Hacettepe University Graduate School of Social Sciences

Department of International Relations

THE EVOLUTION OF ARAB POLITICAL IDENTITY IN THE CONTEXT OF ARAB SPRING: A SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVIST PERSPECTIVE

Emine ALP

Master's Thesis

Ankara, 2022

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The jury finds that Emine Alp has on the date of August 17, 2022, successfully passed the defense examination and approves her Master's Thesis titled "The Evolution of Arab Political Identity in the Context of Arab Spring: A Social Constructivist Perspective."

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Emine Alp

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ABSTRACT

ALP, Emine. *The Evolution of Arab Political Identity in the Context of Arab Spring: A Social Constructivist Perspective,* Master's Thesis, Ankara, 2022.

Arab political identity, despite its different paths of development, has emerged and evolved depending on the social and historical context and manifested through discourse. Among different ideological currents, Arab national identity, which developed as a reaction to the late Ottoman rule and the advance of Western influence in the region, dominated the course of events in the Arab world from the late 19th to the second half of the 20th century. In the interwar (1918-1939) and in the post-1945 periods, it turned out to be an anti-colonial and pan-Arab national movement, culminating with Nasserism led by nationalist and socialist figures in the 1950s and 1960s. After 1967, a variety of reasons led to the decline of pan-Arabism and the rise of Islamism in the region. However, the changing context and world order with globalization brought about the split of Islamism into different forms and a revival of Arab liberal thought dating back to the 18th century. At the beginning of the 21st century, a youth-led wave of pro-democracy uprisings shook the region, demanding an inclusive and accountable political leadership, a functioning economic system, and a just and stable social order upon the overthrow of authoritarian regimes. At this point, considering the role of identity in political and social mobilization in the Arab world, this thesis aims to examine the evolution of Arab political identity in the context of the Arab Spring. The study relies on Discourse Analysis (DA) as a research method, while the theory of Social Constructivism is used to evaluate the research findings. Consequently, this thesis argues that Arab political identity has evolved from an Islamist ideology toward a post-Islamist and liberal thought, despite its failure to dominate current Arab politics, in the context of the Arab Spring upon the reconstruction of social reality and perceptions through language-in-use.

Keywords

Arab Spring, Discourse Analysis (DA), Social Constructivism, Arab world, Arab political identity, post-Islamism, liberal thought.

ÖZET

ALP, Emine. *Arap Baharı Bağlamında Arap Siyasi Kimliğinin Evrimi: Sosyal İnşacı Perspektif,* Yüksek Lisans Tezi, Ankara, 2022.

Arap siyasi kimliği, farklı gelişim evrelerine rağmen, sosyal ve tarihsel bağlama bağlı olarak ortaya çıkmış, evrilmiş ve söylem yoluyla tezahür etmiştir. Çeşitli ideolojik akımlar arasında, geç Osmanlı yönetimine ve Batı egemenliğinin bölgeye nüfuz etmesine bir tepki olarak gelişen Arap milli kimliği, 19. yüzyılın sonlarından 20. yüzyılın ikinci yarısına kadar Arap dünyasındaki olayların seyrine egemen olmuştur. İki savaş arası (1918-1939) ve 1945 sonrası dönemlerde milliyetçi ve sömürgecilik karşıtı Pan-Arap milliyetçi hareketine dönüşürken 1950'ler ve 1960'larda sosyalist liderlerin önderliğinde Nasırcılıkla doruğa çıktı. 1967'den sonrasında çeşitli sebepler bölgede Pan-Arabizm'in gerilemesine ve İslamcılığın yükselişine yol açtı. Ancak küreselleşmeyle birlikte değişen dünya düzeni ve bağlam, İslamcılığın kendi içerisinde farklı formlara ayrılmasını ve kökleri 18. yüzyıla kadar uzanan Arap liberal düşüncesinin yeniden canlanmasını beraberinde getirdi. 21. yüzyılın başlarında ise gençlerin önderliğinde otoriter rejimleri devirerek kapsayıcı ve hesap sorulabilir bir siyasi liderlik, işleyen ekonomik sistem ve adil ve istikrarlı bir sosyal düzen talep eden demokrasi yanlısı ayaklanma dalgası bölgeyi sarstı. Bu noktada, kimliğin Arap dünyasındaki siyasi ve sosyal mobilizasyondaki rolünü dikkate alan bu tez, Arap Baharı bağlamında Arap siyasi kimliğinin evrimini incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu çalışma, araştırma yöntemi olarak Söylem Analizi (SA)'ne dayanırken araştırma bulgularını değerlendirmek için Sosyal İnşacılık teorisine başvurmaktadır. Sonuç olarak bu tez, Arap Baharı bağlamında sosyal gerçeklik ve algıların dil kullanımı aracılığıyla yeniden inşa süreci üzerine, mevcut Arap siyasetine hâkim olamamasına rağmen, Arap siyasi kimliğinin İslamcı bir çizgiden Post-İslamcı ve liberal bir düşünceye doğru evrildiğini savunmaktadır.

Anahtar Sözcükler

Arap Baharı, Söylem Analizi (SA), Sosyal İnşacılık, Arap dünyası, Arap siyasi kimliği, Post-İslamcılık, liberal düşünce.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABBREVIATIONS

Al-Fatah   The Palestinian National Liberation Movement

CUP   Committee of Union and Progress

DA   Discourse Analysis

GDP   Gross Domestic Product

Hamas   Islamic Resistance Movement

IR   International Relations

PLO   Palestine Liberation Organization

UN   United Nations

US   United States

WW   World War

TABLE AND FIGURES

INTRODUCTION

In late 2010, the outbreak of mass demonstrations against the entrenched Arab regimes opened a new phase in contemporary Middle East politics. The non-Arab world has defined the incidents by various popular concepts, such as "Arab Spring,"[1] "Arab Uprisings," "Unfinished Revolutions," "Social Media Revolutions," and "Arab Winter." Whereas, as Norton noted, "In Arab discourse, 2011 has been described by many people as the 'Awakening,' 'Second Arab Renaissance,' or even 'Arab Revolutions'" (2016, p. 132). Besides the definition of the events, ten years after the outbreak of the protests, academic discussions on the nature of these social movements, which have profoundly affected the entire region, is continuing. Given this, the aim of this thesis is twofold: First, to examine the role of context (social, economic, and political background of discourse) and language in the construction of Arab political identity throughout modern times. Second, to find out whether or how Arab political thought evolved from the Islamist current toward a post-Islamist and liberal direction during the Arab uprisings through discourse and a social construction process with a focus on the role of the youth, civil society, and artists.

