣir urged the solution of several standing questions to further insure a protracted union: (a) the Ba'th's relationship with other nationalist groups; (b) political freedom; and (c) socialism. The latter was particularly important for Nāṣir, who was wary of Syrian capitalists and did not want union with a non-socialist country.[248]

The discussion of socialism opened the door to the reappraisal of Ba'thist ideology in the third meeting of these series.

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[246] Maḥāḍir, p. 76/1

[247] Ibid., pp. 76/2,3, 78/1,2 and 80/2.

[248] Ibid., pp. 81/2,3, 82/3 and 83/2,3.

Third Meeting (March 19)

Discussion was resumed on socialism, the canceling out of feudalist and reactionary elements, and unified leadership. The demand to have socialism implemented as a precondition for unity was not merely academic. If carried out, it would indeed upset the internal economic and political set up. The mass sequestration of property carried out by Nāṣir in 1961 proved detrimental to the peculiar needs and system of Syria and therefore had no popular backing. Neither could the Ba'th do away with capitalist and reactionary elements because many a landowner was in turn a seasoned politician and even a member of the party. But the unification of leadership posed the most dangerous challenge: it both suggested the hegemony of Nāṣir plus his followers in Syria and Iraq, and the renewed submission or disappearance of the Ba'th from the active political forum.[249]

Nāṣir proposed some variations on the previous union theme:

> . . . In order to merge them (Ba'thist Fronts of Syria, Iraq and the Socialist Union of Egypt) into one political movement, we must first set up a unified leadership and create a certain measure of cohesion and ideological unity among them. . . what about the other nationalist parties in Syria and Iraq? We must first create a front, then a unified political command to lead the state. . . then set up a central committee to direct affairs instead of central committees in the various states. . .[250]

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[249] Mahādir, pp. 88/1,2 and 89/1.

[250] Ibid., p. 92/2.

'Amr dutifully agreed on the necessity of unifying the leaderships of the three countries prior to the creation of a military command, and Nāṣir later rejoined him stating it was really a matter of ethics as any of the parties or movements might work to undermine the protracted union to safeguard its own stand.[251] Thus saying, Nāṣir questioned the alleged supremacy of the Ba'th as the sole representative of Syria and demanded that all nationalist elements merged within the Front in order to achieve "proper representation."[252]

The President juggled with arguments and dead-end proposals instead of putting forward his own terms. His aim was to exert cummulative pressure on the Ba'thist leaders to finally break their resistance and force them to mollify him. He presented his alternatives in such a manner that Bīṭār and 'Aflaq were constrained to show their hand before they could even bluff or bet on a given possibility. Thus Bīṭār:

> Let us suppose we create a national front in Syria and the members of this front clash with each other --this has happened already in Iraq where our party withdrew from the coalition--what next?

Nāṣir: If your party withdraws from the front, . . we in Egypt would still support the front. . . It is with this front of yours that we shall come to an agreement. . . and it is my opinion that we should merge politically in order to avoid secession. . . This means that the federal state would have one unified command in which everyone would be associated. . . If one group defies the front it would automatically be defying everyone. Now the question is, can all the unionist forces merge into one body?[253]

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[251] Maḥāḍir, pp. 92/2 and 93/2.

[252] Ibid., p. 93/3.

[253] Ibid., pp. 93/3 and 94/1.

Bīṭār: This is essential, since they must.

Nāṣir: . . . I am speaking now after having eradicated all my doubts. . . and all elements of mistrust. . . with the understanding that we are beginning a new chapter in our relations.[254]

The discussion of leadership and unity entailed the question of freedom concerning the possibility of having political parties function. This was a vital question, for it involved the true cause of dissension, namely, power. Nāṣir availed himself of the opportunity to dismiss Ba'thist ideology, charging that its only explicit objective was unity, and that freedom, democracy and socialism were just theoretical premises yet to be put into practice.[255]

Ḥusayn re-stated the question of the alleged differences which were said to divide the U.A.R. and the Ba'th politically, but he received a muddled response from the Ba'thist leaders:

Ḥusayn: . . . I would like to. . . find out what these differences are in order that our ideologies may be harmonized.

'Aflaq: In popular organization the differences I think would be. . .

Bīṭār: In social organization. . .

Nāṣir: In connection with that point I have already indicated that the government must not be run solely according to popular demands. . . If so, it might appear that the leadership has lost ist revolutionarism.. [256]

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[254] Mabādir, p. 94/1.

[255] Ibid., p. 94/3.

[256] Ibid., p. 96/2,3; my italics.

'Aflaq: I do not mean popular demands. . . What I mean is: should the revolution. . . be the result of popular organization or the other way around?

'Aflaq also stressed the twenty-year experience of his party during which the Ba'th had maintained a close relationship with the masses and had exercised democracy and free discussion. Nāṣir's answer was playfully scornful:

> Dear me, Michel, I wish you would alter some of the impressions you have and not believe all the pronouncements of the Ba'th (laughter). . . The task of government is not run on the basis of giving orders and having the people follow them as you surmise. Even in our beginnings we had popular bases. . . eleven years later these still remain, along with free discussion on socialism, for example; you. . . have never freely discussed socialism or freedom . . . and the proof is that your conception of socialism is not clear.

'Aflaq: We have not yet arrived at the stage of implementation. . [257]

Satisfied with that avowal, the President further underlined the contrast between the Ba'th and the U.A.R.:

> . . . We have arrived at a stage which has not been attained by any political party in the Arab world or anywhere in the Middle East. You have not yet reached this stage of discussion and implementation, of trial and error. In ten years, we have moved from theory to practice. . .[258]

The talks continued on general matters concerning administrative problems, questions of governmental procedure, decision making, and ended shortly with Nāṣir's injunction to meet at one o'clock the following day.[259]

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[257] Mahādir, p. 96/3.

[258] Ibid.

[259] Ibid., pp. 97-98.

Fourth Meeting (March 20)

The discussion was concerned primarily with practical examples of Egypt's implementation of domestic policy. Nāsir continued to give oversimplified definitions of democracy, socialism, etc., which the Ba'thists merely acknowledged or refuted ineffectually:

Aṭāsī: . . . Yesterday we finished the discussion . . . on the political organization. . . and the form it will have in future. . . trusting that basis we must round up /everything/. . . Is there still something we have not discussed?

Nāṣir: . . . The delimitations and definition of socialism. . . of freedom also. . . freedom from feudalism is one thing. . . and freedom from reaction, another. . . and /freedom/ concerning socialism is an altogether different thing. . .[260]

'Aflaq: . . . By freedom, do you mean democracy or liberation?

Nāṣir: As we understand it and as it is found in the Charter, . . . freedom means a free country and a free citizen. . . Socialism implies sufficiency and justice. . . unity is a popular, historical and true will, and the Charter devotes a whole chapter to constitutional unity an all its forms. The socialist path is defined, beginning with internal trade and ending with the popular control over the means of production. . . with reference /in the process/ to agriculture. . . the private and the public sector. All national activity is defined in the Charter.[261]

'Aflaq: The slogan of the Arab Nationalists is Unity.. Liberation and Socialism. . . But /for them/ freedom means liberation.

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260 Mahādir, p. 101/1,2.

261 Ibid., p. 101/2,3.

Nāṣir: Certainly, for we have to liberate ourselves from the domination of feudalism and capitalism.

'Aflaq: No. . . liberation there means freedom from imperialism.

Nāṣir: In 1952, we had six principles: the destruction of imperialism, of exploitation and domination of capital, the creation of social justice, of a strong army and the establishment of a proper democratic life. . . freedom of the individual. . . entails total freedom for the people. . . in order to buttress this freedom, we spoke of self-criticism. . . freedom of the press and of all popular organizations. . . we linked the election with the loaf of bread: in other words, socialism is a prerequisite of freedom. We also advocated that democracy, socialism and freedom be inter-dependent.[262]

'Aflaq: You do not lack a definition of democracy and socialism, but. . . sometimes, socialism . . . has taken the place of democracy.

Nāṣir: Have you read the Charter?

'Aflaq: Yes.

Nāṣir: Then it seems that you were reading one line and skipping the next. . . Our revolution was the first to call for social democracy, for without it, political democracy is inconceivable. . . socialism was necessary for democracy in order to avoid exploitation. . .

'Aflaq: Yes, indeed democracy. . . without socialism . . . is a fake.[263]

The Egyptian leader went on describing in detail the implementation of socialism in trade and industry, as well as the coordination of political activity in trade unions and factories by means of committees attached to the Social-

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262 Mabādir, p. 101/3

263 Ibid., pp. 101/3 and 102/1.

ist Union. As he elaborated on the subject, Nāṣir pointed out the uniqueness of the Egyptian experiment vis-à-vis the Yugoslav, Russian, Chinese, Algerian and Indian systems.[264] He gradually brought the discussion to dwell on the "Syrian experiment" which he knew existed only on paper, in an effort to sound the Ba'th's socialist policies and embarrass Bīṭār and 'Aflaq at the same time:

> Nāṣir (addressing 'Aflaq): . . . It seems that your impression of our experiment is very inaccurate; one of you said yesterday that our experiment "could be termed socialist". . . it is in fact socialist and built upon a revolution which has destroyed the alliance of feudalism and capitalism, and has given all power to the people. . . Do not forget that your present slogan "No Socialism without Socialists" is the one we launched in 1961, just before the July 1961 socialist decrees.[265]
>
> Bīṭār: No. Socialism. . . is to be protected by socialists. . . What we want to arrive at is government by the people.
>
> Nāṣir: Fine. We are ready to have immediate elections and have the people rule. . . But what do you mean by the "people"? . . .
>
> 'Aflaq: The workers, of course.
>
> Nāṣir: Who else?
>
> 'Aflaq: The working people, I mean the peasant and workers who are in the party.
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> Nāṣir: Do you conceive that government by the people--even if you have elections--means three or four persons sitting in a room and making decisions? You are mistaken, for then you would have isolated the entire population and ruled as a tiny minority.[266]

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[265] Mahāḍir, p. 103/1,2.

[266] Ibid., p. 103/2.

The discussion of Syria's economic policies gave the Egyptians the opportunity to denounce the subservience of politics to economic interests:

Nāṣir: Indeed political stability can never come about in Syria unless all banks and insurance companies are nationalized. . . Otherwise, capitalism will be ruling in Syria. . . and your government shall be a façade. . .

'Amr: We believe that Syria is ruled by big business.

Nāṣir: . . . Political stability can only be /attained/ by making the banks serve the people's interests. . .

. . . . . .

The banks must not be controlled by reaction . . . otherwise, your socialism will be meaningless. . .[267]

Atāsī: Quite correct, Mr. President, but. . . a hasty measure like the one you suggest affecting all the banks. . . entails complications . . . we have obligations and commitments, etc.

BIṭār: . . . Political stability cannot be divorced, as the President maintains, from the power of capitalism. . . or capitalists. The curtailment of their power must be very gradual. . . as for the banks. . . I do not see any possibility.

Atāsī: I meant that Decree No. 117 would be immediately implemented.

'Aflaq: No. . . there is no urgency about it.[268]

'Aflaq claimed that the economy had to go through two stages: "Arabization" and "nationalization," but when 'Amr remarked that the first stage had already been reached, BIṭār candidly admitted Syria had "gone back on Arabization," and

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[267] Mahādir, p. 104/2,3.

[268] Ibid., p. 104/3.

that the only successful case had been the nationalization of the "Bank of Syria" whose head office was in Paris. He said that the other banks ("Intra" and "Arab Nation") were Arab in name only, and therefore, could not be "Arabized." Nāṣir repeated that the two stages had been implemented under the previous union, but Bīṭār and Atāsī did not pursue the subject; they merely stated that "the decrees were well known, as they all came at a certain period."[269]

The discussion shifted to the problem of regional jurisdiction in relation to the federal government. Bīṭār opted for a strong, central administration which, however, should be implemented gradually. He added that regional differences and the previous experience, along with the psychological susceptibilities resulting from it, should also be considered. With his last suggestion that the armies remained autonomous, he introduced an irreconcilable factor.[270]

The talks continued on barren ground: the Ba'thists tried to pinpoint the jurisdiction at all levels of the central and regional administrations in an effort to restrict federal power, and the Egyptians fended off every one of these advances. This matter remained on the agenda for the next meeting.[271]

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269 Reference is made to the socialist decrees of July, 1961, which accelerated the secession from the U.A.R. Maḥāḍir, p. 104/3.

270 Ibid., p. 106/2.

271 Ibid., pp. 107/3 and 108.

Fifth Meeting (March 20)

No major achievments were registered either during this meeting. The problems of governmental jurisdiction and leadership remained a point at issue. President Nāṣir resolutely grappled with these matters; he refuted the Ba'thist charge of "Pharaonism" constantly repeated by Damascus and Baghdad radios, and stressed that it was the achievments of his government, rather than Egyptian imperialism which turned Egypt into the representative of Arabism. This was basically true, but unfortunately, Egypt's latest intervention in Yemen belied Nāṣir's sincerity.[272] Mutual distrust lent a taunting quality to the discussions:

Bīṭār: If we draw up a development plan for a certain number of years. . . in the sphere of unification and of a common nationalist ideology. . . then matters will [thereafter] proceed [satisfactorily]. . . We should begin with planning.[273]

Nāṣir: This is not an easy, but a difficult proposition. . . In the previous experiment attempts were made at dodging us. . . and you were a part to them.

'Aflaq: . . . This union is. . . historically inevitable.

Nāṣir: On the contrary, it is all hope. . . we suffered exceedingly during the union. . . but despite that, we have not lost faith.

Bīṭār: You have borne a lot. . .

Nāṣir: Certain Ba'thists maintained that the problems of union should be solved by secession. . . [perhaps] it would have been easier to say to our-

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[272] Mahādir, p. 114/1.

[273] Ibid., p. 115/1,2.

selves. . ."It is better for our peace of mind . . . our nerves and health to have two governments."

'Aflaq: The leadership bears a great responsibility . . . as the heart-beat is in Egypt.

Nāṣir: Not really, Michel. . . You ought to come here and gain experience in implementation /of policy/ so that you may be able to see matters in their true light. . . [274]

Pressed on by Nāṣir to provide "proper solutions" for the "endless problems" of Arab unity, 'Aflaq came up with a quaint answer:

The proper solution. . . lies in society. . . education. . . and love. . . the latter. . . has a direct bearing. . . on union.

Nāṣir: But all those problems take a long time to deal with in the proper fashion. . .[275]

Egged by Nāṣir's barrage of questions, 'Aflaq grew more incoherent (or so appears in the minutes). He could only manage to suggest "effective association" as opposed to "formal association" and "a partnership of the three revolutionary leaderships to constitute a revolutionary unity," without specifying at all the method of implementation.[276]

The bargaining on the number of representatives in the projected council of leadership gave Nāṣir the opportunity of further confusing the Syrians and to reintroduce his image of the hammer and the anvil:

Atāsī: May I. . . come in here? . . ./in/ the presidential committee. . . the chairman would be the

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[274] Maḥāḍir, p. 115/2

[275] Ibid., p. 116/2

[276] Ibid., p. 117/1

president of the republics. . . In this council there would be a representative from each region: one from the Syrian Front, one from Iraq and one from the Socialist Union. Thus, with the President there would be four members of the Council. . . and the hammer and anvil problem would not arise.[277]

Nāṣir: . . . Let us assume there are two representatives. . .

Atāsī: Why two?

Nāṣir: Suppose every region has two representatives and I am out of this council; who then would be chairman, and how should we proceed?

Atāsī: We are assuming complete good faith and mutual trust in the pursuance of our objectives . . . and everything else.

Nāṣir: Let us assume there are three members, plus a fourth, on the basis of a balance,. . . or two from the Ba'th...then two thirds would be Ba'th, one third Socialist Union. This means Ba'thist preponderance in the federal union which would cause it to falter in its steps.[278]

Atāsī: Another solution. . . two members of the Socialist Union, one Syrian and one Iraqi Ba'thist with Your Excellency as chairman; that should provide a basis for confidence. . .

Shā'ir: Why don't we have a Union Council, as in the U.S.S.R.?

'Aflaq: Of course.

Nāṣir: This would change nothing. . . The basic problem remains, namely, of whom shall this council be composed? If it happens that you have an Iraqi Ba'thist, a Syrian Ba'thist and an Egyptian, then the Ba'th would be running the state. . .[279]

The way Nāṣir played with the issue of the council

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[277] Mahāḍir, p. 117/1.

[278] Ibid., p. 117/2.

[279] Ibid.

members reveals his cunning nature and the fact he did not want any system which might have involved the sharing of power. He proposed two more prerequisites for union: political and constitutional union in order to avoid inter-party clashes, i.e., between the Ba'th and the Socialist Union. All considered, the participants agreed there would remain one unsolved question: the divergence in the political leadership.[280]

Pretending to be flexible, Nāṣir stated he could and would negotiate with one Ba'th as he had previously done, but not with two, and insisted that the party ought not to have a majority vote in the leadership.[281] Atāsī called his bluff by reiterating that the Iraqi and Syrian branches constituted one party. Nāṣir answered with a sly proposal: he would be permitted to have the Socialist Union operate in Syria and Iraq (where he had supporters), and grant the Ba'th the same privileges in Egypt, fully aware that the party had no following in his country.[282]

Cued by the President's statements, the Syrians expressed again their concern over Nasirist groups. Atāsī indicated that the Unionist Front in its present form was unacceptable. A merger of all nationalist and unionist forces was suggested; the Syrian front so constituted would then be free to merge with the Socialist Union in Egypt.[283]

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[280] Mahādir, p. 118/1,2,3.

[281] Ibid., p. 120/3.

[282] Ibid., p. 120/2,3 and 122/1.

[283] Ibid., p. 124/2,3.

There was agreement at least to disagree, but Nāṣir remained bent on fulfilling his basic requirement, namely, to deny the Ba'th a say in the decision-making process at the federal level and to constrain the Ba'thists to share power with his partisans within Syria and Iraq.[284]

## THIRD ROUND, POWER POLITICS AND IDEOLOGY

Scarcely three weeks after the initiation of the talks, relations between 'Abd al-Nāṣir and the Ba'th were tense. These series of "ideological meetings" are perhaps the most significant in that the discussions included some of the leaders and chief ideologists of the Arab world ('Aflaq, Nāṣir, Bīṭār, Bazzāz) and a majority of radical "progressive" army officers.

Ideology was put to the test in a unique confrontation between the most reputable Arab leader and the best known ideological party. The evolution of the discussion gradually discloses the rigidity of accepted dogmas, the inability to compromise, the traditionalist outlook on power and authority and the opportunist but convenient simplification of political thought on the part of the army officers. Power politics, rather than ideology, emerge as the basis for conflict and contention.

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[284] Mahāḍir, p. 125/1,2.

First Meeting (April 6)

The delegations met under inauspicious circumstances. Several articles had appeared in Al-Ba'th, organ of the party, which were deemed insulting by Nāṣir, who had in turn ordered retaliatory measures. Some of the criticism was addressed to Nāṣir's Syrian partisans, but in general, his policy and institutions were taken to task.[285] Incensed by what he called "underhand sniping," the President charged the Ba'thists with subversive activities aimed at upsetting the status quo in the U.A.R. and devious, hypocritical actions, for even prior to their departure on the 21st of the previous month, their party organ had printed abusive articles which had been reprinted by other newspapers financed by the Ba'th.[286]

Bīṭār coyly described his party's action (his own, indeed), as "constructive criticism," in that the article "had merely pointed out to old mistakes in the context of a new union." He avowed that criticism had been confined within Syria because the articles had not been broadcast either by radio or any other media. He added that the purpose behind this action was "to unify the people," and to make it clear to all those who wished to "stumble into a new union," that union represented "a vast undertaking." That said, Bīṭār accused in turn Nāṣir of attempting "to remove Ṣalāḥ Bīṭār

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[285] See Al-Ba'th, Damascus, issues of March 23 and 27, 1963.

[286] Mahādir, p. 132/1, and Kerr, Arab Cold War, p. 86.

and his regime" by inciting the unionist Syrian groups, as well as embarking on a propaganda war against the Ba'th.[287]

Nāṣir answered with full batteries. He reminded Bīṭār of his previous confession published in Al-Ba'th that he had never collaborated with 'Abd al-Nāṣir prior to the 1958 union, for "he could not possibly support autocracy and tyranny," and that those and worse accusations had been condoned by Bīṭār when he signed the secessionist manifesto.[288] Cornered and exasperated, Bīṭār committed a major tactical error by blurting out that there were serious ideological differences between Nāṣir and the Ba'th, which he could "sit down and expound for months."[289]

The President eagerly grabbed the pawn unwittingly advanced by Bīṭār. He painstakingly reviewed recent events and those following March 22, when the Syrian delegation left, after having agreed "to shelve all doubts."[290] The publication in Al-Ba'th of the article "More Royalist than the King," which actually ridiculed the Nasirist groups rather than the President himself, angered Nāṣir but he still took no action.

