The development of Arab Nationalism owes much to the Turkish rule over the Arab land. Though Arab Nationalism was a very old concept for the Arabs in the mid 19th Century, it was again revived by the Arab Christian and Muslim thinkers like Michael Aflaq and Jamal Abdul Nasir of Syria and Egypt respectively. In the name of Ba'thism and Nasirism this movement was propagated throughout the Arab World.

The catalyst for the rise of Arab Nationalism i.e. Qawmmiyya was undoubtedly the growth of the Zionist movement in Palestine, culminating in the establishment of Israel in 1948. The cry for Arab Unity came into Arab consciousness and was mainly directed against the Israelis.

Regardless of the practical inability of the Arabs to unite or to defeat the Israelis, Arab Nationalism became the political force of the Arab World. Hence, the uneven drive for Arab Unity can be seen in a number of attempts at the cross national political integration in the Arab World. Syria and Egypt formed the United Arab Republic in February 1958 (to be dissolved in 1961), a few days later the Arab Federation (of Jordan and Iraq) was formed (to last until July 1958).

Ba'thism is another version of Arab Nationalism which is based upon Arab Unity, Freedom and Socialism. Since the
founder of this ideology. Michael Aflaq and Salah al Bevtar were influenced by the Western ideologues during their education in France, they tried to implement Ba’thist ideology in Syria vix-a-viz in the Arab World. Before Hafiz al-Asad, there was political instability in Syria. After Asad came into power in 1970 he not only proved himself to be a strong leader but also gave an ideology of Greater Syria, which include Lebanon and a portion of Jordan and Palestine. This expansionist tendency of Asad coincided with the nationalist identity of Syria. Therefore, under the Asad’s efforts Ba’thist rules, are very much close to Syrian Nationalism.

In the case of Iraq, after independence it became a Western ally, when General Nuri al-Sa’d made an agreement with Turkey as a result of Baghdad Pact in 1955. In the wake of 1955 pact Arab reaction took place among pro-Nasirities who became aggressive towards Monarchical regime. Since the Arab masses responded actively against the Iraqi regime. Therefore, from 1958 to 1968 many regimes in Iraq were overthrown.

In 1963 Abdul Salam Arif over threw Qasim and began to implement the policies of the Ba‘th with intellectuals support from the military elements, the intellectuals and the middle classes. A number of efforts were made during the year 1963-65, for Arab unification, but agreement made between Syria and Iraq and between Egypt, Syria and Iraq
had little practical effect. However, the experience of both Syria and Iraq in civil-military cooperation have demonstrated that the military often tended to impose their own decisions and run the business of the Government in accordance with their own imperatives rather than with party principles and guidelines. Though civilian leaders voiced criticism of military control, the increasing civil military tension remained unresolved.

In July 1968 in a bloodless coup Arif was overthrown by Ahmad Hasan al-Bakr who was a staunch supporter of the Ba’th. Within months of Bakr’s accession to power Iraq was confronted with a new problem i.e. the uprising by Kurdish guerrillas. But the demise of the Kurdish revolt and the granting of limited autonomy to the Kurds in Iraq can be viewed as a victory for the Ba’th Party and a step toward intra-regional accommodation and stability. It is also an indication of Iraq’s growing strength, of the country’s consolidation of power, and of the need for foreign powers to refrain from exploiting minority problems for their own interests.

After the Ba’th Party came to power in Syria in 1963, it discussed the relations of the party and government and of party and populace, as well as, the problem generated by the establishment of the national guard. It affirmed the right of the people to criticize the party and made a special point that such organizations as those of labour, students
and professional people should not be subject to state control.

However at a later stage, the Ba’th Party Conference decided that the socialist goals of the party should be put into operation immediately. Such a move would have been a reversal of Aflaq’s traditional attitude that independence and unity were necessary pre-conditions for the successful implementation of Ba’thist (Arab) Socialism. It represents the strong influence exerted during the conference by the ‘extremist’ wing associated with Ali Salih Sadi and Nur al-din al-Atassi, Secretaries General of the Iraqi and Syrian regimes respectively. Specifically, the sixth conference statement considered the establishment of collective forms on land processed under the agrarian reforms measures as a goal to be striven for urgently.

In the case of Iraq, radical agrarian reform was one of the main tasks which the Ba’th revolutionary talked in the early stage. As a preliminary, changes had to be made in the institutions concerned, and the party’s control of them had to be strengthened. Under the revolution, the party’s leadership and democratic practices were extended and developed in rural areas, and the peasants contribution to the political life of the country has grown. Peasant association have acquired political and economic importance. New patterns of production have emerged, and the old ones are in decline.
Despite the great achievements made in industrial sector during the period 1974-81, it still suffers from certain obstacles and drawbacks which negatively affects its course of progress and the achievement of the objective assigned to it. Some of these obstacles and drawbacks, are caused by the levels of economic progress of the country, the lack of experience in industry and the problem of socialist application.

