CHAPTER V

REGIONAL INTEGRATION AND PAN-ARABISM
The Arab world constitutes a particular system. Interactions between its components, whether cooperative or conflictual, have therefore a special and peculiar set of dynamics. Many factors push the region toward complete unity: the same language and culture, a shared historical experience and present problems held in common. Other factors pull it in the opposite direction: unequal distribution of human and natural resources, substantial differences in political systems, ideologies and constitutions, as well as serious psychological and sociological heterogeneity.

Arab nationalists emphasise the common features among the components of the Arab system, trying to cultivate those features toward the construction of a viable common future; their opponents, for their part, advance their own characteristics and argue that divisive feature predominate. Each side interprets history to underline its respective arguments. However, the fact of the Arab nationalism cannot be argued away. It is a major political and social phenomenon as well as a mobilizing ideology that has shaken the whole region since the last years of the nineteenth century.

Nasser's Egypt succeeded, if not in achieving Arab unity, at least in synchronizing the interactions between its components and in helping the emergence of a specific
Arab system with Egypt at its core. But the defection of Egypt from the Arab system after the conclusion of a separate peace treaty with Israel resurrects the debate on pan-Arabism. Many articles and studies have been devoted to the issue. The analyses have been very different, some are antagonistic. Walid Khalidi still believes in the vitality of pan-Arabism, seeing in it a sort of super-legitimacy in contrast to which the legitimacy of Arab states "shrinks into irrelev­ance".  


F. Ajami occupied the opposite end of the continuum, with an extremely clear stance: "An idea that had dominated the political consciousness of modern Arabs is nearing

Arab nationalism is not likely to disappear but its peak in the twentieth century seems to have passed; other nationalism have taken its place while the turbulent politics of the Middle East continues.
its end, if it is not already a thing of the past. It is the myth of pan-Arabism."  

The current debate is characterized by passions and confusion, which do not help in understanding the role of pan-Arabism and its dynamics. In 1965 Hans Tuetch argued that:

pan-Arabism constitutes the intellectual mainstream of Arab nationalism. But to confer the term Arab nationalism exclusively on pan-Arabism or in its most violent side, current Nasserism, would be grossly misleading. Arab nationalism means different things to different groups: it is by no means a simple movement. Pan-Arabism has many facets, and Arab nationalism has assumed three principal forms, which partly or entirely excluded each other.

In the context of the current debate, the best approach may be to conceptualize the basic assumptions of the extremist thesis that predicts the "end of pan-Arabism" expressed by Ajami. An analysis of these assumptions could clarify the nature of pan-Arabism itself, the dynamics of its development, its present crisis and its possible future.

Ajami devoted three articles to this issue. The titles of his articles are expressive and revealing: ranging from

5. Hans Tuetch, Facets of Arab Nationalism (Detroit, 1965).
"stress in the Arab triangle"\textsuperscript{6} to the "struggle for Egypt's soul",\textsuperscript{7} both of which by Ajami's logic, lead to "the end of pan-Arabism".\textsuperscript{8} Three concepts emerge from Ajami's thesis. The first relates to the internal dynamics of pan-Arabism, or the mutations in socio-economic structures of the components of the Arab system; the second relates to the external dynamics, or the mutations in the environment, a target of classic pan-Arabism; and the third relates to "conjuncture", or the mutations in the leadership of the pan-Arabic movement.

Ajami considers that the "universalism of pan-Arabism derived to a considerable extent from the universalism of the Ottoman Empire, of which the Arab states had been a part of four centuries".\textsuperscript{9} So Arab nationalism has been a natural response to Turkish nationalism/imperialism. Western colonialism established new boundaries within which specific Arab states emerged; and each one, for the past sixty years, has progressively consolidated its own legitimacy and its specific nationalism. So a particular nationalism has emerged in each of the Arab states, and its constituency in the raison

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7. Ajami, "The Struggle for Egypt's Soul", \textit{Foreign Policy}, no.35 (Summer 1979), pp.3-30.


d'etat, a concept which is by nature, in Ajami's sense, antagonistic to the concept of pan-Arabism since the constituency of pan-Arabism is the whole Arab world. In other words, the raison d'etat of any state and the exigencies of pan-Arabism cannot have any sort of interaction other than conflictual.

Pan-Arabism has been defeated, according to Ajami, on both governmental and popular levels. On the governmental level, Arab regimes behave according to their separate raison d'etat, which push them in divergent directions. And on the popular level of public opinion, the development of particular and antagonistic nationalism within the boundaries of Arab states, accompanied by the concentration of wealth in the less populated and less developed parts of the Arab world, generates grievances and bitterness among the Arab populations. Because of this, the aspirations of Arab people are not likely to find comfort or satisfaction in a pan-Arabist ideology.

To substantiate his allegations concerning the demise of pan-Arabism in public opinion, Ajami refers to a field study undertaken by a social scientist at Kuwait University. 10

It was designed to elicit the opinions of 500 undergraduates

about pan-Arabism, among other issues. This study, according to Ajami:

has supplied us with important evidence substantiating the demise of pan-Arabism and suggesting the shape of things to come... (for among its findings) was a remarkable assertion of Islamic sentiments and of patriotism associated with particular Arab states.

Ajami's reasoning seems to point out three targets that aided in the emergence of Arab nationalism and, later, the maintenance of unity in the Arab system: the Ottoman Empire, the colonialism of the Mandate years, and Israel. The Ottoman Empire under which the Arab world saw itself as a whole, is now a thing of the past. Further:

Britain and France, the two powers whose deeds and diplomacy haunted and traumatized a generation of nationalists, have been cut down to size: they made their last stand in the Suez affair, and since then their diplomacy has been on the whole, sympathetic to the Arab states. London is no longer a hostile capital... (and) France has become synonymous with de Gaulle: an admired symbol of nationalism and from 1962 onward, a 'friend' of the Arab states.

As for Israel, it does not represent the same target it used to be in the past. The defeat of Palestine has been perceived as a defeat of all Arabs. But now:

11. Ajami, n.4, p.364.
the unity forced onto the Arab world by the Arab-Israeli conflict has eroded... Sadat diplomacy has dragged the Arabs into the modern game of states. The conflict is no longer about Israel's existence but about its boundaries; and in inter-Arab affairs the leading military state (Egypt) has for all appearances rejected the inter-Arab division of labor that assigned it the principal obligation for the pan-Arab cause.

Ajami also considers Egypt's defection from the Arab system a nationalist move. This logically suggests that Israel became the sole target of Palestinian nationalism (not pan-Arabism), while pan-Arabism as an ideology became itself the target of all kinds of nationalism - the Israeli nationalism, of course, but also the Egyptian, the Saudi and Palestinian nationalisms. But Ajami does not explain in his analysis why and through which mechanism an Egyptian phenomenon (i.e. Nasserism) became an Arab one and why the Arab masses identified themselves and their inspirations with those of Nasser, nor why an ideology and a political movement which existed before Nasser would end with his death.

Ajami carefully avoided defining the pan-Arabism which he believes had ended. Ajami seems to confuse the idea and its implementation, the ideology and the political movement.

Pan-Arabism is an idea and a political movement. The history of pan-Arabism, the idea and the political movement,

shows that pan-Arabism has constants and variables. The constant has always been the objective, which was and still is independence and unity; the independence of each Arab state is the condition for unity.