Nāṣir put all restraint aside upon reading Al-Ba'th of March 27; in a lengthy article, the U.A.R. was charged with having put the people "in cold storage" during the previous

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[287] Mabādir, p. 133/1,2.

[288] Ibid., p. 134/2,3.

[289] Ibid., p. 135/3.

[290] Ibid.

union, and ridiculed political meetings in Egypt as a "hodgepodge of peasants and the like"; Haykal answered in kind in his article "I Protest" published in Al-Ahrām on March 31.[291]

The affair amounted to a public broadcast of political bickering, but Bīṭār pretended ignorance concerning the broadcast on the Syrian and Iraqi radios of his party's indictment of Nāṣir and his partisans. In response, Nāṣir offered to give Bīṭār a duplicate of the Ba'th's articles picked up from Damascus radio.[292] Thereafter, the Egyptian leader relentlessly pounced on Bīṭār's assertions and ideology, and for the first time established the main basis for discrepancy:

> I did not say that the criticism of the Ba'th newspaper revealed an ideological difference* for the very simple reason. . . that I still do not know what Ba'thist ideology is. . . I read the constitution of the Ba'th, the two books published by the party and an anthology of articles published in Al-Ba'th among which there is one--I think--written by Zuhūr on socialism. . . I read it all in detail. . . But where is the ideology? I was unable to discover it. . . There are no ideological differences . . . Our differences are entirely personal.[293]

In a lengthy expostulation, Nāṣir continued to dissect and ridicule 'Aflaq's ideology as a hodgepodge of premises which were "the result of plagiarizing Lenin's and Stalin's works," with, however, "a great deal of confusion and mis-

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[291] Mahādir, p. 136/1,2 and Rabinovich, Syria under the Ba'th, p. 61.

[292] Mahāḍir, p. 136/1.

* "Khalāf madhhabī" in the text; according to context, "madhhabī" and "madhhabīya" are translated as "ideology," "ideological," "methodology," and "methodological."

[293] Mahāḍir, p. 136/2.

construction." [294]

Nāṣir successfully challenged the Ba'thist contention that the U.A.R. had put the people and popular organizations "in cold storage" during the union. He stressed the difference which Lenin makes between the party and popular organization: in this relationship, the party is the leader, while the popular organization is represented by the Soviet councils. The Ba'th, on the other hand, claimed that the party was the popular organization and therefore, its neutralization within the union had meant in fact the abolition of popular organization and participation. The point was rather academic in that each party sought not the truth, but a justifiable premise to support his right to power.[295] Nāṣir finally stated the main issue for contention:

> What I mean is that there are no methodological or ideological differences. . . during the union /the sole discrepancy/ was that you asked for the suppression of all newspapers in Syria and I refused. . . that is not an ideological conflict . . . our sole conflict arose over one single issue. . . partnership.[296]

The cards were finally laid on the table; Nāṣir recalled the many instances when the Ba'th had adopted dilatory or contrary measures concerning the ruling of the union, and at the end, had Bīṭār helplessly confess that the Ba'thist leaders had plotted to resign from the union scarcely seven or eight months after it had been created. Nāṣir referred

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[294] Mabādir, p. 136/2,3.

[295] Ibid., p. 136/3.

[296] Ibid.

to the ulterior motivation of the Ba'thist leadership by recalling again the "special committee of six" proposed by 'Aflaq and Ḥūrānī in total disregard for democratic values.[297]

Still mocking Bīṭār, Nāṣir asked him a loaded question: "What do you hope to achieve by this union, the correction of 'Abd al-Nāṣir's regime?" Bīṭār naturally denied having such designs, but the President implacably lay bare the Ba'thist directives, namely, that of changing the Egyptian regime from within; the short intervention of Atāsī was peremptorily interrupted by Nāṣir, who continued to pounce on Bīṭār and his party.[298]

Zuhūr valiantly came to the defense of the Ba'th ideology and policy and managed to point out the different sequence of their slogans, a sign perhaps of intellectual and ideological depth:

> In my opinion, Your Excellency, there are ideological differences between the U.A.R. and the Ba'th. . . differences in general policy. . The U.A.R. calls for Freedom, Socialism and Unity. . . while the Ba'th calls for Unity, Freedom and Socialism. . . It is a matter of giving precedence to some things over others. . .
>
> Nāṣir: It was because of you (the party) and of the endless difficulties we have had in advocating unity that we put it at the end, so that you could not accuse Egypt of imperialism. . . and political tyranny. . .
>
> Bīṭār: Well, unity used to be first, Your Excellency (laughter).[299]

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297 Mahādir, p. 138/1,2 and supra, p. 126.

298 Ibid., p. 138/3.

299 Ibid., p. 141/1.

Zuhūr refuted most of the charges against the Ba'th and ultimately pointed out that differences of interpretation were inevitable and to be expected, as was the case with the Arab Nationalists, whose views did not entirely agree with the U.A.R.'s. Nāṣir retorted that their criticism "was objective," whereas that of the Ba'th "was revengeful."[300]

Suwaydān tersely remarked that had it not been the Ba'th who criticized the U.A.R., the plans for union would still be unimpaired. He added sensibly that union should be fashioned in a way that would assure its independence from any group or party within the union, for the policy of any of the participants might change at any given time in the future. He finished with a pointed question: "The Ba'th might come to power in Syria: does this imply the rupture of the union?"[301]

Conscious of the implications inherent in that question, Nāṣir answered that the Ba'th "was necessary" for the union and that its absence would weaken it, for "all forces should join in order to stave off any attempts made by anti-nationalist elements."[302] 'Aysamī, foreseeing the danger, asked the President whether his remark implied that no divergence of opinion, or parties with differing programs were to be allowed in the union, and that all parties were to be

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[300] Mahāḍir, p. 141/2,3.

[301] Ibid., p. 142/3.

[302] Ibid., p. 143/1.

merged into one political organization. If so, 'Aysamī considered it detrimental, for such a measure should be kept "as a future goal" to be achieved when "due notice" had been paid to the "Ba'thist experience in Syria, the revolution in Egypt and the Algerian experiment."[303]

Nāṣir dismissed 'Aysamī's suggestion stating that he certainly knew better than the latter everything concerning the "Algerian experiment," especially the disastrous coalition governments they had had, which "almost wrecked the Algerian revolution."[304] He then stressed the difference between "collective" and "coalition leadership" and proposed to devote the following meeting to the discussion of that subject.[305]

Second Meeting (April 7)

Two main questions opened the discussion: the achievment of national unity as the basis for federal union, and the creation of a coordinating committee to harmonize their respective policies. Nāṣir saw two obstacles in attaining that goal, namely, regionalism and the possibility of clash and competition among parties and unionist groups, the solution of which would imply the unity of political action on two levels. Unity of aims was to be extended from broad matters of principle, where there was more or less agreement,

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[303] Maḥāḍir, p. 143/3.

[304] Ibid.

[305] Ibid., pp. 143/3 and 144/2,3.

to the particulars of implementation, where disagreement was bound to appear.[306]

Nāṣir insisted in adopting a charter embodying all common notions involving the principles upon which there was consensus, for once having done that "the rest would be easy." Zuhūr suggested a twofold action involving the creation of a unionist front in Syria followed by the merger of popular organizations "within one charter and one internal organization."[307] There was no consensus as to the front or any other organization during the transitional period.

The proceedings were interrupted by the ill-timed and muddled intervention of Bīṭār, who reintroduced the bitter argument about the newspaper articles and the issue of the unionist groups in Syria.[308] On that account, Bīṭār stressed that regionalism had to be accepted as a political reality within the union (in the sense of accepting dissident opinions), that the merging of unionist forces within the three countries should precede any political union, and that the article "More Royalist than the King" did not justify Al-Ahrām's campaign against the Ba'th. Even conceding that the article constituted "an error," Bīṭār argued that the reaction to it should have been in the form of "constructive criticism," not on the basis of the newspaper's (i.e. Hay-

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[306] Maḥāḍir, pp. 147/3 and 148/1,2.

[307] Ibid., p. 148/2,3.

[308] Ibid., p. 149/1,2.

kal's) interpretation which was based on "erroneous impressions and delusions."[309]

Nāṣir answered in an unceremonious fashion which elicited the most foolish reaction from Bīṭār:

Nāṣir: Don't you read the Lebanese press? It (the article) was published in Lebanon.

Bīṭār: We have not seen it, so we cannot refute it.

Nāṣir: Don't you read the Lebanese press?

Bīṭār: No, we do not.

Nāṣir: Neither the French nor the Lebanese newspapers?

Bīṭār: No, we do not; they do not enter /Syria/, so. . .

Nāṣir: How very apropos!! What sort of talk is this?

Bīṭār: Your Excellency, when you read them. . . contact us. . .

Nāṣir: So you do not read the Syrian, Lebanese or French press. . . How on earth do you govern?

Bīṭār: All right, then let someone reach us and inform us. . . we do not have the time to read. . .[310]

Recriminations ensued on account of the "war of radio waves" unleashed against Cairo; Bīṭār absurdly reiterated his total ignorance of the matter, despite the fact that most of the articles had first been published in Al-Ba'th. Nāṣir insisted on solving the extant question of the alleged ideological conflict in order to have the basis of a common aim. He said their efforts had amounted to "a boxing match," and enumerated three issues which had to be cleared in order

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[309] Maḥāḍir, p. 150/1,2

[310] Ibid., p. 150/2.

to avoid "a violent clash" in future: the analysis of ideological differences, self-criticism (which he never practiced), and cooperation with the Ba'th during the old union.

Nāṣir mentioned again the Ḥūrānī-Bīṭār rift, his efforts to reconcile them, and the fact each had accused the other of wanting a union so that he could rule Syria (Bīṭār admitted having told Nāṣir that about Ḥūrānī).[311] In a clever move, Nāṣir emphasized the divisiveness in the rank and file of the Ba'th to support his contention, and refute that of Bīṭār, that the party had not been removed from power, but had fallen because of its own weakness.

Bīṭār faintly stated he had just tried to clarify Nāṣir's accusation that by deserting the government they had forsaken the union. 'Aysamī's intervention was outspoken and direct; he reminded the Egyptians that a negative attitude towards the Ba'th had prevailed in the U.A.R. government, and that although the Syrians had complained to 'Amr about the persecution of party members, nothing had ever been done about it.[312]

Hindī pleaded "that all past conflicts be moot in view of the present revolutionary forces," but Nāṣir reiterated that the Ba'th was guilty of obstructionism and opportunism, and that many Ba'thists had even been ordered not to join the National Union.[313] 'Amr noted that the government had

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311 Maḥāḍir, pp. 150/3 and 151/1.

312 Ibid.

313 Ibid., pp. 151/2,3 and 152/1.

"encouraged" the Ba'thists, despite their electoral defeat, by giving them positions of leadership, a fact which, in his opinion, clearly refuted 'Aysamī's accusations.[314] To this, Bīṭār remarked:

> . . . I believe that the greatest mistake committed during the union was to remove us as leaders of the Ba'th party from the National Assembly; I remember that Al-Ahrām, before the selection of the members of the National Assembly were made, mentioned two points of view: one was that the same leadership present in the National Assembly also be present in the National Union to which we were a part. The other was that such leaders should be excluded. . . We hoped the first opinion would prevail because the interaction which Sāmī (al-Jundī) mentioned and which was vital, would have begun and been completed.[315]

'Amr retorted that the above was simply Bīṭār's own view, but when 'Umrān asked Bīṭār if he had ever specified that request to the President, Bīṭār destroyed the validity of his argument with his answer:

> No. . . because we had resigned from the government. . . and told the President that our presence therein was a mere formality, and /therefore/ we could not bear any responsibility. . . but on the other hand, we were ready to co-operate. . . in any other area.
>
> 'Umrān: Did you ever state any specific proposals or asked for rectification of a given situation or anything of that sort?
>
> Bīṭār: No. . . our relationship had been severed.[316]

Nāṣir coldly remarked that the minutes of the work sessions of the National Union were at hand, that Ḥūrānī had

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[314] According to 'Amr, thirty-five young Ba'thists joined the National Assembly and the rest did not run for office. Maḥāḍir, p. 152/1.

[315] Ibid.

[316] Ibid., p. 152/2.

agreed to all the proposals adopted by a triumvirate to which he was a member, and furthermore, that there was no record of what he had just said. Al-Atāsī re-directed the meeting to the question of unified political leadership. Nāṣir reiterated the necessity to "clear once and for all" every possible misunderstanding concerning unity of aims, ideology and leadership. The meeting was adjourned with a final motion to create a tripartite committee to study those questions and invite the Iraqi delegation to participate as well.[317]

The Third Meeting (April 7)

President Nāṣir introduced the doctrinal issue, whereupon Ṭālib Shabīb, the Iraqi Foreign Minister, dispelled Bīṭār's allegations in a lucid and correct manner:

> . . . Mr. President, it is difficult to accept the statement that there are ideological differences between the U.A.R. and the Ba'th party in Syria or Iraq or in any other region, because if it were so, this meeting would not have been held at all. . .
> . . . . . .
> Differences in content and interpretation regarding these slogans are possible, not solely among the three revolutions, but also within one single revolution. . . the determination to establish a tripartite union conclusively proves that ideological differences are absolutely non-existent.[318]

Zuhūr and Bīṭār followed suit recanting their previous statements in a most unconvincing fashion:

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[317] Maḥāḍir, pp. 152/2,3 and 153.

[318] Ibid., p. 155/2,3.

Zuhūr: The issue is linked with the definition of the scope of theory, so if we include the method of implementation in /the meaning of/ "theory," then we can say that there are ideological differences. But if we do not. . . then we cannot say there are ideological differences. Thus, a misunderstanding arose. . . /over/ the meaning of the word itself.

Bīṭār: Your Excellency, as others have stated, I do not believe there are any ideological differences. . . as Ṭālib (Shabīb) said, at present the three revolutionary movements have a common goal. . . that means we are agreed about socialism, capitalism, and our future organic structure.[319]

There followed a circular discussion concerning the slogans of socialism, unity and freedom. Predictably enough, everybody seemed to have a different definition. Thus, Shabīb defined "freedom" as "a movement which has led to revolution and believes in unity and freedom," whereas Nāṣir said it to be "free participation of all political groups," clearly alluding at the Nasirist groups in Syria and Iraq.[320]

The President accepted that they were basically in agreement, except for the question of socialism. At any rate, he insisted that they should have a clearer conception of every slogan in order to avoid misunderstandings.[321] Thereafter, Nāṣir extolled the U.A.R. Charter and every narrow definition of ideological precepts contained therein.

The simplification of complex, subjective concepts such as democracy and freedom, pointed to the superficial

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[319] Maḥāḍir, p. 156/1

[320] Ibid., p. 156/2.

[321] Ibid., p. 156/3.

assimilation of Western thought, and the clear distinction made between democratic ends and democratic means: how one governed was of secondary importance, provided positive results were obtained. Obviously, no correlation existed between theory and practice, government and responsibility, nor did the participants show any awareness of their own inconsistency. The fluidity of their political conceptions matched that of their political behaviour: a month after the coup, Atāsī unabashedly stated that their concept of freedom had already changed! *

The value of this discussion lies, therefore, in that each participant, himself a cadre in the ruling elite, presented his views in a candid manner and in so doing, provided an invaluable insight into the peculiar amalgamation of thoughts and impulses which govern Arab politics. Thus, the paradox between the natural tendency towards monopolizing power and the rationalization of freedom and democracy as perceived by Iraqis, Syrians and Nāṣir:

> Shabīb: Freedom in general, seems to imply that those movements which have led these revolutions. . . deserve to be associated and be freely allowed to participate in building the new Arab federal state . . . Other movements must be denied this freedom, but how should that denial and the method of political exclusion operate, may indeed vary in every region. . [322]

Sa'dī: We cannot begin to discuss what we understand by freedom, or parties, or the wording of the re-

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* See infra, p. 158.

322 Maḥāḍir, p. 157/2.

> quirements involved, or the various stages required. . . We can only hope to agree about the general connotation of words such as socialism, unity and freedom. . .[323]

Zuhūrī When one simply belongs to a popular organization, one carries no responsibility; one is free to bandy slogans around and is not responsible for their implementation or for their consequences. . .

> . . . . . .
> When revolutionary movements find themselves in power, they discover that many of their former views must be rejected or re-studied. For, while such movements are operating on the level of a national struggle, they want democracy, albeit a bourgeois sort of democracy in order to enhance their position; when in government, however, those movements maintain that such a bourgeois democracy poses a great danger to the revolution, for, if they face elections, these revolutions would be swept away. . .[324]

Hindī agreed that the three basic slogans (freedom, democracy and unity) needed almost daily re-interpretation, but refuted Zuhūr's statement on the grounds that "he had destroyed the value of theory," without specifying how Zuhūr had done so.[325] On the other hand, the President's statement faithfully reflected his domestic policy:

> When a revolution assumes power, it must know how to keep it. [The means] to preserve that power is to deprive the revolution's social enemies of their essential weapons. . .
>
> . . . . . .
> Hence the primary factor is to make clear the aims of the revolution, and to deprive its enemies of their essential weapons. . . The second factor is to organize the popular working forces. A single party dictatorship can never take the place of pop-

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[323] Mahādir, p. 158/1; the excerpts were taken at random.

[324] Ibid., p. 159/1,2.

[325] Ibid., pp. 159/3 and 160/1.

ular organizations. . .[326]

The allusion to the Ba'th was clear enough, so 'Aysamī came to its defence:

> . . . The Ba'th has been forced to develop its initial ideology. . . for example, the conception of democracy was initially affected by the wrong sort of democracy which prevailed at that time, and hence was perhaps Western in colour . . . but now. . . the Ba'th is tending to view freedom as properly belonging to the working classes and to other socialist-minded organizations. . . it may therefore be finally forced to adopt a single-party system as its policy.[327]

Nāṣir: . . . I heard Shiblī ('Aysamī). . . say their point of view has changed. . . in all honesty, what is it now?

'Aysamī: Change is one thing, and evolution, another. I meant that the party's "democracy" has evolved, not changed, since 1943. The nature of the struggle may have, at that time, dictated the necessity of allowing the opposition to enjoy freedom within a reactionary regime which collaborated with imperialism. . . But the tendency now is to deny freedom to the enemies of revolutionary, socialist organizations. . .

Atāsī: I conclude, Your Excellency, that a detailed or specific definition of freedom is at present difficult to arrive at.

Nāṣir: Well [then, what about] democracy?

Atāsī: Or a definition of democracy. . . this is not quite clear to me either. I think that the same applies to my colleagues.[328]

'Amr: Clarity in this context is a must. If we discuss socialism. . . we need not specify an absolute mode of implementation for each region, but certain socialist standards must be present. . .[329]

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[326] Mahādir, p. 161/2; dialogue sequence reintroduced thereafter.

[327] Ibid., p. 162/2.

[328] Ibid., p. 163/1,2.

[329] Ibid., p. 163/3.

Atāsī: . . . If you, Marshall 'Amr, were to ask: "How do you define socialism in Syria?" I believe that none of my colleagues would be in a position to answer this question, whether it be Shiblī or Prof. 'Abd al-Karīm Zuhūr. . . Before March 8, the conception of freedom was different from what it is now; in order to crystallize in our minds, such a conception must be thrashed out within the group. . .

'Amr: Lu'ay (Atāsī), a new, unified state is about to arise; as a citizen, I have the right to know how I am to be treated and whether my freedom will be restricted, and if so, to what extent. . .[330]

'Umrān: I believe the context of freedom and democracy is clear, namely, that the people must in fact exercise complete authority. But at what stage are they really able to do so? Here, of course, is the question. But the conception of freedom and democracy is clear: people exercising their authority; when they can do so, however, may vary from region to region . . .some maintain that this comes through party organization, when all the people constitute the base . . .[331]

The above quotations show the general consensus which existed with regard to the expediency of dictatorial rule. The curtailment of human rights and freedoms inherent in a democratic system was justified on the basis of "radical, revolutionary change," although society as a whole was to remain unchanged. In abolishing all opposition, the ruler -whether an individual, group or party--checked the growth of national identity and political awareness. The system, more than the people, perpetuated the apathy and general anomie of the Arab populations.[332]

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[330] Mahādir, pp. 163/3 and 164/1.

[331] Ibid., p. 165/1

[332] "Anomie" refers to the same situation described in Sebastian de Grazia, The Political Community: A Study of Anomie (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948).

As none of the slogans were satisfactorily defined nor accepted by the majority, the ideological issue softly whimpered into oblivion. The assembly then got to grips with true bargaining. This implied reaching a compromise as to the character of leadership, the merging of the organizational structures of the various parties into a single body or national front, and the coordination of the resulting fronts.[333] The latter issue was of utmost importance in avoiding the existence of separate organizations, leaders and loyalties which would wreck the protracted federal state. Bīṭār did his best to put the matter off arguing that the problem should be left to the unified leadership (which did not exist) and that in time "it would force itself upon them while discussing the constitution."[334] The question was deferred till the next meeting.