By this, it tries to explain the Arab Spring through a theoretical lens, which mainstream International Relations (IR) theories have largely ignored. Even though some studies focused on discourse analysis, there has been no serious attempt to apply discourse analysis to social constructivism that views discourse analysis as a useful method to understand the ideological shifts of the human agency. Moreover, there has been given little attention to explaining the ideational roots of the unexpected popular movements from an IR theory perspective. In other words, this research examines the evolution of Arab political identity through a social constructivist framework, focusing on the role of individuals and social groups as an agency during the regionwide upheavals, unlike the studies focusing on the new atmosphere defined by geopolitical and sectarianized conflicts in the post-uprisings.

At the same time, the study refutes the thesis of Arab exceptionalism for democratic transition and liberal values using data on the discourse of the Arab uprisings. Beyond the contemporary situation, it provides the evolution of Arab political identity in the last

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[1] A controversial term among Middle East specialists on the ground of bearing Western references, narrow implications, and Orientalist connotations. Despite using the term for popular understanding, this study prefers a neutral term "uprising" (a popular rebellion against the political authority in a society with the aim of political change) to describe the events in the post-2010 Arab world.

century as the background and the sociopolitical and economic context in which the Arab uprisings (*fawra*) flourished. In doing this, it conducts Discourse Analysis (DA), which has both qualitative and quantitative research techniques, and looks at the use of language in relation to its social context and draws conclusions from it. In this way, it shows also the decisive role of identity in the Arab world [2] and how Arab political identity has been 'constructed' and 'reconstructed' based on the historical conjuncture. Ultimately, the thesis aims to draw attention to the constitutive relations between the sociopolitical context and discourse, proving the 'flexibility' and 'complexity' of the Arab political identity.

As the causes and consequences of the Arab uprisings remain controversial, the academic study of the Arab Spring and Arab political identity by scholars and experts has a vast and growing literature consisting of various political, historical, ideological, linguistical, and theoretical perspectives. The review in this thesis, however, states the general findings of broader sources from a variety of disciplines and perspectives divided into two broad groups, each focusing on local, regional, and international dimensions.

The first group (Hashemi & Postel, 2017; Szmolka, 2017; Hinnebusch, 2016; Sayre & Yousuf, 2016; Gelvin, 2015; Sadiki, 2015; Kamrava, 2014; Danahar, 2013; Lynch, 2013; Khosrokhavar, 2012; Filiu, 2011) analyzes the various causes and outcomes of the uprisings, i.e., socioeconomic and political changes and the new geopolitical landscape of the region. They also try to demonstrate how the uprisings affected inter-Arab politics, their bilateral relations with nonregional actors, and the power relations between great powers. Govrin (2014) stresses the role of the "new Arab liberal thinkers" in the spark of public upheavals. Owen (2014) and Telhami (2013) argue that the Arab masses, living under autocracy and in the age of globalization, embraced the revolutionary process for better living standards. To describe the tragic consequences of the process—many serious challenges to democratic consolidation, counter-revolutions, economic downturns, the resilience of the authoritarianism, sectarianization of the identity-based issues, regional insecurity triggered by the rise of radical activism, proxy wars, foreign intervention, as well as state failure—King (2020) and Feldman (2020) use the term "Arab Winter."

The second group deals with the ideological roots and inclinations of popular uprisings. The concepts of 'democratization' and 'liberation' occupy a central position in this

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[2] The term throughout the thesis implies a geographic area consists of 22 Arab countries located in the Middle East or Middle East and North Africa (MENA), excluding Israel, Iran, and Turkey.

approach. Underlying the "richness" of Arab political thought, Corm (2020) sees the uprisings as articulating the modernist facet of Arab political thought. Roy (2020), Bayat (2014), and Dabashi (2012) challenge the conventional narrative of "Arab exceptionalism" and link the events to a post-Islamist direction (which seeks a synthesis of Islamic values with democratic principles). Muasher (2014) and Dawisha (2013) define the process as the "Second Arab Awakening." For Muasher, the mass movements were the young generation's struggle for 'pluralism' against the domination of society by the old state elites and Islamists. Referring to the socialist revolutions, Achcar (2013) points out the link between socioeconomic factors and the 'revolutionary' dynamics of the events from a Marxist perspective. Similarly, Weyland (2012) points out a set of common causes and features between the Arab uprisings of 2010-2011 and the Revolutions of 1848 ("Springtime of the Peoples"), a wave of revolutionary protests initiated by the European working class for political change, economic prosperity, and social liberty and equality.

While Sadiki (2016) emphasizes the role of 'human agency' in political orientation, Khatib & Lust (2014) examine the transformation of 'Arab activism' with new demands and strategies. To refute the "End of Arabism" thesis, Phillips (2013) and Sawani (2012) discusses the relevance and importance of the nationalist identity, or a sense of new pan-Arabism, which binds the geographically dispersed demonstrators together. In a religious sense, Moaddel (2020) asserts that Arab public preference is shifting from "religious fundamentalism" to a "liberal direction." On the other hand, Ramadan (2012), based on the Islamic references in the demonstrations, claims that Islam still is at the center of Arab political identity despite the reconciliation with democratic values. Beyond these, a growing number of studies (Lahlali, 2021; Ullmann, 2021; Ismail, 2019; Alaoui, 2014; Michel, 2013; Wolfsfeld, Segev, & Sheafer, 2013) highlight the role of social media and language through linguistic and discourse analysis of the uprisings.

To reach the conclusion that supports the hypothesis, the evolution of Arab political identity from Islamism toward a post-Islamist and liberal thought in the context of the Arab Spring, the study analyses empirical findings collected from the demonstrations, including written and spoken discursive practices of the social actors, constituting the primary sources, i.e., the selected slogans chanted during the protests, statements of social leaders, manifestos of the social movements, opinion polls, media sources, graffiti, and even symbolism. They, such as the collection of news, blogs, and moments and videos of the demonstrations country by country by the website Global Voices, Al Jazeera news and documentaries, and

a few online libraries providing coverages of documents regarding the uprisings, were drawn based on a Google search. The discourse is applied to the thesis as the key variable for understanding the self-conceptualization and ideological shift of Arab political identity. In this sense, context and discourse are dependent and independent variables of each other. Since language is undeniably linked to Arab identity and worldview, Discourse Analysis (DA) can offer a better understanding of the issue. In addition, this study draws on many valuable secondary sources, i.e., academic books and articles by various leading Western (European and American) and Middle Eastern scholars studying the region.