The leadership of the pan-Arabist movement passed from Arab feudalists and dignitaries, to kings and royal families, to the petite-bourgeoisie constituted around an alliance of military, bureaucrats and intellectuals. In each stage the content of pan-Arabism, in terms of the target, the ways and the forms of unity, the kind of society it works for, its implementation, et cetera, changes. It is worthwhile to note that pan-Arabism, like any nationalist movement, is a recipient of different intellectual streams: religious fundamentalism or reformism, secular thought with its two branches, liberalism and Marxism, etc.¹⁴

To prove the demise of pan-Arabism, Ajami argues that the evolution of Arab states since the colonial mandates has been characterized by the emergence of local nationalisms around bureaucratic interests. This is a fact. But Ajami forces the analysis and sees in local nationalisms and pan-Arabism antagonistic and irreconciliable concepts. This is not accurate.

First, local nationalism is the outcome of both colonialism and modernism. Western colonialism in Arab states did not start at the same time and has no single label. However, the amount of interaction between different local nationalist movements on the one hand, and between them and the proponents of pan-Arabism, on the other hand, intensified during the struggle against colonialism and with the increasing danger of the Zionist movement in Palestine. It is very interesting to notice the parallelism between the intensification of the struggle for independence and the increasing Arab interaction. Local nationalisms and pan-Arabism were pursuing the same objective: independence. It would be absurd to find any antagonism between these two nationalist movements as a whole. 15

Without casting doubt on the objectivity of the study, it is not out of place to mention here a recent meticulous study by Saad ed-din Ibrahim based on a field study of Arab public opinion and the problematics of Arab unity. 16 Ibrahim administered a questionnaire of 5,557 Arab citizens from all social milieus in ten Arab states: Jordan, Qatar, Egypt, Palestine, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Sudan, Tunisia and North Yemen. The poll covers all aspects of pan-Arabism:

15. Ibid, p.141.
images and perceptions by Arabs of each other, the belief in Arab unity, its form, timing etc. It provides valuable statistics that pan-Arabism and the belief in Arab unity and in a common destiny is deeply rooted in the Arab consciousness. 17

The struggle against Ottoman Empire, then against the colonial powers, embodied the objective of local nationalisms and pan-Arabism alike: independence.

The struggle for independence was not simply a struggle for physical elimination of the military occupation. Nasser's attempt to achieve political independence led him to refuse military alliance and to choose the policy of non-alignment, which he perceived as the only way to conserve the political independence of small states. His battle for the development started with the Aswan High Dam, and continued logically and pragmatically toward first the Egyptianization of the economy, then its nationalization.

Pretending that pan-Arabism has no goal after the withdrawal of the colonial powers is to ignore the real motivation of pan-Arabism. Imperialism, hegemonic pretentions and economic exploitation became targets as powerful as colonialism had been. It is not by chance that Nasser became both the symbol and the hero of pan-Arabism. 18

Israel has been an element of both integration and disintegration in the Arab world; a factor of integration in the sense that Israel is a living memorial to Arab weakness and division, which has been a stimulating factor for unity and cohesion. And Israel has a factor of disintegration in the sense that Israel helped the radicalization of some Arab regions, which in turn increased the divisions in the Arab world and the inter-Arab ideological struggle so much that the Arab approach to a solution became in itself conflictual.

The problem is not only the boundaries of Israel but also and particularly its role in the Arab system. In this regard it is worthwhile to notice that Israel has always refused to deal with the Arab states as a whole system. For the sake of peace, Arabs are different and independent states: it must deal with each separately; but at the same time its military system and conception of national security seems to take the Arab system as a reality.¹⁹

There is no doubt that Nasser's charismatic leadership gave pan-Arabism a forward push and that his defeat in 1967 and death in 1970 have been a setback to pan-Arabism as a political movement. But pan-Arabism as an idea, as the aspiration for independence and unity, existed before Nasser and still exists after him.

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¹⁹ Ibid, p.147.
Both centripetal and centrifugal forces are occurring at a variety of scales. Along with the individual states being tied together, regional links have been gradually being forged. These range from simple bilateral or multi-lateral co-operation in specific spheres to functional economic integration and ever occasionally complete political amalgamation.  

The discrepancy between hope and reality is immense. Even a loosest form of political association among the existing states can hardly be discerned. The political disunity of the Arab world has been more apparent than its unity. However, incremental functional integration has been a constant feature of the area.

Regional integration is a form of micro-integration in the framework of macro-integration of the Arab world. While discussing Arabism and regional integration of the Arab Gulf states, the following items should be taken into account.

1. The Bases of Arab unity,
2. The Obstacles to Regional integration
3. The Experiment with Regional Integration
4. Subregional Integration.

1. **Bases of Arab Unity**

Issawi has perceived Arab unity as that of a people:

inhabiting a definite stretch of territory, bound by ties of kinship, speaking a common language, sharing common historical memories, and practicing a common way of life, expressed in the form of religion and other cultural traits.

Despite being distributed among many states, the Arabs believe that they belong to one nation (*Qawm*). This belief has sustained Arab nationalism and pan-Arabism, but it has not precluded growing attachment to the individual Arab states.\(^{22}\)

Two factors are very basic in the analysis of pan-Arabism, namely, language and religion.

(a) **Language:** Language is the most important binding factor of the Arabs, transcending religious, tribal, and regional differences. The language continues to be an overriding symbol and instrument of common affiliations based on historical, cultural and/or religious roots. In political integration Arabic plays a role of minimum effect, but it certainly plays a role of paramount significance in the integration and

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unity of Arab identity. In its standard variety, Arabic supersedes local nationality and state boundaries. In this respect, Arabic shows much more homogeneity than is found in other world languages. This has given the Arabs a sign of belonging to one language community.

However, state-local varieties of Arabic have their own distinctive characteristics. In this sense, the Arab do not form one speech community. Despite speech diversity, in connection with the debate over regionalism, states have individually followed policy lines that are identical across the nation and in keeping with a norm that is worldwide. The policy secures loyalty-maintenance toward Arabic as their identity symbol. However, states seem to be unable to resolve the conflict they perceive between the requirements of being Arab and those of trying to be modern. Until now only two states have effected a programme of Arabisation. In the others, the situation is aggravated by the discrepancy between policy-making, actual implementation—using foreign languages in teaching higher education science and technology. Double-standards can also be discerned in preferential


treatment of the foreign-language trained on the job market in both the public and private sectors. 26

(b) Religion: Religion is one of the most important of the bonds among Arabs. Though the terms Arab and Muslim cannot be equated, the terms are central to the understanding of the Arab national identity. Islam is an integral component of Arabism.

Islam integrates the Arabs in the sense that it affects every sphere of life and prescribes a code of conduct that binds all Muslims into a spiritual community (Ummah). Muslims are obliged to honour the five pillars (or basic duties), which provide most of the region's inhabitants with common experiences. The form and content of the prayer of five appointed times each day vary little geographically. All Muslims pray facing Mecca which again suggests the centripetal role of Islam. Similarly, the month of fasting during Ramzan is observed in the fixed time. The Hajj, i.e. the pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in life time reinforces a profound sense of belonging to the Islamic community. A high proportion of pilgrims are Arabs. In 1982, for instance of 853,555 foreign pilgrims, 396,882 or 46 per cent cover from Arab countries (see Table 5.1).

