

Foregrounding The Image Of Islamic Arab National Identity

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ABSTRACT

This research is set to foreground the historical legacy of the Muslim *Ummah identity in general and the Arab identity in particular*. The paper begins with the history and origin of the Arabs. The paper focuses on the image of Islamic Arab identity in the present time using both scholars. The following questions could be used as a guideline to foreground the reality of the Islamic Arab National Identity: What issues are contested in a Muslim nation generally and the Arab nation particularly? Who are the central participants in these Arab societies and how are their needs addressed? How has the Arab identity gone through various transformations and how has colonial experience affected the Arab world? How does the political identity affect the Arab ethnic identity?

Keywords: Islamic Arab Identity, Political Identity, Ethnic Identity

INTRODUCTION

The paper explores the current image of Islamic Arab identity. It focuses on the main issues that caused the crisis and conflict in the Arab identity. In order to understand the Arab identity first, an overlook to the historical background is important. Then it is significant to touch on the movements, events and transformational aspects that had affected the Islamic Arab identity until the present. Therefore, this paper proposes practical solutions that could explicate the reality of the Arab identity splits and crisis.

Furthermore, this paper implements actual and factual sources that can clearly identify the problematic issues in the Arab identity.

ARAB NATION: PRE / POST COLONISATION

Several historians and political scholars wrote that the Arabs originated from the Arab peninsula. They practised tribal system and lived around the Arab world. Arab geography books typically define the Arab world as “extending from the Persian Gulf to the Atlantic Ocean, from Iraq and the Gulf states in the east to Morocco’s Atlantic coast in the west. From north to south, the Arab world extends from Syria to Sudan” (Tamari 1996: 1). He adds that the vast region comprises such different ecological zones as the vast deserts of the Arabian Peninsula and the Sahara, the river valleys of the Nile and Euphrates, the rain-fed agricultural regions of the Mediterranean coastal areas, and the rugged heights of Mt. Lebanon, northern Iraq, Yemen, and the Atlas mountains of North Africa. Within these zones one finds nomadic Bedouins, peasant farmers, agricultural wage laborers, industrial workers, craftsmen and craftswomen, and all the trades and services associated with booming cities such as Rabat, Cairo, and Beirut.

Some scholars have written on the Arab national development and stated the circumstances faced by peoples in this region. In fact, Arabism first ascended in the nineteenth century “not as a direct reaction to Western rule, but as a critique of the state of the Ottoman Empire, whose reach had extended over most of the Arabic-speaking peoples since the early sixteenth century” (Kramer 1993: 172). For nearly four hundred years, these Arabic speakers had been

fully reconciled to their role in the Empire. George Antonius's *The Arab Awakening* (1938) explains: "The seat of the Empire was in Istanbul, and its vast domains were administered in Ottoman Turkish. But the Othman professed Islam, as did the overwhelming majority of their Arabic-speaking subjects." Therefore, their state evolved as a partnership in Islam embracing all of the Ottoman Sultan.

Zeine (1958) writes, those Muslims who spoke Arabic retained a pride in their language: God revealed the Qur'an in Arabic to an Arab Prophet (peace and blessing be upon him) in the seventh century. They also celebrated the history of the early Arab conquests, which carried Islam from the Oxus to the Pyrenees. And they took pride in their genealogies, which linked them to Arabia at the dawn of Islam. In addition, Kramer (1993) states, all Muslim subjects of the Ottoman house saw themselves as participants and beneficiaries in this shared Islamic enterprise, and they drew no distinction between Arab and Turk. He explains that pointing a sensitive issue that is the very fidelity to Islam bound all believers with other Muslims who speak other languages, and who brought new vitality to the defense and expansion of Islam. Since the fifteenth century, the Othman showed exactly this strength, attached to an Islamic zeal that had widened the expansion or *Fotohat* of Islam to the gates of Vienna. Therefore, all the Muslim subjects of the Ottoman house saw themselves as participants and beneficiaries in this shared Islamic enterprise, and they drew no distinction between Arab and Turk.

But in the nineteenth century, the relative decay of the Ottoman power began where "the foundations of this symbiosis began to weaken" (Haim 1960: 5). As Sylvia Haim (1960:5) adds that, "The great Ottoman carpet was being rolled up at both ends: by Europe's Great Powers, locked in imperial rivalry, and by the discontented Christian subjects of Ottoman rule in Europe, whose struggles for independence took a nationalist form" (Haim 1960: 7). The Othman went on board on a succession of westernizing transformational restructuring but "eventually lost their footing in the Balkans, the Caucasus, North Africa, and Egypt" (Duri 1987). Hourani (1983) states that, "The Empire dwindled, so did the confidence of its remaining subjects, and some discontent even appeared in the remaining Arabic-speaking provinces of the Empire, in Arabia and the Fertile Crescent — a discontent that would come to be known as the Arab awakening". Tibi (1990) also supports Hourani's idea of declining the Ottoman Empire.