Moreover, the study uses social constructivism as a theoretical approach to examine the emergence and development of Arab political identity. As the scope of International Relations (IR) theory has broadened to include ideological factors in the post-1945 period, rationalist perspectives, often representing biased and ethnocentric viewpoints, have been unable to explain 'identity-based movements' in the world and the Arab Middle East. However, the others, especially social constructivism, have provided a theoretical frame for a thorough understanding of the identity-politics relationship (Telhami & Barnett, 2002). It is also because social constructivism uses discourse analysis as a qualitative method to make assumptions about the social 'construction' of identity and change.

Apart from the introduction and conclusion, this thesis consists of four chapters exploring the historical evolution of the Arab political identity as follows: Chapter 1 presents the theoretical and methodological framework for the research topic. Chapter 2 focuses on the historical development of the 'modern' Arab political identity. It is divided into three successive phases of Arabism and then followed by the rise of Islamism as the successor to nationalist ideology. However, the information provided here is no more than background and an introductory analysis of such a long history. Chapter 3 provides the sociopolitical, economic, and ideological context of the popular movements in which Arab 'liberal' discourse flourished and ushered in the most significant development in the Middle East today. Chapter 4 is the discussion section of the thesis analyzing the research findings based on discourse analysis supporting the objective (s) of the thesis. Last, the conclusion section sums up and highlights the main findings of the study.

CHAPTER 1

THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter addresses the theoretical and methodological framework that would guide the study to determine how a research study is structured and supported by applying an appropriate theory and method to the topic. A theoretical framework in a study provides a way to explore the research, analyze, and conceptualize the information sought while drafting the study. In other words, it is crucial to connect the most appropriate theory with the study to build its research design and support its arguments (Grant & Osanloo, 2014). Research methodology, on the other hand, refers to the systematic way of conducting the study to address the research questions and find a solution to the defined problem. It provides methods (e.g., case studies) to collect data and techniques (e.g., content analysis) to interpret the results and form the hypothesis (Kothari, 2009, pp. 7-8). Given this, the relevant theory brought to bear in this thesis is Social Constructivism, while Discourse Analysis (DA) is the research method.

1.1. SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVISM

Social Constructivism, or for short Constructivism, a term coined by Nicholas Onuf in 1989, emerged as a social theory within the 'Third Great Debate'[3] of IR theory in the dramatically changing world of the 1980s with much older roots dating back to the 18th century (Jackson & Sørensen, 2013). Then, it was systemized by Alexander Wendt, notably with his work *Anarchy is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics,* which discusses the neo-liberal and neo-realist understanding of international politics and claims to "build a bridge between these two traditions" (1992, p. 394). Considering international politics as a social process, Wendt speaks of an anarchic international structure constructed by ideational factors and social interaction instead of being exogenously given. The central premise of his constructivism, thus, is that shared ideas, not just material structures, determine national interests and actions of actors and

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[3] A post-positivist and an inter-paradigm debate emerged in the 1980s, covering different theoretical discussions such as the neorealist-neoliberal (neo-neo debate) and rationalists-constructivists ones. In terms of epistemological and methodological perspective, thus, the debate has a pluralist profile tied to 'relativism' (Lapid, 1989). On the other hand, the First Debate (during the interwar period) was ontological debate between realists and idealists about the war-peace issue and the nature of international politics. The Second Debate (in the 1950's and 1960's) was a methodological debate between the traditionalists (an interpretive method) and behavioralists (a scientific method) on the question of how to study international politics (Schmidt, 2013, pp. 13-15).

world politics (Wendt, 1992). Over a short time, Wendt's and his fellows' constructivist social assumptions and views of the international system, norms, anarchy, cooperation and conflict, and change in world politics have been discussed by other IR approaches, especially the neorealist, neo-liberal, and neo-Marxist ones both with endorsements and critiques (Jackson & Sørensen, 2013).

As constructivism has been influenced by others, such as the English School and Critical Theory, some IR approaches, particularly feminist ones, have adopted its core concept, 'intersubjectivity' (the shared understanding of actors). The theory—which is divided roughly into two camps, conventional and critical constructivism (Hopf, 1998)—has developed into one of the mainstream IR theories and subdivided into Modernist, Rule-oriented, Critical, Radical, and Realist Constructivism (Barkin, 2010) with different theoretical and methodological perspectives (see Table 1). Despite their variations on epistemological, ontological, and methodological perspectives, "the construction of social reality and social construction of knowledge" remains the consensus of all constructivists, agreeing that agency and structure constitute each other (Adler, 2013).

Within the agent-structure debate, social constructivism strictly emphasizes the mutually constituting relationship between the agency and structure that affects the agent and is reproduced by its actions. Social agents and their cultural environment shape the ideas, identities, and practices that define and interpret the material world. Norms and rules (constitutive and regulative), which social actors constantly revise, determine the behavior of individuals and states and shape the world order. Therefore, the key concepts of international politics, such as national interests are not given and fixed but alterable. Like, social practices, including war and peace, depend on human interpretations determined by historical factors, language, and shared norms (Barnett, 2020). Moreover, material and social conditions cannot be wholly separated as no objective reality exists independently unless social actors identify the external world, as Onuf claims, "Despite the existence of some independent features of the real world, things exist only insofar as they are named as such." "We construct worlds we know in a world we do not know" (1989, pp. 37, 38). The role and importance of socially constituted identities, social norms, and values in shaping political behavior are central to the constructivist tradition, in which individuals/elites are the units of analysis besides the states. It argues that social and state elites play the most significant role in shaping and changing such identities and ideas through the interaction and communication between them (Grieco, Ikenberry, & Mastanduno, 2015, pp. 92-95).

Constructivism challenges the materialist interpretation of world politics by neorealism and neoliberalism and rejects the rationalist views of the social sciences. It assumes that both material factors, such as the distribution of material capabilities, and nonmaterial structures, matter to a large extent. In contrast to the rationalist view that national identities, interests, and political choices are determined or 'given,' for constructivists, they are shaped by normative and ideational factors (institutionalized norms, social identities, imagination, communication, constraints, and the social environment). Wendt rephrases it by claiming that "identities are the basis of interests" (1992, p. 398) and are not value-free. In addition to empirical analysis, constructivists offer an interpretive methodology, discourse analysis, and sociohistorical analysis of actions (Reus-Smit, 2013). However, since constructivism recognizes the importance of the ideological and phenomenal world in determining actors' preferences, it occupies a "middle ground" between rationalism and interpretivism (Guzzini, 2013, pp. 189-190).

