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Arab Nationalism: Historical Problems in the Literature

RASHID KHALIDI

AS WITH MANY ASPECTS OF MIDDLE EASTERN HISTORY, the study of Arab nationalism has tended to remain isolated from broader trends in history and the social sciences and specifically from the comparative study of nationalism. Similarly, most writing on nationalism has drawn sparingly on Middle Eastern examples. Thus, while a few of the early studies of nationalism in comparative perspective, such as that of Hans Kohn, devoted some attention to the nascent nationalisms of the Middle East including Arab nationalism, more recent writers, such as Eric Hobsbawm and Benedict Anderson, have touched on the Middle East only in passing, if at all.¹

Within the field of modern Middle Eastern history, beyond a general isolation from current trends in history, including the comparative study of nationalism, there has been a propensity toward compartmentalization along linguistic and national lines.² This has led to an unfortunate situation in which those studying Arab and Turkish nationalism, for example, have often been unaware of the relevance of one another's work, unfortunate because Middle Eastern nationalisms—such as Turkish and Arab nationalism before World War I or Zionism and Palestinian nationalism more recently—have strongly influenced one another in many ways and have served as the channels through which political concepts and forms of organization originating in Europe entered the Middle East. Failure to examine these reciprocal influences has at times led to an overemphasis on direct European influences and to numerous other kinds of distortions, notably a

¹ As can be seen from the title of his first book, *A History of Nationalism in the East* (New York, 1929), Hans Kohn came to the comparative study of nationalism after examining its specific properties in the Middle East and Asia, an examination that informs his book *The Idea of Nationalism: A Study in Its Origins and Background* (New York, 1944). See also E. J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge, 1990); Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. edn. (New York, 1991). Hobsbawm offers a list of recent works on nationalism (p. 4), including Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (London, 1983), Anderson's book, and the collection edited by Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, 1983). None of these books deals in any depth with Middle Eastern nationalisms. One of the few authors on nationalism with expertise in the Middle East field is Elie Kedourie, whose work is discussed below. See especially his *Nationalism*, 4th rev. edn. (London, 1985) and the edited work *Nationalism in Asia and Africa* (New York, 1970).

² This compartmentalization may be due in part to the specialized language study necessary for work on the historiography of Arab, Turkish, and Iranian nationalism, as well as Zionism. It is also in part a function of the insidious influence of nationalist rhetoric on these different historiographies. As a result of the heady impact of the subject studied on some of those studying it, much research and writing on these topics has come to reflect in microcosm the antagonisms between Middle Eastern nationalisms.

downplaying of the regional context in which each of these national movements developed.

The study of Arab nationalism in particular has suffered from these and other problems. Specifically, there has frequently been a failure to analyze the Arab case using methodologies derived from some of the more critical recent approaches in the study of nationalism. In the work of some scholars, this failure has been linked with an unquestioning acceptance of elements of the national narrative—or myths, to put it more bluntly—generated by Arab nationalism. The fact that the study of other Middle Eastern nationalisms is often plagued by the same flaws (often for the same reasons, growing out of the recent emergence of these national movements and the involvement of many of these scholars in the definition and support of their new polities) can be of little consolation to those interested in a balanced approach to the subject.

As historians with even a passing acquaintance with the field are aware, this failure means that treatments of the history of the Middle East, especially the history of the modern Middle East, are often partisan and controversial. Even scholarly writing on this subject is sometimes influenced by current political preoccupations to a degree greater than in many other fields. At the same time, political and public discourse in this country is frequently studded with citations of what are taken to be “the lessons of history” in the Middle East by commentators who are, as a rule, blissfully ignorant of the slightest knowledge of the history, languages, and cultures of that region. It is doubly unfortunate that this should be the case at a time of intense and growing interest in this field, an interest sometimes hard to sustain because of the clouds of polemics that surround it, particularly at moments of crisis in the Middle East.

Notwithstanding, it is possible to make a selection of seminal works in English on Arab nationalism and other aspects of modern Arab history that bear on it (the rich literature of works in Arabic and other languages will not be referred to here). These English-language works can be read with benefit by the nonspecialist, referred to in order to obtain a comparative perspective on other regions of the world, or provided to students interested in Middle Eastern history and politics. They can be grouped into two broad areas: the earliest works in the field and more recent books on Arab nationalism, including related works on specific nation-state nationalisms in the Arab world that shed particular light on the subject. As a preface to a discussion of these works, and to the key historical questions they deal with, a few introductory words on Arab nationalism are in order.

