INTRODUCTION

Arab Nationalism arose within the context of Muslim civilization at a time when the latter had been seriously challenged and weakened by the encroachments of the West. Considered as the belief in the national identity of the Arab people and the wish to see them United in a single polity, it is the source of the Arab Unity movement in West Asia. It has had an immense impact on Arab politics even with the most traditional leadership paying homage to its ideals. Arab nationalism has thus been viewed as opposed to feudalist social structures, capitalist exploitation and the persistence of privileged classes.

Most of the ideological trends that appeared specially in Syria and Iraq advocated this revolutionary doctrine of Arab Nationalism leading to the doctrines of socialism, basically motivated again foreign involvement in the area. The Palestinian debate in 1948 further boosted the revolutionary trends of nationalism, in place of liberal nationalism which was by then prevalent in the Arab World.

The revolutionary Arab Nationalism in this phase re-dedicated itself to fundamental change in order to achieve their desired objectives of Freedom and Unity. Freedom was to be achieved from the colonial powers and Unity had to be enshrined among the Arab States.
Founded in the early 1940s in Syria, the Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party has espoused a Pan-Arab ideology but has achieved only a measure of political success. It has repeatedly been torn apart by ideological arguments and power conflicts. Since 1963 it has been controlling party in both Syria and Iraq.

As for the Ba'ath ideology is concerned, the emphasis has been fixed more on Arab Nationalism than Arab Socialism. The party constitution deals first with the Unity and Freedom as the mission of the Arab Nation. Only after considering these issues does it speak about socialism. According to Michael Aflaq one of the fundamental principles of the party is the eternal mission of the Arab Nation. One aspect of the mission is to fight colonialism. Another is to extend the fraternal hand to other nations in order to collaborate with them for the establishment of "Just institutions" which will bring "prosperity and peace", as well as moral and spiritual advancement.

The Ba'ath works towards a complete change. It will be a total psychological transformation of every individual, and not simply a change of governments and institutions. The Ba'ath declares that all the natural resources, big industries and means of transportation should be owned and managed by the state. No owner of agricultural land should
posses more than he can farm, and all farming should be subject to the overall economic planning of the state. Civil liberties must not become a cover under which the age old Arab concern for self thrives: such liberties should be provided, but within the national interest.

The issue of Nationalism has been discussed and debated time and again the United Arab World. For some Arab Nationalism has been a force dividing the Arabs. Even Pan-Arabism was divisive when it threatened the privileged classes which had vested interests in the perpetuation of each of the autonomous states. More fundamentally, strong national feelings exist in individual Arab countries on the levels of both the people and the elites. Having led a separate existence for two or three decades, these states have became the normal point of reference for their citizens. It has proven difficult to utilize feelings of a broader unity to stimulate effective action. As a result, Arab Unity can only be accomplished if each participant state gains in terms of its local interests. The failure to meet this difficult requirement was the major cause of the collapse of the Union of Syria and Egypt in 1961.

The Union failed to meet Ba'ath's expectations, and in the coup of 28th September 1961 the Nationalist regime came to power in Syria and put an end to the Unitary experience with
Egypt. The nationalist regime led to a new low in Syro-
Egyptian relations, it meant normalization, even rapprochement in relations with Iraq. The regime in Syria found itself by radical Arab nationalist advocating Arab Socialism, whether the Ba'thist version, both of which had considerable appeal within Syria itself. And indeed on the March 1963, the Syrian regime fell to a coalition of nationalist and Ba'thist officers. The purges led to continued Ba'th rule in Syria, albeit of different factions, to the present day.

During the period of 1963-70, there was continued struggle for power and influence among several groups and individual in Syria. In this situation, the Ba'th took control of Syria. The party had been formally dissolved from the beginning of the UAR period until 1962. Though, the Ba'th Party’s founders, Michael Aflaq and Salah al-Behtar continued to advocate Arab Nationalism, most of the leaders however had been turned away from Arab Nationalism by the UAR experiment. They had come to focus their energies and interests on Syria and its immediate environment.