The probability of change in international and domestic politics is a characteristic premise of the constructivist theory. For constructivists, change in world structure is possible, even though not easy and certain, because socially produced meanings and norms constantly influence actors' social practices and actions. As national identities and interests determine foreign policy behaviors, the international structure and interstate relations can also shift from conflict to cooperation or vice versa (Hopf, 1998, pp. 180-181). In Onuf's words, "What we produce is never a finished product. Goals change as work proceeds, rules change, and the world change" (2013, p. xvi). The debate about the agency, structure, and methodology has created variations within the constructivist school, as examined below.

1.1.1. Modernist Constructivism

Modernist, or Neoclassical, constructivism has two primary goals, to understand and explain social reality rather than to transform society and achieve human emancipation (Adler, 2013, p. 116). For Wendt, the proponent of the modernist approach, 'social construction' is a two-sided process in which agency and the material world, or structure, equally shape each other. While the material world is an 'objective' reality that can be investigated through causal mechanisms, identities, interests, and social reality are constructed through intersubjective practices that are not exogenously given and fixed but change by the interaction of actors. Since material and social structures (unobservable but knowable) separate from each other, scientific and positivist approaches can be applied as a methodology to the social sciences and the study of world politics (Wendt, 1999).

1.1.2. Rule-Oriented Constructivism

Rule-oriented/Modernist-Linguistic constructivism is concerned with how social rules, which link material and ideational structures, and discourse contribute to the social construction process. It emphasizes the centrality of language and relates the formation of social rules to "speech acts" and "discursive practices" of actors (Burch, 2015, pp. 68-69). As language creates rules, rules (instruction, directive, and commitment rules) directly guide social practices. Given this, all social activities of actors, including international politics and interstate relations, are essentially "rule-governed" (Onuf, 1989, pp. 47-49). The reciprocal relationship between actor and structure is made possible through the medium of language (speech acts) and rules (practices). The analysis of international politics requires the analysis of language and rules since many aspects of world politics, especially anarchy and institutions, are conditioned by rules (Kubalkova, 2015).

1.1.3. Critical Constructivism

Consistent with the Critical Theory of IR discipline, the focus of critical constructivism is to provide a practical and normative explanation for social facts and construction. Accordingly, all human knowledge and social practices, such as identities, otherness, domination, and especially the post-Westphalian international system, are social and historical production through a conscious process. The deconstruction of injustices and reconstruction of just social and political systems is both possible and a universally moral responsibility, which Linklater calls an "emancipatory project." Since discourse is the constitutive force of unequal relations, analyzing language and replacing it with an egalitarian discourse would be crucial to achieving universal liberation (Linklater, 1998).

1.1.4. Radical Constructivism

By rejecting objective knowledge, radical constructivism underscores the power-knowledge relationships and certain social groups' role in constructing reality. According to Foucault, the construction of knowledge, concepts, rules, and even theory through discursive formations is dominated by the ideology of privileged groups to serve their interests. Discourse analysis, thus, helps uncover socially constructed, transmitted, naturalized, and even institutionalized power-knowledge relations and hierarchical positions (Foucault, 2002). For instance, gender, as a socially constructed concept, is deeply situated in the male-dominated discourse. 'Gendered discourse' legitimizes and reflects the hierarchical relations between women and men and the subordinated position of women through gendered roles at the personal, domestic, and international levels. Where

women are portrayed as "reproducers" whereas men are the "manager" in economic areas (Tickner, 2001).

1.1.5. Realist Constructivism

According to Barkin (2010), the major proponent of realist constructivism, the relationship between realism and constructivism is not as mutually exclusive as claimed by many theorists of IR. On the contrary, they share certain features that refute the 'incompatibility' thesis (see Table 1). The ontological and epistemological distinction between the material and social worlds is not inherent in both approaches. Because realism does not disregard the nonmaterial elements when speaking of power politics, which is essentially contextual and relational and thus contains ideational factors as well. Social constructivism, on the other hand, cannot reject materiality since agency requires certain material phenomena and historical contingency that influence and constrain agency in creating the social world. The methodological distinction is also incomplete since realism still needs social aspects when studying human action besides scientific methods. Likewise, constructivism cannot make accurate predictions through only interpretivism and cannot theorize human behavior without considering structural factors that shape their understanding (Barkin, 2010).

Given that there are diverse strands within it, the constructivist theory offers multiple frameworks rather than a unified set of assumptions for interpreting the research findings. Although this thesis focuses on the common ground of the constructivist approaches, it largely relies on the modernist and rule-oriented approaches, which are defined within the conventional constructivist camp with a focus on the separate existence of the material and nonmaterial elements that mutually affect each other and generate meaning, knowledge, understanding, and influence behaviors of the agency. This is also because both use the method of discourse analysis, emphasizing the importance of language in such interaction. As demonstrated in the following chapters, material structures have been influential in shaping the interests and social identification of the Arabs, while social perceptions and images continuously interpret the material conditions revealed by the changes in Arab political discourse.

Table 1

Five Types of Constructivism

Approach	Basic Tenets	Major Proponents
Modernist Constructivism (Adler, 2013; Wendt, 1992)	Constitutive and causal theory (why and how questions) Objective hermeneutics (a way of interpretation) The distinction between material and social reality Ideational forces, not merely material, determine actions The mutual construction of agency and structure Applicability of positivist methodology No mission for human emancipation (nonnormative)	Alexander Wendt Emanuel Adler Michael Barnett Jeffrey Legro Martha Finnemore Peter Katzenstein John Ruggie Thomas Risse
Rule-Oriented Constructivism (Adler, 2013; Onuf, 1989)	The world is both material and social The construction of social reality by rules and language Combination of empirical and interpretive methodology Intersubjectivity and post-positivism Constitutive theory (what and how questions) No strict causation and objectively existing knowledge Subjective hermeneutics and interpretative methods No clear mission for human emancipation Discourse analysis and case studies as a method	Nicholas Onuf Christian Reus-Smit John Austin Ted Hopf Friedrich Kratochwil Karen Litfin Neta Crawford John Searle Jutta Weldes
Critical Constructivism (Adler, 2013; Linklater, 1998)	Pragmatism and an emancipatory mission (normative) No sharp distinction between material and social reality No strict causation as intersubjectivity interprets material reality Deconstruction and cultural explanations of social facts The impact of human experiences on social theory Construction of world system by a historical process Combination of objective and subjective hermeneutics Interpretative methods and constitutive theory Narrative and discourse analysis as a method	Andrew Linklater Craig Murphy Robert Cox Antonio Gramsci Jurgen Habermas Karl Popper Paul Keal Heather Rae Hilary Putnam
Radical Constructivism (Adler, 2013; Tickner, 2001)	Not concerned with the existence of material reality Agnostic about the validity of scientific knowledge An emancipatory mission No objective knowledge and social theory Deconstruction of power-knowledge relations Subjective hermeneutics and constitutive theory The central role of language in the building of social codes Postmodernist and post-structuralist pragmatism Discourse analysis as a method and empirical research	Cynthia Weber Ann Tickner Michel Foucault Martin Heidegger Ludwig Wittgenstein David Campbell Jacques Derrida Richard Ashley R.B.J. Walker
Realist Constructivism (Barkin, 2020, 2010)	The synthesis of realism and constructivism Given structural constraints on agency The distinction between the material and social worlds The mutual constitution of agency and structure Challenges to normative theory and morality of liberalism No mission for human emancipation Reflexivity rather than pure intersubjectivity Relational and contextual power politics A mix of causal explanation and interpretive methodology	J. Samuel Barkin Stefano Guzzini Germán Camilo Prieto Martin Boyle Justin Delacour Laura Sjoberg Andreea Iancu Saira Bano