In the Arab World, inter-Arab relations on bilateral as well as on the basis of Pan-Arab level of both of the countries have remained concentrated largely on two basic issues i.e. Palestine and Arab Nationalism.

But there are other factors in inter-Arab relations which, despite the lack of visible short term results, play a fundamental part in strengthening links with the masses in other Arab countries and in laying the foundations for Arab Unity. However, in the Fertile Crescent relations especially between Syria and Iraq have assumed a significant importance especially after 1970 where the issues of nationalism vs. localism have been repeatedly debated and discussed.

After the coup of November 1970 in Syria, Baathism more often ignored the new rules continuous, though slowly abating insistence on Baath legitimacy. And when voicing its criticism viz-a-viz Syria it again acknowledged the
existence there of a Ba'th Party.

However, motives in the argument over Ba’thi legitimacy were differences over what Ba’thism should stand for and personal hostilities. The coup fo 23rd February 1966 in Syria advocated a different version of Ba’thism than that of the Qawmmiyya, and a few of them like Jadid, seemed to have some ideological motivation, their main objective was simply to take power. The stronger emphasis on socialism presumably served largely to mobilize supporters who could not be reached with more moderate arguments. The Iraqi Ba’th, for its part, had no actual programme at all, and indulged in complete ideological vagueness. As far as ideological differences had a bearing on the conflict this was largely due to the preferences of the Syrian nationalism for the rulers in Iraq which threaten to erode the basis of Syrian regime.

Ba’thism in Iraq and Syria certainly diverged at the verbal level: where as the Iraqi party continued to stick to the traditional Ba’thi discourse and vocabulary, Jadid and his supporters borrowed Marxist-Leninst terms and concepts. Both sides, however, claimed to recognize the constitution of the Ba’th Party, passed by its first Congress in Damascus in 1947, as the theoretical basis of their political practice.

However, due to their regional competition relations between Syria and Iraq greatly deteriorated till the process
in the aftermath of the Camp David accord seemed to be reversed in an almost spectacular volte-face.

Syro-Iraqi relations, in 1980 returned to the state of open conflict that had characterized them prior to 1978-79 rapprochement. Though the means resorted to largely resembled the pre-rapprochement period, a few differences can be distinguished. Foremost among these differences was the establishment of a firm alliance between one of conflict parties Syria - and another regime in the region-Iran that served to combat Iraq as their common enemy.

The current phase thus has witnessed the intensification of the ideological conflict aiming the Iraq and Syria on the lines of the political independence of its branches, thus ending for its existence all practical purposes as a Pan-Arab Organisation.

Throughout the 1950s, the Ba‘th conceived the idea of the Arab Nation as an organic whole entrusted with the task of national regeneration. However, with the failure of the Arabs first experiment in unity in 1961, and their defeat as a united force in 1967 Arab-Israel War, the experience of the Iran-Iraq war, the Ba‘th conception of the nature and role of the Arab Nation suffered a great deal.

In a pragmatic fashion, the Ba‘th Movement both in Syria and Iraq realized that a decisive change in the status quo of the Arab countries was not likely to occur in the
foreseeable future unless it was accompanied by a process of regional transformation. The key to Arab regeneration in the form of a unified socialist state was not to be found in an idealistic attempt to harmonize the efforts of conflicting political systems and social interests, but lay in first preparing the social and political conditions in each Arab country for such an eventuality.

The impracticability of a comprehensive Arab Movement under the unstable political conditions in the Arab World. Consequently, its Pan-Arab character gave way to an increasing tendency to participate in regional politics. The new Ba'thist governments were more successfully in accommodating by compromise and more often by coercion the political ambitions and economic interests of the more influential segments of society, such as the landed gentry, royal families and more recently army officers and bureaucrats generating the feeling of Wataniyya over Qaummîyya. Consequently the call to abolish boundaries between Arab States, and the demand to eradicate social and economic differences were fiercely countered by the adamant resistance of those who had vested interests in preserving the state of political fragmentation in the Arab World. Today the conflict between the Ba'th Government in Syria and Iraq cannot be entirely attributed to ideological differences. Underlying this conflict are the concrete state interests of the two countries, in which no amount of rhetoric on Arab Unity and brotherhood can dispel.