Therefore, Sharabi (1970) denotes that, "This 'Arab awakening', Christian and Muslim, failed to produce a trenchant social criticism or a truly modern language of politics. Ultimately it would defeat itself by its apologetic defense of tradition and religion." However, the status of the Arab world after colonisation and with the existence of Israel in the heart of the Middle East left an impact on the unity of the Arab nation: "...the anti-Egyptian Arab coalition that came into being following the signing of the Camp David accords and hoped that this coalition could be transformed into the 'anti-imperialist' Arab unity it had so long desired" (Freedman 1986: 1). The desire for Arab unity is a result of the disunity after the era of colonisation.

One of the reasons that caused the continuity of the disintegration of the Arab nation is politics. Political authorities accepted the divisions and continued the disunity of Arabs as multiple States. Basically, this disunity has nothing to do with the nation. The political authorities have agreed upon dividing the Arab world into many nations and accepted the colonial idea of nation-states. The most obvious policy that has influenced the Arab land by the coloniser is the "divide and rule policy" (Islam 2005: 235). This policy is based on the idea of dividing the nations into small entities, where ruling became easier. Therefore, all these changes or "development" on the field of politics in the Arab world are somehow represented in the

writing of historians and novelists. Each writer has his own way and perspective in representing any incident.

The nation became regionally identified. Its loyalty became the new national aspects like the anthem, loyalty to the king and loyalty to the land. The nation suffers under the oppression and negative practices by the governments. The Arab nation tried to achieve unity, but the dictatorship constructs a great obstacle that prevented them from doing so. This matter is unsolved until the present day, but no one could address it openly. It seems like neo-colonisation after independence. However, studies on related literature could uncover the truth behind the scene.

It is significant to notice that before colonisation, there were no States, not even governments in the sense of organised power. Crevelde (1999) states that, "The state emerges out of the middle ages by fighting and overcoming, ecclesiastical and imperils universalism". Most of the world was occupied by empires like the Ottoman Empire and the Roman Empire. However, the French revolution led to the existence of the state and the division of civic. In 1648, the French revolution resulted in a lot of changes in the world's civil communities. "This period led to the separation of the state from 'civil society' and the creation of many of its most characteristic institutions; including its bureaucracy, its statistical infrastructure, its armed forces, its police apparatus, and its prisons (2004: 92). The most important issue that could lead to the main scope of this paper is the spread of the state from its 'original home' in Western Europe to other parts of the globe, including Eastern Europe, the British colonies in North America and Australasia, the Spanish and Portuguese ones in Latin America, and finally the countries of Asia and Africa (Crevelde 1999).

The map of the world changed and the state system occupied the whole world. Presently, each area is known by its state name. The colonial invasion has left the Asian and African continents divided into many states. For example, the African continent has continued the same colonial divisions. As Fisher (2012: 2) comments:

When European colonialism collapsed in the years after World War Two and Africans resumed control of their own continent, sub-Saharan leaders agreed to respect the colonial borders. Not because those borders made any sense -- they are widely considered the arbitrary creations of colonial happenstance and European agreements -- but because new rulers in Africa made the decision to keep the borders drawn by former colonisers to avoid disruptive conflict amongst themselves, as a Harvard paper on these artificial states put it.

Therefore, the borders of the modern Middle East region were drawn up by the victorious powers of the First World War, as laid out in the 1916 Sykes-Picot agreement. The for-mercure areas of the vast Ottoman Empire became the state of Turkey. Mirjam et al. (2005: 142) states that, "The Armenian provinces were given to Russia, Lebanon and most of Syria to France, and modern-day Iraq and the rest of Syria to Britain. France controlled Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia, while Britain was in charge of Egypt, Palestine, Jordan, and southern Yemen." Then "By the mid-1960s, the people living in the areas drawn up as states or mandates by the Sykes-Picot agreement had achieved their independence (Mirjam et al. 2005: 148).

THE DILEMMA OF THE MUSLIM ARAB NATIONAL IDENTITY

Before reviewing the Arab history and identity, it is important to highlight on the studies that have been done far on the Arab national identity and the main ideologies that affect its shape and transformation. Initially, the postcolonial countries are solely formed of the western and Europe experience of nationalism and nation-state ideology Thus, Mirjam et al. (2005). Hence,

that ideology is purely copied to the postcolonial countries especially since nationalism and national identity are western founded. The present policy of any postcolonial country is essentially based on the previous colonial power. With no doubt, the western view has conquered the whole criteria of nationalism and national identity for the postcolonial countries as many historians and scholars have written.

It is also important to mention that the ruling authority is blindly implementing the western system. This continuation of ruling the institutions in the country was explored by Massad (2001). Therefore, the postcolonial countries are applying the same system as the westerners or colonisers in the ruling of their nation and in forming the national identity after independence. As a result, the national principles, origins and bases of building a country and nation are being confined since the western doctrine is already implemented. However, this idea is the main point that causes the emergence of contradiction whenever we come to study a national identity of any postcolonial nation.