Source: Compiled by the author

1.2. SOCIAL IDENTIFICATION

An insight understanding of the historical evolution of Arab political identity and political thought lies in an accurate evaluation of the social identification process, the way of identifying the self with a group affiliation, in the Arab world. With a diverse ideational route, Arab political thought has undergone a constant and evolving social identification process beginning with 'national identity' that determined the course of Arab politics in the last century so needs to be analyzed within the conceptual frameworks described below.

1.2.1. Nationalism

Since its appearance on the world political scene in 18th-century Europe and spread worldwide, 'nationalism' has immensely exerted its influence on domestic and world politics. It was a significant force behind the foundation and development of the modern world system since the 19th century. The outbreak of World War I (WWI) and WWII evidently marked the "inflation of nationalism" (Carr, 1968, p. 24). On the other hand, defining nationalism is diverse and challenging, just as different theories address its origins and rise. In general, however, it is classified as an identity, a sentiment, an ideology, a cultural or social movement with various forms—e.g., civic, ethnic, political, cultural, religious, liberal, and totalitarian nationalism—all of which have their particular historical progress. Though the term nationalism is not objectively well defined, it generally refers to a deep loyalty of people to their political entity and homeland, as well as cultural, ethnic, linguistic, and religious communities (Kohn, 1965, p. 9). In political terms, nationalism makes sense primarily through the principle of 'self-determination' which grants all national identities equal recognition and the right to determine their destiny. Based on it, national mobilization, in the forms of secession, unification, and decolonization, has been a defining, often destabilizing, force in international politics since WWI (Moore, 2005).

1.2.2. Identity

The equally important concept that should be elaborated on is 'identity' because, as Woodwell suggests, "The politics of nationalism is the politics of identity" (2007, p. 13). Upon the rise of nationalist policies, group-based social movements, and ethnic conflicts in world politics, the concept of identity has become an essential subject for social sciences and has gained importance in IR literature since the early 1990s. That situation is mainly because the content of social identity entails cognitive, purposive, relational, cognitive, and normative elements, which shape the social perception of the world, construct meanings, and drive state behavior. As a social variable, collective identity is measured through

various interpretive methods such as discourse analysis, cognitive mapping, agent-based modeling, content analysis, interviews, surveys, and experiments (Abdelal, Herrera, Johnston, & McDermott, 2006). To conceptualize it as a social construct, identity is the self-perception and definition that designate a person's position in relation to others. It is formed by answering who am 'I,' who is 'us,' and who is the 'other.' Through self-categorization and social comparison, individuals identify their in-groups and out-groups. This constant process of naming self and others allows us to build, modify, activate, and deactivate any identity. It is also possible to create new contexts for the activation or disappearance of identity that would guide the behavior of group members. That is because, within a social group, commitment to collective identity drives group members into the expected roles of the group, as in all social movements (Stets & Burke, 2000).

Identity politics, on the other hand, is a cultural and political practice of the self and social conceptualization. Taking the forms of social and political activism, it is a force of popular mobilization expressing the political stance of groups. As a socially constructed practice, collective identity primarily reinforces group activism for political recognition and representation, eliminating oppression and subordination, and promoting socioeconomic equality and justice between different identity groups. Yet this also may harden the differences and polarization between mutually exclusive groups (Bernstein, 2005). In the Middle East context, identity politics (ethnic, religious, national, or community-based) has become a key variable in determining inter-Arab politics and foreign policies over the past century. Moreover, national identities in the region have not only been a justification tool for Arab leaders but also innate drives behind their decision-making strategy, though not always consistently and directly (Telhami & Barnett, 2002, pp. 1-3).

Against this theoretical background, the evolution of identity politics in the Arab Middle East can be interpreted through a social constructivist lens since nationality in the Arab world was constructed from above and re-interpreted by elites in response to critical socioeconomic and international developments tremendously impacting its evolution. As Barnett (1998) suggests, in contrast to those who view Arab politics predominantly as realist politics, Arab national interests, and foreign policies in the 20th century were reflections of their political identities. Arguably, it was Arab nationalism that shaped their strategies for survival, commitment to the sovereignty, and foreign policy behaviors. Shared cultural exchanges, social interactions among Arab states, and political events,

notably the foreign dominance and recurrent Arab-Israeli military conflicts, directly influenced the Arab identity (Barnett, 1998, p. 6).

According to Anthony Smith (1986), there is a continuity between pre-modern ethnic roots and the construction of modern nations. Because it is the set of myths, symbols, collective memory, and values that link modernity to antiquity, no collective identity can be formed without 'primordial' ties that embody cultural elements and beliefs for future generations. In his view, "Nationalism is to rediscover, select and reinterpret the past or pasts of a given community, reshape its conception of its present state and so help to regenerate the community" (2009, p. 65). In the Arab case, modernity has been interpreted within the framework of historical identities (Islamic principles and history, culture, and values). The discussion so far has been done for a better understanding of Arab thought, which has been developed based on a common culture, language, and collective experience yet was in search of political identity. The role of Western-educated intellectuals in forming identity and reviving their nations was crucial, considering the society's internal weakness of the affiliation with a national identity compared to its religious and tribal identification (Breuilly, 1993, pp. 149-151). Such formation is part of social construction and deconstruction, where the primordial ethnic identity was awakened by modernity and used as an instrument by the political and intellectual elite. Taken together, the theoretical approach to be applied to this thesis is social constructivism.