Fourth Meeting (April 8)

Nāṣir summed up exceedingly well the results of the previous meeting:

> . . . In yesterday's discussions, we went round in circles. . . creating all sorts of social, political and military vacuums. . .[335]

The discussion centred on five operatives: the nature of political activity within the new state; the merging of the several organizations into a governing body; a coalition

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[333] Maḥāḍir, pp. 166/2,3 and 167/1,2,3.

[334] Ibid., p. 169/3.

[335] Ibid., p. 173/3.

formed by the leaders of the three countries; the unification of political activity prior to Federation by means of a federal political organization (proposed by President Nāṣir); and the creation of a constitutional framework and the delimitation of regional jurisdiction as the basis for the later merging of the party leadership, proposed by Bīṭār.

Nasir asserted his readiness to agree "to anything, from a unity of aims to constitutional union," [336] and the Ba'thists seemed to have taken him at his word. The strategy of the party centred on fending off Nāṣir's attempts at political organization on the absurd claim that under the circumstances, "it was too difficult to find a suitable means of merging the party leadership";[337] the shift from sloganeering to concrete action proved too much for the Syrians:

> Atāsī: . . . We decided to create the state and then leave political activity for the future. . . We ask that interaction and time be left to do their work.
>
> Nāṣir: How can one create a state without first agreeing about its political organization? Is it sensible to talk about "state now, political activity later"? . . .[338]

Shabīb introduced the question of a coalition, given that the "three revolutionary movements" had had different origins and had yet to discover a formula for mutual co-

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[336] Mahādir, p. 173/3

[337] Ibid.

[338] Ibid., p. 174/3.

operation within each region.[339] Nāṣir contended that the coalition did not mean that each party (to such a coalition) should rule a part of the state:

> . . . A coalition. . . would amount to a secession clothed in the garb of union or federation whose downfall would entail the wrecking of the whole state. . .

The President expounded on the pitfalls inherent in coalitions, and warned that another secession would make the people disavow unity and would pervert its meaning. Zuhūr argued at length for the desirability of a coalition on the grounds that the issue was merely political, not theoretical, and that if a charter specifying the guidelines for unity were drafted, there would not be any grounds for conflict.[340] The Egyptian leader, however, maintained his stand:

> If we desire a federal union, then we must create one. . . and if this is not possible, then we must clearly declare that we intend to draft a work programme which will lead to union in, say, three years. . .
>
> . . . . . .
>
> We can then proceed with a coalition which will ultimately lead to union. . . We must only do what we are capable of doing and then later on develop our activities. . .[341]

Atāsī: We are definitely here to create a federal state. . . What I want to say is that the constitution would create the state. . . while the charter would create the political organizations. . .[342]

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339 Mahādir, p. 174/3

340 Ibid., p. 175/1,2,3.

341 Ibid., p. 176/2.

342 Ibid., p. 176/3.

The participants doubted even the feasibility of voting. Bīṭār opposed voting within the various coalitions and was backed by his colleagues:

> Suwaydān: . . . Voting should not be employed before we have properly interacted. . . but federal policy must be enforced, particularly in guiding our steps.[343]

Nāṣir remarked on the absurdity of the Ba'thist position concerning the unification of leadership, but it was to no avail:

> I believe the question of political organization is essential. . . . Shibli ('Aysamī), 'Abd al-Karīm (Zuhūr), Ṣalāḥ Bīṭār and 'Alī Sa'dī have all spoken about political organization with the exception of Suwaydān, because he is not a party member. . .
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> . . . . . .
>
> There is a national leadership which unifies the ruling parties, . . . the Syrian and the Iraqi Ba'th. Therefore, the Ba'th possesses both elements of a federation: the state or government, and the popular organization of the party. . . You already have a national leadership which controls two-thirds of our future federation. . . but then we hear that a unified leadership for the whole federation is impossible and that this must be left to time!![344]

Shabīb and Bīṭār responded by extolling the advantages of a coalition, but Nāṣir countered their argument with the record of failures of past coalitions in Syria.[345] Atāsī was of the opinion that the nature of the political organization should consist first of a front and later of a unified structure; Nāṣir remarked that that was precisely the goal being

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[343] Mahādir, p. 177/1.

[344] Ibid., p. 179/2.

[345] Ibid., pp. 180/1,2 and 181/1.

pursued. Shabīb intervened anew to stress the necessity of harmonizing rather than merely reaching a compromise on regional differences:

> I would distinguish, Your Excellency, two aspects of this discussion. First. . . the various parties to the front which are now joined by the charter and among which considerable agreement over basic matters seem to exist. Secondly, our future agreement should not result from a compromise of various political stands or conflicting ideologies in Syria, Iraq and Egypt, but rather from the very existence of three separate regions and political situations in each region . . . 346

Nāṣir: What are these "particular political situations"? Or to put it simply, what are your aims?

Shabīb: . . . There are various political parties in Iraq, the likes of which have not sprung up in Egypt or Syria due to the different circumstances prevailing in Iraq. . . thus, political movements. . . have developed along different lines. . . In Syria, there are the National-Socialists which do not operate in Iraq or Egypt. I mean that this organization arose out of the peculiar Syrian experience; /then/ there are the Arab Nationalists in Iraq and Syria, but not in Egypt. But in forming a union, we must also unify these movements. The question is how are we to merge into one front the fronts of the three countries? . . .

. . . . . .

Time will be a unifying factor rather than a signal for the end of a coalition and the beginning of disagreement. . . 347

Nāṣir: Past coalitions, in other words, have been short lived. You Ṣalāḥ, have joined certain coalitions?

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346 Mabādir, p. 181/1,2.

347 Ibid., p. 181/2.

Bīṭār: Yes. . . before. . .

Nāṣir: How long did they survive? What did you accomplish?

Bīṭār: They were then directed against the Baghdad Pact.

Nāṣir: Were you able to accomplish any of your principles? No.[349]

Having made his point against Bīṭār, Nāṣir pursued the defense of his case:

> The U.A.R. believes that unity of political activity must take precedence over the establishment of a federal state, since the creation of a federal state at a time when political activity is divided, means that a clash will occur inside that state and might produce a relapse. . .
> . . . . . .
> Also, in Syria and Iraq this unity exists in the form of the national leadership of the Ba'th party. This implies that Egypt will be faced by one bloc which controls two parties to the union, and clashes will become frequent and violent until the whole fabric of the union is destroyed. . .
> . . . . . .
> We shall encounter the same problem at the level of collective federal leadership. . . The solution, then, lies in creating one national leadership for everybody, in which all parties and all regions will be represented.[350]

The conflict over the issue of unified leadership proved to be the main stumbling block on the road to unity, for if either of the parties agreed, it would entail the relinquishing of his goal. Bīṭār pressed Nāṣir to cast in black and white the extent and limitations of the proposed

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[349] Maḥāḍir, p. 181/2,3

[350] Ibid., p. 183/2,3

federation:

> It would help if we defined the jurisdiction of the federation and the regions. . . unified political organization is difficult. . . if we do not know exactly the two jurisdictions. . . We may then specifically exclude the creation of axes, such as a Ba'thist axis, for all of us are in agreement that axes would be fatal to the union. . .

Nāṣir: But axes within the union are far more dangerous.

Bīṭār: . . . We want the leadership of our union free from axes. . . but the question remains, where does the jurisdiction of the federation and the regions stand? What is the competence of the federation? What can it decide upon and what can it not?

'Amr: If each region is politically independent, the whole structure remains in the air.

Bīṭār: This is what we need to discuss. . . Egypt's withdrawal from the union would spell a grave danger.

Nāṣir: I tell you, the coalition you suggest would lead us to that end.

Bīṭār: . . . As far as the establishment of the tripartite federation goes, Egypt has the greatest potential which we must not waste and which is the basis for the union. . . but there is another point . . . Are we to allow other parties to function in Egypt?. . . Are we to ban other parties in Iraq? In Syria there is a proliferation of parties. . .[351]

That last remark hinted strongly at the Arab Unionist Movement which Bīṭār was at pains to isolate from the Syrian leadership. 'Amr suggested the discussion of basic principles to regulate political activity, but Bīṭār promptly dismissed the motion pointing out they had done so fruitlessly for the last two or three meetings.[352]

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[351] Maḥāḍir, p. 184/2,3.

[352] Ibid.

Dissatisfied with Bīṭār's evasiveness, Nāṣir brought back the issue of the Syro-Iraqi "axis" which, in his opinion, had been corroborated by Shabīb himself: Haykal's article in Al-Ahrām prompted Shabīb to call the Egyptian ambassador in Iraq and inform him that the Ba'th was a unit, and therefore, whatever happened in Syria had repercussions in Iraq and viceversa. Oblivious to the "indictment," Shabīb merely re-stated their "unity of aims" and "common ideology" were a guarantee against any clash between the Ba'th and the Arab Socialist Union.[353]

Atāsī diverted the attention of the assembly towards the issue of elections to choose the federal leadership, but no one seemed to give the matter serious consideration. Voting and elections geared the discussion to the role of The Socialist Union. Nāṣir stressed the need for representation of several social and bureaucratic sectors, specially the army, whose role should be participation rather than rule.

Nāṣir stated that the army should be "national but non-partisan," in order to avoid factionalism like in Syria; it should be modern "to protect itself against opportunistic exploitation"; it should be nationalist not traditionalist, and it should be nationally committed.[354] This was a pointed criticism of the Syrian army, since it hardly filled those requirements.

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[353] Mahādir, pp. 185/3 and 186/1,2.

[354] Ibid., 186/2.

Messrs. Atāsī, Bīṭār and Nāṣir agreed to meet separately and work out a proposal to be discussed in the next meeting. The issue under study was concerned with the basic principles of a federal union as well as the "safeguards," definitions and explanations deemed necessary in the interest of a comprehensive proposal.[355]

Fifth Meeting (April 9)

Mr. Husayn gave the gist of the political charter as follows:

> . . . Unity is a result of the popular will and must consequently be linked in principle and practice with popular aspirations. . . . For the union to be effective, it must strive to fulfill Arab aspirations for freedom of individual and country, and for justice and self-sufficiency . . . The union must have powerful representation, a unified social policy and common planning in the economic, cultural and scientific fields.[356]

The Charter's most relevant points under discussion were:

1. Freedom: "To be enjoyed by the people and denied to its enemies. . . . the latter includes all those who have been sentenced as secessionists, plotters, exploiters or enemies of Arab nationalism."[357] In other words, all political opposition was neutralized.
2. Socio-political reorganization, which necessitated the destruction of "the alliance between feudalism and capital-

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[355] Mahāḍir, p. 187/1,2.

[356] Ibid., p. 191/1.

[357] Ibid., p. 193/2.

ism," and its replacement by "a coalition of the popular working forces of peasants, workers, soldiers, intellectuals and national bourgeoisie," in order to exclude the possibility of the supremacy of one given class over the rest of society.[358]

3. Mass political organizations. The Charter called for the setting up of "popular political organizations arising from direct and free elections as representatives of the majority, with a guarantee of at least 50 per cent representation for peasants and workers."[359]

4. Suffrage. This question seemed as baffling as it was foreign to the political process of the three countries:

Nāṣir: In our Charter, we say that the citizen has the right to vote and to run for office. . .

'Ammāsh: A right, not a duty.

Nāṣir: But at the same time, if he does not exercise this right, he is fined.

Bīṭār: You have made it compulsory. . .

Nāṣir: Yes, because very few people used to vote in the past. But now everyone does so. . .

'Ammāsh: It has therefore become a duty, an obligation..

Shabīb: This is an infringement upon the citizen's rights. As a citizen, I might wish to abstain or I might reject elections on principle. . .

Nāṣir: One can [always] deposit a blank ballot; our goal is to get the people to participate in public life, even if they wish to remain aloof [because of] their negativism and indifference. . .[360]

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[358] Mahādir, p. 195/3

[359] Ibid., p. 199/2

[360] Ibid., p. 202/1,2.

Sa'dī: Seventy per cent of our people are peasants [who] can either be bribed or forced to participate in public life. . . . They would not do so of their own volition.[361]

5. The constitution of a Political Front. All unionist forces were to merge into a regional political front whose decisions would be abiding for the majority. The activities of the Front were to be regulated by a Charter for Political Action.[362]

6. Unified Leadership. Operating at the federal level, the unified leadership would also be regulated by the Charter: All political fronts and organizations within the three regions were to abide the decisions of the unified leadership, taken by majority vote. The political leadership was to gradually evolve into a unified political structure which would manage all activities, whether domestic or international.[363]

Hindī availed himself of the opportunity to denounce the ostracizing of his Arab Nationalist Movement in Iraq and asked for "safeguards" to insure the acceptance of such political groups on an equal basis at the federal level. Since the group operated in Syria and Iraq, and was generally known to be backed by Nāṣir, it touched a sensitive chord in the Ba'thist leadership, which deemed necessary to dismiss the matter as an "internal problem." This vital question was

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[361] Mahḍir, p. 203/2.

[362] Ibid., p. 205/2.

[363] Ibid., p. 205/3.

not properly dealt with; Shabīb argued that the relations among the various nationalist groups were the concern of each region, while Nāṣir justly insisted that such attitude was inconsistent with the spirit and constitution of a federation.[364] A smoke screen was drawn on the matter with the argument that constitutional provisions would solve it.

7. Civil Rights. Freedom of opinion, of the press, assembly, education, religion and free association into trade unions and cooperatives were to be guaranteed.[365]

8. Socialism as a) "social freedom" in the sense of equal opportunity and equitable distribution of the national wealth, and b) full control--not possession--of the means of production by the people was to be adopted. Total nationalization of the means of production or putting an end to private ownership and legal inheritance was to be avoided.[366]

9. Article 3 specified that private capital, as well as the public sector should be under the supervision of "popular authority"; workers were to share in profits and management and a minimum wage scale was approved. There was no conclusive agreement on the socialization of agriculture. Bīṭār favoured private ownership or cooperatives; Nāṣir opted for agrarian reform and to allow private enterprise only in the sphere of light industry.[367]

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[364] Mahādir, pp. 205/3, 206/1,2,3, 207/3 and 208/1.

[365] Ibid., pp. 208/3 and 209/1,2.

[366] Ibid., p. 210/1.

[367] Ibid., pp. 210/2,3 and 211/1.

The meeting was adjourned after the President's lengthy exposition on the implementation of socialism in industry, commerce and agriculture in the U.A.R.

Sixth Meeting (April 10)

Ḥusayn resumed the reading of the Charter; it was agreed --after a lengthy discussion on the acceptability of "region" (quṭr) or "province" (iqlīm) as a constitutional designation-- to institute a Federal or United Arab Republic formed by the union of the Syrian, Iraqi and Egyptian "provinces."[368] Cairo was chosen as federal capital. Next came the jurisdiction of the federal government and its agencies; the headings were given first and details followed to allow for the discussion of each one of them:

1. Foreign Affairs.
2. Defence and National Security (if it is deemed better to have the latter in a separate article, it will be No. 3).
4. Finance and the Treasury.
5. Economy and Planning (these are separate).
6. Information and National Guidance.
7. Cultural Planning (kept separate).
8. Education, Higher Education and Scientific Research Planning.
9. Justice and the sistematization of laws.
10. Federal transport.
11. Other sections may be added by the Constitution.[369]

Although the first item was Foreign Affairs, Nāṣir immediately geared the discussion to the difficulties inherent in the unification of trade. Given the complexity of each country's trade relations, he considered that a minimum of

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[368] Maḥāḍir, pp. 215/1,2 and 216/1,2.

[369] Ibid., p. 217/1.

ten years would be necessary to coordinate trade. The issue was dealt with extensively, but the net result was simply the acceptance of the impossibility to harmonize trade in the near future, and the desirability to achieve a gradual unification rather than rush matters.[370] Sundry bureaucratic questions ranging from the organization of internal trade, currency, export-import provisions to visas were dealt with before the discussion was shifted to the army.[371]

The decentralization of the armed forces was envisaged in a plan where the regional and federal governments would share jurisdiction. Matters concerning operation, equipment, organization and training were to be centralized and handled by the federal authorities, whereas questions of transfer, promotions, administration and retirement were to be dealt by the local command. The latter measure was backed by Bakr on behalf of the Syrian officers, who obviously tried to escape from Egyptian control as in the former union. Nāṣir was aware of the implications, so when Bakr unwittingly proposed the creation of a Defence Council, he readily supported the motion.[372] Shā'ir and Quṭaynī blocked the measure, and Nāṣir ended with a warning note:

> The point is that if the army is under the command of the provincial governments, then no union is possible. . .
> . . . . . .

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370 Mahāḍir, pp. 217/1,2 and 218/1,2,3.

371 Ibid., p. 219/1,2.

372 Ibid., pp. 219/3 and 221/1,3.

> If local governments begin to interfere in military affairs, the scene will change radically . . . but if we declare a union and keep our armies separate, . . . then our federation will simply be a miniature Arab League. . .373

Seventh Meeting (April 11)

The bargaining on the union was resumed in an atmosphere of heightened caution. The concerted action of the Syrian Ba'thists converged in one point: to assure a predominant position for their party and restrict Nāṣir's power as much as possible. Zuhūr and Suwaydān proposed that the Federal Assembly have predominant power and the three countries be equally represented therein, despite the differences in population.374

A second proposal asked for the set up of a special committee to be in charge of political leadership within the Assembly. This committee would supervise the branches of the government as a whole or, as an alternative, leadership would be bestowed onto a Presidential Council surrounding the President of the Federation:

> Zuhūr: The Federal Assembly should possess a greater measure of authority than we have allotted it. . . It should perhaps have the right to make proposals or supervise the Executive. . . in which case its membership has to be small to insure efficiency. . .
> . . . . . .
> The Assembly must not concern itself solely with legislation, but must also direct the Executive.375

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373 Mahādir, pp. 222/3 and 223/1,2.

374 Ibid., p. 232/2,3.

375 Ibid., p. 233/2.

Shabīb: Here, Your Excellency, is a practical point to be remembered. . .[namely] the establishment of parity and cohesion among the Federal Assembly, the Parliament, the Council of Leadership and the Regional Assemblies: each with its own specified membership. . .

Nāṣir: I suppose you are thinking of a small number.

Zuhūr: Thirty, for example.

Shabīb: Thirty. . .[would suffice].

Bakr: The fewer they are, the greater their output. In fact, if we entrust thirty people with a task, . . . they shall endeavour to do it better than would a greater number [of people]. . .

Nāṣir: Can we defer the decision about the number until the end?

Shabīb: Why can't we agree now?[376]

Nāṣir: We must do some calculations. . . Zuhūr's mention of thirty already predetermines the number before we agree on a limit; federal assemblies in general are supposed to be basically legislative . . . the Federal and National assemblies have to be brought together into a Congress which would act as some sort of supervising and controlling body. . . but the basic question which mainly affects the regions is [the issuing of] laws. If disagreement occurs between the Federal Assembly . . . and the Parliament, nothing would work. . .

Zuhūr: . . . At first, it was assumed there was to be a leadership council which would sort of lead the whole . . . I can not find that in the draft, but then it occurred to me that the Federal Assembly could supervise both the legislative and the executive branches and thus would become a kind of linking body. . .[377]

Nāṣir: What is the point of having a leadership or Presidential Council?. . . The only country which has it is Egypt but the reason for it is that there is no National Assembly..[378]

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376 Mahādir, p. 233/3.

377 Ibid., p. 234/1.

378 Ibid., p. 234/2.

Nāṣir enumerated the Soviet, Presidential and Parliamentary systems as the three available choices, none of which was considered suitable. Zuhūr insisted on having the Presidency and the Federal Assembly acting together as the highest legislative and executive body in the state, and Nāṣir strived to extricate the Executive from the Federal Assembly[379] in order to have at least a partial control of it. He suggested that the political leadership reside in a permanent council in Cairo and that it "lay down plans for political action outside all arrangements." Accordingly, he proposed a body of twelve members who would scan all proposals presented to the federal and national assemblies.[380]

Bīṭār rejected Nāṣir's proposal and remarked that socialism and unionism were directed and applied from above in the U.A.R., in a manner totally different from the Soviet Union and the United States. He offered an alternative:

> Our republic must have some sort of political leadership--as mentioned by Your Excellency--which may reside either in a political bureau or in a federal front; that is all right, but I do not agree that we should separate the leadership from the state as a whole. . . this leadership may be composed of certain members of the Federal Assembly and form part of that body. . . If we are to have two assemblies, one federal and one national, and decide that the former have all the authority, then the political leadership would have to be drawn from its ranks.[381]

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[379] Mahāḍir, pp. 234/2 and 235/2.

[380] Ibid., pp. 236/1,2,3 and 237/3.

[381] Ibid., p. 238/1.