As a result, we find the postcolonial nation and the Muslim *Ummah* are affected by western concepts and inadvertently still colonised, controlled and yet to be freed as *we*, Muslim in a postcolonial nation, claims after independence. The Islamic view has proven that nationalism and national identity has caused the Muslim disintegration. Thus, most of the countries that have gained independence from colonisation are not yet totally free since they are still using the coloniser's system. The present situation discloses that the postcolonial countries are still partially adhering to the western system whilst another half is within its culture, principles and origins. Postcolonial Muslim countries are supposed to adhere to the Islamic way or at least return to its status before the colonial era. A similar notion was expressed by the former Prime Minister of Malaysia, Mahatir (2003: 188): "...they have also lost their independence and are under constant pressure to conform according to the ideologies of the oppressor". He also stated that, "None of our counties are truly independent. We are under pressure to conform to our oppressors' wishes about how we should behave, how we should govern our lands, how we should think even" (Mahatir 2003: 188). Rabie (2008: 1) comments on the Arab leaders today as selfish leaders whose interest is only on how "to remain in power". There are many reasons that caused the crisis of the Arab world today despite its great history, some of which are "economic in nature like high unemployment rates, very low labour productivity, and low per capita incomes; others are sociocultural like high illiteracy and population growth rates, and widespread corruption".

Politically, there are also several more problems related to the "political and security conditions", such as lack of political legitimacy in most countries, civil wars in others, and failure to solve the Arab-Israeli conflict or deal with the worsening Iraqi situation. Furthermore, the American invasion of Iraq in 2003 has had a "catastrophic impact", not only on Iraq but also on the entire region, causing "international terrorism to spread, anti-Americanism to deepen, and all issues related to economic development and the transformation of cultures, including the political culture, to be postponed, if not neglected and forgotten" (Rabie: 2008).

Khoury (1983: 41) states that,

The Arab population in the Middle East has not had the opportunity to freely express its political sentiments or affirm its identities for many decades, perhaps even centuries. In the transition from Ottoman to European control and then gradually to independence, most Arab citizenries did not have the opportunity to define their own state borders or craft their own governance systems. The turbulence and dynamism in the region today perhaps reflect the desire of many people to make up for a lost century of political self-expression.

Accordingly, the democratic deficit in the Middle East resides in a complex set of circumstances. There has been extensive debate about the role of Islam. Fish (2004) finds in a multivariate cross-national analysis, that Islam is robustly associated with autocracy and attributes this mainly to the subordination of women in Islamic states (although this is not prescribed in the Quran). Donno and Russett (2004), on the other hand, find that this is more of a characteristic of Arab states than of Islamic countries generally. The colonial experience, continued foreign influence, and persistent conflict have not encouraged democratic tendencies either. Yet, other countries have broken out of such postcolonial authoritarianism. More importantly, in most of the Middle Eastern countries, the basis of the economy has not produced social and economic development with modernism and democracy as favourable by-products. In particular, heavy dependence on oil production is not conducive to democracy (Ross 2001).

Ideologically, the intellectual parties and the Islamic one are the most effective in the Arab crisis today. Alqudosi (2010) states that:

In the Islamic history many arguments and discussions had been conducted especially between the intellectual and philosophical ideologies and the Islamic ideology. Mostly they have been rejected because the Islamic ideology or *Shariah* was primarily leading. Therefore, this leads to be shattered ideologically especially in the early centuries of the Islamic civilisation. Each ideology or party suppresses the other (2010: 1).

However in the 20th century, western civilisation has penetrated into Islamic countries. Its influence can be seen in the daily life of the communities especially the Arab community. The main noticeable issue is the emergence of two ideologies; the first calls for the people to follow the western civilisation and replicate their norms with complete rejection to the Islamic and Arab morals, norms and traditions. The second ideology calls for Islam and the *Shariah*, people must stick with their religious aspects and principles plus the cultural and traditional values (Hasan 2010: 184). In the meantime, there is another ideology that emerged from the conflict between the two ideologies. The ideology calls for the moderate between the imitations of the modern western civilisation and the other ideology being old and traditional. This ideology proposes to combine both ideologies in order to gather the positive points and find the peaceful way of life. So, the Arab communities can live with some development on different fields such as intellectual and philosophical. Actually the Arab nation likes “the Islamic world in general lives on the bedrock of a huge crisis in this field. Therefore, the third ideology finds the way by compromising a bit with the western ideology of development and positiveness towards the maintenance of the traditions and Islamic principles” (Mehsen 2010: 3).