Table 5.1

Pilgrims Arriving from Foreign Countries by Nationality
1982 (A.H. 1402)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Arab countries</td>
<td>98,408</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Egypt</td>
<td>63,241</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Yemen Arab Republic</td>
<td>40,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Algeria</td>
<td>26,983</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Sudan</td>
<td>25,429</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Jordan</td>
<td>23,179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Iraq</td>
<td>18,686</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Morocco</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Libya</td>
<td>17,787</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Tunisia</td>
<td>9,645</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Oman</td>
<td>9,473</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. People's Democratic Republic of Yemen</td>
<td>9,085</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Kuwait</td>
<td>6,558</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. U.A.E.</td>
<td>5,812</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Palestine</td>
<td>3,680</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Bahrain</td>
<td>3,109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Somalia</td>
<td>2,483</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Lebanon</td>
<td>1,723</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Mauritania</td>
<td>1,559</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Qatar</td>
<td>1,118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Djibouti</td>
<td>632</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Arab Countries</td>
<td>396,882</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Arab Asian countries</td>
<td>341,159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Arab African countries</td>
<td>110,390</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European countries</td>
<td>4,220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American countries</td>
<td>700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Misc. nationalities</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand Total</td>
<td>853,555</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Islam moulded intellectual and scholastic tradition of the Arab societies. Education and religious instruction were, until recently, virtually synonymous because secular schools did not exist. The Islamic heritage also pervades political life, explicitly shaping the institutional and ideological development of states like Saudi Arabia. Fundamentalism is a growing force in these areas. For centuries, a common Islamic legal code, the sharia, linked the Arabs. Islamic courts are still responsible for marriage, divorce, inheritance and other matters of personal status. The sharia's legacy and influence are considerable. Islam has traditionally defined the aesthetic tastes of the people as is evident from art and architecture, with their emphasis on Quranic Calligraphy and avoidance of depicting human forms. Finally, Islam has fortified the Arab's sense of unity by providing them with shared historical memories. The achievements of the early Islamic Umayyad and Abbasid rule remind them of their past glory and unity. The Ottoman Empire, which nominally united most of the Arab world for the four centuries preceding its twentieth-century fragmentation, was at root an Islamic one.

A certain number of constants relating to the relationship between Islam and its institutions and political power can be drawn from the observation of both history and contemporary politics in the Arab world. Then Islam appears as a
"two-sided" phenomenon: it can be perceived as a religion, i.e., as an ideological force, or as an institution, i.e., as a sociological structure composed of a set of institutions and of a more or less coherent establishment. Three classes of cases can be distinguished in terms of relations between religion and the state. In the first, there exists a certain degree of harmony between Islam and the state, ideologically as well as institutionally. In this case, the religious institutions tend to willingly co-operate with the state, contributing to its legitimacy and supporting its policy. The Arab Gulf (GCC) states can be placed in this category. In other two cases, the relationship between state and religion is characterized by the presence of conflict and opposition, which appear either on the ideological or on the institutional level. In one case, the state claims a major role as the guardian of Islam, until then monopolised by religious institutions. It then attempts to marginalise and weaken the traditional establishment: Algeria and Tunisia are examples of this. Finally, the conflictual relationship appears mainly on the institutional level. The state has no ideological differences with its


28. Ibid, pp.149-63.
opponents, but faces a powerful and challenging religious force, which mobilizes its institutions and structure to gain political control. Egypt and Sudan illustrates this. 29

2. Obstacles to Regional Integration

(a) Geographical Factors: Geography divides as well as unites the Arabs. The immense size of the Arab world is itself an obstacle to integration. Until recent times, travel from one end to the other took weeks. Despite the advent of modern air transportation and mass communication, the centrifugal effect of distance remains. 30 The settlement pattern compounds the problem. Because of pronounced geographic variations in precipitation and water availability, settlement is discontinuous and clustered in narrow coastal lands, in uplands exposed to moisture-bearing winds, along river valleys, and around oases. Vast empty arid spaces typically separate these concentrations.

This discontinuous settlement pattern has encouraged subregional particularism because, until recently, transportation links among population clusters were absent or deficient. The colonial powers built transportation networks geared to exporting raw materials rather than to serving regional

29. Ibid., pp. 149-63.

or even local needs.\(^{31}\) This has led to political fragmentation. Because regional transportation planning is still in its infancy, international links are still generally inadequate and often made in an ad-hoc, haphazard manner.\(^{32}\) Since the 1960s, substantial progress has been made in improving communication links.

Adequate transportation links are a precondition of greater integration within the Arab world. Time consuming, cumbersome, and arbitrary border-crossing formalities still often impede interaction. Crossing the Syrian, Jordanian border, for example, took 3 or 4 hours in 1984.\(^{33}\) Too frequently the borders have been closed altogether during political disputes between neighbouring regimes. For over three decades, Israel has served all overland connections between Egypt and the Arab countries to its east.\(^{34}\)

(b) Historical Factors: Partly because of the Arab world's extent and discontinuous settlement pattern, the historical experiences of its constituent parts have frequently diverged. Consequently, Moroccans, Tunisians and Egyptians among others,

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31. Ibid.

32. UN, ECWA, "Development of an Integrated Transport System for Western Asia", Studies on Development Problems in Countries of Western Asia (New York, 1980).

33. Drysdale, n.20, p.231.

34. Ibid.
often have strong sense of *Wataniyyah* (patriotism) as well as *qawmiyyah* (Arab Nationalism).

Historically speaking, the Arab countries were affected by colonial intrusion in varying degrees. Some, like Algeria and Libya, were subjugated and experienced large-scale colonization by European settlers. Countries like Yemen Arab Republic or Saudi Arabia escaped direct colonial control altogether or had relatively superficial and limited treaty relationships with a colonial power (Kuwait, the former Trucial Shykhdoms, and Oman). In countries like Egypt, Lebanon and Syria, substantial Western capitalist penetration resulted in major economic transformation.

The European colonial powers had diverse objectives and used different methods. The French considered Algeria an integral component of metropolitan France and clung to it until 1962, when they were compelled to relinquish it after a bloody struggle. By contrast, Morocco was regarded as a mere protectorate and was granted independence after less than 50 years. Tunisia, too, did not suffer the radical dislocation experienced by Algeria as a result of French colonialism. In Syria and Lebanon, France's imprint was least discernible which it controlled as League of Nation's mandated territories between the two world wars. The similarities among these countries as a result of their French colonial heritage are, thus, rather superficial. The British
involvement in places like Egypt and Aden, which had an economic to strategic significance, was considerably deeper. Their involvement with countries like Iraq or Jordan, which they abandoned quickly, was rather superficial. Their mark on the Gulf Shaykhdoms was relatively shallow, with the exception of Bahrain. Italy's only interest was in Libya. Unlike the French, the Italians made no attempt to assimilate Arabs into their culture. Libya's independence came as a result of Italy's defeat in World War II and not as the culmination of a protracted war on national liberation. Spain's colonial interests was confined to relatively small parts of Morocco, some of which to this date have a distinct personality.35

Colonial rule imposed institutions and traditions patterned after those of the colonial power. In areas controlled by France a Francophone and Francophile elite usually emerged. Even now the political, administrative, and educational apparatus of these states show French influences. In British-held territories, English acquired a special status and national institutions often reflected the tastes and prejudices of British officials. Whereas, the French bequeathed republicanism, the British favoured monarchies.36

36. Ibid.
Traditional ruling classes were bolstered in the newly created states by the colonial power, consequently developing their own vested interests by perpetuating the political fragmentation. After independence, few were willing to dissolve their states for the sake of Arab unity. The colonial power's role in dividing the Arabs, therefore, goes far beyond mere boundary drawing.  

(c) National Integration Problems: Acute national integration problems within individual countries have also impeded Arab unity. Although the vast majority of the Arab World's population is Arabic speaking Muslims, there are, significant linguistic and religious minorities in certain countries. These groups have generally viewed Arab unity with apprehension or hostility. Lebanon's Christians secured from their Muslim compatriots a commitment to uphold the country's independence and not seek its unification with Syria or any other state for this very reason. Egypt's coptic Christian minorities have preferred Egyptian identity. In Iraq, large Kurdish speaking population is a hindrance to Arab unity. In Morocco and Algeria, many Berbers are not enthusiastic about being incorporated within a larger Arab state. In Sudan, unity schemes antagonize the large black minority.  