Bīṭār proposed that the Assembly have from thirty to sixty members out of which eight to fifteen would be elected to form the leadership. The group thus formed, plus the President, would constitute the political committee charged with guiding and directing the affairs of the Federal Assembly.[382]

This new attempt to clamp on the Presidency did not escape Nāṣir, who objected on the basis that such an arrangement would do away with the equilibrium of the set up. Within the original arrangement, only the President could reject or veto a law passed by the majority of the Federal or National Assemblies, and a two-thirds majority would be required to ratify the law. In Bīṭār's scheme, a majority of twelve votes would be necessary to refer back a given law to the Assembly.

As a result, the President insisted that the National Assembly retained the highest authority and privilege to choose and/or dismiss a Prime Minister, a President of the Republic and a Cabinet. In fact, he was asking for effective popular representation and agreeing to a rather weak presidency, but the Ba'thists failed to grasp the implication or perhaps simply chose to do so.[383]

Zuhūr in turn proposed the set up of "an official political body" which would be "both a politburo and an official administrative body, capable of making itself felt at all levels." Nasir's counterproposal was the adoption of the

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[382] Maḥāḍir, p. 238/2,3.

[383] Ibid., p. 240/2.

Egyptian system, where the President had wide powers plus a Presidential Council. This was naturally rejected.[384]

The absence of unified political action often decried by Nāṣir was apparent at every level and in every utterance. Only Shabīb agreed that the creation of a common political leadership should indeed precede the institution of the union:

> I think. . . that a discussion of this problem should have preceded any talk about the Constitution, for we cannot proclaim a union if we do not firmly believe in the absolute unity of political action.

Zuhūr: . . . We want a presidential council which corresponds to, and complements the national fronts. . . in order to avoid any clash between the fronts and the official authorities. . .

Nāṣir: If these authorities existed, then what you say would be true. . . if the federal authority were powerful or if the President had real power, then you would be right in fearing that the nature of official rule and political leadership would be different. [That would also apply] in a parliamentary republic having a prime minister and collective responsibility in the cabinet. . . in a presidential republic. . . there is only the President's responsibility to the people. But where there is collective responsibility, a prime minister and a cabinet, both authority and leadership are collectively vested in the cabinet.[385]

Zuhūr: . . . I do not trust parliaments. . . two or three powerful men can run things and lead the others.

Nāṣir: But your own brand of government, 'Abd al-Karīm (Zuhūr), would not work. . . you want a president with no powers, a prime minister with no powers. . .

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[384] Muḥāḍir, pp. 240/2 and 243/3.

[385] Ibid., p. 245/1,3.

> a cabinet, collective responsibility in the executive branch, a federal assembly, a national parliament and a presidential council to go with the president. Were I to be president in such a set up. . . the most grievous presidential responsibility would be to receive credentials from foreign ambassadors. . .[386]

Zuhūr: I am still thinking. . . in terms of a body like the Supreme Soviet with a wide measure of authority. . .[387]

Zuhūr's dilettantism was not exceptional but rather characteristic among the participants. The meeting ended with Nāṣir driven to exasperation and exhaustion. The bargaining was to continue in the next meeting.

The Eigth Meeting (April 13)

The Ba'thists were bent on furthering their policy of strengthening the regions vis-à-vis the federal government through a series of amendments and counter-proposals. The most important questions under discussion were:

1. The right of any region to reject a federal law by three-fourths of its members in the Federal Assembly, where the law could only be passed by a three-fourths majority. This amendment was presented by Nihād al-Qāsim, and was meant as a means to overrule any decision emanating from the Executive which might be deemed detrimental to the regions. Nāṣir objected on the grounds that the President, as head of the union, should be the one to exercise his

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386 Mahāḍir, p. 246/1,2.

387 Ibid., p. 247/1.

veto power on behalf of any party who requested it, but Qāsim alleged that it was an "extra safeguard." Bazzāz remarked that since the parties to the union were expected to increase, it would be more representative to adopt a two-thirds majority; Nāṣir agreed to this diplomatic suggestion.[388]

2. Collective Responsibility vs. Individual Responsibility. Shabīb favoured the first on the grounds that individual ministerial decisions must obtain the approval of the cabinet; Nāṣir contended that in constitutional terms, both the cabinet and the individual ministers carried responsibility, but nevertheless opted for collective responsibility to avoid weakening the cabinet should one or more of its members resign if they failed to get a vote of confidence.[389]

The possibility of disagreement between the two assemblies concerning the confidence issue was solved by adopting President Nāṣir's suggestion of a unified Congress; after lengthy debates, it was agreed that confidence could be granted or denied by an absolute majority, that is, half the members plus one.[390]

3. The dissolution of regional parliaments or ministries. The article provided for a special majority to be decided by the constitution, by the proposal of a certain number

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[388] Mahādir, p. 259/2,3.

[389] Ibid., p. 256/2.

[390] Ibid., pp. 257/2 and 258/1.

of members, or on the recommendation of the Governor of the region. Qāsim wanted the article deleted, Nāṣir agreed, but no general consensus was reached.[391]

4. The election of regional governors. Qāsim suggested doing away with the post and substituting it with a regional prime minister. Atāsī favoured a governor "to provide an element of continuity," in case the regional cabinet were to resign; Shabīb moved to have the presidential system at the federal level copied at the regional level. Zuhūr suggested the election of three vice-presidents from the three regional parliaments to act in lieu of the President in each region. Nāṣir objected; in his opinion, the vice-presidents should be elected from the Federal Assembly "to avoid regional bias." No concrete accord was reached.[392]

5. The Presidency. Article 2 stated that the President of the Republic was to be elected by the National Assembly. Bīṭār wanted to assure that the Prime Minister, not the President, should be responsible for the cabinet. It was at last agreed that the President head the cabinet and not be subject to a vote of confidence.[393]

On the election of the President, the Constitution provided for the eligibility of any individual member of the National Assembly on the basis of a two-thirds majority

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391 Maḥāḍir, p. 263/2,3.

392 Ibid., pp. 263/3 and 264/1,2,3.

393 Ibid., pp. 265/3 and 266.

vote of the Congress.[394] Nasir argued that in most of the "popular democracies" it was the National Assembly which appointed and dismissed the President, who was thus directly responsible to that body. Bīṭār refuted the above and declared that such a situation only obtained in the absence of a Prime Minister. He gave Yugoslavia as an example, but Nāṣir noted that Yugoslavia was the exception, not the rule, and that at any rate the new Yugoslav constitution still made the President responsible to the Assembly. The question was left at that.[395]

6. Regional Authority. The Ba'thists requested equal authority for regional governments in their respective "province" as the federal government possessed in the federation. Shabīb backed the above motion and advocated as well the right for the Regional Governor to appoint or dissolve parliament in the same manner as the federal government would. The subject was discussed again fruitlessly.[396]

Predictably enough, Nāṣir opposed this provision. He suggested instead having the regional governor appointed by the federal, rather than the regional assembly, "to insure greater harmony," and that the governor should retain the right to dissolve the regional parliament. The entire episode underlined the divergent goals pursued by the Egyptian leader and his Ba'thist opponents. Nāṣir desperately tried to secure

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394 Mahādir, p. 267/2

395 Ibid., p. 268/2,3.

396 Ibid., p. 274/1

if not a strong presidency, at least a more balanced system, whereas Bīṭār and his party sought to insure a degree of regional autonomy incompatible with a federal system, but perfectly logical within the Ba'thist political scheme and interests. Bīṭār therefore insisted that, in a crisis, it befell the regional government alone to dissolve the parliament. The right to secede was implicit:

Zuhūr: The governor and the government might come to an agreement.

Bīṭār: That is another question.

Shabīb: Karīm (Zuhūr), that means they can then secede.[397]

Zuhūr: But we must find a solution. . .

Shabīb: . . . When both the regional government and the parliament defy a federal order they will not sit and wait for their formal dissolution. . .

Zuhūr: No secession would take place if the President of the Federation ordered to have it crushed by force.

Shabīb: Of course.

Zuhūr: But it would have to be a constitutional order. What I mean is that it has to be a legal order. The matter is that once there is a government, all is settled. . .

Nāṣir: All told, one must view political activity as a unified whole, whether at the regional or federal level. . .

Shabīb: Quite right. . .[398]

Pending matters remained on the agenda to be discussed during the following meeting.

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397 Mabādir, p. 274/1.

398 Ibid., p. 274/2.

Ninth Meeting (April 13)

The simple procedure of setting a deadline to hold the plebiscite and thus bring the union into being was faced with amazing inanity. The delegates acted as if it were something totally unexpected and bizarre. When Ḥusayn announced that the plebiscite concerning the federal constitution and the appointment of the President and Vice-President would take place within a two-month period from that day, Shabīb seemed to realize for the first time that the disarray at home was a major obstacle:

> This time limit. . . is not practicable and is not specified by the constitution. . . Also to be considered is the creation of the Front, the national leadership and the popular organizations. . .[399]

Bīṭār proposed a maximum period of six months, but Atāsī, Zuhūr, Shā'ir and Ṣūfān deemed three months sufficient. Nāṣir sarcastically stated that he would agree to any period. On the Iraqi side, Sa'dī backed Shabīb's objection and pointed out that the Kurdish question loomed ominously on the horizon, for negotiations might fail at any moment, and almost as an afterthought, remarked:

> . . . We have not been in power long enough to be able to change the structure of the state. . . We have enemies whom we must eliminate. . .[400]

Nāṣir said he would agree to three, six or nine months, but Shā'ir concluded that neither the Iraqis or the Syrians

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399 Maḥāḍir, p. 279/1,2.

400 Ibid., pp. 280/1,2 and 281/3.

could solve their problems in six months.[401]

The second point stated that after the plebiscite, the Federal Constitution and the Federal institutions would be operative within a year; this caused even more dismay than the previous one. Atāsī immediately declared that it would be impossible to hold elections in Syria within a year, and Zuhūr candidly admitted they would "have to rig the elections to keep reactionaries out," although he meant to keep the Ba'th in power.[402]

It was obvious that the hold of the Ba'th in Syria and Iraq was precarious at best. Shabīb and Atāsī dismissed the possibility of holding elections in Iraq, lest "the reactionary forces invade parliament."[403] Shabīb finally accepted the date for the plebiscite, but requested a two-year period for the constitution to be effective, which in fact meant not having a parliament. Nāṣir remarked that such a union would be weak and un-democratic. He reminded Bīṭār of his bitter criticism concerning the old union precisely because there had not been a parliament from the beginning. The President also stated his preference for a very short transitional period to avoid the risk of a coup d'état.[404]

Bitar deemed one year enough to achieve the transition, but Hindī and Zuhūr disagreed. The latter claimed that the

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401 Mahāḍir, p. 282/1.
402 Ibid., p. 282/2.
403 Ibid., p. 282/3.
404 Ibid., p. 283/1,2.

parliamentarian system was discredited in Syria, and that having popular organizations as the basis of their government was unfeasible. He pointed to the problem of "reaching the masses and convincing them about Ba'thist policies." His assessment of democracy is quite revealing:

> A revolution cannot be democratic in character . . . the government must direct from above and must penetrate down to the classes which it wishes to draw into political life. . .[405]

Zuhūr ended with a plea for a three-year transitional period. The Egyptian delegation received his request with dismay. While defending his stand, Zuhūr drew a parallel between present-day Syria and Egypt in 1952, overlooking the fact that the Free Officers had had no political organization like the Ba'th and had faced stern concerted opposition from the political parties and the ruling oligarchies, as Nāṣir aptly put it. The Ba'thists' candid explanation commands credibility:

Zuhūr: In order to combat the activities of the reactionaries, certain extra-legal measures are required which cannot be put into effect under a stable parliamentary system.

Atāsī: One possibility is to have a parliament but also . . . a state of emergency which would allow us to carry our measures through. . . There is a precedent in Syria. . . But you cannot run a country without a constitution indefinitely. Since 1948, the periods when we actually lived under a constitution are few and far between. . .[406]

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[405] Mahādir, pp. 283/2 and 284/1.

[406] Ibid., p. 284/1,2.

Shabīb: . . . Political ostracism is a necessary but insufficient measure. . . One must carry out fully the process of isolating political enemies by genuine and constructive measures, such as winning the people's trust and actually guiding them.

Shabīb pleaded for a three- to four-year transitional period and managed to alarm Nāṣir, who recalled that the foremost flaw of the old union had been the absence of federal institutions and a parliament during a long transitional period, a fact which had been strongly criticized in Al-Ba'th by Bīṭār and Zuhūr; he concluded:

> . . . Why do you suppose I have consented that the President. . . have little or no authority? It is because of your talk of tyranny and dictatorship . . . We must have elected councils. . .[407]

Impervious to pleas, Zuhūr argued that a year was needed "just to reach the peasants" and three months to simply "establish contact." His frankness on democracy and government was almost quaint:

> . . . To organize the Syrian peasants properly, we need a very long time. . . Then, frankly, I object to democracy being mentioned in the constitution.

Nāṣir: What do you mean?

Zuhūr: I understand democracy as guided democracy. . . democracy must not be separated from government and from the people.

Nāṣir: This constitution is based on the draft presented by the Syrian delegation. . . how can we say our constitution is democratic and then suppress the section on parliament at the end?. . .

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[407] Mahādir, p. 284/3.

Zuhūr: On the basis that there shall be a transitional period.

Nāṣir: We agreed all along on a parliamentary system . . . Has our discussion been all in vain?. . .

Zuhūr: We shall implement all of these measures after the transition, . . which is essential to Syria and Iraq. . .[408]

Nāṣir: . . . You should have stated you wanted a constitutional proclamation followed by a transitional period and finally by a constitution. . . the draft you presented. . . was a full parliamentary constitution and you broadcast it to the people of Syria as such.

Shabīb: That was a mistake. . . Our own proposal did not take into account the declarations of our colleagues in Syria. . . Our regime in Iraq is not yet in full control. . . This must be partially settled before we can set up a proper parliamentary democracy. . .[409]

After a recess, President Nāṣir made a recapitulation of the discussion and concluded: "We either want a parliamentary or a guided democracy." Zuhūr's apology amounted to a recognition of the gap between exalted utopic sloganeering and the necessities and vicissitudes involved in the preservation of power. The drafting of the constitution was done on the basis of "a common political action" which did not exist, and with the understanding that "a popular organization would fill the gap," an organization which everybody knew was unfeasible.[410]

As a last resort, the Iraqi and Syrian delegations alleged that they would have to renounce their respective rev-

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[408] Mahādir, p. 285/2.

[409] Ibid., pp. 285/2,3 and 286/1.

[410] Ibid., p. 286/3.

olutions if the constitution were implemented right away, because such action would allow in reactionaries and secessionists who would "do away with the federation." Pressed on by Nāṣir to suggest what would replace the National Assembly, Zuhūr promptly replied: "The three revolutions of Iraq, Syria and Egypt, in the form of a committee of twelve or fifteen men," i.e., a triumvirate Soviet style, and that despite his frequent reiteration that "leadership without the basis of organized popular support was but a skeleton."[411]

The stark truth was that neither Syria nor Iraq had its house in order, and that party interests demanded power on an equal basis with Nāṣir. Shamelessly, all the conditions previously accepted were recanted:

> Nāṣir: . . . All our previous discussions have been in vain. . . We have accepted all your recommendations on the assumption that this period would last no longer than it would be necessary to establish the various institutions outlined by the constitution. . .
>
> Bīṭār: My own comments were purely constitutional. . . not political. . . It was the Syrian government, not me, who ratified this constitution.
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> Nāṣir: But you are the Premier.
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> Bīṭār: Yes...[412]

The discussion came full circle to the question of unified leadership advocated by Nāṣir since the outset. But that goal was almost impossible, for there was no likelihood for

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[411] Mahādir, p. 287/2,3.

[412] Ibid., p. 288/3.

a homogeneous group of men to work in mutual good faith, and neither did a common political structure exist which might have framed such an operation. In essence, the Ba'thists were now demanding a coalition in contrast with Nāṣir's original demand for a unified political leadership which, he insisted, would be the only means to lend a measure of continuity to the regime.[413] The President stressed that within a coalition each member is bound to his group, and therefore no strong commitment to the federal government can ever evolve.

Shabīb disagreed with Nāṣir, and argued that no conflict was likely to arise for, if leadership were to be exercised by the Front (instead of a National Assembly), it would be for the sake of expediency, since a unified political organization would take a long time to be established. Nāṣir reiterated that in the constitution the federal authorities had been weakened and the regions strengthened to a degree that without the National Assembly the union would never last, and the authority of the federal government would be questionable.[414] Shabīb insisted first that the authority of the federation be vested in the Revolutionary Council, and second, the army:

Nāṣir: . . . What is the authority of the Revolutionary Council?

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[413] Mahādir, p. 290/1.

[414] Ibid., p. 291/1,2.

Shabīb: A comprehensive foreign policy.

Nāṣir: That is the easiest thing to evolve. . .

Shabīb: Defence.

Nāṣir: We have not agreed about this subject! . . . The unity of the army is essential to any federation, but we have not reached yet an agreement on this matter. . .

. . . . . .

The only binding /element/ in this very loose union is a national assembly. . . and now you wish to replace it by a revolutionary council. If you review our discussions, you will find too much disagreement /on several issues/: the role of the regional parliament and ministries. . . their dissolution. . . the appointment of a regional ministry /or/ of a regional governor. . . We left undecided all of these topics since the tendency was towards reinforcing the regions and weakening the federal power. . . If we now do away with a national assembly. . . our union will amount to a simple endeavour aimed at creating some kind of political leadership. . .[415]

Faithful to the party policy, Shabib held out and mendaciously stated that he was hopeful that during the transition period "some sort of framework, including both the Federal and National Assemblies, might be created." Nāṣir sternly criticized the Ba'thist stand:

This talk of a political leadership really amounts to party dictatorship. . . and regardless of whether our policies are unified or not, it shall not succeed. . .[416]

The discussion of political leadership entailed the question of mass political organizations. It turned out that the Ba'thist leadership could not draw either peasants or

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[415] Mahādir, p. 291/3.

[416] Ibid., p. 292/2.

workers into the party because, according to Zuhūr, cooperation existed only on paper, and they lacked an efficient organization similar to the Egyptian Socialist Union to set up a campaign to attract them.[417] Consequently, Zuhūr insisted that a period of three years was necessary to organize and incorporate the people into the political machine of the state.

Atāsī objected even to the delimitation of one or three years; in his opinion, they should follow a schedule and complete it in whatever period it might take to do so. Nāṣir insisted that the Ba'thist stand amount to an endorsement of party dictatorship which was bound to fail; in a last attempt, the President tried to persuade them to schedule at least the election for popular councils within six months, but his protracted partners remained adamant.[418]

The Ba'thist notion of a triumvirate "guiding" the people was not a contradiction; politically, it served their ends, and ideologically, it was in keeping with their premise that party activity and popular organizations were one and the same thing. Therefore, they did not agree with Nāṣir's view that the "revolutionary council" idea would amount to party dictatorship. Nevertheless, Bīṭār pretended to assuage Nāṣir's misgivings with the assurance that the Ba'thists had no intention of creating a party dictatorship, and that they

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417 Mahādir, p. 292/2,3.

418 Ibid., pp. 293/2,3 and 294/2.

realized that popular organizations were not synonimous with the party. At the same time, Bīṭār did not give up his request for a lengthy transitional period.[419] Thus, the final balance was zero, for no time limit was set and all previously agreed questions were nugatory.

Tenth Meeting (April 14)

After an unrecorded meeting between the U.A.R. and the Iraqi delegation devoted to the study of Iraq's difficulties, it was agreed to a) establish a union in stages within a three- to five-year period; b) to issue a federal constitution to be implemented according to the discretion of each one of the regions; and c) to gradually unify the three armies.[420]

The predictability of those resolutions underlined the immaturity and weakness which characterized Arab politics at the time. The Ba'thists as a whole, had receded before the ghost of the union could acquire any substance. As it was, the above resolutions bore the satisfaction of the cynical minded and the dismay of idealist and less seasoned politicians like Hānī al-Hindī:

> . . . Our conclusions are rather surprising. For some of us in Damascus, the very special situation of Iraq was not a surprise. . . [we knew] the serious troubles faced by the Iraqi government: the Kurds, the gravity of Communist activity, the

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[419] Mahādir, p. 295/1,2,3.

[420] Ibid., pp. 298/1,2 and 299.

oil problems, the legacy of Qāsim, etc. . . .
. . . . . .
Mr. Bīṭār used to argue then that all these problems could be solved within the union. . .

No one volunteered an answer. Ḥusayn then enumerated the outstanding issues left unresolved throughout the meetings, but the audience was totally unresponsive and evasive:

Ḥusayn: . . . Elections to the Federal Assembly . . . Are they to be direct or from the regional parliaments?. . .

Shabīb: We would not mind either way.[421]

Ḥusayn: . . . And the number of members of the Federal Assembly in proportion to the Federal Parliament. . .

Shabīb: We want. . . as few as possible. . .

Bīṭār: I do not imagine. . . the constitution will specify a number. . . this should be included in the electoral law.

Nāṣir: I imagine we had better agree on something. . .