ARAB NATIONALISM

According to the previous section, the Ottoman domination and its decline on one part and the colonial invasion to the Arab area on the other, has created a desire for Arab unity that is called Arab nationalism (Kedourie 1984: 213). Arabism thus arose from a growing unease about the pace and direction of change. Yet, while the Ottoman Empire lasted, this Arabism did not develop into full-fledged nationalism. Its adherents pleaded for administrative decentralization, not Arab independence, and they had no vision of a post-Ottoman order. The Arab migrants hoped for a way out of their predicament by seeking refuge in Western countries that they deem to be accountable due to their liberal democracies, mainly France and England. Despite the migrants' vague understanding of 'liberty', they were nonetheless being practical. The notion of Arab power was not a dream that they harboured. Kedourie (1984) adds on, a critic of Arab nationalism points out that their grievances “were local and specific; they related to the quality of government services or to the proper scope of local administration; and those who sought redress for such grievances were mostly men well

known in their communities, able perhaps to conduct a sober constitutional opposition but not to entertain grandiose, limitless ambitions.” (Kedourie 1984: 213) Therefore, on the eve of World War I, Arabs were probably still in the minority, outnumbered by Arabic-speaking Muslims and Christians who raised no doubt about the legitimacy of Ottoman rule, and even stood prepared to defend it.

Arab nationalism is an ideology, which began in the twentieth century. The focus of this emerging ideology was that the Arabs are and have been a nation unified by language and a shared sense of history. But they are long divided and dominated by external powers. Arab nationalism (*Al-Qawmeyya Al-Arabiyya*) is a nationalist ideology celebrating the glories of Arab civilisation, the language and literature of the Arabs, calling for rejuvenation and political union in the Arab world.

By the 1920s, Arab nationalism was the hegemonic ideology of the eastern Arab world - the *mashriq* - and its influence continued to spread in succeeding decades. By the 1950s and 1960s, the Arab nationalism Egyptian leader Jamal Abdel Nasser, and the capacities for mobilization, organisation, and clandestine action of the Ba’ath political party and the movement of Arab nationalists, Arab nationalism appeared to be ascendant throughout most of the more than twenty independent states of the Arab world. Finally, Taha (2010: 1) comments that, “Its decline in succeeding decades has been just as rapid, with nation-state nationalist tendencies and Islamic radicalism filling the apparent vacuum”.

The idea of Arab nationalism started after the WWII. Since the Arabs were left fragmented and they share many aspects of one nation, the Arab leaders had attempted to re-unite the Arab world again. Hourani (1991) in *A History of the Arab Peoples*, described the origin and development of Arab Nationalism Post WWII. Hourani (1991: 401) states that, The idea of Arab unity could be explained as the newly independent Arab states after WWII that had enough in common, in shared culture and historical experience as well as shared interests, to make it possible for them to come into close union with each other, and such a union would not only give them greater collective power but would bring about that moral unity between people and government which would make government legitimate and stable.

Furthermore, Barakat (1993: 348) asserts that, “The Arab world is a single unit rather than a number of nation-states”. He adds that the Arab world has the “potential for unity” despite being divided as at present. The Arab world was one united nation and still has the reasons and aspects of unity until present.

There have been several attempts to bring about a pan-Arab state by many well-known Arab leaders, all of which ultimately resulted in failure. Kramer (1993: 174-182) states that, the British Foreign Minister Anthony Eden called for Arab unity during the 1940s. This call was made upon the proposed idea of pro-British leaders, including King Abdullah of Transjordan and Prime Minister Nuri al-Said of Iraq. However, Egyptian proposed to have comprehensive grouping of independent Arab states. It was succeeded in 1945, with the establishment of the League of Arab States, a regional international organisation. In 1958, the union of Egypt and Syria formed the united Arab kingdom and achieved its sovereignty as an independent state. Later in the same year, North Yemen joined forces with the new United Arab Kingdom in 1958 “in a loose confederation called the United Arab States” (Dawisha 2002: 137). However, in 1961, this unification dissolved. Yemen continued to be an independent sovereign state and maintained its UN membership and separate embassies throughout the whole period of confederation.

Many critics have affirmed that the Arab unity is impossible. Dawisha's *Arab Nationalism in the Twentieth Century* (2002) states that, "The author takes particular issue with George Antonious' thesis that leading up to World War I, the region's elites and masses had been stirred by 'the Arab will to freedom'." Therefore, it would prove to be a "difficult mission for the nationalists to compete with entrenched pan-Islamic identities" (102). The statement is directly pointed at the main issue of Arab unity within the current status of Arab nation states system. Consequently, the main contradiction exists when applying the Islamic ideology that is rooted in the nation and the nationalism ideology that is also implemented profoundly. Besides, the nationalism ideology is practiced in the state system. Finally, Arab nationalism based on the nationalism ideology or any non-Islamic ideology is impossible to bring prosperity to the nation.