37. Ibid, p.234.  
38. Ibid.  
39. Sudan withdrew from the Federation of Arab Republic (FAR) (Egypt and Libya were other members) partly because of its black minorities opposition.
Sunni Arabs have generally been more receptive to Arab unity than its Alawis, Druzes, Christians and Kurds. Hence, merging two poorly integrated states together is more likely to compound their problems than to produce one well-integrated state.

(d) **Political Factors:** Political differences among the Arab states are by far the single greatest obstacle to their unification. It was observed in the early 1960s that if one was "to measure the density of national tensions and stresses in terms of unit areas, the Middle East would lead all other regions". This is true even today. Syria's foreign minister, Abd al-Halim Khaddam, in a 1980 speech, lamented that "if we look at the map of the Arab homeland, we can hardly find two countries without conflicts." The differences among the Arab states are both structural and ideological. Until the late 1960s, a chasm separated the Arab world's traditional, conservative, capitalist and Western-oriented monarchical regimes and its modernizing, reformist, socialist, neutralist or Eastern--leaning republican ones. This represented the Arab cold war.


Morocco, the Gulf Sheikhdoms, Oman, Iraq (until 1958), and Libya (until 1969) belonged in the conservative category. Egypt, Syria, Algeria, People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (P.D.R. Yemen) and after their monarchies were overthrown, Iraq and Libya belonged to the radical camp. Countries like Tunisia, Lebanon and Sudan did not fit neatly into either group. Unity between countries belong to the two camps was inconceivable, so fundamental were the differences. Neither camp was itself united. Numerous dynastic rivalries and personal squabbles divided the monarchical regimes for instance. Until the 1958 Iraqi revolution, the closely related Iraqi and Jordanian Kings remained united in their antagonism towards the Saudi dynasty. The royal families of the Arabian peninsula also had numerous disagreements. Although the monarchies would stick together at times for mutual protection, they were unwilling to surrender their power in the interests of Arab unity.

The republics have been the main proponents of pan-Arabism. Nevertheless, their record is no better than that of the monarchies. Even when regimes seem compatible, integration eludes them because of rivalries and jealousies. Some of the most bitter disputes in the Arab world have been between ostensibly like-minded radical regimes. Iraq and Syria, although both ruled by the Ba'ath party, whose original raison d'etre was to unite all Arabs have had an epic feud
for example. In the last three decades unity schemes have failed between broadly similar regimes, most prominently Egypt and Syria (1956-61); Egypt, Syria and Iraq (1969-73); and Syria and Iraq (1978-79).

The gap between the republics and monarchies has narrowed since the late 1960s, when Egypt and Saudi Arabia, traditionally the leaders of the two camps, mended relations following the solution of the Yemeni civil war and the 1967 Arab-Israeli war. The accession to power of Anwar al-Sadat in Egypt had moderating effect on Saudi-Egypt relationship. The massive infusion of petro-dollars into the region after the oil price explosion of the early 1970s also moderated the conflict between the monarchies and the republics. After the 1967 war, but especially after the early 1970s, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the Gulf Sheikhdoms, and other oil producers began making large payments to the frontline states of Egypt, Syria and Jordan. This gave the traditional monarchies a new influence within the region.

At times, political tensions result from a small and relatively weak state's apprehensions that a more powerful neighbour is constraining its freedom of action. Many of the Gulf Shaykhdoms and the Yemen Arab Republic, for example, fear Saudi Arabia. Generally speaking, a good number of states have at one time accused neighbours of
interfering in their internal affairs. Oman, for instance, has repeatedly charged the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen of providing a sanctuary for guerrillas seeking to overthrow the Sultanate. The two Yemens, in turn, have blamed one another for fomenting internal disturbances. Quite a large number of neighbours are, or have been, political antagonists: Syria versus Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq; Libya versus Egypt, Sudan and Tunisia; and Morocco versus Algeria - to name but a few.

Political instability has also impeded regional integration. Unity schemes usually tie authoritarian regimes, not states and peoples together; thus, they are poorly equipped to withstand political change. Successive governments exhibit little continuity in their foreign policies. Military coups d'etat have aborted many a proposed integration plan.

Differing views about the way to solve the Arab-Israeli problem have been another major source of political cleavage within the Arab world. Although all Arabs agree that Israel should withdraw from the territories it occupied in 1967, including East Jerusalem, and that the Palestinians must have a state of their own, they have disagreed about how to achieve these goals. Prior to the adoption of a common position at the 1982 Fez Summit of Arab heads of states, the Arab world was split at least three ways: (1) the maximalist
"Steadfast and Confrontation Front", consisting of Syria, Algeria, Libya, P.D.R. Yemen, and the PLO; (2) those regimes favouring the moderate Saudi Fahd Peace plan; and (3) the few countries, like Morocco, Sudan and Oman, that implicitly agreed with Egypt's approach and the Camp David framework. The Arab-Israeli dispute has exacerbated all other differences within the Arab world.

The Middle East's vast oil resources and location at the junction of three continents immediately south of the Soviet Union has generated super power rivalries. The Arab-Israeli dispute has widened outside involvement by providing opportunities to project the cold war into the area and to win friends and clients through large arms sales and economic assistance programmes. This has seriously impeded regional integration by accentuating differences within the Arab world. On occasion, the super powers have seemed to treat the area as a playground, obsessively searching for military bases and using states as their surrogates. Any unity scheme that seems to extend one super power's influence is immediately met with suspicion by the other. For instance, the United States opposed the Egyptian-Syrian union of 1958-61 and the proposed Syrian-Iraqi merger of 1978, whereas the Soviet Union perceives the G.C.C. states effort of regional integration as a thinly disguised way of consolidating American control of the region. Pan-Arabists view outside powers role as a policy of divide and rule in the region.
(e) Economic Integration: Quite a good number of Arabs argue that political unity cannot be achieved unless solid foundations are first built through incremental functional cooperation, particularly in the economic sphere, as in Europe. Theoretically, the advantage of economic integration are considerable. Closer economic cooperation and coordination can create an enlarged market of 180 million which would permit economics of scale and broaden, and diversify the agricultural and industrial production base; can encourage greater functional specialization by maximizing comparative advantages associated with spatial variations in resource endowment and factors of production. Other advantages of economic integration might include increased trade through the reduction or elimination of tariff and non-tariff barriers expanded investment opportunities and improved efficiency and equitability in the allocation and distribution of resources.

(i) Economic Disparities: Capital Rich and Capital Poor States

There are numerous obstacles to economic integration. Few Arab countries have reached the stage where the advantages of their unity would outweigh disadvantages. The difference among the Arab states is too glaring. Arab countries differ enormously in their population size, resource endowment, economic structure, labour force development orientation,
trade patterns and living standards. Smaller states invariably fear being overwhelmed by large ones, less developed by the more developed, richer by the poorer. Waterbury has suggested a fivefold classification of Arab states based mostly on economic considerations. The typology underlines why economic unity is difficult to achieve. His first category includes the states of Algeria, Iraq and Morocco. These depend heavily on raw material exports of oil, gas or phosphates; are big; have relatively large populations of 14 to 22 million; and have good agricultural bases, reasonably well-developed transportation and communication infrastructures, and sizable skilled labour forces, as well as growing technocratic and managerial elites, expanding industrial bases and a capacity to absorb export revenues productively. As a result, their long-term development prospects are reasonably good.