Shabīb: Let us leave this to Kamāl (Ḥusayn). . . to decide upon. . .

Nāṣir: I notice we are settling all these issues with utmost speed. . . (laughter). . .[422]

Equally unresolved remained the questions dealing with the dissolution of the Federal and Regional Assemblies, the ratifying of the regional constitutions in the Federal Assembly, the relations between the Federal Government and the regions as regards the regional governor, parliaments, ministries, etc. The common response was "let us leave this till later." The unity talks ended with an agreement to

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421 Mahādir, p. 307/3

422 Ibid., p. 308/1.

postpone the implementation of the union for two to five years; regionalism had the day.[423]

A final agreement, meaningless in the light of preceding events and those to come, was signed and published on April 17 in several Arab newspapers as "The Declaration of the Tripartite Union; Announcement of the Creation of the Federated State of the United Arab Republics."

In drawing that declaration, the participants said to have been inspired by their belief in Arab Unity "as an inevitable objective," and guided by "the popular will of the Arab people"; the grandiloquent tones belied the hollow substance of the document. The following extract comprises the most essential points.

STRUCTURE: A Federal State called the United Arab Republic; it would comprise all administrative and political activities in the domestic and international planes.

CONSTITUTIONAL ORGANIZATION.

1. Adoption of a Parliamentary System.

   a) National Assembly: the highest state authority.
      i) Upper House: Federal Council, composed of an equal number of members from each "province."
      ii) Lower House: Chamber of Deputies; members to be elected on a proportional basis.
   b) President and Vice-Presidents to be elected by the National Assembly.
   c) Dissolution of both Chambers to be effected by Presidential Decree.

THE PRESIDENCY: ATTRIBUTES.

(The President is elected by the National Assembly)

1. Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces; makes major appointments and dismissals.

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[423] Mahādir, pp. 309-10.

2. Appoints the Prime Minister and Ministers.

a) Appoints three Vice-Presidents as his Deputies.

3. Veto power over the Legislative; decision to be overriden by a three-fourths majority vote of both houses.

4. Power to dismiss Parliament on the basis of lack of confidence.

REGIONAL ORGANIZATION.

1. Legislative Councils in each region appoint a Regional President subject to the approval of the President of the Republic.

2. Regional Cabinets led by a Prime Minister and Ministers.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES.

1. The drawing up of a "Charter of National Action" to guide all progressive, unionist and popular forces.

2. Creation of Political Fronts in each member state "as an organized means of self-expression." All Fronts to be bound by the majority decisions of the Federal leadership.

3. "Unity of Aims" and "Unity of Values and Principles" to be recognized as political mottoes.

4. Creation of a political leadership at the Federal State level, in charge of guiding and unifying political action within the Federation.[424]

No agreement was reached nor any provision made for the regulation or integration of the various unionist parties into a single organization; that in itself belied the credibility of a unified leadership. The statement read:

> This leadership shall gradually establish a unified political organization that shall lead political action inside and outside the Federation,

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[424] The text of the "Tripartite Declaration" was published in Arabic in Al-Nahār (The Day) Beirut, Supplement of April 17, 1963, and in English in Arab Political Documents, 1963 (APD), pp. 227-246 and Middle East Forum, XXXIX Nos. 6 and 7 (June, July, 1963).

> and shall work to mobilize popular forces . . . But this does not mean the dissolution of existing unionist parties.[425]

The proposals for the triumvirate and the Presidential Council were not included in the prospective federal set up, except for the transitional period, when the Presidential Council was to rule the union. No specification was made concerning the Council's structure, prerogatives and limitations, except that it would be composed of an equal number of members from each region (instead of the proposed proportional representation suggested by President Nāṣir). The latter clause was a welcome concession to the Ba'th, which during the long transitional period could profit to entrench itself in Syria and Iraq.

The key issue in the development and aftermath of the Cairo Talks was the lack of mutual confidence, without which the unification of political leadership--as basis for a lasting union--was a mere mirage. The Tripartite Declaration was nothing more than "a vague statement of good intentions for the future,"[426] in that in the transitional period which was envisaged, each country, to all practical effects, was to remain an autonomous unit.

Nāṣir's primary stand was unequivocal throughout: he refused to have the Ba'th as an equal partner, so Bīṭār

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[425] Arab Political Documents, p. 229.

[426] Kerr, Arab Cold War, p. 98.

should have called off the negotiations. Bīṭār, however, needed Nāṣir's blessing to bolster his shaky regime; he sought union not as a goal per se, but as an expedient confirmation of his party's right to power, and had union come through, as a major partner in the decision-making process of Arab politics.

On the other hand, 'Abd al-Nāṣir threw his weight against the Syrian Ba'thists because of his Syrian partisans, who he hoped could exert some influence to curb or at least embarrass the Ba'th government, should it turn against Egypt. Furthermore, Nāṣir was aware of his weak following in Iraq where, without the acquiescence of the Syrian Ba'th, his influence could be neatly checked.

Egypt did not obtain a solid diplomatic success nor any political, ideological or strategic gain. Despite the fact that the final declaration was more or less drawn along Nāṣir's lines, it was doomed—from the beginning—never to be implemented. Had the commitment to form an acceptable coalition within Syria and Iraq been honoured, then the Nasirist groups would have served as a buffer between Nāṣir and the Ba'th, and the basis for a strong union might have been laid down. But, there never was a chance for such coalitions.

Formally, the coalition terms were not spelled out in the Cairo Agreement, and practically, the Ba'th could not

really contemplate granting concessions to its rivals. A true division of offices would have weakened the party's position as the sole arbiter of Syria and eventually, would have endangered the party should the opposition groups chose to close ranks against it.

The lack of implementation of even the preliminary resolutions for the transitional period soon aroused intra-group disputes and were followed by the purge of pro-Nāṣir elements in the army and the NRCC.[427] Dissension was bound to occur within the Ba'th as well on account of the different views held by those party members--civilian and military--who genuinely and out of ideological conviction desired a sound union, and those who sought to fulfill their own political ends first, the union being instrumental but not essential towards achieving that goal.

Cued by Syria, Iraq followed suit and acted against pro-Nāṣir groups on May 25.[428] That notwithstanding, on June 7 the NRCC issued a joint communiqué stating the determination of the two governments "to satisfy the aspirations of

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[427] The unionist groups of Ṣūfān, Hindī and Qāsim had been accorded a lesser representation in the NRCC "on a temporal basis." After the talks, they demanded equal representation in the National Front but were rebuffed and therefore resigned. See "Memorandum submitted by the Non-Ba'thist Unionist Forces in Syria to the Syrian National Revolutionary Council," published in Al-Nahār (The Day) Beirut, May 21, 1963 and reproduced in English in APD, pp. 267-273.

[428] The Iraqi NRCC published a statement concerning an alleged coup led by "opportunist and reactionary elements" against unity. This provided a good excuse to clamp on all dissidents. Al-Jamāhīr (The Masses) Baghdad, May 26, 1963; excerpts in English in APD, pp. 275-76.

the Arab people for the Tripartite Union, to implement the Cairo Charter in 'letter and spirit,' and to hold the plebiscite at the appointed time." [429]

The frail skeleton of the protracted union had already been seriously fractured by the vicious propaganda war which had been mounting in strength since late April (scarcely fourteen days after the agreement was signed), and was finally shattered by the bloody suppression of the allegedly Nasirist putsch against the Ba'thist regime led by Captain Muḥammad Nabhān on July 18. That put an end to any pretence of implementing the union.[430]

Though Nāṣir's prestige was saved, the embarrassment of failure remained. Despite his charisma, prestige and statesmanship, he was unable to unify the Arabs. On the other hand, 'Aflaq's and Bīṭār's lust for power, strong-arm politics and their inability to control their military clients eventually meant their downfall and the eclipse of their party.

The Ba'th had long been the champion of democratic ideas, but its increasing militarization alienated it from the masses and curtailed its freedom of action. The Syrian officers took full advantage of the Nāṣir-Ba'th rift; they "colonized" and tamed the party which then served as the vehicle to carry out their political aims.

The final collapse of the Ba'th marked the end of civilian regimes in Syria and lightened the task of military

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[429] Official News Bulletin, Damascus, June 8, 1963.

[430] The official NRCC statement was published in Al-Ba'th, Damascus, July 19, 1963 and reproduced in APD, pp. 315-16.

take-over. Likewise, the Ba'th's demise meant the strengthening of the military junta's power in Iraq. The nine months during which 'Abd al-Salām 'Arif served under Ba'thist rule served him as a kind of apprenticeship. He let the Ba'th become entangled in domestic and intra-party squabbles before pushing it aside, a task made easier on account of the party's excesses while in power.[431]

Unity receded again into the musty pages of utopic dreams, ideological jargon and sloganeering--a matter to be dealt with later--its true meaning and importance fading away along with the blurred concepts of "freedom," "democracy" and "socialism." Ideology was no more where military political interests reigned.

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431 Hurewitz, The Military Dimension, p. 148.

# PART III

# IDEOLOGY AND THE ARMY: THE PROBLEMS OF POLITY AND RULE

## V. TRADITIONAL BEHAVIOUR IN MODERN POLITICS

The failure of the Cairo Talks derived not so much from ideological difficulties as from differing political interests based on regional diversity and the uncompromising quest for leadership. The pursuit of leadership over the entire Arab world is closely related both to the traditional Arab conception of power and government and the lack of a political community. This particular set up is also conducive to authoritarian rule, because the mechanisms to check absolute power do not exist; whence the establishment of "stratiocracies"[432] throughout the Arab states.

Army rule is not a modern feature of Arab society. Islam was spread by the sword and so were the questions of leadership and succession settled when expediency so demanded. "Men of the Sword" have always been associated --when not in full control--with power. However, despite the prior existence of large-scale military formations in the Arab lands, the modern military establishment is a phenomenon akin to North-Western European civilisation

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[432] P. J. Vatikiotis coined the term from the Greek "stratiotis" (soldier) and "kratos" (rule), in his article "Some Political Consequences of the 1952 Revolution in Egypt," in Political and Social Change in Modern Egypt edited by P. M. Holt (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 370.

which has slowly spread throughout the globe.[433] The modern army has arrogated unto itself the tasks of nation-building, social reform and economic progress, despite that in most cases, the officers lack the necessary managerial, intellectual and political talent to do so. The army, in its nation-building role, is acutely hampered--among other things--by the ethnic, cultural and religious plurality of Arab society, as well as the existing horizontal and vertical social cleavages. These cleavages do inhibit the two key elements necessary for social mobilization, namely, the circulation of the elites and the awakening of the masses.[434]

The shift from the Islamic perspective towards a nationalist democratic preference is gradually taking place, but the present results are far from complying with the philosophical premises of Western thought. As exemplified by the Unity Talks, there is a marked preference for utopian over constitutional democracy. In fact, constitutional formalities seem to have no connection with the realities of the political process (evidence of that was the detailed

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[433] Morris Janowitz, "Some Observations on the Comparative Analysis of Middle Eastern Military Institutions," in War, Technology and Society edited by V. J. Parry and M.E. Yapp (London: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 417.

[434] Karl Deutsch, Nationalism and Social Communication (Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 1953), p. 78, discusses in depth the problems of ideology and political unity in fragmented societies in his theory of social mobilization through social communication.

elaboration of presidential, parliamentarian and regional powers contained in the Tripartite Declaration and the total disregard for them immediately after). No precedent for the legal transition or change of government and/or political institutions, other than the military take-over, can be discerned.

Given the above premises, it is very unlikely that the will to unite on the part of the people will crystallize in the absence of well-established ideological and institutional structures which would translate the quest for unity into a meaningful, practical reality. But it is by analysing the relationship of authority, power and government, that the inmobility of Arab Islamic tradition and the incapability to unite come to the fore.

The Cairo meetings furnish a distinct insight into the peculiar functioning and thinking of the military elite vis-à-vis the art of government as well as the interpretation and application of ideological formulae. The officers showed a total disregard for the implementation of ideology or political responsibility in relation to the state and the people. Their power derived from physical means, rather than legal authority. The Ba'th and its army supporters sought that authority in the form of Nāṣir's recognition of the Syrian regime.

Nāṣir, on the other hand, possessed a charismatic au-

thority which enabled him to persuade rather than coerce, and to exert power in an indisputed manner. Devoid of that traditional source of authority, the Ba'thist leaders were ultimately driven to coerce when persuasion failed them. The net result was qualitatively the same: power and authority were used in a traditional and absolutist manner by Nāṣir, the Ba'th and the army officers because the rigidity of traditional patterns dictated the stagnation of modes and ideas concerning the philosophical basis of the state.

It is worth noting that whenever change occurs in the Middle East it is not the product of a normal evolution, but the convulsive effect of violent reaction. Power, and the way it is applied, lies at the root of the problem.

## POWER, AUTHORITY AND THE LEGITIMACY OF RULE

In the Arab East, power is held not as a prerogative collateral with responsibility or just as a means intended to produce certain effects; it is rather an inclusive privilege combining influence and domination at each end. The meaning of authority in its literal sense is the power to command, enforce obedience, take action and make final decisions. Political authority, on the other hand, requires that in exercising his authority, the governor's intent

must be limited to changing the governed's behaviour, not his attitudes or beliefs. Moreover, although there is an implicit threat of coercion, there should be no use of force, for it would signify the breakdown of authority.[435]

As a concept, political authority is not apparent in Arab societies, for authority, like power is traditionally personal and applied without restrictions, given that the avowed intent of the ruling military elites is precisely that of forcing the masses into changing their basic attitudes and beliefs, without providing them in the process, with a government of law to shape their political behaviour.

Thus, the Ba'th Manifesto's claim that "the vanguard has the right to <u>force</u> men to be free,"[436] is in keeping with the modes of governance accepted in the area. Change, however, is not a uniform but a selective process: Zuhūr, among others, stated that the government "should direct from above and should penetrate down to reach only those it wished to draw out into political life"(i.e., devoted followers).[437]

Nāṣir also believed in organizing, re-shaping and directing society as a whole from above (as evidenced by the Charter of National Guidance, where all social, political

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[435] Anthony de Crespigny and Alan Wertheimer, editors <u>Contemporary Political Theory</u> (New York: Atherton Press, 1970), p. 58; cf. Hannah Arendt "What is Authority?" in her book <u>Between Past and Future: Exercises in Political Thought</u> (New York: Viking Press, 1968).

[436] Aflaq, <u>Fī Sabīl</u>, p. 29; my italics.

[437] <u>Mabadir</u>, p. 283/2.

and economic activities are defined and regimented), but whereas the Ba'th had to use the army for coercion, Nāṣir could apply persuasion, thanks to his charisma. It was charisma in fact, which sustained the President in power despite his military and political failures in 1956, 1961 and 1967; moreover, his authority remained undamaged.

The above further proves that political theory does not always apply to Arab political realities, for theory claims that when authority derives from purely personal peculiarities, "failure tends to be fatal."[438] Likewise, the Ba'th and its leaders were not ousted by angry citizens when they failed in governing the country, but rather by their exclusive clients, the army officers. Whether the Ba'thists infringed the law or not was a moot question; their authority was not charismatic, nor associated with an easily recognizable symbol less nebulous than the law, and more powerful than the army.

This phenomenon is akin to plural and fragmented societies still marked by authority relationships on the personal, social and political levels and in which rule remains autocratic, in the hope of achieving rapid change and development, not through the concerted effort of the people, but by the design of the few individuals who control the machinery of government.

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438 R. S. Peters, "Authority," in Contemporary Political Theory, p. 66.

The absence of charismatic leadership does not presupose the growth of constitutional government. On the contrary, authority and power become diffuse until they acquire substance, be it in an individual or a ruling powerful elite like the army. In their substantive form, authority and power are thus translated into autocratic rule which is bound to flourish in those fragmented societies where the proliferation of parties responds to ethnic and tribal interests (e.g., Syria and Iraq). To be satisfied, those interests require the support of the army; whence the tendency to make adepts among the officers. This practice resulted in the gradual politicisation of the army and the fostering of liberal, radical nationalist and social ideas as opposed to the conservatism of Western officers.[439]

Another consequence of the personalization of authority and power is the failure of parliamentary democracy and the military take-over. The relationship between the civilian politician and the military is actually a necessary symbiosis (given popular apathy) in which the officers become the exclusive clients and the sole active constituents of revolutionary leaders and/or rulers whose power rests upon satisfying the bureaucratic needs and ambitions of their clients. In fact, by stepping in, the army does not

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[439] Majid Khadduri, "The Role of the Military in Middle Eastern Politics," American Political Science Review, XLVII No. 2 (1953), 517.

ultimately fill a vacuum; it merely breaks a stalemate.[440]

Furthermore, the radicalization of thought and action in the military ranks is only apparent in the rallying cries of "Liberalism, Revolutionary Radicalism and Unionism," but so far, they and the societies behind them, are seemingly incapable of providing a creative idea of human commitment in order to achieve unity.[441] Radicals on the surface, the officers appear willing to use power for ends contrary to those envisaged by the conservatives; yet, they are still unable to exercise and organize power--when they seize it--in a different or original way.

The conception of power remains traditional because of the means used to acquire it, namely, the military coup. The coup as the sole means of political change tends to fall into a pattern: civilian collaboration usually increases after the coup and the alliance often results in a duplication of rule which leads to conflict. The officers tend to instruct the civilians; if they agree, in time become superfluous, and if they object, they are dismissed.[442]

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[440] Dankwart A. Rustow, "The Military in Middle Eastern Society and Politics," in The Contemporary Middle East, ed. by B. Rivlin and J.S. Szyliowicz (New York: Random House, 1965), p. 468.

[441] Vatikiotis, Conflict in the Middle East, p. 11.

[442] Evidence of this is the 1963 Ba'thist cabinet which consisted of ten civilians and ten army officers, who eventually ousted their collaborators. See Hurewitz, Military Dimension, p. 146 and Mahādir, pp. 27 and 30.

Therefore, it can be said that a coup is the beginning of military dictatorship, for soldiers never return to their barracks. From the succession of coups in Syria and Iraq, one can fairly conclude that the coup is not merely "the high road" but "the only road" to effect political change in the Arab countries.[443]

The choice of armed expediency over lawful means to carry out the transition of power is a reflexion of the Arab leaders' inability to establish a concept of legitimate rule and a principle of authority. There has been a constant attempt to replace the old religious basis of the community with a secular one, but the transformation was incomplete, and consequentially, unsuccessful in producing a secular polity, simply because the nature of rule and authority remained unchanged. Nationalism so far has produced states which do not comprise national political communities.

The lack of a true political community inhibits the capacity for integration and the inception of federalism (which should have been the framework of the union if successful). To resolve the future of the political community in the Middle East, the major questions of social mobilization and economic development have to be cleared. Yet, at

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[443] Syria underwent three coups in 1949, two in 1951, two in 1962 (plus the secession in 1961) till March 8, 1963, when the Ba'th came back to power. Similarly, Iraq experienced seven coups from Oct. 29, 1936 to April 3, 1941. After a calm of seven years, 1958 re-established the pattern. Four more coups occurred before the Ba'thist faction came to power in 1963. Be'ri, Officers in Arab Politics, pp. 247-50, 246 and 254.

the time of the bid for union, only Egypt had embarked upon a comprehensive scheme for land reform and a policy of industrialization, albeit state controlled. Land reform in Syria remained on paper, while laissez-faire governed all financial, industrial and commercial activities.[444]

Iraq lagged farther behind. Social mobilization could hardly occur within its fragmented society, and economic development could not be fostered by a non-diversified economy totally dependent on oil revenues and an ambryonic industry. As Nāṣir accurately pointed out, socialism was not viable in Iraq because there was nothing to be socialized or nationalized.[445]

To social mobilization and economic integration one should add national unity. So long as Arab societies remain a mosaic of ethnic and tribal units, there shall not be a true state and therefore, there cannot be any basis for a federal state. As a binomial proposition, federalism requires the pairing of the political community with the ability and will to unite, both of which are lacking in the Arab East. Federalism should also embody supranational authority, but in the Middle East the subordination of the army to a supreme political authority would be exceptional. Military rule, on the other hand, seems to be the normal condition, and seizures of power by the mil-

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[444] Mahādir, pp. 103-108 and O'Brien, Egypt's Economic System, pp. 58-62.

[445] Mahādir, p. 182/1,2.

itary, the national course.

So far, the attainment of unity and federalism remains more the subject of ideological and methodological discussion than a definite goal.[446] Although the army has been unable to achieve unity and social change, it remains the most hopeful alternative. The great value of the army is its relative cohesiveness, control of the communications media and actual power. Ideology can be spread more easily by means of the army as a social movement; the army could arouse the people if it were capable of simplifying ideas, establishing a claim to truth, and in the union of the two, demand a commitment to action. Politics and ideology are a volatile combination; only time can tell if the army can carry on without discrediting itself as the civilian politicians have.