ARAB NATIONALISM, like most other Middle Eastern nationalisms, was a child of the intellectual atmosphere of the nineteenth century and one of many responses to the process of incorporation of the world into a single system with Europe at its center which that century witnessed. Like these other ideologies, Arab nationalism in its fully developed form represented an expression of identity and of group solidarity within the projected new format of the nation-state by an amalgam of

old elites and new social forces at once desirous of seeing their society resist control by outside forces and deeply influenced by the example and the challenge of the West.

Arab nationalism represented both a revival of old traditions and loyalties and a creation of new myths based on them, an invention of tradition, to use Hobsbawm and Ranger's term. Thus, as Arab nationalism took hold, what had been described for thirteen centuries as the glories of Islamic civilization came to be called the glories of Arab civilization; the language and literature of the Arabs, always revered and cherished, took on a new and heightened importance; and a sense of pride in Arabism that had always existed but had long been dormant was consciously revived and actively fostered.

By some time early in the twentieth century, at the end of this process of synthesis (which in many respects closely followed the pattern laid down by other national movements described by Anderson in *Imagined Communities*), the idea was widespread throughout the "Arab world" (itself a concept born of the rise of Arab nationalism) that anyone who spoke Arabic, looked back on the history of the Arabs with pride, and considered himself or herself to be an Arab was one, and that this sense of shared identity should in some measure find political expression. Soon, with the power of the state propagating it through the educational system, the media, and other avenues of access to cultural and political discourse in a number of newly independent Arab countries, the Arab idea was strongly entrenched.

It is important to stress the unevenness of this process, with some parts of the Arab world coming earlier to Arabism—the term given to the early twentieth-century precursor of fully developed Arab nationalism—and others much later, with competing or complementary senses of identity stronger in some regions than in others. These alternate senses of identity, which in many cases preceded the rise of Arabism, included religious and sectarian affiliations as well as local patriotism. The attachment to religion endured, and it has provided the basis for a sustained challenge to nationalism in the Arab world in recent years. Local loyalties ultimately became the basis for the nation-state nationalism of the twenty-odd states that eventually made up the Arab world following the collapse of the Ottoman empire and the European occupations and partitions of the Middle East during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This competing form of loyalty has also mounted a challenge to Arab nationalism in recent years, although in many ways it has been a less public and more subtle one.

Contrary to the mistaken impression held by many, it is not the case that Arab nationalism was or is necessarily synonymous with pan-Arabism, that is, with the idea that all Arabs should live in a single great Arab nation-state. Indeed, despite the inflated rhetoric of certain Arab nationalist parties such as the Baath (its slogan is "one Arab nation with an eternal mission"), in most cases in which Arab nationalists have had a chance to put their ideas into practice, they have not favored the idea of a single Arab nation-state. It was certainly not the practical objective envisioned by the earliest Arabists who, when they had a brief opportunity to deliberate on and implement some of their ideas after World War I, worked through a Syrian and an Iraqi congress in Damascus for the establishment

of three separate, independent Arab states east of Suez, to be linked by dynastic and other ties: one in Syria, one in Iraq, and one in the Arabian Peninsula.

Neither the charter of the Arab League nor the approaches followed by this organization since its establishment in 1944,³ nor indeed the policies of most Arab governments since they gained their independence have in practice favored the pan-Arab idea. Those regimes that at times have appeared to do so—the most notable being Egypt and Syria during the abortive union between them from 1958 until 1961, or the Syrian neo-Baath regime of the late 1960s—were the exception rather than the rule. Moreover, on closer examination, most of these regimes can be seen to have been motivated at least as much by straightforward nation-state interest as by any pan-Arab vision of a unitary state from the Atlantic to the Gulf.⁴ The same could certainly be argued in regard to the policies of the Iraqi Baath regime in power since 1968, including its invasion, occupation, and annexation of Kuwait.