The second category includes Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Kuwait, Libya, Oman and Qatar whose economics are oil based without which they would be world's very poorest states. Generally, these countries have small population; a small affluent but increasingly saturated local market; little or no agriculture; a narrow but growing industrial base; an

43. Drysdale, n.20, p.238.

immature infrastructure; a tiny skilled indigenous labour force; and an acute shortage of homegrown technocrats and managers. They rely excessively on foreign labour force. These countries accumulate huge capital surpluses that cannot be productively absorbed locally.

The third category includes Egypt, Syria and Tunisia. Despite major differences among them, these states have typically begun industrialising and have a solid agricultural base; good road, rail and port facilities; an adequate skilled and unskilled labour force; and a sizable domestic market. Generally, their growth potential is good, but unlike states in the first category, they do not have the means to finance it. As a result, they have chronic external debt problems or depend heavily on aid. These countries have an aggregate population about five times greater than the previous category. Nevertheless, their combined GNP is substantially less.

The widest disparity within the Arab world is between the small oil-producing states and members of the fourth category: both Yemens, Somalia and Mauritania. Per capita annual incomes in these peripheral, heavily rural, underdeveloped states are only $300 to $400. Paradoxically, the countries in the second group would probably have the same standard of living if they had no oil.

Waterbury's fifth category includes Jordan and Lebanon, whose economic characteristics are inescapable from their
special political status. Since Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Jerusalem in 1967, Jordan's economy has been severely truncated. Consequently, Jordan is highly dependent on foreign, especially Arab aid. However, it has achieved a certain prosperity as a result of phosphate exports, large foreign investment, and remittances from workers in the Gulf. Lebanon, before its civil war, was one of the most prosperous and economically advanced countries in the Middle East, acting as the region's clearing house, emporium, and banking center.

The above scheme helps us to identify the divergent economic interests of the region's states and suggests why they view integration in significantly different ways. Waterbury has summarized the dilemma:

The superrich neither need nor promote integration, yet they would be indispensable to any plan for unity. The poor both need and occasionally promote integration, but they lack the leverage to bargain for it on their own terms.

(ii) Differences in Political Economy

One of the more obvious weaknesses of the preceding classification is that it does not classify states according to their political economic philosophies. The differences are too wide, from P.D.R. Yemen's somewhat doctrinaire socialism to the almost untrammeled laissez-faire capitalism of the

45. Ibid, pp.50-53.
Gulf Shaykhdoms and Lebanon. Syria with its mixed public-private sector approach and Libya, with its emphasis on revolutionary Islamic egalitarianism and worker control, would along with most other Arab states, fit somewhere in between. There are incompatible ideas about how wealth should be generated and distributed or about the appropriate roles to be played by the public and private sectors. The Arab countries have widely differing fiscal policies, tax structures, exchange and monetary controls, and attitudes to private or foreign investment. Arab oil states with surplus capital long avoided investing in countries like Egypt and Syria because they feared their assets would be expropriated or because discriminatory legislation concerning business ownership and profit repatriation made it unattractive. Generally, states with mixed or quasi-socialist economies have liberalised investment laws since the early 1970s to attract Arab petrodollars. In Syria and Egypt, this policy of infitah (opening) resulted in a significant influx of outside capital. The old distinction between capitalist and socialist countries has, therefore, blurred since the early 1970s. Nonetheless, the bulk of surplus oil earnings are invested outside the Middle East.

(iii) Inter-Arab Trade

Regional economic integration cannot be successful when levels of inter-Arab trade remains as low as they do.
If North Africa is excluded, Arab countries with relatively little or no oil sent less than one third of their exports to, and received only one fifth of their imports from, other Arab countries in the early 1980s. Among the oil producers, only 3.6 per cent of exports and 5 per cent of imports went to, or came from, other Arab countries in 1979. The developed industrial world is by far their largest market and supplier.

Such trade patterns reflect most countries' narrow industrial base and over dependence on a few raw material exports, like oil, cotton and phosphates, which are needed primarily by developed industrial countries. Arab states tend to export the same items and to duplicate their efforts to compete rather than to promote functional specialization and geographic complementaries. Capital and consumer goods, which together account for most imports, are invariably obtained from industrialized countries. Even when such products are available within the region, a strong preference is often shows for similar items imported from the developed world because these are thought to be of higher quality.

(iv) National Versus Regional Planning

The economies of the Arab states still function largely independently of one another. There is much wasteful

duplication and destructive competition.

The proliferation of ports is one example of wasteful duplication. The situation is worse in the Gulf where, partly because of the areas' political fragmentation, there are eight major and nine secondary ports. Each state, irrespective of its size, has developed its own facilities, for reasons of national prestige as much as any economic benefit. By one estimate, Gulf port capacity in 1982 exceeded requirements by 50 per cent. In the UAE 70 per cent of all existing or planned berthage was unlikely to be needed. Such duplication of efforts underlines both the need for, and the obstacles to, greater regional cooperation.

3. Regional Institutions

In the last four decades, a network of regional institutions have been established to promote co-operation and integration. Most of them have survived and constitute a framework on which Arab unity can be built.

(i) The Arab League

The League of Arab states has been the chief vehicle for institutionalized cooperation since 1945. Initially, on 7 states signed the organization's founding charter,

47. Ibid, p.245.
but others joined as they won their independence. Currently there are 22 members, including the PLO.

Arab nationalists have never really identified with the institution. Arab nationalism was clearly based on the utopian idea of a single Arab state, which the League is the embodiment of another cultural tradition, that of a grouping of mutually independent sovereign states. Its constitution explicitly pledges to uphold each member's independence and sovereignty. Some pan-Arabists view it as an obstacle rather than a means to unity precisely because it recognizes the region's political fragmentation.

The League was created to promote voluntary cooperation and coordination. Its power are limited, and the implementation of its policies and resolutions depends entirely on its member's consent. Decisions of the League's Council, its supreme organ, are binding only on states that accept them.

The legal framework on which the Arab League's system was built has become a very complex one. The inception document is the Protocol of Alexandria signed on 7 October 1944. Six months later, the nascent League was given a charter, signed by the five countries represented in Alexandria.

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now joined by Saudi Arabia and Yemen, selected as co-founding member states. Later, the charter was signed by Kuwait (1961) Bahrain, Qatar, Oman and the UAE (1971) among other states.

The Charter is remarkable for its militant pan-Arab vocabulary. It explicitly states the existence of an Arab umma, which has a common destiny and a pre-determined solidarity and the obligation to provide a balanced development, national (pan-Arab) security, liberation, unity and authenticity. The Arab world is referred to as a watan (fatherland), and economic integration is stated as a central goal.

In the course of development, with the steady flow of oil revenues, came the idea of funds organizing aid from the rich to the poor states of the region. The first to be created was the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development (Kuwait 1968). In the wake of the 1973 war the Arab summit convened in Algiers created an African sister institution, the Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa, ABEDA (Khartoum) in order to channel Arab aid to black Africa. The Arab Monetary Fund (AMF) was created in Abu Dhabi in 1976 along the lines of the IMF. The Arab world is thus largely equipped with the political, economic, financial and

cultural institutions it needs to develop cooperation among its member states and its own integration. However, a change is noticeable in the League's legal framework. The League's 1945 charter does not speak of an Arab umma, but the 1980 Charter on economic cooperation speaks only in these terms.

By the mid-sixties, the radical regimes had experienced enough problems and the conservative ones had shown enough resilience to make such a gathering possible. Dreams of rapid unity were thwarted by a breakdown of the Egyptian-Syrian unity in 1961. Arab summits were soon to become part of inter-Arab politics, almost a routine yearly event. But due to summit's highly political character, the role of League had been marginal.