However, the idea of Arab nationalism died the day the Arab leaders started looking after their own interest instead of the nation's. In the review of Dawisha's *Arab Nationalism in the Twentieth Century* (2002) the lengthy post-mortem of Arab nationalism, "or autopsy, if you will, is a fascinating indictment of authoritarianism." He faults Arab nationalism's acute inability to survive setbacks on "the disinterest of its custodians in creating workable democratic institutions" (Dawisha 2002: 297). On the other hand, and for too long, Arab nationalism had been a one-man show. The idea of Arab nationalism was built on the charisma and vision of an authoritarian leader, and when that leader fell, the idea was doomed to die with him. In the end, "Arab nationalism succeeded in renewing a sense of dignity and self-worth. Yet, even with two decades of the nationalist project infused into the Middle East, the pervasive authoritarianism remains with us to this day" (Dawisha 2002: 297). Central to the nationalist ethos was that in the singular pursuit of unity, there was no room for democratic dissent. Many Arabs seemed to agree, their hatred of imperialism is a way of expressing their distrust of "western" democratic institutions. (Hamid 2005: 102) reviews on Dawisha's work;

We are told of Iraqi demonstrators in 1958 chanting "*AlQawmeyya al-'Arabiyah tufni al-Ahzab al-Gharbiyah*" ("Arab nationalism eliminates Western political parties"). This, of course, leads us to an interesting question, particularly relevant today: Will increasing anti-western sentiment in the Arab world translate into increasing doubt about the desirability of "freedom" and "democracy"? This has not yet happened. But if history is any guide, perhaps it soon will".

Plainly, Arab tries to be one. Their attempts were basically based on capitalism and socialism ideologies. Since the ideology they followed is imported and the westerner, the outcomes of that nationalism must have new principles and philosophies such as capitalism and secularism. Bangash and Siddiqui (1996) comments on the socialism and capitalism used to unite the Arab but are un-Islamic in nature. He (1996: 64) says that.

A succession of Arab delegates stood up to denounce Arab nationalism. They were forthright in admitting that for over 30 years Arab nationalism had been a divisive force in the Arab world and had kept the Arab fragmented and weak. These Arab delegates, many of them Nasesrites and Arab nationalist, now regarded Islam as the only platform which could halt and reverse the inexorable course of recent history.

Thus the idea of Arab nationalism had caused the *Ummah* a gallant fragmentation which had divided it into many nations-states. Consequently, Arab nationalist realised that the only thing that can unite the *Ummah* back is Islam.

With unity being a much revered dream for many of the Arab countries despite the politicians' less than serious attitude towards achieving it, a new "United Arab Republic" was formed by

Egypt, Syria and Iraq in 1963 through an abortive agreement which detailed that its structure was to be entirely federal where each member state will have its own identity and institutions. Despite that, the dream of Arab unity once again faced a stumbling block when, in 1973, Egypt decided to call itself the “Arab Republic of Egypt”.

Prior to the formation of the UAR, Jordan and Iraq had jointly formed the Arab Federation in 1958. However, the monarchist rival fell apart after just six months in formation following tensions with the UAR and the occurrence of the 14 July Revolution. A later attempt in the form of a confederation between the United Arab Republic, Arab Federation and the Mutawakkilite Kingdom of Yemen led to the formation of the United Arab Republic which too ended in 1961.

Libya under the leadership of Muammar Gaddafi too had jumped on the bandwagon and failed with another two attempts namely the Federation of Arab Republics which dissolved after five years and the Arab Islamic Republic which never came into being. As of today, the only instances of actual unification amongst the Arab nations are the United Arab Emirates which is formed by the seven Arab emirates as well as the coalition of North Yemen and South Yemen. The opposing wing of the Bath Party leads the present Syrian government and maintains its advocacy of pan-Arabism. Its presence is also established in a few other countries.

The prospects of pan-Arabism as an admissible ideology was badly impaired when Arab was defeated by Israel in the Six Day War in 1967 and made worse by the failure of pan-Arabist governments to bring about economic prosperity. Avarham Sela's (2002: 166) comments on Arab unity in *The Continuum Political Encyclopedia of the Middle East* warrants attention: “By the mid-1970s, the idea of Arab unity became less and less apparent in Arab politics, though it remained a wishful goal among the masses.”

After the Six-Day War, the Egyptians' connection to pan-Arabism came under intense scrutiny. In his eagerness to form a pan-Arab authority under his own leadership, Nasser became enraptured and thousands of Egyptians perished whilst the country grew disenchanted with Arab politics. The Arabic-speaking countries became even more fragmented following the Camp David Accords between Egypt and Israel in 1978. Anwar Sadat, Nasser's successor, had re-established a conclusive Egyptian orientation through government law and peace reconciliation with Israel, which determinedly affirms that his obligation only covers Egypt and the Egyptians. Evidently removed were the terms “Arab”, “Arabism,” and “Arab unity”. Pan-Arabism was overshadowed by the nationalist and Islamist ideologies by the late 1980s and was opposed by many in the 1990s. Egyptian critics argued that Arab nationalism has managed to corrode and/or entrust native Egyptian identity by covering only one facet of Egypt's culture. The perspectives and antecedents for concerted recognition in the Egyptian state are phrased by a linguistic anthropologist who operated a fieldwork in Cairo.