On the other hand, I do not mean to discount the importance of the Arab idea in general or of this specific pan-Arab variety of it in modern Arab political discourse. Pan-Arabism has had a powerful impact on intellectual and popular currents in the Arab world, even if its effect in terms of guiding the policies of individual Arab nation-states has been very limited. The fragmentation and weakness of the Arab world in modern times have been deeply resented by Arabs, who have tended to place the blame for this situation on the Western powers, which, during the era of high imperialism, partitioned the Middle East in a manner suiting their own interests. Many Arabs have thus sought recourse in the strength they believe unity will bring. Proponents of this approach, while sometimes referring to European models, notably Germany and Italy, frequently look to the recent past in the Middle East, when most of the Arab world was part of the Ottoman empire and not yet subject to external control. More important, they idealize and romanticize a more distant past, a time over ten centuries ago when the Arab world was strong and united and stood at the pinnacle of world civilization.

The crucial point, however, missed by those who focus obsessively on pan-Arabism, is that powerful countervailing tendencies have been present since the earliest days of Arabism, before and after World War I, that have balanced this emotional drive in favor of unity. Notable among these is nation-state nationalism, based on longstanding local loyalties, which has proven at least as tenacious as pan-Arabism for most of this century, even if it does not have the legitimacy or mass appeal of that ideology.⁵ Another is the ideology of Islam, which in its

³ Robert W. Macdonald, *The League of Arab States: A Study in the Dynamics of Regional Organization* (Princeton, N.J., 1965), though outdated, is still a useful source.

⁴ For an illuminating discussion of the interaction between nation-state nationalism and pan-Arabism analyzed in terms of *raison d'état* and *raison de la nation*, see Walid Khalidi, "Thinking the Unthinkable," *Foreign Affairs*, 56 (July 1978): 695–713.

⁵ Among the best studies of the emergence of specific nation-state nationalisms in the Arab world are Muhammad Y. Muslih, *The Origins of Palestinian Nationalism* (New York, 1988); Kamal Salibi, *A House of Many Mansions: The History of Lebanon Reconsidered* (Berkeley, Calif., 1988); and Israel Gershoni and James P. Jankowski, *Egypt, Islam and the Arabs: The Search for Egyptian Nationhood, 1900–1930* (New York, 1986); see also Gershoni's *Emergence of Pan-Arabism in Egypt* (Tel Aviv, 1981). Others are discussed below.

pan-Islamic variety was strongly supported by the Ottoman state until its demise after World War I. In the current form of radical activism, Islam has proven a formidable rival to all forms of nationalism in many parts of the Arab world in recent years. It is thus grossly inaccurate to depict pan-Arabism as the only form of Arab nationalism, sweeping all before it in the Arab world, whether today or in the past.

WHEN THE EARLIEST WORKS ON ARAB NATIONALISM in English were written, beginning with George Antonius's *Arab Awakening* in 1938,⁶ and continuing through the 1960s, nation-state nationalism was less visible as a force in the Arab world than it is today, and the Islamic resurgence that has affected the region so strongly in recent years was not yet apparent to most observers. Through the 1960s, indeed, the intellectual and ideological ascendancy of Arabism in Arab politics seemed assured, and writers on the subject took this as a given. Perhaps the most useful way to classify the authors of these early works is on the basis of how skeptically they approached Arab nationalism, with one group generally positively inclined toward its subject and another highly critical, often to the point of derisiveness.

The most notable book in the first, or positive, category is Antonius's *Arab Awakening*, which, for all its many flaws, has had an enormous impact on both the scholarly and political debate over the Arab world since its publication more than half a century ago. Antonius's book is a seminal exposition of the theses of Arab nationalism, as well as a detailed account of crucial episodes in its genesis and development, much of it based on Antonius's access to both Arab and British documents not before published, interviews with key participants in events, and personal experience. Antonius, born in Egypt of Lebanese parents, was at different times in his brief career between 1921 and his premature death in 1942 an official of the British mandate administration in Palestine, an intermediary in negotiations between Britain and several Arab rulers, a negotiator on behalf of the Palestinian leadership with the British, and an official of an American foundation in the Middle East.⁷

Perhaps the best assessment of this complex book is that of the foremost historian of the modern Middle East, Albert Hourani, who stated that *The Arab*

⁶ George Antonius, *The Arab Awakening: The Story of the Arab National Movement* (London, 1938). The American edition was published the following year in Philadelphia by J. B. Lippincott.