Nationalism and Political Community

The lack of success in creating a meaningful and strong polity goes hand in hand with the failure to produce a working, congruous ideology. With no polity and no ideology, the lack of unity is both psychological and social. This again is a characteristic of pre-industrial societies, where the calls for unity by nationalists and religionists are not the result of conflict among them, but the expres-

[446] This is so because there is no historical precedent for the kind of political unity advocated by Arab nationalism. See Henry Siegman, "Arab Unity and Disunity," in The Contemporary Middle East, p. 252.

sion of their desire to mobilize the energies of a people still caught in the web of tradition.

The main question which the Arab leadership tries to solve is how to change a culture and a society. The embodiment of this change is "revolution" and its instrument, "government."[447] Revolution is seen as a process entailing a social, cultural and psychological regeneration having as an ultimate goal giving power to the many by means of what is called "an awakening." This awakening is tied-up with the prerequisite of democracy since it provides a fundamental agreement within which some disagreement may be tolerated.

The shift towards a nationalist-democratic preference is thwarted and slowed down by the absence of a true national ideology, coupled with the conflicting relationship between political identity and community. These last two terms should be fulfilled to assure the maintenance of a stable polity, and in this light, both determine the political function of ideology. This function, on the other hand, is defined philosophically, i.e., by our ideas of society, culture, etc., and of political community. In this sense, Arab ideology has not crystallized yet.

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[447] Binder, Ideological Revolution, p. 9.

## National and Political Identity

If the former proposition that a political community has yet to evolve in the Arab countries is accepted, one can safely assert the same for ideology. Ideally, ideology "ought to include symbols such as to requit both functional requisites of identity and community."[448] The problem is neither of these two terms is clearly defined in Arab politics, nor do they evoke a precise response from the masses. In its contemporary context, political community is "the terminal group to which political allegiance is owed";[449] in the Middle East, on the other hand, the concept is defined in terms of current political issues: Islam vs. nationalism as the basis of the political community; one Arab state vs. several; questions of legitimate procedures and techniques, the scope of government, etc. This is amply corroborated by the "ideological discussions" corresponding to the last round of the Cairo talks.[450]

Given the lack of a true political community, identity can not be established as a living phenomenon, and if there is no individual political awareness at the national level, much less is it to be expected on a supra-national scale. Syria and Iraq constitute perfect examples for our discussion, in that both are fragmented societies whose

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[448] Hans Kohn, The Idea of Nationalism (New York: Macmillan, 1961), p. 32.

[449] Binder, Ideological Revolution, p. 117.

[450] Mahâdir, pp. 132-295.

populations pay allegiance to the group rather than the state. Throughout the discussions it was apparent that the leaders of these two countries could not count on the support of their people. Bazzāz warned that the Kurds would never accept the federation unless given some "reassurance" because they were "too sensitive," a roundabout way of expressing the danger that the Kurdish population represented for Iraq's national integrity.[451] Ṣalāḥ Bīṭār dreaded no less the centrifugal forces of Syria's disparate social and political groups which have proved to be ungovernable through the centuries.[452]

Seen in this context, Arab nationalism appears without basis, since "the single objective ideological consequence of nationalism. . . is that it delimits the political community."[453] This proposition is perhaps debatable in that Arab nationalism is inherently a subjective sentiment from which nothing further may be logically derived. As a living phenomenon, it is characteristically romantic and vital, and its mass appeal justifies it. The problem lies in that Arab nationalism has not yet been applied meaningfully to everyday political life and that the link between

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[451] Mahādir, p. 194/2.

[452] In Syria, social divisions exist along religious and ethnic lines: 60 per cent are Sūnnī Arabs; there are around 100,000 each of Kurds, Alawis, Druzes, Greek Orthodox and nine other minorities amounting to 10,000 each. Halpern, Politics of Social Change, p. 211 and Rabinovich, Syria under the Ba'th, p. 3.

[453] Elie Kedourie, Nationalism, 3rd. ed. (London: Hutchinson & Co. Ltd., 1969), p. 9.

abstract ideas and identity sentiments has not been fully forged.

So far, nationalism has served its purpose as a liberating force against colonialism, but it has not succeeded in producing an Arab polity. To achieve that end, the old political culture (Islamic and dynastic, tribal, military and autocratic), along with a basically traditional society, must be radically changed. But, despite its shortcomings, nationalism has been essential in the endeavour to give the Arabs a secular identity independent of Islam. This was possible because classical nationalism, like Islam, is monistic in its theory of the state.[454]

In the past, Arab nationalism was concerned with defining the Arab nation and determining the Arab state. By 1963, it had become a doctrine of political action championed by 'Aflaq and Nāṣir. 'Aflaq's is an objective theory, despite his stressing ideas with strong subjective connotations (e.g., "Arab nationalism is a living thing which defies analysis."; "Nationalism is not theory, but it gives rise to theories.")[455] He denies theorizing only insofar as it may affect the basic premises of his argument. Nāṣir is basically in agreement, for he accepts that there is a philoshophy of the revolution and suggests that scholars investigate the historical events leading to that revolution

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[454] Binder, Ideological Revolution, p. 40.

[455] 'Aflaq, Fī Sabīl al-Ba'th, pp. 9-11.

before expounding the ideology.[456]

Arab nationalism should be correlated with the politicisation of the masses and the derivation of political legitimacy from the real or purported will of the masses; this historical development constitutes the only solid content for the justification of Arab nationalism. Instead, the lack of a strong link between abstract concepts and identity sentiments has precluded the evolution of Arab nationalism into a national creed. The masses continue to be guided and the rulers' guns are the basis for the legitimacy of their government.

In summing up, we can ascertain that as an ideology, Arab nationalism has served the purpose of giving the Arabs a secular identity, but it has not yet reached the aim of making the Arab nation co-extensive with one Arab state, nor has the essence of this nationalism been defined or the questions of leadership and legitimate rule solved.

## Plebiscitary Democracy

The shortcomings of Arab nationalism in making the Arab nation co-extensive with one Arab state are better exemplified by the lack of political awareness. This awareness should constitute the basis for the understanding and ultimate adoption of democracy, but in the Arab world there is

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[456] Gamal Abdel Nasser, Egypt's Liberation: The Philosophy of the Revolution (Washington: Public Affairs Press, 1956), p. 12.

a definite conflict of cliques, orientations and socio-cultural traditions which impairs national identity and truly inhibits the growth of political awareness. The survival of the traditional expectation that after consultation has taken place the minority must follow suit with the majority, predisposes the Arabs to accept reformist regimes which fall into the category of "popular authoritarianism" and "plebiscitary" or "guided democracy."[457]

In its purely theoretical form, democracy is defined as a system of government in which people are the supreme authority for all official acts, and individual and social responsibility are reconciled.[458] Within the Arab reality, this is not feasible. Few of the presupposed conditions of democracy exist in the Middle East (e.g., unqualified respect for the law, individual rights, equality before the law, freedom of action for opposition and interest groups, etc.). It is even doubtful that the true import of the concept has been understood, or that those in government wish to implement it, for the concept of the "loyal opposition" cherished in Anglo-Saxon politics, has no place in the philosophy of the new Arab radicalist politicians.[459] This presumption was abundantly justified by the utterances

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[457] J. H. Kramens, "L'islam et la démocratie," Orientalia Neerlandica (Leiden, 1948), 226.

[458] Binder, Ideological Revolution, p. 188.

[459] Elie Salem, "Emerging Government in the Arab World," in The Contemporary Middle East, p. 443.

of the participants in the Cairo Unity Talks.[460] The general consensus favoured guided democracy and abolishing all opposition. Those views agreed with 'Aflaq's theory of a leading vanguard acting, though not obeying, in the best interests of the people,[461] and President Nāṣir's regimented democracy. Though qualitatively different, their ideologies had a confluence of aims in the absolutism of power each sought to achieve and retain.

As an accessory to democracy, freedom was subjected to the same restrictions; according to 'Aflaq, freedom "may be expanded until the radical nationalists attain power," and "curtailed in proportion to their loss of power." Therefore, the "vanguard" must continue to lead because it knows "the true and wider interests of the Arab people."[462] Only when the coincidence of the will of the masses and that of the vanguard group occurs, can democracy, freedom, nationalism and socialism be operative in Ba'thist terms; this coincidence, however, seems hard to come by. Like democracy and freedom, socialism is restricted by the unfulfilled goals of the Arab states.

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460 See supra, pp. 156-58.

461 'Aflaq, Fī Sabīl, p. 59.

462 Ibid., pp. 29-32.

## Guided Socialism

Given the undemocratic characteristics of the Arab regimes, socialism could only evolve as a guided experiment and lacking public support. The Arab brand of socialism is post-Communist, undogmatic and highly nationalist. Socialism appeared in Egypt (1956-61) as a series of improvised economic programmes rather than as an ideology. The increasing popularity of Arab unity came to be accompanied by the idea of revolutionary socialism as the final repudiation of colonialism.

'Aflaq's socialism (which the Syrian army adopted) is Stalinist in character: it can only be a reality within one united Arab state. He acknowledges not a class struggle but a struggle between the Arab people and those hostile to them. In short, the Syrian brand differs from Marxist ideas in its rejection of the class struggle, and from Western socialism, in its espousal of an insular nationalism.[463]

Ba'thist ideology considers socialism, freedom and unity aspects of the same thing, "none of which has precedence over the other." In that sense, socialism is said "to have a beginning but no end; it is a way of life, and the first step towards achieving it is not organization, but

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463, 'Aflaq, Fī Sabīl, pp. 210-12 and 223, and Gordon Torrey and John F. Devlin, "Arab Socialism," in Modernization of the Arab World, p. 185.

understanding."[464] The striking fact is that despite the elaborate theorization of socialism, the Ba'th never attempted to put it into practice.

Contrary to 'Aflaq, Nāṣir derived his socialist theory from practice. Egyptian socialism was conceived as a development policy and as such, it had a qualified success in altering the whole of society. The land reform of 1952 affected more the power than the social structure. Though moderate, the reform removed the props that upheld the landed oligarchy and its satellite mercantile, industrial, and conservative religious interest groups without, for the time being, assaulting their economic and social privileges.[465] It took nine years for the regime to reverse that policy by the massive nationalization of property in 1961.

After the secession of Syria from the union in 1961, Nāṣir also gave his socialism a Stalinist character (i.e., "socialism in one country"), and like 'Aflaq, called for social harmony instead of the dictatorship of the proletariat or any other class; private ownership, though highly regimented, was allowed along with state and cooperative ownership of the means of production. Land and income redistribution were acknowledged by Nāṣir and 'Aflaq, but

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[464] Interview with Akram Ḥūrānī, quoted by Leonard Binder in Ideological Revolution, p. 185.

[465] Charles Issawi, Egypt in Revolution - An Economic Analysis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965), pp. 159-60.

such a policy was carried out in Egypt alone.[466] In synthesis, Egyptian and Syrian socialism differed only in that the first was implemented and the second remained purely theoretical.

Furthermore, the aims of socialism in Syria and Egypt were identical: they sought freedom from foreign control, non-alignment with the Great Powers, a comprehensive Arab unity and social, political and economic reconstruction with the stimulus of the state.[467] This ideological confluence is logical, for the groups behind this national ideology were roughly the same in both countries, namely, the bureaucracy and the military.

Iraq, on the other hand, lacked both theory and practice:

> Nāṣir: . . . I was startled when Ṭālib (Shabīb) told us that Iraq's industry was 90% nationalized. . . . . But I found out that that is not accurate. . . In view of the fact that King Faysal nationalized services completely. . . his socialism was more advanced than yours. . .
>
> Zuhūr: Of course, in this sense socialism does not exist in Iraq.
>
> Bīṭār: But it is on its way. . .
>
> Nāṣir: No. Capitalism, both private and public is at present inactive in Iraq. . . the whole economy has collapsed. . . Iraq is by no means socialist. . .[468]

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[466] Ibrahīm 'Abd al-Raḥmān, "Planning for Balanced Social and Economic Development," Memo of the Institute of National Planning (Cairo, 1961), pp. 37-46.

[467] Peretz, Middle East Today, p. 233.

[468] Maḥāḍir, p. 182/2,3

The truth of the matter is that none of the three countries was truly socialist. Faithful to their middle class background, the soldier-politicians aimed at expanding the economic and political opportunities of their class, thus enhancing their own social status. Nationalism, rather than socialism, was the legitimizing institution and their justification: when the political is viewed as an aspect of the economic, socialism usually becomes a necessary adjunct of democracy or nationalism, and that is the case in the Arab world.

A constitutional political community could at least have a concerted participation or repudiation of the state's policies, but in the absence of political awareness and national identity the polity can not evolve. In that sense, revolution as a means of change should be a welcome proposition, provided it <u>really</u> means replacing traditional attitudes and values which constitute a stumbling block in the maturity and strengthening of modern polities. Socialism could also be a feasible premise should it be judiciously implemented and propagated conscientiously among the population.

In this respect, it is not farfetched to link unity with revolution and socialism--as 'Aflaq does--in that revolution would carry out a necessary change and socialism would satisfy the material needs of the many: a satisfied

society can be unified.

No reform, however, can have a lasting impact unless the application of political and economic measures be timed to social change, widened in scope as regards achievement and management, and opened to more innovative initiatives. The main basis for failure nevertheless remain in society itself; so long as self and national identity do not assert themselves fully, the lack of national commitment and participation shall keep the nation-building process in a state of suspended animation.

## VI. THE ARMY AND THE NATION-BUILDING PROCESS

From the inception of the unity talks till their demise, political bargaining was coloured by the military mentality and attitude: revolutionary defiance and chauvinistic nationalism replaced those skills of political leadership that require discussion, persuasion and negotiation for which professional soldiers do not display much appreciation. It was evident that the political army could not become an institution above the battle; it intervened as a partisan representing a new class and a serious contender for leadership.

### THE POLITICS OF STALEMATE AND RADICAL NATIONALISM

Leadership, as we have noted elsewhere, did not encompass the notion of opposition, "loyal" or not. The tendency towards coercive policies--inherent in autocratic societies of the Islamic type--has been greatly reinforced by the bitter experience of the Middle Eastern countries with Western imperialism,[469] and has provoked the political paralysis of more conventional modes of government.

In this context, the army lends a measure of stability to an otherwise chaotic situation emanating from the

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[469] Rustow, "The Military in Society and Politics," p. 465, attributes this trend to Western imperialism only.

lack of agreement on constitutional principles, the inexperience of the ruling cliques with government by discussion, the weakness of civilian bureaucracies, the atrophy of political parties and the diffuseness of economic interest groups. But this stability is usually short-lived, in that the military show the same lack of political know-how as their civilian counterpart and their rule is thus characterized by the divorce of power from responsibility. Consequently, another coup is necessary to "restore order."[470] We designate this process as the "politics of stalemate."

What this political behaviour produces is an oscilatory movement between a legitimate political situation inspired by Western ideology, followed by a de facto government which, after a suitable period of consolidation, affirms its legitimacy through coercive policies in the name of Western ideological rationalizations. That alternation is not just a circular movement leading to the return of a previous situation, for the dialectics of events do not occur in a social vacuum, but is rather the reflexion of concrete social mutations and shortcomings.[471]

The oscilation between democracy and autocracy hence determines the anomalous functioning of institutions which cannot be rationally operated amidst impermanent forces. Constitutional instruments, understandably, prove difficult

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[470] See Leonard Binder, "Prolegomena to the Comparative Study of Middle Eastern Governments," American Political Science Review, Vol. LI (September 1957), p. 651.

[471] Francis Bertier, "Les Forces sociales à l'oeuvre dans le nationalisme égyptien," Orient, V (1958), 73-84.

if not impossible to operate in the absence of a strong tradition of voluntary political organization whose logical confluence is the political community.[472]

Implicit in this development is the disparity between the slow progress of social and economic change and the heightened socio-economic and political expectations derived both from the "demonstrative effect" of advanced economies and mass communication: expectations have far outgrown the potential of present-day structures. Social stagnation, therefore, lies at the base of the "politics of stalemate," which have made the military coup their instrument of change and "radical nationalism" their underlying philosophy.

Radical nationalism conveys the unmistakable middle class ideas of egalitarianism akin to radical Bonapartism rather than the conservative Prussian tradition.[473] Since most Middle Eastern armies lack an aristocratic tradition and are essentially recruited from lower and middle classes, it is not surprising that they should produce reformist military regimes rather than armies of feudal upper class origin, and that their ideology upholds the rights

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[472] In Europe the growth of such voluntary associations went hand in hand with the expansion of modern state power and served to subordinate it to the control of a widening political community. See Dankart A. Rustow, "The Politics of the Near East," in The Politics of the Developing Areas, ed. by Gabriel A. Almond and Majes S. Coleman (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), p. 420.

[473] Francis Bertier, "L'idéologie sociale de la révolution égyptienne," Orient, VI (1958), 50-53.

of the inarticulate peasantry and the working class.[474]

At the same time, the lack of an aristocratic tradition precluded any restraint in military education which might have limited the army's political orientations.[475] But, the very absence of a social tradition gave the military a free hand in changing a system in which they had little or no stake, and if social origins did not determine a professional ideology, it did contribute to a bureaucratic and managerial outlook which was congenial to social change, a phenomenon exemplified in Egypt. In this respect, the army became the agent of reform and social change, and in the process, the architect of nation-building.

Less clear, perhaps, is whether the army is the exponent and instrument of the middle class whose values and interests it seems to represent.[476] If so, then the army stands for a class with whom the majority of each Arab country does not yet share a common consciousness. If not, the army needs to anchor itself on a well-organized movement representing not a given class but the wider interests of

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[474] Ergun Özbudun, "The Role of the Military in Recent Turkish Politics," Harvard University, Center for International Affairs, Occasional Papers in International Affairs, No. 14 (November 1966), 3.

[475] The small elite of Ottoman-Circassian descent in Egypt does not warrant an exception.

[476] This view is variously accepted by Halpern, The Politics of Social Change, p. 258; Binder, Ideological Revolution, p. 215; Morroe Berger, Bureaucracy and Society in Modern Egypt (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), p. 185 and Bertier, "L'idéologie sociale....," p. 51, among others.

the state in order to avoid factionalism and social clashes.[477]

In effect, both premises are present in the Arab East. There is no uniformity in the development, behaviour, composition, spirit and capabilities of each Arab army. Their purposes have coalesced into a radical ideology which represents a criticism of parliamentary democracy and seeks power as its ultimate fulfillment, rather than Arab unity.

Thus, class and parochial interests along with regional, economic and kinship ties are more evident in the Syrian and Iraqi armies because both have failed to create an anchor organization and a durable leadership.[478] Egypt, on the other hand, has reconciled class interests and national cohesion thanks to a charismatic leader and the creation of a reliable and permanent bureaucracy. None has so far succeeded in creating a viable mass political movement.

The lack of a mass organization has largely determined the absence of mass political consciousness and participation. Illiteracy, social rigidity and the lack of political identity further confabulate to render Arab society more vulnerable to the manipulation and coercion exerted by an individual or a collective military dictatorship. The same conditions which allow the rise to power of the military,

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[477] Halpern, Politics of Social Change, p. 274, would like this movement to represent the new middle class.

[478] Ibid., p. 258; the contention is that the army has "a national mission" which has transcended those particular shortcomings.

tend to limit their ability to manufacture the type of political community they desire.

The resulting regimes and policies of each one of these countries can be better understood by looking within the framwork of each individual culture and society. Military regimes are molded by several factors: the structure of society, the heritage or absence of military rule, the nature of the deposed civilian political system, the rate and orientation of social and economic change (in particular the degree to which the army has sponsored that change), and the character of the military establishment before and after the seizure of political power. Syria, Iraq and Egypt exhibit their own mixture of the above factors.

## The Military Solution

### The Army, Society and Reform

The politics of the military in the countries under study possess many traits in common: they had all experimented with democratic institutions which had been corrupted and served the interests of the landed, mercantile oligarchies and, in Syria and Iraq, communal leaders; they had all acceded to power upon the discrediting and collapse of civilian parties, and they had all used the power machinery of the army as a means to carry on more assertive policies aimed at achieving social, political and economic reform,

as well as enlarging their respective scope of political activity and power.

Differences, however, are more significant than similarities; in this context, the role of society is a major factor. Arab societies are generally backward, but their degree of racial homogeneity varies and accounts for the absence, existence and extent of cultural, religious and socio-political divisions. In turn, these divisions determine the character of rule, the composition of the ruling elite and the degree of social mobilization and political integration, which ultimately form the personality of the state.

Society in turn is molded by the character and method of rule as well as geo-political restrictions. Though both the Egyptian and Mesopotamian civilizations were riverine cultures, centralism remained the traditional form of government in Egypt thanks to the very homogeneity of its society and the preservation of that condition even under British rule.

Upon the overthrow of the monarchy, the succeeding military junta represented not the alien upper strata or a given minority, but a sample of the majority. Whatever the innovation of army rule as an institution, the essence of it was not alien to the population. As a result, the intervention of soldier-politicians in Egypt led to the crea-

tion of a stable regime which in time fashioned its own institutions of governance.