The Nationalist (Syria) responded in February 1966 by seizing power in a violent coup that drove the party’s founders into exile and split the Arab Nationalist Ba’th
Party into two, one centered in Syria and one in Iraq. The Syrian group was headed by the Alawi Officer Salah Jadid, along with some civilians who dominated Syrian cabinets from 1966-70. It was ideologically committed to a collectivist, state run economy and to support of a national liberation struggle by Palestinians. The forward policy of this faction helped cause the 1967 war with Israel. The defeat in 1967 led to the gradual erosion of Jadid's power base and in 1970 he was overthrown in a bloodless coup by Hafiz al-Assad. Asad's move to the top of the Syrian pyramid of power graphically demonstrated the reality of military predominance of the party.

After dismissing the ruling Ba'th body in November 1970, Asad appointed a provisional Regional Command. The people loyal to him, had gained sufficient control of the party branches in the election. Asad became the secretary general of the party, the President of the Government and the Commander in Chief of the armed forces. He appointed a permanent Regional Command in place of Provisional Regional Command by the addition of new members. Asad also became the regional Secretary general. In mid year, the National Congress met; it too chose Asad to head the National (Pan-Arab) Command. He has been re-elected to those posts at succeeding regional and National Congress in 1975 and 1979-80.
The notion of Greater Syria has been revived once again by Asad. The term BILAD ASH-SHAH (the land of Syria) is a geographical historical term, a region linking the two parts of the Arab homeland. BILAD ASH-SHAH was divided after the First World War into four mini-states (DUWAYLAT) namely Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Palestine, and in 1967 it lost territory to Israel. It was openly propagated over Damascus Radio and in Ba'th daily AL-THAWRA for several months in 1976-77.

Regarding the notion that Palestine is an integral part of Syria, Asad said in his speech in March 1974: 'Palestine is not only a part of the Arab homeland, but constitutes the major part of southern Syria. Other Syrian leaders also stated on various occasion that Palestine was part of Syria.

Despite these statements, it is conceivable that Asad, the realistic and cautious politician has been aware of the enormous difficulties involved in unifying the countries of Greater Syria under his leadership. It is more likely that his strategic goal has been (and still is) to achieve a (federal) union of Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Palestine under his leadership. Bearing in mind that Syria would be the biggest and strongest party in such a union, Damascus could maneuver among her partners and take the predominant role in shaping its political and military strategy.
Indeed, it would be seen that Asad's more concern of Greater Syria is to serve his two interrelated goals of creating a new regional power centre, or sphere of influence which can make its impact in inter-Arab politics vis-a-vis his two strong Arab rivals, Egypt and Iraq, and of coordinating military and political struggle with Israel.

The League of Arab states and UAR are two of the many unsuccessful attempts towards Arab Unity. The First, association of member states, never intended nor achieved real unity. The Second, while quite serious at first, proved both limited and temporary as the union collapsed in 1961. In addition to these, there have also been concerted efforts on the part of the independent Arab nations to acquire defense arrangements against any threat from the outside.

Nuri al-Said, the Prime Minister, was convinced that Iraq's best interest could be served by joining a Western sponsored security system.

Prime Minister Nuri made concrete move towards closer collaboration with Turkey. A Turkish -- Iraqi pact was signed in Baghdad on February 24, 1955 by the President of Turkey and King of Iraq. It stipulated that the two countries would cooperate for mutual security and defence and would refrain from interference in each other's internal
affairs. On April 4, 1955, England and Iraq concluded special Agreement in Baghdad where by

- UI acceded to February 24 pact to mutual cooperation between Iraq and Turkey.

The dramatic development in the West Asia during the period 1956-58 exposed Iraq to further attacks from Arab states hostile to the pact which were now rallying around Nasir as a result of the ill-fated invasion of suez in 1956.

The suez crises of October –November, 1956, created the fear in Iraq that Egyptian - Israeli hostilities might expand beyond Sinai. The Suez crises gave the leader of the opposition full opportunity to embarrass the government of Nuri al-Said internally and public opinion was aroused against western imperialism. This led to protest demonstrations and serious riots in Mosul, Najef and Kut.