⁷ For more on Antonius and his impact, see Albert Hourani, "The Arab Awakening Forty Years After," in *Studies in Arab History: The Antonius Lectures, 1978–87*, Derek Hopwood, ed. (London, 1990), 21–40. Hourani's was the first of the Antonius lectures, which have been delivered at St. Antony's College, Oxford, since 1978 and eleven of which are collected in this volume. For less charitable assessments of Antonius, see Martin Kramer, "Ambitious Discontent: The Demise of George Antonius," in *The Great Powers in the Middle East, 1919–1939*, Uriel Dann, ed. (New York, 1988), 405–16; and Sylvia G. Haim, "The Arab Awakening: A Source for the Historian?" *Welt des Islams*, n.s. 2 (1953). Bernard Wasserstein, *The British in Palestine*, 2d edn. (Oxford, 1991), 183–89, gives useful biographical details, as does the essay by Thomas Hodgkin, "George Antonius, Palestine and the 1930s," 77–102, in Hopwood, *Studies in Arab History*. A biography of Antonius by William Cleveland is in preparation and will complement his useful biographies of Antonius's contemporaries, Sati' al-Husri and Shakib Arslan: *The Making of an Arab Nationalist: Ottomanism and Arabism in the Life and Thought of Sati' al-Husri* (Princeton, N.J., 1971); and *Islam against the West: Shakib Arslan and the Campaign for Islamic Nationalism* (Austin, Tex., 1985).

Awakening “is a slightly uneasy combination of two different kinds of writing. It is a work of historical narrative, but also of political advocacy.”⁸ As Hourani and others have pointed out, although much of what Antonius told us is still historically valuable, many of his conclusions have been superseded by more recent research, such as his contention that Syrian Christians played a crucial role in the early development of Arab nationalism.⁹ The book nevertheless retains importance, not only because of its political impact and that of its author at the time it was published but also because scholars continue to argue for and against Antonius’s theses, which have in some measure become parameters for the field.¹⁰ In a sense, this initiator of the modern scholarly debate in the English language about Arab nationalism has continued to be a part of it during the fifty years after his death.

There is certainly great attention paid to Antonius in works that can be considered highly critical and at times even dismissive in their treatment of Arab nationalism. Prominent in this second category are the writings of Sylvia Haim and Elie Kedourie, although the same general approach permeates the work of other historians. Perhaps the most influential work in this category is the book edited by Haim titled *Arab Nationalism: An Anthology*, which has been in print since 1962.¹¹ This selection of twenty readings originating between 1901 and 1957 is notable for Haim’s analytical 70-page introduction, which presents an assessment of the readings as well as harsh portraits of many of the leading intellectual figures who influenced Arab nationalism. Jamal al-Din al-Afghani is described as having “a reputation resting on very slender evidence” (although Haim later states he “contributed to the spread of revolutionary temper and a new attitude towards politics all over the Muslim East”); the thinking on Islamic revival of al-Afghani and his disciple Muhammad ‘Abduh is called “a spurious construct of [their] imagination”; and the Syrian writer ‘Abd al-Rahman al-Kawakibi is for her “an entirely derivative thinker,” whose only original idea “he seems to have taken from somebody else.”¹²

⁸ This is Hourani’s retrospective assessment of the book in “*The Arab Awakening Forty Years After*,” 26. His article carefully analyzes what is still of value to historians in the three different parts of the book, concluding that the first two retain interest even today.

⁹ This point is best made in C. Ernest Dawn, “The Origins of Arab Nationalism,” in Rashid Khalidi, et al., eds., *The Origins of Arab Nationalism* (New York, 1991). See also the lengthy bibliographical note 1 in C. Ernest Dawn, “The Formation of Pan-Arab Ideology in the Interwar Years,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 20 (February 1988): 85–86; and R. Khalidi, “Antonius, Dawn and the Rise of Arabism in Syria: Changing Views of a Changing Society,” a paper presented to a conference at the University of Illinois in November 1989, currently in preparation for publication in a volume edited by Charles Stewart.

¹⁰ Other works in the first, or positive, category include Zeine N. Zeine, *The Emergence of Arab Nationalism*, 3d edn. (Delmar, N.Y., 1973); Hazem Zaki Nuseibeh, *The Ideas of Arab Nationalism* (Ithaca, 1956); Hassan Saab, *The Arab Federalists of the Ottoman Empire* (Amsterdam, 1958); and most important among them A. L. Tibawi, *A Modern History of Syria, including Lebanon and Palestine* (London, 1969). What links these four scholarly studies with the more polemical work by Antonius (for all their disagreements with him) is their uncritical acceptance, and at times advocacy, of some of the central tenets of the ideology they describe. Saab (p. ix), for example, stated that “the urge for Arab unity is essentially an urge toward the reconstruction of one united Arab state” (italics in the original), thereby adopting the nationalist thesis that the early Islamic empires were a “united Arab state,” which was simply being “reconstructed” in the modern era.