Historically, Egyptians have considered themselves as distinct from 'Arabs' and even at present rarely do they make that identification in casual contexts; *il-'arab* [the Arabs] as used by Egyptians refers mainly to the inhabitants of the Gulf states... Egypt has been both a leader of pan-Arabism and a site of intense resentment towards that ideology. Egyptians had to be made, often forcefully, into “Arabs” [during the Nasser era] because they did not historically identify themselves as such. Egypt is considered as a self-conscious nation due to the old history and civilisation in Egypt. This conception on Egypt is before the pan-Arabism as well as before the British invasion to the country. Niloofar (2003: 47) further explains on Egypt as, “Its territorial continuity since ancient times, its unique history as exemplified in its pharaonic past and later on its Coptic language and culture had already made Egypt into a nation for centuries. Egyptians saw themselves, their history, culture and language as specifically Egyptian and not

Arab". The distinction among Arabs remains obvious especially with the absence of Islam the first country to become distinct is Egypt.

Example: Jordanian Nationalism

A considerable amount of literature has been published on the Jordanian identity as an established country. Initially, the former King Hussein of Jordan declared that Jordan is a new state and is for Jordanians. He states that,

The Jordanian State is a State of Law in the modern sense of a democratic state. It is a state for all citizens regardless of any differences of opinion or any pluralism of approach. It derives its strength from an actual and declared application of the principles of equality, justice and equal opportunities and from the provision of practical means enabling the Jordanian people to participate in the decisions affecting their lives and their affairs in such a manner as to achieve peace of mind, security, faith in the future, genuine concern for the institutions of the state and pride in belonging therein. (1)

Jordan is an indivisible part of the Arab and Islamic nation. Hence, its national identity is Arab just as Islam is the faith of the nation, the fountainhead of its civilisation and the source of values which govern its conduct. In the light of these facts, the people, leadership and democratic institutions of Jordan firmly believe in the inevitability of union among the Arab states and aspire to achieve union by all legitimate means. They also aspire to establish effective "Arab-Islamic solidarity and contributing to the formulation of a new and balanced world order." (King Hussein 2010: 2)

Jordanian nationalism is known to be unique in its form and structure. Jordanian national identity is studied by many scholars like Massad (2001) and Anderson (1991) specifically in the field of political science. They noticed that Jordan was established from nothing and rose to become an independent country. It has its weight among the Arab countries, and occupies an important position either politically or strategically. Robins (2004: 16) indicates that, "The decade of 1920s was crucial in terms of the emergence of both state and regime in Transjordan." Robins's (2004) *A History of Jordan* explores that Jordan was not a state with borders or any political entity: "Prior to the First World War, the potential for the emergence of a state from the land beyond the river Jordan was almost non-existent" (Robins 2004: 5). Thus, many studies have been carried out on Jordanian nationalism and national identity exploring the mysterious and secretive strategy behind the construction of the Jordanian national identity. This section includes a view on these studies on the national identity of Jordan.

A study by Massad on the Jordanian identity, which indicates that the production of national identity of Jordanians is based on the colonial institutions. Therefore, the influence of the institutions of the previous colony has a great impact on the process of reformation or reproduction of the Jordanian identity. These institutions remained after the British colonial military and law. "The two key institutions examined are the law and the military" (Massad 2001: 1). Hence, his study is built upon the literature of nationalism by pointing out the production of national identity within the postcolonial nation-state.

Massad's study had focused on the transformation and production of the Jordanian identity in particular and the creation of a national identity within the phenomenon of a nation-state which is Jordan. In other words, Massad's study refers to how the original Arab identity is being transformed to follow the western system of nation-state. Thus, Jordan can be considered as a new nation-state and new formation of the western ideology of new regional national identity. However, my reading focuses on the way to position the national identity within the development of the nation-state phenomenon as reflected in works of fiction.

Other research describes the national identity in Jordan as a collective identity. It is collective because Jordanian identity seems to have much confusion in its construction. Hillel Frisch (2002: 1) studied the Jordanian identity and comments that the Jordanian identity is 'fuzzy': "In Jordan, the construction of nationalism is deliberately fuzzy and eclectic due to security concerns". Jordanian identity is collective because of the emergence of the state as Transjordan and recently as Jordan. The border of Jordan was free from any rule of state, before the emergence of the state as mentioned previously. People were living in that area as Arabs without belonging to any state rule. When Jordan existed as a state, the citizens of that state became known as Jordanians. The building of the nation was through the adoption of the national identity. Thus, the Jordanian nation is a construct of collective identity, based on four often "discordant" elements: the first is the lineage and family, the second is the civic identity, the third is the (pan)-Arab identity and the last is the religion. The first type which is the lineage and family is usually "advanced by the monarchy". Whilst the second, the civic identity, is "promoted by both society and the monarch" (Hillel Frisch 2002: 5). The (pan) Arab identity and religion deal with "inner tensions" facing the "integrity" of the state and society of Jordan (Hillel Frisch 2002: 1). These four types of identity have different directions and views under one state called Jordan.

Relatively, the studies have so far reviewed that the national identity of Arab is being recognised based on the region or state. Jordan is the example being examined in this paper. The nation-state concept might be the only way to look at the nation's identity. However, there is lack of studies on the Arab national identity as *Qawmeyya*. This perspective of study is possible from the angle of nation rather than state. Thus, the current paper sets out to investigate this scope in the national identity of Arab. In the following section, a new area is presented in relation to the Arab nation and ideologies. Literally, the section presents current issues of Arabs and Muslims.