In the first decade (since 1964), the main debate was almost exclusively centred around the Arab-Israeli conflict. But after the 1973 war, the very basis upon which the heads of state used to meet disappeared. Egypt soon signed the Sinai-II agreements, followed by the Camp David accords and the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaties. After 1974, the resolution of inter-Arab conflicts, instead of being a major side-effect of the summits, became the only real point on the agenda.
Despite this disintegration of the Arab system, the Arab summits succeeded (Baghdad 1978) in stating a clear policy of refusal of the Egyptian-Israeli accords, and in launching (Amman 1980) an Arab development decade. But other factors led to a gradual disintegration of these stands. Countries such as Iraq, Jordan and the PLO soon reestablished their links with Cairo, while the Amman resolutions became dead letters. The attempt to devise a joint Arab stand concerning the Palestinian issue (Fez, 1982) was destroyed by the militant American refusal. Still able to oppose (Baghdad 1978) and to propose (Fez 1982), Arab summits were impotent in keeping Arab ranks even minimally united. By the mid-1980s the mere convening of a summit became very difficult.\(^{50}\) Besides, oil has developed what one could call "Gulf isolationism" vis-à-vis pan-Arab needs, feuds and institutions.

In assessing the performance of the League, one may look at the opinion surveys as well. Many opinion surveys in the Arab world have asked the Arabs how they view the League. The answers are systematically negative.\(^{51}\) In the oft-quoted survey conducted by S.E.Ibrahim in 1977, it appeared that 78.5 per cent of the respondents were not

\(^{50}\) Saleme, n.51, pp.273-4.

\(^{51}\) Ibid, p.275.
happy with the minimal inter-Arab link embodied by the League. 52

On the inadequate role of the League, some still insist on "the original sin". Ahmad Tarabayn, for example, thinks that the "League was not, at its inception, a real step towards some form of unity. It was, on the contrary, an antidote to the Hashemite-inspired schemes for domination and a way to maintain the state system's status quo." (Centre for Arab Unity Studies, 1983: 66).

There are, on the other hand, those who think that the League has accomplished a great deal. After all, the League has kept alive an Arab's framework for consultation and reconciliation, if not for actual joint action. Jamil Matar has remarked that the General Secretariat has always worked for Arab Unity, though the charter did not empower it with this mission. He also remarked that most projects for economic integration were initiated by the League's agencies, not by the member states (Al-Qawmiyyah 1979: 486).

The League has actually had two functions: to help the Arabs defend themselves against foreign dominations (liberation, security, independence) and to help the Arabs unite their ranks (co-ordination, integration, unity).

52. S.E. Ibrahim, Ittijahat ar-Rai al-am al-Arabia nahwa Masalat al-Wahda (Trends of Arab public opinion towards the issue of unity) (Beirut, 1980).
The defence-liberation function was central from the very inception of the League, particularly on the Palestinian question. The League's members continued the pre-1945 Arab expression of solidarity with the Palestinians, made it official and opposed the Partition Plan before and after it was adopted in the UN. In 1950, they took the important step of forbidding any individual state to deal with Israel. The League was also instrumental in bringing the PLO into existence (1964), in recognizing it as the sole representative of the Palestinians (1974) and in giving it full membership (1976). However, there is some frustration that the League's activities have been too dominated by the Palestine question and by the Palestinians. But it is also true that only something like this issue would have been able to unite the Arabs, and therefore give the League a raison d'être.

In its first two decades, the League could still draw attention to the independence of Lebanon and Syria (1945), to the withdrawal of British troops from Egypt (1945-54), to the independence of Libya and particularly to the struggle against the French presence in North Africa. These anti-colonialist and anti-Israeli stands greatly helped in making the League as spokesman for the Arabs. But when one turns to the organization of Arab ranks, the performance look very poor. The League is clearly inefficient in resolving inter-Arab conflicts.
In establishing co-operation, the League has often taken the initiative, notably in the economic and cultural fields. The treaties signed under its auspices is quite impressive. Applied, they would have created a very high level of pan-Arab integration. This obviously is not the case. The League has prepared detailed projects, has pursued increasingly precise objectives and has tried, as far as possible, to isolate economic and cultural issues from the persistent threat of political instability.\footnote{53 Ibd, p.278.}

**Rival Frameworks**

From the very inception of the League, it was clear that it could not pretend to be the sole and exclusive regional grouping. The door to closer cooperation among the few Arab countries was left open by the Charter. On the other hand, participation in the UN system encouraged relations beyond the limits of the Arab world. Regionally, it was hoped that no overlapping or institutional rivalries would occur. Recent history, however, shows that besides the persistent state challenge to the efficiency of pan-Arab institution, dissatisfaction with the League and other political considerations have led some Arab countries to look for parallel and clearly rival frameworks.
(1) The religious challenge to the official secularist, modern definition of the League was the first to be felt. The League's first general-secretary, Azzam Pasha, who came from a background where pan-Arabism and pan-Islamism were close to each other, would have liked to use the Islamic tones more openly, had it not been for the opposition of Lebanese, Syrian and the nationalist-secularist in general. 54

But Nasserism was soon to dominate Arab nationalism and therefore the League's official ideology. At the beginning, Nasser was rather vague on his ideological preferences. In his Philosophy of the Revolution, he singled out three equally important circles in which Egypt was to develop her foreign policy: Africa, the Arab world and the Muslim world. Of the latter he said: "how could we ignore the existence of an Islamic world to whom we are bound by links of religious doctrine as well as by the reality of history?" 55 Nasser, not unlike the 1930s mainstream, viewed the Arab World as part of a larger Muslim world, a view that was clearly expressed by thinkers such as Muhammad Rashid Rida or by Hassan al Banna, the founder of the Muslim brethren.

It was his early confrontation with the Brotherhood and the clearly pro-western path chosen by many Islamic countries of his time, that drew Nasser and consequently the Egyptian dominated League's secretariat, into the adoption (around 1955-56) of a much clearer nationalist-secularist attitude. This ideology was strengthened by the Saudi-Iranian attempt in the 1960s to replace the Egypt-dominated Arab league with a western-oriented Islamic one. In fact, the Muslim World League was established in 1962 with clearly pro-Saudi tenor. The challenge to the Arab League's ideology was indirectly included in the Jiddah-based organization's insistence on "Islam as being a bond that supersedes nationalist loyalties".

The Muslim League was soon to appear too weak and too feebly organized to face the Arabist challenge. Hence the idea of an Islamic pact, organized this time as an inter-government organization. The call for an Islamic summit came from an Iranian-Saudi meeting in late 1965. But Nasser regarded the Islamic pact or Conference as a colonialist venture. This attitude froze the nascent Islamist idea for a while, but it reemerged in the wake of the 1967 war, in view of Egypt's devastating defeat and the ensuing new balance of power among Arab states. Both Jordan and Saudi Arabia were now behind the idea and an Islamic organization was officially established in 1969. After many meetings,
the organizations Charter was adopted in 1972. Forty-two states (including all the Arab League's members) joined the organization.

(2) A second challenge to the Arab institutional framework came from politically inspired groupings which tended to let the East/West conflict supersede the pan-Arab nationalist ideology. In the period of the League's life (1945-1958) this challenge basically came from the two Hashemite regimes, established in Jordan and Iraq, which were unhappy with the increasingly anti-western line adopted by the Cairo-based League. These two regimes were clearly encouraged by the West, notably in the tripartite declaration of 1950 and even more in the 1955 Baghdad Pact, founded upon Turkish-Iraqi-Pakistani military co-operation and backed by the West. The Eisenhower Doctrine of 1957 was another illustration of the intrusion of the East/West conflict into the Arab sub-system. Later challenges to Arab framework came from some radical Arab countries' alliance with newly-Marxist Ethiopia, or from the Syrian-Libyan support for Iran in the Iraq-Iran war, at the expense of Arab Iraq. The most serious challenge came from Egypt. It cannot be doubted that the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty constitutes an absolute repudiation of the Charter of the Arab League and of the 1950 Arab Defence Pact.