¹¹ Sylvia G. Haim, *Arab Nationalism: An Anthology* (Berkeley, Calif., 1962).

¹² Haim, *Arab Nationalism*, 6, 7, 21, 27.

Haim argued in the preface to a later edition of her book that "Arab nationalism is now less a step toward unification, in spite of some outward signs in that direction, than a belief with a particular aim, namely, the defeat of the State of Israel."¹³ While Haim's skepticism regarding the trend toward unification seems well placed, and has been borne out by events, her main point is questionable. Arab nationalism has indeed been linked to opposition to Zionism since the earliest years of the two movements, but they have had a shifting relationship, as is evidenced by a variety of attempts to arrive at a settlement between them since the Faisal-Weizmann accord in 1919, and indeed even before that.¹⁴ Moreover, to reduce Arab nationalism to no more than opposition to the state of Israel, as Haim seems to be doing, is surely unjustified given the differing resonances of the ideology in different parts and in different social strata of the Arab world over nearly a century, although it is highly revealing of her attitude toward her subject.

Among the key historical questions raised by Haim, and even more forcefully by Kedourie, is the crucial and complex linkage between Arab nationalism and Islam. Haim sees a shift in recent decades toward a closer identification between the two and adds: "By becoming acceptable to Muslims, Arab nationalism is no longer merely a doctrine for the verbose and the gullible." In the less contemptuous words of Kedourie, "Islam and Arabism largely overlap; and where they do not, they are not in opposition."¹⁵ Such views are widely held, as can be seen from the argument of Bernard Lewis, in the much-reprinted monograph *The Arabs in History*, regarding the identity of Islam and nationalism for Muslim Arabs: "For Muslims the two forms of expression were never really distinguished."¹⁶

These assertions are worth considering carefully. Certainly, much evidence exists to show that many Arabs have not drawn a sharp distinction between Islam and Arabism; they were different but closely linked forms of expressions of identity made all the more important by the encroachment of the West. This attitude was particularly prevalent in the Arabian Peninsula, as well as in some parts of North Africa, such as Algeria and Libya, where national resistance to European colonialism very early took on a religious form. The idea of a near identity between Islam and Arabism is much less satisfactory, however, when applied to Egypt and the countries of the Fertile Crescent, which are the central Arab lands and the sources of the most advanced syntheses of both nationalist and Islamic revivalist doctrine, and which at the same time contain large Arab-Christian populations.

In these central Arab regions, what we may call the Haim-Kedourie thesis manifestly fails to take into account the full scope and complexity of the pre-World War I interaction between early Islamic reformers and the young

¹³ Sylvia G. Haim, ed., *Arab Nationalism: An Anthology* (Berkeley, Calif., 1976), ix.

¹⁴ For more on the earliest Arab opposition to Zionism, see Neville J. Mandel, *The Arabs and Zionism before World War I* (Berkeley, Calif., 1976); and R. Khalidi, "The Role of the Press in the Early Arab Reaction to Zionism," *Peuples méditerranéens*, 20 (juillet-septembre 1982): 105-23. On Arab-Zionist negotiations, see Neil Caplan, *Futile Diplomacy*, 2 vols. (London, 1983-86).

¹⁵ Haim, *Arab Nationalism* (1976), ix. Elie Kedourie, *Islam in the Modern World, and Other Studies* (London, 1980), 56.

¹⁶ Bernard Lewis, *The Arabs in History*, 4th edn. (London, 1966), 173.

generations of nationalists they influenced, both in Egypt and Syria,¹⁷ or the spread of secularism among the elites of this region during this century. Secularism in particular seems to have escaped the attention of writers of the critical school we are discussing, who rightly point to a widespread attachment to Islam that did tend to blur distinctions but who fail to address the clear delimitation between Islam and Arabism envisioned by the most advanced formulations of Arab nationalism, whether in the versions put forward by Sati' al-Husri in Iraq in the 1930s and 1940s, the Baath party in Syria in the 1950s, or Nasserism in Egypt in the 1960s.