1.3. DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

1.3.1. Language as a Variable

Discourse Analysis (DA), or Discourse Studies (DS), was introduced by linguist Zellig Harris (1909-1992) in 1952. As a qualitative research approach and method, DA is the study of the language-in-use (text-context-practice relationship), which "is about saying, doing, and being" (Gee, 2011, p. 16), within its social and historical contexts. Analyzing language as a variable, 'beyond the sentence,' DA differs from linguistic studies with scientific language techniques such as grammar, phonology, vocabulary, and structure of sentences. The term discourse implies any written, spoken, or visual things accounted as verbal and nonverbal communication, i.e., political speeches, novels, cartoons, interviews, rhetoric, images and symbols, conversations, narratives, newspaper articles, and even social media posts. DA primarily examines the text (all spoken and written discourses)-context, and language-practice relationship to develop arguments. In doing so, DA seeks to discover how language is used to produce meaning (semantic), to resent who we are and

what we feel, and express our attitudes and interests (Paltridge, 2012). In this regard, the interrelation between discourse and identity is significant to observe how identity is socially constructed rather than pre-given and used to achieve the sociopolitical aims of its agency. Language, thus, not only serves to claim our individual and group self-identification but also determines our interpretation of the social facts and 'others.' Discourse communicates knowledge and perceptions that embody the collective memory, records of values and cultural heritage, and conceptions of reality, spatial relations, and cognition. Each contributes to forming, sharing, and maintaining identity between a social group's past and future generations (Chassy, 2015).

With a new methodology and critical and pluralist perspective, DA is helpful for social research to study the newly emerged compelling topics, to which traditional methods and theories offer little or no significant explanations, and the growing importance of language to social sciences in the last decades. There are also several challenges to the study, such as the difficulty in choosing the best among the variety of approaches to DA and drawing an appropriate theoretical framework to study discourse, building a good research question for the object of study, and the time-consuming process of data collection and analysis (Phillips & Hardy, 2002). 'Intertextuality' and 'interdiscursivity' are among the core concepts of DA. While the former examines how the prior discourses are related to the present ones by conveying the knowledge, the latter highlights the supportive relationships between different types of discourse. Moreover, discourse significantly affects the re/constructing of social reality, differentiating relations, a shift in social identities, and the evolution of political thought, like the democratization of political discourse (Fairclough, 1992, pp. 102, 118). According to discourse analysts Philips & Hardy (2002, p. 2), "Without discourse, there is no social reality, and without understanding discourse, we cannot understand our reality, our experience, or ourselves." Hence, discursive changes through social interactions are both the constructive force and mirror of cultural and sociopolitical transformations in a given society (Fairclough, 1992).

1.3.2. Doing Discourse Analysis

As an 'interdisciplinary' social study, DA is used in various social fields with definitions of discourse and theoretical and methodological perspectives. The many different forms of DA are categorized within two frames: descriptive (linguistically-oriented, explanatory, and noncritical) and critical (socially-oriented and interpretative), primarily used in social sciences, which not only describes but also accepts discourse as 'socially constructed'

reality (Gee, 2011). According to Gee, "All discourse analysis is critical discourse analysis, since all language is political, and all language is part of the way we build and sustain our world, cultures, and institutions" (2011, p. 10). Since discursive practices are reflexive of social structures and more than a means of interaction, critical approaches have a social constructivist view of discourse, producing and reproducing the social world where it originates. Indeed, no critical method of analysis and approach to discourse is entirely exclusive from each other but are closely interrelated methods despite the variations (Phillips & Hardy, 2002).

Among the wide-ranging approaches to DA, Conversation Analysis (CA) deals with the way of creating social order and relations through daily conversations among people. While Variation Analysis concerns the impact of cultural and linguistic variations on discourse, Narrative Analysis (NA) highlights the way of constructing meaning and displaying personal background through narrating and speaking. Speech Act (SA) argues for the constitutive role of discourse in driving social action beyond the statement. Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) looks at the combination of multiple semiotic modes (e.g., text, images, and music) to uncover shared meanings. The Ethnography of Communication (EOC) analyses discursive communication between members of social groups from an anthropological perspective. The Pragmatics approach examines the relationship between meaning and language users in a context that affects the users' intentions. Unlike others, the Corpus approaches use a quantitative method to manage extensive data and analyze the occurrence of keywords within it. Interactional Sociolinguistics (IS) explains how people create and interpret meaning through social and intercultural interactions (Schiffrin, 1994). Within a socio-political frame, Political Discourse Analysis (PDA) addresses the discourse and rhetoric of any political institution, social actors, a group of people, and politicians—often to show their instrumentalization of language for political purposes—on a specific political topic (Dijk, 1998). On the other hand, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) attempts to uncover and deconstruct the discourse-embedded social inequalities, domination, power abuses, and power-knowledge relationship, which is central to the approach (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997).

How to do DA is also difficult and diverse as discourse analysts favor using their distinct methodology, though all situate the discourse in its social and historical context and connect it to the social reality. J. Paul Gee (2014) offers a set of tools to apply to discourse analysis, including intersubjectivity, vocabulary, topic and theme, identity and politics

building, relationships, situated meaning, and social languages tool. In general, four consecutive steps are implemented regardless of which methodology is used for discourse analysis: First, the decision of which approach and method would be used, based on the research problem and objectives. Second, the collection of relevant discursive data to work on consists of written works, speeches, interviews, static images, slogans, metaphors, symbols, and even songs produced by social and political agents. Then, make a connection between the text and its context—cultural, sociopolitical, and historical backgrounds, interests, worldviews, and ideological orientations of the speaker/writer/builder and the listeners/readers—and even the 'time' and 'space' of the discourse. The last step is to draw meaning and conclusions beyond the sentences (Gee, 2014).

In the Arab world context, language has always been the most meaningful instrument to present the Arab mind. As Michel Aflaq (1943) denotes, "Arabs have historically been very attracted to words, which had a certain sense of holiness and were meant to be heard by the heart and not just the ears." With modernity, it has contributed to 'construct' and 'manifest' a new 'political view' of themselves within a surrounding social, economic, and political environment and historical trajectory, in which social and political actors have dynamically redefined the concepts of 'we' and 'others.' Moreover, the Arabic language has been the unifying force of the cultural integration of Arabs and a symbol of Arab identity (Abuhamdia, 2016, p. 41). As the historical background shows, discussed in more detail below, discourse in the Arab world has been shaped by and, in turn, influenced political thought, which has evolved based on the changing conditions. Therefore, it provides a valuable analysis for social sciences to understand regional dynamics.