These successive failures did not prevent Washington from continuing to seek an ideologically-organized grouping
that would replace pan-Arabism with a local reflection of the East/West conflict. But Arabism was associated with opposition to bloc politics, and consequently to the US. In his way, M.H. Heikal had expressed this conflict as a confrontation between an Arab vision based on history, culture and solidarity and a US vision of the Arabs made of pure geo-strategic criteria. 56

(3) A third challenge to the Arab framework comes from local groupings of Arab states, organized along lines of local geographical proximity. The Arab League's charter encourages such groupings.

These sub-groupings are basically four. The first one concerns the Maghreb states, the second sub-group includes the state of the Nile valley, the third sub-group includes the Fertile Crescent states and the fourth sub-group is the GCC.

(4) Subregional Integration

The most realistic way to integrate the Arab world may be in stages, first forging links among subregional blocs of countries. The Meghreb, Nile valley, Fertile Crescent, and the Arabian peninsula countries come to mind as natural

groupings. Unfortunately, what geography and economic logic would put together, "politics and long historical memories keep apart". 57

The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)

The creation of the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) in March 1981 is a milestone in the Arab efforts to develop closer contacts, not only politically, but economically. The council is based on numerous previous attempts. Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the U.A.E. established the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC), "to realize coordination, integration and closer relations in all spheres".

Co-operation Before 1968: The principal characteristics of the development of co-operative links among the states of the Arab Gulf in this early period were: the co-ordination under the British protectorate of policy in those states which were not yet fully sovereign; the activities of Kuwait and, to a lesser extent, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Qatar in extending aid to those states which were not yet producing oil; and the initiation of co-operative economic arrangements between Kuwait and Iraq and between Kuwait and Saudi Arabia.

The main organs of co-ordination in the Trucial states were: the Trucial States Council of which the 30 meetings between 1952 and 1968 brought the rulers together to discuss matters of mutual concern; the Trucial States Development Fund, established in 1965 to approve and monitor development projects in the area; and the Trucial Oman Scouts, responsible for the security of the area, under the British protectorate. 58

By 1968 Kuwait had become deeply involved in the development process within the Trucial States. 59 This involvement dates back from 1952, but the main programme was initiated in 1962 when a Gulf Permanent Assistance Committee (GUPAC) was established in Kuwait to recommend and administer aid to those states. Other aid for the Trucial States came from Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Qatar, although none of this was substantial as that from Kuwait.

As with Gulf state aid to the Trucial States, Kuwait appears to have played the most active role in pioneering co-operative arrangements with its neighbour Saudi Arabia. Relations involved considerable co-operation and co-ordination in oil production and international oil policy.


Federative Efforts, 1968-72: Over these years, the trend towards developing co-operative relations among the states of the Arab Gulf was dominated by attempts to create a nine-state federation, culminating in the failure of the regional scheme but in the establishment, in 1971, of the United Arab Emirates, linking the seven Trucial States. Other prominent aspects of this period were: the conclusion of a further set of economic and cultural co-operation agreements among the states of the area; the expansion of the physical communications infrastructure connecting the various states; the attempts to settle and define the frontiers between the states; the increase of aid from the richer states to the poorer; and the role played by Chambers of Commerce in pressing for greater co-operation and co-ordination.

It was clearly the British government’s decision in January 1968 to withdraw its forces from the area which set in motion the attempts to federate. The course of the negotiations spread through 1968, 1969, 1970 and 1971. There are two main ways in which the federal project created a basis for enhanced co-operation between the UAE and other Arab Gulf states in the years which followed 1971. First, the network of joint committees which were established to examine aspects of integration, and the intensive meetings which took place at different levels, opened up contacts between the rulers of Bahrain, Qatar, and the Trucial States,
and between administrative departments in the different states bearing responsibility for similar fields.

A number of schemes were undertaken which brought the states of the Arab Gulf closer to one another, in terms of the time taken to travel or communicate between them. Further, the process of seeking to delineate the land and offshore borders between the Arab Gulf states was pushed ahead over the period in question, although many of the most difficult issues remained unsettled at the end of the period. Along with other border settlements Saudi Arabia and Kuwait concluded negotiations in December 1969 for the division of the Neutral Zone between them, and the division proceeded forthwith under the supervision of a joint committee. Besides, the trend towards inter-governmental co-operation in the Arab government was mirrored by private interests seeking co-operative arrangements.

Economic and Social Cooperation, 1972-79: The level of co-operation and co-ordination among the Arab Gulf states since 1972 has shown a marked advance over that which existed previously. Most notable has been the host of economic and social co-operation and co-ordination agreements concluded among the states. The attempts at enhancing co-operation and co-ordination in these spheres may be divided into the following categories:
1. broad agreements laying down general principles for co-operation and co-ordination;
2. agreements to pursue specific policies of cooperation and co-ordination;
3. establishment of joint committees for considering or implementing schemes of co-operation and co-ordination;
4. co-ordination of currencies;
5. cultural and social co-operation and co-ordination;
6. joint projects;
7. functional organizations established by a number of Arab Gulf states to serve their collective needs;
8. intra-Gulf aid giving.\(^\text{60}\)

While the myriads of joint committees and economic co-operation agreements have often failed to have much effect, activities in the field of functional organization have often been productive.

**Further Aspects of Co-ordination, 1972-79:** The measures of co-operation and co-ordination mentioned above have been carried through within a context of continuing discussion regarding a more far-reaching integration. This discussion has taken three forms. The first, limited mainly to the three years which followed the establishment of the United Arab Emirates, has been discussion of the possibility of

\(^{60}\) Niblock, n.58, pp.195-6.
resurrecting the nine-state federation idea i.e. bringing Qatar and Bahrain into the existing federation. Despite efforts, the scheme failed.

The second form was the discussion of a 'single political and economic plan' for the Arab Gulf states. The elements of co-operation and co-ordination which were in fact brought about over these years could be considered part of the process of creating the 'single plan'.

The third form has been discussion of the creation of Gulf common market. Although there has been no formal establishment of a common market organization in the Arab Gulf, some of the aspects of common market practice have been in existence there for some years.

The trends towards social and economic integration are inevitably affected by elements of co-operation and divergence within the political sphere. The continuous exchange of ministerial visits, together with the basic similarity of the problems facing the regimes, has enabled the states to pursue broadly similar policies with regard to the outside world.

Launched in 1981, the GCC has since been institutionalised with headquarters in Riyadh and a Kuwaiti General Secretary. Summits of the six countries have been held regularly since then and a few agencies have been created
to carry out resolutions on economic, education, and security and other fields. A certain degree of military co-operation and weapons standardization has been achieved. The six countries have also agreed upon an almost unified attitude towards the Iraq-Iran war, though this unity has often been the victim of individual deals with one or the other of the two belligerents. This very relative success is basically due to a high degree of similarity in the social fabric, political institutions and ideological vision in the six states. It is also explained by the deep feeling of vulnerability they share vis-a-vis poorer, more densely populated and politically active neighbouring states.61

Public opinion is optimistic about the future of the GCC. The first public opinion survey to measure the public's attitudes toward the GCC was conducted by two professors at the University of Kuwait in the fall of 1984. The full study was published in June 1985.62 This was the first public opinion survey in Kuwait or anywhere in the Gulf to measure the people's perceptions of the GCC. The study can be regarded as sample study for the whole region.