Equally serious, historians of this school have failed to appreciate the tension between nationalism and Islamic activism that has been latent since the foundation of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt in the 1930s, flared up anew in Egypt after the 1952 revolution, and has been a permanent feature of the politics of Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, and the Palestinians since at least 1970. Certainly since the 1950s, the brotherhood and their various radical Islamic offshoots, allies, and imitators have considered nationalism, whether in its full-blown Arab nationalist form or that of nation-state nationalism, to be an abomination, as is shown most clearly by Emmanuel Sivan in his perceptive *Radical Islam*.¹⁸ In many Arab countries, these Islamic movements have come to regard nationalist parties and forces as their main enemies (an attitude of hostility that is in many cases heartily reciprocated). This was the case for the Da'wa movement in Iraq throughout the 1980s, for the underground Islamic movements in Syria in the late 1970s and early 1980s, for the Amal movement in Lebanon before the Israeli invasion in 1982, and for the Islamic movements in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip until the *intifada* began in 1987, and perhaps even afterwards. The Haim-Kedourie thesis prepares us for none of this.

Two other weaknesses of this approach must be touched on, at least in passing. The first is a tendency to reduce ideology to the pettiest of personal motivations on the part of its formulators. Whether with regard to al-Afghani, Kawakibi, or Antonius, we find in Haim and Kedourie a tone of contempt for personal failings described in detail, then closely linked to the ideas of these individuals.¹⁹ While such forays into psychohistory undoubtedly have a place in assessing ideas and ideologies, they loom far too large in the work of these authors. Like other ideas and ideologies, Arab nationalism deserves to be studied for itself and in terms of the social and political forces that espouse it, as well as in terms of individuals and their personal failings.

The second is the persistent argument, found for example in Kedourie, that

¹⁷ The recent work of David Dean Commins, notably his excellent book *Islamic Reform: Politics and Social Change in Late Ottoman Syria* (New York, 1990), and his article, "Religious Reformers and Arabists in Damascus," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 18 (November 1986): 405–25, help elucidate this vital relationship and the way in which Islamic reformist thought influenced Arabism, as does Joseph H. Escovitz's article, "'He was the Muhammad 'Abduh if Syria': A Study of Tahir al-Jaza'iri and his Influence," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 18 (August 1986): 293–310.

¹⁸ Emmanuel Sivan, *Radical Islam: Medieval Theology and Modern Politics* (New Haven, Conn., 1985).

¹⁹ These figures are dealt with in Elie Kedourie, *Afghani and 'Abduh: An Essay on Religious Unbelief and Political Activism in Modern Islam* (London, 1966); Sylvia Haim, "Alfieri and Kawakibi," *Oriente moderno*, 34 (1954); Sylvia Haim, "Blunt and Kawakibi," *Oriente moderno*, 35 (1955); and Kedourie, *Nationalism in Asia and Africa*, 85–87.

Arab nationalism is in some measure a bastard creation of its British official sponsors during the first half of this century.²⁰ Kedourie was certainly correct in arguing that Britain originally adopted Arab nationalism as a weapon against the Ottoman empire—indeed, I have argued elsewhere that this process began even before the World War I agreements with Sharif Husayn, which most historians note as its starting point²¹—and continued to favor and support client elites that espoused Arab nationalism until well after World War II. But this approach ignores the rest of these Arab societies at the level below the few leading figures with whom the British dealt and the way in which Arabism developed, not just at the elite level but elsewhere in society. In other words, Arabism existed as an ideology and a popular political force independent of all the twisted relationships between imperial Britain and its Arab clients that Kedourie chronicles, and it cannot be understood only in terms of these relationships, important though they were.

THE QUESTIONS RAISED by these early works on Arab nationalism—about the relationship between Arabism and Islam, and the influence of the West on the genesis of Arab nationalism—are considered further in some of the more recent scholarly work on this topic. Other crucial issues treated in recent literature include the uneasy relationship between Arab nationalism and the nation-state nationalism of the different Arab states that have emerged in the modern period and the social basis of Arabism and its ideological rivals. These issues receive a magisterial treatment from Albert Hourani in *A History of the Arab Peoples*, a new and very well-received synthesis of the whole sweep of Arab history, whose most important contribution is a careful consideration of the problems of the modern period, of which Hourani is the acknowledged master.²² After a career spanning more than forty years of teaching and research, he looks carefully, in the lengthy segment of the book on the Arab world since the beginning of the nineteenth century, at all four of the historical issues I have just underlined, in particular the relationship between Islam and Arabism and that between Arabism and the outside world, which have always preoccupied him, as they preoccupied Antonius and Kedourie.