In light of this information, as a method of analysis, this thesis focuses on the socially oriented discourse analysis by contextualizing the discourse-practice and discourse-context relationship, though not applying a specific approach overwhelmingly to the study. Because the discursive practices of the Arap uprisings are composed of various sociopolitical and ideational concepts, such as authoritarianism, democracy, revolution, social and political identities, freedom, political humor, and historical conjectures, different techniques can address them. In other words, the study analyses the use of language during the demonstrations in its contextual conditions that affected its emergence and nature to support the social constructivist explanations of the uprisings, provided in the last chapter following the overview of the historical path of Arab political identity.

CHAPTER 2

HISTORICAL EVOLUTION OF ARAB POLITICAL IDENTITY

To begin with, the generalization of Arab identity and nationalism (*al-qavmiyya al-arabiyya*), which developed in a complex trajectory and took distinct forms throughout the region, may be misleading because not all Arabic-speaking peoples defined themselves predominantly with national but religious or tribal affiliations. Nor did such a modern identity disregard the realpolitik in the region, especially the failure of Arab leaders in fulfilling its prospects and the fragmentation between the Arab regimes. Nevertheless, it has never lost its potency and is highly likely to spark future mass movements (Kramer, 1993). The definition of the concept of Arab nationalism is also challenging due to its subjective and overlapping connotations. The term Arabism (*al-urubah*), often used interchangeably, refers to the 'cultural uniformity' of the Arabic-speaking peoples, while pan-Arabism *(qawmiyya)* means the political unification of all Arabs under the same authority upon the legacy of the shared past. In contrast, state-centric nationalism, or patriotism (*wataniyya*), is defined in civic attachments and geographic areas (Dawisha, 2016, pp. 8-13). Along with secular interpretations, the ideology, standing between tradition and modernity, also implies pan-Islamism (political unity of Muslims) for some. When it comes to self-identification, however, religious identity may take precedence over the Arab and state identity, such as the Iraqi, which is still unconsolidated (Reiser, 1987).

From the beginning of Islamic history, the deep-rooted relationship between religion and politics in the Middle East has rendered the Arab identity strongly connected to the Islamic tradition. For some regional people, the Islamic identity is the foundational force and common ground of other loyalties (including national, political, and territorial) (Lewis, 2010). Therefore, the analysis of Arab nationalism would be incomplete unless taking that connection into account. According to Choueiri, Arab nationalism emerged as a cultural movement and gradually evolved from this cultural Arabism (1800-1900) into political (1900-1945) and social Arabism (1945-1973). In the last phase (since 1973)—covering the Islamist trend, socioeconomic crises, and eroding state-society relationship exacerbated by globalization—it has experienced the rise of demands for democracy (Choueiri, 2000, pp. vii-x). In this regard, this chapter presents an overview of the historical development of Arab national identity and its full of ups and downs course until the 1960s and the rise of Islamism represented by various Islamist groups in the following sections.

2.1. THE EMERGENCE OF ARAB NATIONALISM

Even though Arab nationalism is a modern political concept, constituting factors of the ideology—Arabic language, shared interests, culture, and historical experience—are the legacy of the past that fundamentally distinguish nations from each other. In addition to such common denominators of the Arabic-speaking world, ethnicity and religion are considered by many theorists as other principal elements of the Arab nationality. But they remain controversial due to the existence of non-Muslims, different ethnic roots, and secular orientations in the Arabic world (Nuseibeh, 1959). In *The Arab Awakening*, the preliminary study on Arab nationalism, George Antonius (2015) contends that there was no unifying force in a diverse and disintegrated Arab world other than 'cultural unity' to create a national consciousness. For him, the next step for the nation-formation was to awaken the Arabs about the 'revival' through modern means, i.e., the establishment of the printing press, modernization of the Arabic language, Arabization and spread of public education accompanied by missionaries, and guidance of Arab figures. Last, the march of the Arab movement would be triggered by the domination of foreign rule (Antonius, 2015).

Given that the Arab national movement was essentially a top-down project, urban Arab notables, possessing strong economic and bureaucratic power, played a critical role in the spark of Arab nationalism after 1860. To consolidate their social status and broaden economic and political independence from the central government, some landowning families supported the decentralization and modernization reforms of Ottoman rule and sponsored the anti-Ottoman organization. The Christian, Jewish, and Muslim bourgeoisie, through commercial ties and intellectual interaction with Europe, adopted and fostered the spread of modern ideas in the region (Khoury, 1983). Moreover, from the 1860s onwards, region-wide Christian missionaries and missionary schools—notably the Syrian Protestant College (1863-1920), today's American University of Beirut— significantly contributed to the Arab cultural awakening by supporting the modernization of scientific methodology and Arabic language, and the translation of European masterpieces on various fields into Arabic, such as those of Charles Darwin, Herbert Spencer, and Louis Pasteur. Accordingly, missionary education equipped the students with professional training, European languages, scientific knowledge, secular values, and modern ideologies. In addition, language academies and literary departments began standardizing the Arabic language by introducing technical terminology and vocabulary and publishing periodicals, scientific journals, and magazines to popularize the project (Elshakry, 2014).

As Barnett claims, "Modernity and imperialism provided an impetus for Arabs to discover their common identity and destiny" (1995, p. 503). With no common ground for the exact time or event of the beginning of Arab nationalism, it is agreed that its origin dates to the late Ottoman Empire era when European-imported ideologies had already captured the multinational Empire. While the Ottoman subjects were described with religious identities other than ethnic lines (*millet system*), Muslims, including the Arabic-speaking provinces (*wilayat*), united under the banner of Islam as a part of the great Muslim community *(ummah)* (Goldschmidt & Boum, 2016, p. 140). Under the 400-year of Ottoman rule, Turkish-Arab relations were mutually constitutive in various socioeconomic and cultural fields, from administration to language. Then, the decline of the Empire, triggered by economic and internal weaknesses, despite a wide range of institutional and socioeconomic reforms, ultimately resulted in anti-empire movements and ultimately in its disintegration. The rule of Sultan Abdulhamid II (1876-1909)'s efforts to strengthen ties between Arab subjects and the central administration with a pan-Islamist ideology (the unification of all Muslims under the Sultan's leadership, or *caliphate*) and curb the emergence of secessionist ideals served only until his deposition. The centralization attempts of the Young Turk Movement (1908-1918), later the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), in the Arab provinces fueled the deterioration of mutual relations along with the maladministration, corruption, and the influence of Western ideas (Zeine, 1973).