CURRENT ISSUES: ISLAM AND MODERNIZATION

There has always been an argument that the Quran has "either been misread or that it requires a more sophisticated reading than it usually receives" (Sargent 2009: 219). There are many scholars and thinkers who argue that the Quran does not exclude adaptation to modern life. Briefly, the focus in this case will be on these three thinkers namely Taha (1909-1985), Ziauddin Sarder (1951) and Tariq Ramadan (1962).

Taha was a Sudanese political leader and theologian as well as founder of the Sudanese Republican Party. According to Hafiz (2009) "He is an advocate for liberal reform after independence. He was executed by the Sudanese government for his political activities" (Hafiz 2009: 249). As a theologian, he argues that there are in fact two Qurans: one from when Islam was under physical attack and one from when it was at peace. He contended that too much emphasis was put on the former, and that the latter was a truer reflection of Muhammad's position. Understanding the historical situation relative to different parts of the Quran shows that its true message is democratic. For Taha, the Quran advocates universal human rights, tolerance, equality and freedom.

Sarder takes the position that because new questions that arise require answers, each generation must read the Quran afresh. He is particularly interested in the ways that science and technology can be used to overcome the problems that all humanity faces. He notes that Islamic science was initially far more advanced than western science and that it has provided the basis for much of what was developed in the west. He argues that the suppression of science in Islamic countries by colonial regimes had set Islam back significantly and provided the condition that allowed the development of Islamism.

Ramadan is the most conservative of the three in that he calls for a restrict reading of the Quran. But he argues that this can be done by creating a European Islam, just as there are now African and Asian variants of Islam. He says that western Islam is beginning to influence Muslims throughout the entire Islamic world. For Ramadan, the social message of Islam includes the followings:

1. The right to life and the minimum necessary to sustain it.
2. The right to family.
3. The right to housing.
4. The right to education.
5. The right to work.
6. The right to justice.
7. The right to solidarity or the right to participate in social life.

Ramadan's argument, and a growing number of Islamic theorists and theologians, for an Islam that fit the west illustrates the revival of Islamic modernism in a form that remains true to Islam while adjusting to the west. And the message to the west is a reminder that both groups can and should learn from and enrich each other.

The term democracy became widely used and known to political powers, parties, and nations. Lyman (2009: 90) comments that, "If any ideology is dominant today, it is democracy. Most countries at least pretend to be democratic in the most minimum sense of holding election. And many countries are going through a process called democratizing." Therefore, democracy is seen and visualized as the main solution for peace between such nation and its ruling political authority. However, in the case of the Arab nation, democracy is missed. The Arab Spring witnessed today is a sufficient example of the nation's thirst for democracy. Furthermore, the democratic deficiency in the Middle Eastern countries inhabits a complex set of circumstances; of which some are economical and others political.

Therefore, many Muslim and non-Muslim scholars have argued a significant question: as a Muslim nation, what is the current position of Islam in solving the autocratic issues. Therefore, there has been extensive debate about the role of Islam. Fish (2004) finds in a multivariate cross-national analysis, that Islam is robustly associated with autocracy and attributes this mainly to the subordination of women in Islamic states (although this is not what is taught in the Koran). He notes that Muslims today are backward and unable to fit with democracy due to religion before any other reason. Donno and Russett (2004), on the other hand, find that this is more of a characteristic of the Arab states rather than of Islamic countries generally. The colonial experience, continued foreign influence, and persistent conflict have not encouraged democratic tendencies either. Yet, other countries have broken out of such postcolonial authoritarianism. More importantly, in most Middle Eastern countries, the basis of the economy has not produced social and economic development with modernism and democracy as favourable by-products. In particular, heavy dependence on oil production is not conducive to democracy (Ross 2001). Finally, Lyman (2009: 91) argues that, "In the third world, democratic institutions borrowed from the previous colonial rulers were put in place, but again those citizens have little or no previous experience with these institutions." In other words, democracy is far from third world countries especially the Arab countries due to political, economic, religious and cultural reasons amongst others.

THE ISLAMIC IDEOLOGY: MUSLIM IDENTITY

Muslims, once leader of a dominant civilisation, today stand perplexed and polarized within themselves and dominated and exploited by foreign powers. Ghayasuddin (1986: 4) in the foreword of his book *The Impact Of Nationalism On The Muslim World* states that, "The political

fragmentation of the *Ummah* was achieved by the imposition of the nation-state system. If despite this, the disintegration has remained peripheral, it is because of the political culture of the Muslim masses, which has resisted the breakdown of their traditional societies." The influence of nation-state system on the Muslim nation is widely adopted by the Muslim political authorities. The Muslim nation became disunited - far from what it was before the colonial invasion. Hasan (2003: 51) also states that, "The position of Muslim in the world today is not very elating. Economically they are weak and vulnerable and politically they stand divided". Despite the strong economics of some countries like the gulf countries as an example, yet the Arabs are weak and divided and remain until today in the third world ranking.