Besides Albert Hourani, the historian who most thoroughly addresses these questions is C. Ernest Dawn, notably in *From Ottomanism to Arabism*.²³ In this collection, and in later writings, Dawn has persuasively delineated some of the

²⁰ Kedourie has put forward this argument repeatedly in his many writings, perhaps most notably in his first book, *England and the Middle East: The Destruction of the Ottoman Empire, 1914–1921* (London, 1956); and in the title essay in *The Chatham House Version, and Other Middle-Eastern Studies* (London, 1970), 351–94.

²¹ Rashid Khalidi, *British Policy towards Syria and Palestine, 1906–1914: A Study of the Antecedents of the Hussein-McMahon Correspondence, the Sykes-Picot Agreement, and the Balfour Declaration* (London, 1980).

²² Albert Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples* (Cambridge, Mass., 1991). The book reached number 3 on the *New York Times* best-seller list after its publication, a remarkable feat for such a scholarly work.

²³ C. Ernest Dawn, *From Ottomanism to Arabism: Essays on the Origins of Arab Nationalism* (Urbana, Ill., 1973); this volume brings together essays most of which were originally published between 1957 and 1962; see also the two more recent essays by Dawn cited above in n. 9.

different ways in which Arabism has related to Islam in the Arab world. He has shown with relation to Syria, the Hijaz, and Egypt in particular that a more complex interaction took place than that depicted by either Antonius or Haim and Kedourie, critiquing the views of the former and refining significantly those of the latter. Moreover, in describing the early relations between Arab elites (notably the Hashemites) and the British, Dawn has both followed lines laid down by Antonius and Kedourie and developed his own insightful analysis, showing the Hashemites to be dynasts for whom Arab nationalism was a useful instrument in some circumstances and of little relevance in others. This analysis has been largely borne out in monographs on the Hijaz and Jordan by William Ochsenwald and Mary Wilson respectively, and in a book on Iraq by Hanna Batatu.²⁴

Dawn's interpretation of the social basis of Arabism in Syria—that it was essentially the vehicle of a minority faction of the traditional upper-class elite until after World War I—has been very influential, although it has been challenged in a number of respects.²⁵ It nevertheless remains the first serious attempt to elucidate an important aspect of Arab nationalism and one that has not yet received the attention it deserves. It addresses the relationship between ideas and society, specifically the way in which changes in the dominant ideology in the Arab world, notably that from Ottomanism to Arabism in the first two decades of this century, relate to simultaneous transformations in Arab society.

The paucity of work on this subject is attributable in part to the relative lack of scholarly attention to the social history of the Arab world, with a few important exceptions, such as those sections relating to Arab society in Haim Gerber's *Social Origins of the Modern Middle East*, in volumes such as *The Rural Middle East: Peasant Lives and Modes of Production*, edited by Kathy Glavanis and Pandeli Glavanis, and in the pioneering work of the late Gabriel Baer.²⁶ The situation is somewhat better in the field of economic history, where the extensive writings of Charles Issawi and Roger Owen have illuminated both the internal development of the Middle Eastern economies and their relations with the expanding world economy in the modern era.²⁷ Unfortunately, there has as yet been little impact from research in

²⁴ William Ochsenwald, *Religion, Society, and the State in Arabia: The Hijaz under Ottoman Control, 1840–1908* (Columbus, Ohio, 1984); Mary C. Wilson, *King Abdullah, Britain and the Making of Jordan* (Cambridge, 1987); see also their respective essays in R. Khalidi, *Origins of Arab Nationalism*, “Ironic Origins: Arab Nationalism in the Hijaz, 1882–1914,” and “The Hashemites, the Arab Revolt and Arab Nationalism”; Hanna Batatu, *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq: A Study of Iraq's Old Landed and Commercial Classes and of Its Communists, Ba'thists, and Free Officers* (Princeton, N.J., 1978.)

²⁵ Dawn's thesis was put forward in its original form in his essay, “The Rise of Arabism in Syria,” in *From Ottomanism to Arabism*, and expanded in his two articles cited in n. 9. For a critique of them, see R. Khalidi, “Ottomanism and Arabism in Syria before 1914: A Reassessment,” in R. Khalidi, *Origins of Arab Nationalism*; and “Society and Ideology in Late Ottoman Syria: Class, Education, Profession and Confession,” in John Spagnolo, ed., *Taking the Long View on the Modern Middle East: Essays in Honour of Albert Hourani* (Oxford, 1991).