The junta rallied around 'Abd al-Nāṣir as a unit; this allowed for more comprehensive policies--both domestic and foreign--and fostered the creation of able political cadres and the gradual maturity of the regime. With the abolition of the political parties, the military became securely ensconced and acted as the sole executors and guardians of Egypt's new policies. Lured by the magnetism of their charismatic leader, the population as a whole upheld and responded to these new policies.

The different development and behaviour of the military elite in Syria and Iraq corresponds to their plural societies. The heterogeneity of society accounts for the lack of socio-political integration of the people at large and the ruling cadres in particular. Each community, religious and/or ethnic group seeks the fulfillment of its own interests in detriment of national goals. In Syria, this pattern was accentuated by French policies whose aims were to maintain division in order to prolong submission. The end result was the growth of an amorphous society loosely knit and temporarily united by the anti-colonial struggle, but totally devoid of a national ideology, identity and leadership.

The absence of leadership became an increasingly crucial factor in a political scene where the proliferation of parties mirrored society and its divisiveness. So diffuse and atomized were the electoral basis of the political contestants, that the army became the exclusive and sole active constituent of the political parties.

Social plurality was extended to the army because the Mandate policy had stressed the recruitment of minority groups which naturally sought to improve their status by assuming or supporting the leadership.[479] Group interests in turn spawned an acute factionalism which checked the potential of the military leadership; whence the necessity to combine forces with civilian politicians and parties such as the Ba'th.[480]

The officers observed varying degrees of allegiance with the Ba'th, ranging from full membership to a loose association, which comprised the majority. Others, like 'Abd al-Hamīd Sarrāj in Syria and 'Arif in Iraq merely used the party's influence when convenient. This collaboration was possible because the Ba'th fulfilled or seemed to fulfill army desires: it provided a systematic and comprehensive political ideology for soldiers who had opinions and aspirations, but no program; the call for unity rallied the army

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[479] Gordon H. Torrey, "The Role of the Military in Society and Government in Syria and the Formation of the U.A.R." in The Military in the Middle East, ed. by Sydney N. Fisher (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1963), p. 53.

[480] Ba'thist influence on the Syrian and Iraqi officer corps dates from 1951 and 1955 approximately. Be'ri, Officers in Arab Politics, p. 401.

and most important of all, the officers gained ties with an organized, active party with branches in all Syrian towns and villages which embraced wide social strata and ethnic communities.[481]

The fluidity of the Ba'th-army relationship allowed the officers to shift from one category to another. This shifting accounted for the officers' unstable opinions which, added to the wide-spread lust for power and passion for intrigue, inevitably led to clashes among the army ranks and ultimately between the army and the civilian leaders of the party. This development occurred both in Syria and Iraq.

Despite the common link with the Ba'th, the Iraqi military establishment was British in spirit and organization and developed more as an elite corps than either its Syrian or Egyptian counterparts.[482] As such, the army had a veto control over politics dating from 1936. Army coups facilitated a system of rapidly revolving governments (usually led by Nūrī al-Sa'īd) which interrupted normal constitutional operations, but which did not include the

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[481] In this respect, the Syrian officer class comes closer than Egypt's or Iraq's to reflecting the composition of the general population, as regards diverse class composition, communities and political parties. Be'ri, op. cit., pp. 324 and 405.

[482] The Iraqi officers are members of the wealthy 'Umarī class. The corps also includes the sons of the Muslim clergy almost entirely missing in Egypt, while the majority comes from middle class urban families, sons of junior officers and small traders. Kinship and factionalist groupings are as numerous as in Syria and Egypt. Be'ri, op. cit., pp. 330-31.

military as co-rulers.[483] As a result, when the officers finally took over in 1958, they were as unprepared to govern as the rest; in this respect, the Egyptian Free Officers were several steps ahead of their Syrian and Iraqi counterparts. The presence of British troops as late as 1954 maintained the morale of the politically inexperienced officers at a high pitch and furnished them with a ready-made programme for uniting the Egyptian people behind their leadership.

The Egyptian unity of purpose compensated for the lack of a military tradition and checked and divisiveness resulting from attempted domestic reforms. During the trials of 1956, the group welded itself into a purposeful team under the guidance of Nāṣir, and thereafter, having gained a reputation for leadership, put it to practical use in running the country. Thus, at the end of the first decade, the officers had become not only articulate domestic reformers, but also good rulers capable of exercising collective leadership by means of a select group.

Again, the situation was different in Syria and Iraq. French troops had already withdrawn (1946) by the time the army took over in Syria (1949). In Iraq, the Preferential Alliance with Britain was terminated in 1955, three years

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[483] Between 1936 and 1941 there were seven successive military coups; al-Sa'īd held the premiership fourteen times. Rustow, "The Politics of the Near East," p. 393 and Salem, "Emerging Government in the Arab World," p. 441.

before the deposition of the monarchy. Since the Baghdad Pact brought benefits as well as obligations, a vigorous domestic opposition never arose against it. Without a forceful leader and an alleatory factor capable of welding all factions, the officers never formed a brotherhood, or any sort of durable leadership. Instead, Syria suffered a series of personal dictatorships which were invariably overthrown by rival factions and followed by purges, and Iraq remained yet farther behind under the monarchy.[484]

Yet, like their Egyptian colleagues, the Syrian and Iraqi officers espoused domestic reform through socialism and the modernization and expansion of the armed forces. The incursion of the U.S.S.R. as arms supplier in the area (thanks to Nāṣir's initiative in 1955), eased the attainment of military modernization, but this progress did not extend to domestic policies. In this regard, the Iraqi officers have been highly ineffective: they have mismanaged their country's considerable wealth and have failed to attain a minimum of national unity--the Kurdish question remains at large--and have contributed nothing to the cause of Arab unity.

Neither have the Syrian officers been able to copy Cairo's sort of civil-service establishment. Unlike the Egyptians, the Syrian military elite maintains social and

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[484] See Ayyad al-Qazzaz, "The Changing Pattern of Politics of the Iraqi Army," paper presented at the Seventh World Congress of Sociology, Varna, Bulgaria, September 1970, 27 pp.

personal connections with a landed upper strata and therefore, cannot carry on reform--be it political, social or economic--without creating internal strife or endangering its position. This relationship in fact, has obliterated the basis to alter the modes and political effects of the former sort of civilian rule, for the army modified rather than changed it.

The officers' inability to alter the distribution of power lies as much in their inexperience with government as in their factionalism which inhibits any possibility of consensus. Lack of consensus inhibits in turn dealing with political issues through the channels of the state, a coup being the only resource to change unwelcome policies.

The high incidence of the coup best exemplifies the officers' spurn of the value of institutions and/or modes of political thought and behaviour on their road to power. While they purport reform and subscribe to democratic ideals, in reality they find constitutional reform as such irrelevant and tend to suspect the efficiency of democracy. The net result is that traditional institutions continue to deteriorate while the incorporation of more satisfying ways lags.[485] In the absence of minimal social stability, the chances of efficient government are reduced. Conversely,

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[485] This is akin to a "legally unrestrained majority rule," that is, "a democracy without a constitution," which Hannah Arendt finds to be "very formidable in the suppression of the rights of minorities and very effective in the suffocation of dissent without any use of violence." /On Violence (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1970), p. 42/.

when the government's persuasive and coercive functions are ineffectively executed, there is little chance of social stability and less of stable growth. This reciprocal relationship seriously limits the political community and the possibility of producing durable changes.[486]

In this context, the Syrian and Iraqi coups of 1963 simply ratified a well-established pattern. The one important difference [redacted] the Iraqi coup was the inclusion of civilian politicians and the establishment of Ba'thist ascendancy in leadership over that of 'Arif. The new regime, however, did not differ significantly from the previous dictatorship of Qāsim.

Likewise, the Syrian coup purported to recall the union with Egypt, but in reality was just the means to break one more impasse in the Syrian scene. As in Iraq, the new rulers did not spell out new ways of ruling. In a quest characterized more by the necessity of survival than the higher requirements of reform and unity, the mood of the Syrian and Iraqi officers was a half-hearted expression of support for the rallying cry of Ba'thist unionism.

At heart, the Iraqi officers were conscious of the geo-political imperatives which had governed Iraqi policy in relation to Egypt and Syria. The latter was a natural

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[486] Daniel Lerner, The Passing of Traditional Society Free Press Paperback (Toronto: Collier-Macmillan Canada Ltd., 1966), Chapters vii and viii, discusses the plight of Egypt and Syria in attempting the modernization of the social and economic structure of Arab society. Many of the facts on Syria apply to Iraq as well.

partner, the former, a contender for that prize. Pan-Arabism and unity as preconized by the U.A.R. ran counter to the imperatives set by tradition in resisting Egyptian success and expansion. Neither did the Syrian officers and the Ba'th want unity in the original sense the concept carried, i.e., the total reunification of all Arab peoples. They subscribed to pan-Arabism and unity more in the interest of revolutionary rhetoric and prestige than actual policy. Thus, the real meaning of the precept of the "ideological army" which became official doctrine in 1963 did not mean the education and indoctrination of the army in a certain spirit (e.g., Arab unification and reform), but the predominance of a given party and army factions.

The liability of the officers to indoctrination is apparently stronger in Syria and Iraq than in Egypt, both because of societal particularities and the lack of strong leadership. How the army goes about governing depends on its relationship to power (e.g., indirect rule through civilian parties, veto power or outright control) and society. In this context, populism seems to be the normal solution for pragmatists of the Egyptian sort, and modernizing elitism that of more doctrinaire groups associated with an ideological party as was the case between the Syrian officers and the Ba'th.

A pronouncement on the suitability of one system over the other is neither feasible nor fair, since only the ultimate failure or success of the leadership in the Arab countries under consideration can attest or deny the validity of present policies and ideological postulations. As instruments of the military solution, populism and modernizing elitism simply add one more dimension to the analysis of army rule and behaviour.

## Populism vs. Elitism: Problems of Government, Leadership and Bureaucracy.

We have observed elsewhere that in light of the bankruptcy of civilian politics in the Middle East, the army constitutes the best organized and most coherent institution to carry on the much needed political, social and economic revitalization of the area. Because of its general composition, the army is best suited to enact populist doctrines that more conservative civilian politicians may not deem advisable because of ideological views or their particular interests and those of the groups which support them.

On the other hand, modernizing elitism of the sort preconized by the Ba'th, usually has a more restrictive effect than populism. Committed to the safeguard of its supremacy, the elite group is apt to discourage radical changes in society and the economy and choose instead loose

controls.[487] The worst feature is that popular participation in governmental affairs is negligible because the masses are left largely quiescent, whereas populist regimes uphold and intensify policies aimed at exhorting and even goading the people in order to draw them in.

The Ba'thist regime in 1963 showed a curious mixture of populist and pre-populist features. Its conception of freedom and the incidence of freedom was populist, in the sense that it restricted freedom of action to revolutionary, radical and socialist organizations, and did not permit any challenge to the ruling elite. It was pre-populist in that it allowed the existence of several political parties (instead of a single mass organization), legislated through a parliament (rather than by decree or plebiscite), maintained a "non-representative" system of rule (in the sense that the rulers were usually members of a traditional elite), and kept the bureaucracy as a personal appendage to the ruler in turn, totally divorced from the task of carrying on the reform subscribed to by the "revolutionary vanguard."[488]

Egypt, and Iraq to a lesser degree, had populist regimes. The Egyptian regime claimed to be more "representative" than either that of Syria or Iraq in that the origin

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[487] Morroe Berger, The Arab World Today (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1964), p. 394.

[488] Ibid., Chapter xi for detailed characteristics of populist and pre-populist regimes, pp. 399-434.

of the ruling cadres was middle or lower class. Given that most of the ethnic and religious groups in Syria and Iraq were represented in the army and the government, that assertion is doubtful. The most significant advantage of Nāṣir's regime over either that of Syria or Iraq was definitely Nāṣir himself, the permanence of the ruling apparatus, and the subordination of the bureaucracy which cooperated in the implementation of the development programmes designed by the regime.

These qualitative differences account for the divergence in style between Egypt's lasting military regime and Syria and Iraq's lasting military condition. The Free Officers in Cairo learned from practice that government, like armies, have their own rigid rules of management and conduct. The longer the Egyptian officers ran the government, the more they fell into the pattern of performing administrative functions in the same manner as non-military rulers do. The junta, in time, overhauled the Egyptian government, economy and society, and in doing so accepted the conventions of governance and laid out a strong basis for the continuity of the leadership and the strengthening of Egypt as a political community.

The leadership kept the bureaucracy constantly revitalized by the admission of new officers and, given the socialist character of the regime, army officers also filled

administrative positions in the state-run industries and cooperatives.[489] The closed ranks of the executors and guardians of that policy remained militarized by virtue of the constant flow of new recruits from the army. The result was the co-existence of two bureaucracies, one military and one civilian, the second being subordinated to the first.[490]

But Egypt constitutes a unique example in the Middle East of a modernizing army becoming a modernizing agency in the economy and in the society at large; the process was reversed in Syria and Iraq. Army officers replaced other officers at the leadership, not the bureaucratic level. The new leaders retained an active interest in the army and the government mainly to prevent rival factions from ousting them. The frequency of the coups made it impossible for any group in power to suffuse the civilian bureaucracy with loyal military officers or to establish a transcendent military bureaucracy.

The failure to subordinate the bureaucracy relates to the impermanence of rule, the immaturity of political cadres and the alienation of political and national iden-

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[489] Abdel Malek, Military Society, Chapter ii "The Army and the Industrial Revolution," pp. 87-149.

[490] Nāṣir tried to diversify the recruitment source and drew on civilian professional and intellectual groups to fill advisory and responsible administrative posts. Vatikiotis, Egyptian Army, pp. 224-25.

tification on the part of the masses with the state. In turn, those factors inhibit the creation of a political community and insure the miscarriage of socialist and economic policies designed to effect change and progress in these societies.

The foregoing considerations invite some reflexions. The first is the failure of the Syrian and Iraqi officers to define their regimes through policy. In Syria, during the period 1949-1954, only the regime of Shishāklī was given a recognizable political framework because of populist policies. Previous and subsequent regimes showed single features of personal dictatorship or a mixture of pre-populist and dictatorial modes.

In Iraq, on the other hand, the officers were not given the opportunity to participate in decision making. Their relatively late accession to power (1958 as opposed to 1949 for Syria and 1952 for Egypt), as well as their inexperience in government accounted for their political hesitancy and inefficiency. The army as such did not seem to have yet a conception of itself as a ruling institution.[491] Whence the easy imposition of Qāsim's personal dictatorship, and in 1963 the acceptance of the Ba'th as a senior partner.

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[491] It did have an esprit de corps in the tradition of the British, whose creation it was and to whom it was subordinated under the Preferential Act and the Baghdad Pact. Sharabi, Nationalism and Revolution, pp. 35-36; cf. Majid Khadduri, Independent Iraq (London: Oxford University Press, 1951), pp. 69-72.

Lack of solidarity also contributes to the officers' inability to evolve a congruent regime. In Syria, the coups were usually the work of an individual rather than a conspiratorial group acting in answer to the civilian politicians' invitation to "restore order," and often with the support of kindred groups. The series of purges during 1949-1963 determined the lack of permanence of any given group; the absence of solidarity, therefore, is both the product of social heterogeneity and the impermanence of the ruling cadres.[492]

The second factor is factionalism. Egypt does not face that problem because from the outset the military elite uprooted all members of the old regime by denying them the right to hold public office, by proscribing their parties, and finally, by confiscating their wealth with the sweeping socialist measures of 1961. Syria and Iraq failed to do so. The old liners, by courting any of the many military cliques, fostered internal struggles in the army and multiplied the chances for military and civilian factions to join forces in planning conspiracies. At best, this state of affairs led to indirect army rule; at worst, to the outright personal dictatorship of the colonel or general in turn.

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[492] For a comprehensive study of Syrian politics, see Patrick Seale, The Struggle for Syria (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965).

The third consideration is the failure of ideology both as a unifying, political guideline and as a working premise to enact policies. As an ideal, unity received a generally enthusiastic and romantic accolade; as a practical proposition, it only elicited age-old fears of political annexation on the part of Syria, and whetted the distrust and envy of Iraq and the rest of the Arab countries vis-à-vis Egypt.

Western institutions like democracy and freedom proved to be half-digested terms or mere slogans. Arab nationalism almost eclipsed every other concept, for it was used as a political alternative in itself. The effect of concentrating exclusively on one political manifestation --nationalism--rather than its essence--social change-- entailed temporary failure as a nation state (especially Syria during 1957-1962). Furthermore, nationalism was intimately viewed in regional instead of supra-national terms. If federalism could not thrive in this atmosphere, total unification much less.

As for socialism, it had a mixed success in Egypt and it never took off in Syria or Iraq. The failure of these two countries to militarize or to subordinate the civilian bureaucracy partly explains their lack of success during 1963 (and even after 1964), to put their socialist policies to productive effect. Both regimes could hardly

demonstrate that they had become successful sponsors of non-military modernization. On the other hand, the miscarriage of socialism could well be deliberate, according to P. J. Vatikiotis:

> In military regimes, /it is/ the soldiers and bureaucrats, communicators and technocrats /who/ tend to benefit most from industrialization and other wealth-producing activities.[493]

In the present historical period of social change, the important distinction in the character of ruling elites is whether they continue to be centred upon individuals or crystallize instead around an ideology, that is, whether political life ultimately moves from a conflict of cliques and factions to a conflict of orientations.

The above task cannot be accomplished so long as social and economic structures remain unchanged. The younger nationalists subscribe in theory to democratic ideals but actually regard constitutional reform as irrelevant. In the progression of uncertain regimes, the growing tendency is towards suspecting the efficiency of democracy and substituting authoritarian for democratic means for the achievment of progress and reform.

Progress and reform are not viewed in terms of constitutional maturity and bureaucratic efficiency. What is wanted is not a constitutional regime that functions hesitantly and slowly, but a vigorous leadership that may be

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[493] Conflict in the Middle East, p. 28.

able to revitalize, by force if need be, the dormant forces of the Arab population. The validity of government is measured by the degree to which it manages to improve the economic lot of the masses, increase industrialization, the production of natural resources and the enhancement of Arab dignity. The means to attain these goals are of secondary importance.

The question still remains: Do the soldier-politicians mean to secure the supremacy of a single individual interest, region, class or group, or do they mean to initiate individuals for the first time in the modern age into a common political culture? So far, the net contribution of radical government and charismatic leadership--when positive--has lain in administrative efficiency (as compared with past performance), the issuing of laws promoting social and economic justice, the increase in industrialization, agricultural reform and the reduction of corruption.

However, the fact that constitutional government survives only in form bespeaks of the inability of the army to effect substantive, true reforms, and belies the justification of political despotism as a form of government. At the closing of 1963, the nationalist "radical officers" in the states we have been concerned with, had a record of failure. Despite the enthusiastic accolade given them as

"vanguard" of the Arab nationalist struggle and revolution, and as the modernizers and unifiers of Arab society, the officers did not show great qualifications either as professional soldiers or as the foremost agents of social change, unity and political revolution.

# C O N C L U S I O N

The previous examination of the facts does not lead to the conclusion that Arab unity is a certainty, but they emphasize the strong drift in the direction of unity which in time might produce practical results. Whether or not unity is achieved in future, will depend on historical circumstances and developing the institutional means for putting it into effect. So far, experience has shown that spectacular tours de force in international affairs--such as the 1958 Syro-Egyptian union--regardless of the degree of enthusiasm they may generate, do not provide an institutional base for unity. Also evident is that personal charisma cannot resolve the myriad political and economic problems of unity.

Nothing can alter the fact that the realization of any real unity shall require some central authority, yet it is also clear that a strong leader like the late 'Abd al-Nāṣir frightens most Arab leaders, and that physical conquest of the area by one Arab state is not only improbable but also impracticable within the forseeable future.

In the circumstances, the future of Arab unity is anything but clear. Obstacles lie across all of the more feasible paths towards unity. The only remainder of institutionalized unity is the Arab League, which has never become

a parliament of the Arabs but remains an assembly of the representatives of the sovereign Arab states. What was once the policy of Egypt to use the League to maintain the status quo has been adopted by Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, Jordan, the Sudan and even Iraq. The prospect for a Fertile Crescent union has grown dimmer since Iraq supports the status quo and Syria remains reluctant to accept the uncertainties of another union.

The generally precarious situation of the economies of the non-producing oil countries further reduces the chance of even staking out a claim against the oil-rich Sheikhdoms. As for Egypt, the prospects for the adherence of other Arab states to the U.A.R. grew slighter following the secession of Syria in 1961, the failure of the Unity Talks in 1963 and Nāṣir's demise in 1970.

The collapse of unionism in 1963 had echoes of the fiasco of 1958. The secession and its implications manifested themselves in the politics of distrust which characterized the approach of President Nāṣir and his Ba'thist counterparts towards negotiations. The problem for Syrians, Iraqis and Egyptians was to find a formula which would give expression to the need for solidarity and cooperation within the Arab nationalist framework and still be consonant with the political and social realities of each country.