The concept of nationalism or nation-state was previously non-existent in the Arab and Islam world. It is only after the colonisation of Arab that the term started to come into use. Nationalism is described as the continuation of western domination and control over the Arab nation. Ghayasuddin (1986: 6) argues that the new phenomenon of nation-states and their institutions function as an extension of colonial rule and in the interests of the colonial powers. He elaborates that, "The West has managed to keep the power of Islam divided and defused". The colonial invasion on the Islamic world contributed to the weakness and fragmentation of the Muslim states. The system of Nation-state and country has conquered the whole Islamic world. Instead of being one Islamic state, the Islamic world became westernised with the concept of nationalism.

Furthermore, he added, "the map of the Islam world today is the map of nation-states in which 'nationality' and 'national interest' stand above Islam" (Ghayasuddin 1986: 6). The western ideology has successfully introduced its system to the Muslim *Ummah* and the Muslim *Ummah* has adopted it to a large extent. The new national interests and concepts promoted to the Islamic world have effectively worked on the fragmentation of the *Ummah*. Another nationalist writer, Hans Kohn (1969:19) believes that Muslim countries were going through a secularisation process similar to that in Europe. Therefore, the western concept of nationalism after the colonial era has caused the Muslim world to be fragmented after long decades of having one national Islamic identity since the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessing be upon him) until World War II and the last Islamic state, the Ottoman Empire.

Therefore, nation-state, as the main factor and pillar of this research, created an identity crisis in the Muslim world. After World War II, most Muslim countries gained their independence and formed their own nation-state. It is considered to be the beginning of the conflict between the concept of *Ummah* and concept of nationalism. As Giyasuddin (1986: 12) said "Islam is incomplete without the Islamic 'State'. In other words, the question arises as are we a member of nation state or the Islamic *Ummah*? Is there any form of unity behind the concept of nationalism in Muslim world? Is there any improvement and strength or power to any nation-state of Muslim nowadays?" the Islamic State refers to the Islamic Khelafat or Empire or gavernanace. However, it has no relation to the present ISIS in Syria and Iraq.

Since the Islamic world is fragmented and due to religion or Islamic reasons, the Islamic world and nation is moving backwards as it was before Islam. Once, we said that we belong to the Islamic community; in the seventh century, however, it was replaced by tribal royalty. Maududi as quoted by Kausar (1994: 107) states that 'tribalism' is synonymous with nationalism in many ways. Grunebaum (1995: 3-4) says that with the establishment of Islam, the tribal practices were no longer given priority over the *Ummah*. The Islamic law did not abolish the tribal system but it states that the tribal identity of the individual was of secondary importance to the identity of the *Ummah*. Therefore, it only changed the hierarchy of an individual's identities in society. Shabir and Abid Karim (1992: 1) have mentioned that, "Nationalism is a

concept alien to Islam because it calls for unity based on family and tribalistic ties, whereas Islam binds people together on the `Aqeedah, that is the belief in Allah (S.W.T) and His Messenger (saw). Islam calls for the ideological bond.”

Tribalism is considered to be a prohibited custom to practice. Muhammad Nazir Kakakhel (1982: 63) asserts that, “He who embraces Islam had to forget all his tribal and clannish affiliation.” It is also narrated by Abu Da’wud that the Messenger of Allah (saaw) said, “He is not one of us who calls for `Asabiyyah, (nationalism/tribalism) or who fights for `Asabiyyah or who dies for `Asabiyyah.” Ansari (1966: 63) considers superiority of one tribe over another as “arrogance of time of ignorance”. Muhammad Mahathir states that, “It is no more *Jahiliyyah*, however another kind of darkness has swallowed today's Muslims” (2004: 190). This darkness is the new *Asabiyyah* in its new form, the nationalism and national identity which make Muslims forget their own identity and submit to the modern *Asabiyyah*.

CONCLUSION

This paper concludes the issues contested in the Arab identity. It has three main sections on identity; the first is the Arab pre/post colonial era. The second is the transformation to political identity explicating the dilemma of Arab identity. *This continues to the next section 'Arab nationalism'*. Lastly, a brief idea on the Islamic identity concludes the discussions on this paper (*Haweyya Islameyya*). There are some examples from the individual experience on the sense of *Qawmeyya* and *Islameyya* presented to facilitate the national consciousness among the nation. In this paper, the presented shows a great consciousness on the Arab nation's unity and condemns the fragmentation and division of the Islamic Arab identity.

How then can a more balanced approach be struck to ensure the Arab identity crisis and fragmentation that occurred after the colonial era, and unfortunately until present, will not come up to surface in the future? How can contesting demands of individual, *Qawmeyya* and *Islameyya* meet within the makeup of the Arab nation? What are the necessary processes involved towards a united Arab identity? There must be a construction or a framework that can conceptualise these questions and fit the current fragmentation and complexity of the Arab identity.

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