²⁶ Haim Gerber, *The Social Origins of the Modern Middle East* (Boulder, Colo., 1987); Kathy Glavanis and Pandeli Glavanis, eds., *The Rural Middle East: Peasant Lives and Modes of Production* (London, 1990). Gabriel Baer's most important works of social history include *Studies in the Social History of Modern Egypt* (Chicago, 1969); and *Fellah and Townsman in the Middle East: Studies in Social History* (London, 1982). See also Edmund Burke III and Ira M. Lapidus, eds., *Islam, Politics, and Social Movements* (Berkeley, Calif., 1988); and Tarif Khalidi, ed., *Land Tenure and Social Transformation in the Middle East* (Beirut, 1984).

²⁷ Charles Issawi's writings on Egypt's economic history alone are impressive, encompassing three

these areas on our understanding of ideology in the modern Arab world, whether Ottomanism, Arabism, the different nation-state nationalisms, or Islamic radicalism.

Similarly, much work remains to be done to link our growing understanding of the increasingly important nationalisms of the individual Arab states with what we know of the transnational movements such as Arabism and Islamic radicalism, which compete for the loyalty of their citizens. We are in a better position to understand these individual nationalisms today than a few decades ago, because the work being done on them represents some of the most interesting research in the field of modern Middle Eastern history. Philip Khoury's two books on Syria, Kamal Salibi's brilliant latest work on Lebanon, Yehoshua Porath's two books on Palestinian nationalism, as well as that of Muhammad Muslih on the same subject, Gershoni and Jankowski's volume on Egypt, together with other monographs, are evidence that much outstanding research is being done on the modern history of the nationalisms arising in individual Arab countries.²⁸

Missing is a synthesis that will tie together and explain the common factors between these different national movements, provide an analysis of the meaning of their emergence, and explore the delicate balance between the transnational, the national, and the subnational in an Arab world whose very form and shape are still indefinite seventy years after the post-World War I settlement. This settlement fixed those of the region's current boundaries that had not already been delimited by European powers before the war. Although few of these boundaries have changed since 1921, the settlement has clearly left the Arab peoples with a heavy, unresolved legacy of problems of legitimacy, identity, and relations with the outside world.²⁹ Future work in this field needs to address some of these problems, incorporating both worthwhile methodological and critical approaches from outside the field of Middle Eastern history and the most valuable conclusions of the works discussed above.

major works, to which must be added his valuable documentary economic histories of the Middle East, Iran, Turkey, and the Fertile Crescent, as well as his analytical *An Economic History of the Middle East and North Africa* (New York, 1982). Roger Owen is the author of *The Middle East in the World Economy, 1800–1914* (London, 1981), which is the best treatment of its topic; *Cotton and the Egyptian Economy* (London, 1969); and several other valuable works treating the relations between politics, economics, and society in the Middle East.

²⁸ Philip S. Khoury, *Urban Notables and Arab Nationalism: The Politics of Damascus 1860–1920* (Cambridge, 1983); and *Syria and the French Mandate: The Politics of Arab Nationalism, 1920–1945* (Princeton, N.J., 1987); Salibi, *House of Many Mansions*; Yehoshua Porath, *The Emergence of the Palestinian-Arab National Movement, 1918–1929* (London, 1974); and *The Palestinian Arab National Movement: From Riots to Rebellion, 1929–1939* (London, 1977), as well as his *In Search of Arab Unity, 1930–1945* (London, 1986); Muslih, *Origins of Palestinian Nationalism*; Gershoni and Jankowski, *Egypt, Islam and the Arabs*. See also Ami Ayalon, *Language and Change in the Arab Middle East: The Evolution of Modern Political Discourse* (New York, 1987).

²⁹ For a thoughtful treatment of these issues, see the final two chapters of Hourani, *History of the Arab Peoples*. On the post-World War I settlement, see David Fromkin, *A Peace to End All Peace: Creating the Modern Middle East, 1914–1922* (New York, 1989), which treats primarily the European decision-making process, on the basis of Western sources, since, in Fromkin's words, "in the 1914–1922 period, Europeans and Americans were the only ones seated around the table when the decisions were made"; p. 17. It is thus one of the best examples of the old-style diplomatic history, which ignores the natives as unimportant.