Despite the stern measures taken by the government Nuri’s opposition gained strength when President Nasir of Egypt turned military defeat into political victory, by becoming a symbol of anti-western imperialism. Opposition forces in Iraq found considerable support from Nasir and the Iraqi government had no choice but to combat this Cairo-inspired Pan-Arabism and Allies were sought in this struggle
from among the monarchical regimes remaining in the Arab World.

The Monarchy in Iraq was however overthrown in July 1958 and Iraq became a republic with Abdul Kareem Qasim as the Prime Minister and Abdus Salam Arif as his deputy. Col. Arif was associated with the influential Ba‘th Party and had shown himself to be a supporter of union between Iraq and the UAR.

In 1963, Arif overthrew Qasim and began to implement the policies of the Ba‘th with 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 agreements made between Syria and Iraq, and between Egypt, Syria and Iraq had little practical effect.

In 1966, Abdus Salam Arif was killed in an air crash and was succeeded by his brother Abdur Rahman Arif. In July 1968, in a bloodless coup A.R. 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. Direct confrontation between the Iraqi government and the Kurdish movement became inevitable following the non-Ba‘thist regime. The new regime emphasized the need to create a strong centre and advocate Arab
Nationalism to supersede local and parochial feelings. The threat of direct control by Baghdad instilled a sense of unity among the Kurds. The tribal and traditional elements viewed the central authority as a threat to their way of life, and the secular nationalist saw it as a threat to their goal of establishing an autonomous or separate Kurdish entity.

The failure of the central government to defeat the Kurdish revolt became a major source of instability of the regime and contributed in no small measure to the overthrow of three Iraqi governments since 1958 to 68. The situation began to change with the return of the Ba'th Party to power in 1968. Advocating what is considered to be perhaps the most attractive ideology in the West Asia, the Ba'th combined the appealing principles of Arab Unity and Arab socialism. The Ba'th leaders learned a lesson from their former regime. Though, pragmatic and secular in outlook, they were convinced of the righteousness of their cause and determined to make Iraq a model, if not a leader of a modern state in the Arab world. Beset with social, political and economic difficulties, the Ba'th party realized that the establishment of a stable regime had to be ensured before its ideology could be transformed into a reality.
The present study attempts to identify the issues that have determined Syro-Iraqi relations since Ba'th party came into existence. It aims to give the comprehensive account and explanation of the major events and developments in Syro-Iraqi relations over the last two decades.

The study is based on historical descriptive method. Materials both of primary and secondary nature have been organized in a systematic order and rendered into the analytical framework. The variables and events have been compared and conclusions derived.

In this context, the first and second chapters deals with the ideologies propounded by the different political thinkers regarding the Arab Unity. Arab Socialism in the Arab East (Fertile Crescent). The impact of these ideologies on Arab Nationalism depended upon the question of Arab Unity, the Palestinian cause and the issue of the social transformation. After the creation of Israel, the ideological groups of the young Arabs used Palestinian question as an instrument of the development of the Arab Nationalism.

The third chapter gives an analytical account of not only instability in Syria due to the frequent coups but also highlights the differences among the ideological groups operating in the country itself. The study also highlights
the developments of Party status under Hafiz al-Asad since 1970 which legitimises and consolidates the government's position in Syria.

The fourth chapter analyses as to how and why the Monarchical government in Iraq was overthrown by the revolutionary guards (Ba'thist) who were against the Northern Tier alliance. The study further highlights in detail Ba'th Parties stand on the Kurdish Question. This alliance was imposed by the imperialist power.

The fifth and final chapter of the thesis evaluates and examines the nature of conflicts between the same ideological countries i.e. Syria and Iraq. The issue of ideological perceptions always has created a feeling of confusion among the people as well as the regime. Syrian-Iraqi bilateral relations are not only tense but often have led to open conflict. Hence to maintain their hegemony in the Arab World particularly in the Arab East (Fertile Crescent), they have independently worked for their own nationalism using the slogan of Arab Nationalism as mark to cover the reality. The final chapter also raises question regarding the futures of Ba'th ideology its validity in the changed circumstances viz-a-viz to the question of Arab Nations.
ARAB NATIONALISM IN WEST ASIA

B'nTHISM IN SYRIA & IRAQ

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