61. Salame, n.48, p.271.

The important findings of the study are as follows:

1. Kuwaiti public opinion reflects a high level of interest in the GCC.

2. Kuwaitis believe that the GCC was established primarily to protect the security of the member states and the region from the ambitions of foreign powers.

3. Kuwaitis strongly support Gulf economic, commercial, industrial, and agricultural co-ordination. However, they feel that little has been done in this area.

4. Kuwaitis are aware of the many hindrances that impede real cooperative efforts in the Gulf. These constraints are local, regional and foreign.

5. Kuwaitis are aware of the close linkage between Gulf co-operation and General Arab co-operation.

6. The survey results also revealed the presence of a substantial segment of the Kuwaiti population that has no opinion on GCC matters either a result of ignorance, or fear, or other reasons. The bulk of this group consists of women, illiterates, single people, and members of the lower class.63

The GCC and Security: The more pressing issues have been the issues of security both internal and external. The external issue was quite obvious, as the Gulf war raged at the head of

the Gulf and, within a few months, was to be extended into waters of the Gulf as well. The internal security issue was more complex and reflected the anxieties of Gulf rulers over the possibilities that the example of the Iranian revolution could spill over to the southern coastline of the Gulf. Religious tensions with most Gulf states were not new and, in several of them, ethnic and religious heterogeneity automatically caused official anxiety over issues of internal stability, particularly in view of the regional situation.64

(A) There had been specific incidents to alarm Gulf rulers as well, not least the Grand Mosque attack in Mecca in November 1979 and consequent unrest amongst the 400,000 strong shia community in the Eastern provinces. There had also been irredentist threats to the independence of Bahrain from the Islamic militants in Teheran and the announcement of an anti-government plot there in December 1981. In Kuwait, constant anxieties existed over the danger of the Iran-Iraq conflict spilling over into the Emirate, both in terms of actual invasion and in terms of destabilisation of the government. Saudi concerns had been given some practical expression, for all the GCC states except

64. Informations in the subsequent discussion is drawn from George Joffe, "Pan Arabism or Regionalism: The GCC Comes of Age", Arab Affairs (London), vol.9, Spring-Summer 1989, pp.89-106.
Kuwait had already signed bilateral security pacts with the GCC's most powerful state.

Agreement has proved far easier over issues of regional security and here the GCC has had some solid achievements in which it can talk considerably pride. The organization's potential for improving regional security was underlined by its success, in November 1982, in bringing the state of hostility between South Yemen and Oman which had lasted ever since the suppression of the Dhofar rebellion in the mid-1970s to an end. Another example of the GCC ability to defuse regional tensions came in 1988, when GCC mediation persuaded Qatar and Bahrain to place their maritime delimitation dispute - which had erupted in open confrontation in 1987 - before the International Court of Justice in the Hague.

Much of the GCC's security concerns were linked to the desire to prevent the problems of the Gulf and the hostilities involved in the Gulf war from bringing in the super powers and internationalising the problems of the region. This aspect of the Arab Gulf policy predates the formation of the GCC. Gulf opposition to the Carter administration's Rapid Deployment Force (RDF) proposal, for example, was as much because of the implications of US interference in Gulf affairs as it was a result of Gulf Arab anxiety to remain neutral and non-aligned.
It was for this reason that the Kuwaiti decision to seek international aid for the protection of its tankers from Iranian attack in the waters of the Gulf raised such irritation in 1986-87. The willingness of the USA to eventually reflag Kuwaiti vessels and the consequent introduction of over 30 units of the US Pacific Fleet into the Gulf seemed to have rendered the doctrine of exclusion and non-alignment irrelevant for the GCC. This was particularly galling since GCC states, led by Saudi Arabia, had been continuously moving towards a new modus vivendi with Iran, despite GCC financial support for Iraq during the previous year. Oman and the UAE had been particularly anxious to achieve this and were amongst the most vocal in private over the Kuwaiti decision.

GCC states were also aware that their ability to influence events in the region was limited. There had been several GCC sponsored attempts to negotiate a ceasefire which had foundered on the rock of Iranian hostility. It had also proved impossible to prevent the tanker war from affecting GCC shipping, despite discreet attempts by the organization to persuade Baghdad to cease provoking Iran into indiscriminate response to attacks as its own tanker shipping and Gulf oil terminals. Saudi Arabia, in particular, had been at the forefront of attempts to persuade Iran to accept UN mediation to end the fighting. However, it was only in
July 1987, in the wake of the rioting by Iranian pilgrims during the Hajj, that Saudi Arabia and the other GCC members became reconciled to the US naval presence in the Gulf.

Yet, even then, at a time when Saudi Arabia itself had been forced into confrontation with Iran, GCC members were still seeking methods of regional conciliation. The December 1987 GCC heads-of-states meeting, for instance, devoted most of its time to discussions of Omani and UAE inspired motions for a new GCC peace initiative. In fact, it was only after the July 1988 cease fire in the war that relations between the GCC and Iran improved, but the desire of the organization for mediation and for a Gulf-based solution was evident.

(B) However, even if problems had been encountered in the realm of internal security and super power exclusion from the Gulf, significant development has taken place in the more positive arena of military security. The GCC states know, of course, that they cannot directly confront the military power of countries such as Iran or Iraq, given their eight years of harsh experience of hostilities and their vastly superior populations.

The result has been the growth of a 10,000 strong GCC defence force - the Joint Strike Force (JSF), based at the Hafr al-Baten military city in Saudi Arabia and with an
officer corps drawn from all GCC member states but under Saudi command. This was instituted at the December 1984 GCC summit in Kuwait and is designed to act in parallel with the growing co-ordination of the individual military forces of GCC member states. Here a series of joint military exercises have been organized under the title of the "Peninsula Shield" since 1983 on the territories of different member states.

Unfortunately, however, such moves toward a joint defence policy have not been as extensive as they might have been. Several states are not anxious for complete integration since they fear that national policy might thereby be subordinated to regional needs and that Saudi preoccupations might come to dominate the organization. Furthermore, member states tend to have different perceptions of what regional threat might be - as was evident at the December 1987 GCC summit meeting. This inevitably tends to militate against integration of defence policies. There is also a problem over equipment standardization, for, although US equipment predominated, some states have habitually turned to other suppliers, such as France and the UK. Furthermore, the reluctance of Congress to supply military equipment under the Reagan administration because of fears that it might be turned against Israel had led to several states, particularly Kuwait, acquiring Soviet weaponry instead.
Yet, even if there still remains much to be done to standardise equipment and to integrate both defence forces and defence policies, there has been clear progress in another direction. This has been the creation of strategic economic planning. The Gulf war made it evident that GCC member states, as major oil producers, faced serious threats to the interdiction of their oil exports. As a result, from November 1985, GCC states have made it clear that a threat into any one of them will be construed to be a threat to all. In conjunction with plans like creation of strategic food stockpile, there has also been attempts to improve and integrate the communications infrastructure linking GCC states together.

It is now over a decade since the GCC was launched and there is no doubt that it has acquired an important reality in the political and economic lives of the Arab Gulf states. Although its original inspiration was political-dominated by the anxieties of Gulf rulers over security issues at the start of the decade - its most significant manifestation today is economic, as it increasingly becomes the vehicle of economic rationalisation and communication with the outside world. This is likely to prove to be its most enduring feature in the years to come as well. However, the experience of the Gulf Cooperation Council shows
that the spread of Arab groupings sharply curtails the power of the Arab League. In terms of specific cooperation schemes or projects, these groupings will inevitably detract from the League's functions and many may not provide the best alternative for the rational use of resources.