A political formula might have been more easily drawn up had a national Arab ideology existed. As it was, the dynamics of unity were circumvented by the forces of regionalism on the one hand, and power politics on the other. Since policy is still made largely by the sanction of organized force rather than debate, leadership, political organization and the ideology to justify them were at the core of the conflict.

Throughout the unity meetings of 1963, it was made abundantly clear that sovereignty and the interests of the various ruling elites in Iraq, Syria and Egypt were too solid and tenacious realities to permit, at least for the time being, voluntary state liquidations in the name of wider Arab unions. The solutions offered for the attainment of union responded to the particular perspective of the two parties involved: Nāṣir and the Ba'th. The perspective of the leadership they could provide was in turn dictated by the evolution of their respective political regimes.

The will to unite did not respond to the same preoccupations; at heart lay the contest for leadership, and the realization that Arab unity of the political sort advocated by Arab nationalism, had no historical precedent nor immediate future. Nāṣir envisaged unity within a centralized pattern consisting of a single circle with Cairo at its

center; 'Aflaq and Bīṭār were determined to imprint the union with their ideology and political style, which implied a freer arena where Nāṣir would be part of, but not the basis of the union.

The participation of Iraq was but an unfulfilled promise of stability for the union that never was; the change in leadership did not entail the shift to a unionist policy, nor elicit the support of the ruling cadres or the people at large, who continued to be divided and alienated from the new coalition formed by 'Arif's faction and the Ba'thists. In fact, the Syrian and Iraqi bid for union was an expedient solution to break the political impasse at home, rally the support of the masses and secure their regime with President Nāṣir's acknowledgment of its legitimacy.

Nāṣir was more cautious but no less interested. He did not seek the revival of the former union because it was apparent that its pattern was unsuitable to Cairo and Damascus, but it seemed equally clear that the forces which had brought about the union in 1958 persisted. The prospect of leading a new, enlarged union would have given Nāṣir the opportunity to efface the setback of the secession and provide a needed boost to his and Egypt's prestige at home and abroad. The offer was too tempting, and he did not refuse.

The tone of the negotiations indicated that the pur-

suit of unity was at best an idealized goal and at worst a prize for the contestants in the Arab arena. Each participant sought to promote his individual interest while upholding the ultimate goal of creating an Arab nation. Nāṣir at least was realistic enough to acknowledge the negotiations as a debate on the suitability of Egypto-centrism vs. Ba'thist modernizing elitism, and a personal contest for leadership between himself and the Ba'th leaders.

Bīṭār and 'Aflaq, on the other hand, seemed oblivious to the practical effects and responsibilities attached to unity. Nāṣir's lingering on the 1958 fiasco proves his awareness of the two main stumbling blocks towards unification, namely collective leadership vested in a central authority and the actual regimentation of unity into a comprehensive, specific code. The secession had made it painfully obvious that he alone, or the romantic dynamism of Arab nationalism were insufficient to materialize in practical terms what so far had been a mere illusion.

The reform of the previous union meant the destruction of the institutional basis on which it had been founded, and implied the creation of new institutions on which a new regime with a new unionist philosophy would establish itself. In theory, the military and civilian Ba'thists backed the Egyptian President's proposals, but in practice could not accept them without jeopardizing their personal

and party interests which they presumed to be those of their respective nations.

Nāṣir alone seemed to understand the meaning of reform, for he had made a serious and prolonged effort to carry the 1952 revolution on into the transformation of the social, economic and political life of Egypt. His symbolic role as leader of Arab nationalism had the effect of equating Egyptian reform with Arab nationalism itself, or at least with Nāṣir's own nationalism. The consequence was to add new dimensions to his relations with other Arab states and to link the problems of social and economic development to questions of foreign policy.

Therein lay a source of controversy. Nāṣir was not prepared to join in a federation with any state which had not embarked upon a social and economic revolution similar to that taking place in Egypt. Syria and Iraq, on the other hand, were just as reluctant to carry on even a mild socialist reform because of the ties between the military and party elite with the landed and mercantile oligarchies. The rejection of collective leadership and the "Arabization" of the economy by the Ba'thists meant the rejection of the federation itself, for it could not survive without a governmental or economic basis.

The disagreement on the implementation of economic and political measures did not evolve from ideological conten-

tion. The Ba'th and Nasir followed basically the same orientation: both favoured statism and attempted to regiment life as a whole, not only political life; both believed in guided democracy and the right for themselves to lead until the time when the absolute coincidence between their leadership and the will of the people would occur. This ideological confluence denies any substance to the claim that unity could not be achieved because of diverging ideologies.

What separated the negotiators was a divergence in practical means and goals. Essentially pragmatic, Nāṣir codified the results of his domestic policy, whereas the Ba'th theorized on the possible results of policies it never implemented (e.g., land reform, socialism, educational and political reform, etc.). Nāṣir was in control of a well-integrated, homogeneous society; the Ba'th was the weaker member of a coalition with the armed forces which attempted to govern two schismatic, plural societies.

Though imperfect, Egypt constituted a political community exhibiting at least the basic requirements of leadership, political identity, mass organization and a permanent bureaucracy. The success of the Egyptian revolution as a social movement lay in the junta's ability to simplify ideas, establish a claim to truth, and in the union of the two, demand a commitment to action. The people's commitment

had an equivalent in the officers' devotion to government and reform. The permanence of rule and Nāṣir's charisma further cemented the basis for a collective leadership which could continue to run the country even after the leader's demise.

Syria and Iraq, on the other hand, did not fulfill the requirements of a political community. Their fragmented, plural societies were not suited to unifying policies and concerted action. Primary individual and group loyalties prevailed over national loyalty and commitment. As a result, the economic, political and social diffusion could only sustain military roulettes or short-lived personal dictatorships. This impermanence of rule made it more difficult to determine the scope of government or lay the basis for the transition of rule by means other than the coup.

The frequency of military take-overs in Syria and Iraq has established a pattern where the army not merely fills a vacuum but actually moves in to break a stalemate. This politics of stalemate increasingly enhanced the position of the army which, by 1963, was ready to challenge the former ruling elites for the total control of the state. Nāṣir was aware of this development, for he repeatedly inquired about the exact composition of the leadership in Syria and Iraq, in order to assess his bargaining position.

It is difficult to determine the number of those civilian and military Ba'thists seeking unity out of genuine conviction, but it is evident that the majority were in a way stalling for time and waiting for the domestic situation to crystallize in their respective countries. The disparity between the tone of the negotiations in Cairo and the parallel political developments in Syria and Iraq emphasized the gap between ideological and practical politics.

Ba'thist ideological politics had been successful insofar as it popularized general slogans like unity, freedom and socialism, but it lacked that practical purpose which results from experience, something which Nāṣir had had the benefit of. In practical terms, the Ba'th was an ineffective force because of its reduced elite appeal and its lack of physical clout. The latter was provided by the army which had maintained a client-patron relationship so long as its factionalism had precluded the nurturing of a leadership strong enough to challenge the party. The splintering of the Ba'th ranks further weakened its position and reversed the relationship with the military. The problem was that this process of consolidation went on parallel with the negotiations for unity.

Since neither the Syrian nor the Iraqi coups had yet crystallized into an actual government, it is no wonder that there could be no agreement as to the institutionaliz-

ing of the future federation. It is not farfetched to doubt whether the participants had a glimmer of the responsibility and political complexity inherent in such a task, or even a literal understanding of "federation" and "unity" in practical, not theoretical terms.

The inability to grasp subjective concepts and link them with political action marred all prospects for agreement. This is the major failure of Arab nationalism as an ideology; so far it has turned out to be essentially an assertive imposition of a sentiment on disparate societies without a supporting cohesive and economic, not to mention political structure. Equally wrong, or at least unrealistic, is the assumption that the Arabs constitute one nation even when not formally united.

The vagueness of these assumptions makes it easier for the new revolutionaries to be radical on the surface: sloganeering replaces creative action. All nationalist forces, while still subscribing to Arab unity, cannot agree on ways of carrying it into effect. The collapse of the negotiations in 1963 further emphasized the urgent need for a coherent, practical philosophy which could channel the expectations of the Arab populations and the policies of the leadership. So far the notion of an "Arab Nation" has elicited wide popular support, but it runs the risk of being abused into oblivion.

Unionism ought to be lowered to the perspective of practical politics rather than kept in the heights of utopian thought. The crux of the matter is how to change Arab culture and society. Despite the impact of Arab nationalism, unity and radical socialism, the Arabs have not yet experimented a true political revolution in that a fundamental change in their dynastic, Islamic and traditionalist outlook has not been brought about. The principle of authority, political organization and life remain unchanged.

The basis for this stagnation is not the limitation of this process to a pattern (past or present), but rather the very nature of rule and political behaviour in the Arab countries, which continue to be influenced and determined more by tradition than by any radical ideology.

Up to now these countries have experienced rebellion, not revolution, as they have been able to change only the pattern rather than the system, the essence, or the basis of government. They have also failed to establish a concept of legitimate rule and a principle of authority. The modernization of Arab society and culture has been incomplete; consequently, the leadership has been unsuccessful in producing a secular polity simply because the nature of government and society remained static. So long as authority and power continue to be viewed in charismatic and autocratic terms, no possibility exists for the rule of law to ef-

fect a peaceful transition of power and assure the establishment of legitimate government.

Likewise, power cannot be organized and exercized in an original way until the feelings of national identity and commitment to the state are fully forged. The political community as such has no basis if the people are incapable of attaining consciousness of themselves as individuals and as members of a unit, i.e., the political community. It follows that national identity and integration are a prerequisite for supra-national unity. Army radical politics has at least linked self to national identity by connecting those concepts with the general goal of the renaissance of the Arab nation and the enhancement of Arab dignity.

But unity cannot be achieved only by radicalism; for the radical regimes that have overthrown previous orders by force, however, the state has acquired the characteristics of uncompromising politics, of national mobilization and integration but without allowing for a necessary mitigating process. A combination of militancy and tradition sustains military oligarchies and individual leaders in mass-oriented societies such as Egypt, Syria and Iraq. Governmental action appeals both to traditional masses and the more militant groups, but all pre-empt domestic politics in the service of a revolution to be fulfilled.

Pre-emptive action was a sallient feature in the politics of the 1963 Ba'thist government in Syria and Iraq. Freedom and democracy were deferred in the hope that revolution might carry progress and change in its wake without, for that matter, allowing the people to participate in the fulfillment of that revolution. This kind of guided democracy filled the vacuum created by the bankruptcy of parties and ideas, and came to be accepted as the most viable system of government. As a result, domestic politics became generally coercive, pre-emptive and confined to the military elites in charge of the organs of the state.

Coercive politics serve the immediate designs of the ruling elite, but seriously damage the prospects for democracy and nation-building. In the long run, the conflicting relationship between political identity and community, and the tension between individual and state are exacerbated to the extent that the whole process of reform is regressed into a vicious circle.

The general acceptance of guided democracy by coercion is dismal proof of the ineffectuality of the military elite in achieving reform and unity. Nationalism and radical rhetoric alone cannot create a polity. Up to 1963, the result of ten years of Arab nationalist politics was to provide an arena for intra-Arab power rivalry, to accelerate and sharpen local mutual subversion and propaganda

wars, and to foster the emergence of intra-regional blocs.

The nation-building process was perforce slowed down because the absence of liberal and enlightened rule persisted. Likewise, political action remained regional and personal because of the lack of the unifying influence of a national ideology. The problem underlying the present ideology is that it continues to be expounded by radical revolutionaries who go on adopting, emulating and seeking ways and means devised mostly by Europe for the attainment of modernity and power, but who at the same time, insist upon the rejection of the European intellectual, political and cultural legacy.

Borrowing and applying Western thought on this basis creates an anomalous dimension, le futur antérieur, which results in a gap between self-identity and social reality, and an ideological eclecticism which tends to reinforce political diffusion. In this sense, Arab thought has failed to synthesize the ideological and socio-political infrastructures which in turn determine the co-existence of a traditional culture and a secular sub-culture conflicting within the state. When and how the harmonization of these two terms is achieved shall, to a great extent, influence the prospects and outcome of Arab renaissance and unification.

Thus, the radical change of Arab culture and society

remain the principal task of Middle Eastern leaders; only then can national commitment and the political community come into being. Public debate must help crystallize a shift from the conflict of cliques to the conflict of orientations which must be centred upon an ideology rather than an individual or a party. Likewise, compromise must replace confrontation, and polycentrism must replace centralization for, if unity is to be achieved, the fundamental pluralism of the regional units must be acknowledged.

Because the above requisites were not present, the rush towards unity proved as premature in 1963 as it had been in 1958. For the Syrians unity remained an idealistic quest, and in the circumstances, an expedient political measure. For Iraq, unity did not touch a stronger chord than the traditional distrust for Egyptian success, whereas for Nāṣir it represented the greatest goal of his unambiguous Arab policy.

Unity succumbed to power politics and the inability of the participants to deal in government by discussion. The Ba'th might have accepted Nāṣir and his system as a partner in, but not as the foundation for a unified state. Nāṣir might have actually accepted a federation had he received the assurance of collective leadership and fair play concerning dissenting pro-Nāṣir groups within Syria and Iraq. In the end, practical politics and national in-

terests prevailed upon loftier unitarian endeavours.

Summing up, disunity resulted, among other things, from the fact that none of the Arab countries concerned comprised a strong national political community; none had viable economies or economies likely to be easily integrated, for economic differences lead to conflict among states and with outside powers (in particular oil economies); given their different political evolution and history, each state followed a different orientation in social, economic and educational matters; primary individual and group loyalties of the XIX c. were still strong, the notion of nationalist loyalty being a recent development; and the questions of national ideology and leadership remained at large.

Most potential rulers or ruling cliques covet the position of supreme leader, but are incapable of relinquishing power to a supra-national authority. Capable leadership for such an enterprise is scarce to say the least, and without a unifying national ideology, regionalism is bound to prevail.

A conclusion for the future based only on this catalogue of obstacles to unity, however, would have to rest on the assumption that things are likely to stay much as they are, and that the forces driving in the direction of unity will continue to be contained. This is logically a

dubious presumption. Much depends on the change in orientation of societal and governmental trends, and the degree to which the leadership may improve the economy.

At the closing of this chapter in the movement for Arab unity, the sum total of the military contribution to the cause was negative. Both those who had reservations about it and those who wished to promote it added almost nothing and only sharpened the existing differences. The prospects for success would be enhanced if unity were carried out not as a revolutionary operation but through gradual accommodation based on tolerance and mutual consideration.

So long as the character of rule and society at large remain unchanged, regionalism shall prevail over federalism and unity, and internally, domestic politics shall continue to be coercive, pre-emptive and confined to those with access to the more massive means of violence: the soldiers.

## APPENDIX I

### THE CAIRO UNITY TALKS

### FIRST ROUND

**U.A.R. DELEGATION**

| | |
|---|---|
| Jamāl 'Abd al-Nāṣir . . . . . | President of the U.A.R. |
| 'Abd al-Laṭīf al-Baghdādī . . | Vice-President and Member of the Presidential Council. |
| Field Marshall 'Abd al-Ḥakīm 'Amr . . . . . | Vice-President and Member of the Presidential Council. |
| Kamāl al-Dīn Ḥusayn . . . . . | Vice-President and Member of the Presidential Council. |
| 'Alī Ṣabrī . . . . . | Member of the Presidential Council and Chairman of the Executive Council. |
| Amīn Huwaydī . . . . . | U.A.R. Ambassador to Iraq. |
| 'Abd al-Majīd Farīd . . . . . | Secretary-General to the Presidency. |

**IRAQI DELEGATION**

| | |
|---|---|
| 'Alī Ṣāliḥ al-Sa'dī . . . . . | Vice-Premier and Minister of the Interior. |
| Lieut. General Ṣāliḥ Mahdī 'Ammāsh . . . . . | Minister of Defence. |
| Ṭālib Shabīb . . . . . | Minister of Foreign Affairs. |
| Dr. 'Abd al-Raḥman al-Bazzāz. | Iraqi Ambassador to the U.A.R. |

**SYRIAN DELEGATION**

| | |
|---|---|
| Nihād al-Qāsim . . . . . | Vice-Premier. |
| 'Abd al-Ḥalīm Suwaydān. . . . | Minister of Agriculture. |
| 'Abd al-Karīm Zuhūr . . . . . | Minister of Finance. |
| Major-General Rāshid Quṭaynī | Deputy Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces. |
| Major-General Ziyād al-Ḥarīrī | Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces. |
| Major Fawwāz Muḥārib. . . . . | Member of the National Revolutionary Council. |
| Major Fahd al-Shā'ir . . . . | Member of the National Revolutionary Council. |

## APPENDIX II

## THE CAIRO UNITY TALKS

## SECOND ROUND

### U.A.R. DELEGATION

| | |
|---|---|
| Jamāl 'Abd al-Nāṣir . . . . . | President of the U.A.R. |
| 'Abd al-Laṭīf al-Baghdādī . . | Vice-President and Member of the Presidential Council. |
| Field Marshall 'Abd al-Ḥakīm 'Amr . . . . . | Vice-President and Member of the Presidential Council. |
| Kamāl al-Dīn Ḥusayn . . . . . | Vice-President and Member of the Presidential Council. |
| 'Alī Ṣabrī . . . . . | Member of the Presidential Council and Chairman of the Executive Council. |

### SYRIAN DELEGATION

| | |
|---|---|
| Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Bīṭār . . . . | Premier |
| Lieut. General Lu'ay al-Atāsī | Chairman of the Revolutionary Council. |
| Major Fahd al-Shā'ir . . . . | Member of the National Revolutionary Council. |
| Michel 'Aflaq . . . . . | Secretary-General of the Ba'th Party. |

## APPENDIX III

### THE CAIRO UNITY TALKS

### THIRD ROUND

**U.A.R. DELEGATION**

| | |
|---|---|
| Jamāl 'Abd al-Nāṣir . . . . . | President of the U.A.R. |
| 'Abd al-Laṭīf al-Baghdādī . . | Vice-President and Member of the Presidential Council. |
| Field Marshall 'Abd al-Ḥakīm 'Amr . . . . . | Vice-President and Member of the Presidential Council. |
| Kamāl al-Dīn Ḥusayn . . . . . | Vice-President and Member of the Presidential Council. |
| 'Alī Sabrī . . . . . | Member of the Presidential Council and Chairman of the Executive Council. |
| Kamāl al-Dīn Rif'at . . . . . | Member of the Presidential Council. |
| Amīn Huwaydī. . . . . | U.A.R. Ambassador to Iraq. |
| 'Abd al-Majīd Farīd . . . . . | Secretary-General to the Presidency. |

**SYRIAN DELEGATION**

| | |
|---|---|
| Lieut. General Lu'ay al-Atāsī | Chairman of the Revolutionary Council. |
| Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Bīṭār . . . . | Premier. |
| Nihād al-Qāsim . . . . . | Vice-Premier. |
| Muḥammad al-Ṣūfī . . . . . | Minister of Defence. |
| 'Abd al-Karīm Zuhūr . . . . . | Minister of Finance. |
| Hānī al-Hindī . . . . . | Minister of Planning. |
| Sāmī Ṣūfān . . . . . | Minister of Supply. |
| Dr. 'Abd al-Ḥalīm Suwaydān. . | Minister of Agriculture. |
| Shibli al-'Aysamī . . . . . | Minister of Agricultural |
| Dr. Sāmī al-Jundī . . . . . | Minister of Culture and National Guidance. |

## APPENDIX III

| | |
|---|---|
| Major-General Rāshid Quṭaynī | Deputy Commander in Chief of the Army. |
| Brigadier Darwīsh al-Zūnī. . . | Member of the Revolutionary Council. |
| Brigadier Ghassān Ḥaddād . . . | Member of the Revolutionary Council. |
| Colonel Kamāl Hilāl. . . . . | Member of the Revolutionary Council. |
| Colonel Fahd al-Shā'ir . . . . | Member of the Revolutionary Council. |
| Colonel Muḥammad 'Umrān. . . . | Member of the Revolutionary Council. |
| Major Fawwāz Muḥārib . . . . . | Member of the Revolutionary Council. |

IRAQI DELEGATION

| | |
|---|---|
| Aḥmad Ḥasan al-Bakr . . . . . | Primer Minister. |
| 'Alī Ṣāliḥ al-Sa'dī. . . . . | Vice-Premier and Minister of the Interior. |
| Lieut. General Ṣāliḥ Mahdī 'Ammāsh . . . . . | Minister of Defence. |
| Ṭālib Ḥusayn Shabīb. . . . . | Minister of Foreign Affairs. |
| Colonel 'Abd al-Sattār 'Abd al-Laṭīf . . . . . | Minister of Communications. |
| Muḥammad Khattāb . . . . . | Minister of Municipalities. |

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