The harsh centralization policies implemented by the CUP administration in the post-1913 events were accompanied by the ideological movements of Turkish nationalism and pan-Turkism. While the former was an ethnic-based nationalist and irredentist project excluding the pan-Islamist ideology and ethnolinguistic identities of the non-Turkish Ottoman elements, the latter connotes the ideal for the unification of all Turkish-speaking peoples at cultural and political levels (Landau, 1995). In essence, it was a domino effect created by the nationalist and secessionist wave in the Ottoman Balkans of the 19th century. The systemic domination of the Turkish identity and language in the Arab provinces via the Turkification policy generated a sense of resentment that induced the Arab national movement. Feeling marginalized and considering the unpromising future of the Empire, the Arab intelligentsia sought to safeguard Arab national rights, particularly the Arabic language and national 'autonomy,' with weakening loyalty towards the Empire (Onsoy & Atmaca, 2016). The Iraqi newspaper *al-Raqib*, for instance, embodied these

ideals in its article, "*The Parliament, the Arab countries, and Arabic*" (1909) as a reaction to the Turkification attempts of the central administration (Tauber, 1993, p. 172).

2.1.1. Early Arab Nationalists

The starting point of Arabism, however, was not the drive for political separation from the Empire but a cultural manifestation aimed at the revival of the 'glorious' past. The transition from Ottomanism to cultural Arabism was led by the early Arab elite groups, i.e., Muslim scholars (*ulama*), the Christian intelligentsia, and middle-class notables. They assumed the mission of cultivating a sense of unity (*wahda*) among Arabs by reminding the 'greatness' of the Arab past. In parallel to this, the first poem of the Arab national movement, "Arise, O Arabs and Awake!" was released by Ibrahim al-Yaziji (1847-1905) in 1868 (Coury, 2008, p. 724). Similarly, originating in the 1830s—under the Western-educated Arab historians such as al-Tahtawi (Egypt), Abdallah Laroui (Morocco), and Kamal Salibi (Lebanon)—the modern Arab historiography took on a national character, centered on the theme of national identity. The fundamental motivation of these scholars was to contribute to the transformation and urge for collective action. They reinterpreted the past, including the pre-Islamic *al-jahiliyyah* (the age of ignorance), through a large-scale translation of European works and methodology. They also rediscovered the classics of Muslim scholars, like Ibn Khaldun's masterpiece *Muqaddimah* (Introduction). Besides the resurrection of Arabic civilization, local history-making such as the Egyptian, Tunisian, Syrian, and Palestinian began to develop separately (Choueiri, 1989, p. xiv).

Modern Arabic reflects the region's rapidly changing socioeconomic, political, and cultural reality. Through the adaptation and Arabization of modern concepts, the political vocabulary of the Arabic language has undergone a profound reconstruction process since the early 19th century. Arab intellectuals, who now were preoccupied with modern political concepts and ideological thinking, reinterpreted old political texts and revived forgotten words such as '*udw'* for denoting members of the assembly *(diwan)* and '*al-fawda'* for anarchy. For foreign concepts that have no equivalent, they either directly imported or matched them with those that have close meanings e.g., *democratiya* (democracy), *sinat* (senate), *umma* (nation), *sha'b* (people), *hizb* (party), and *al-watan* (the homeland). Alternatively, they altered such terms as *al-dawla* (the state), *jumhuriyya* (republicanism), and *majlis* (parliament). Having been disseminated through Western-style education and Christian missions, the translation of numerous works set up a direct link with the West. Also, the Arabic newspapers, such as *Hadiqat al-Akhbar* (The News

Garden-1858) and *al-Waqa'I al-Misriyya* (The Egyptian Affairs-1828), became valuable sources of information about world affairs (Ayalon, 1987, p. 13).

The leading pan-Arab nationalists, despite their divergent paths, were influential in awakening the nationalist sentiments and ideological orientations of the region. Sati'al-Husri (1880-1968)—an Ottoman-trained intellectual who served as an educator and bureaucrat—was one of the foremost nationalist figures with his numerous writings, professional efforts, and activism in educating the Arab youth. Defining nationality in a secular sense, his nationalist ideology transformed from Ottomanism to Arabism, with no alternative once the Empire was defeated in WWI and dissolved immediately. Then, because of the mandate rule in the region and the Zionist movement in Palestine, al-Husri became the first advocate of pan-Arabism (Cleveland, 1971). Whereas al-Kawakibi (1855-1902), Rashid Rida (1865-1935), and el-Bazzaz (1913-1973) imagined an Arab unity in the light of Islam. The basis of their writings, like Rida's *Civilization of the Arabs* (1900), was the revival of the Arabic civilization that would ultimately bring the Islamic revival. The common point of these pan-Arabists was that the Arab nation holds a unique position among all Muslim societies because Arabs are the best 'knowledgeable' and 'representative' of Islamic principles. It is deeply rooted in the fact that the Arab homeland is the birthplace of Islam, the Prophet Mohammed is one of them, and the Muslims' holy book Qur'an is in their language. In sum, Islam was regarded as "the Arab national religion, which has served to make the Arabs into a cohesive group" (Kedourie, 1962, p. 38).

During the period between 1908 and 1914, political Arabism was voiced under the roof of the Arab/Secret Societies established by administrates, members of parliament, activists, religious notables, and students either within or outside the Empire after the Young Turk Revolution of 1908. Even if there was no common end and methods among them, each society aimed at increasing the awareness of Arabism and protecting and improving the political, economic, and social interests of the Arab population through solidarity. Based on their manifestations, despite some members' disagreements on fundamental issues, these societies can be divided roughly into two categories. The first group—such as the Society of the Arab Revival, the Arab-Ottoman Brotherhood, the Syrian Central Society, and *al-Qahtaniyya*—sought the development of Arabs through reforms without planning secession. The second group—such as the Society of the Arab Association, the Lebanese Revival, the Green Flag Society, the Secret Society of Beirut, *al-Fatat*, the Literary Club, the National Scientific Club, and *al-Ahd* (the Covenant)—advocated the right to autonomy

for the Arabs. In such a context, initially promoted ethnic and cultural Arabism was added by a political one (Tauber, 1993). The First Arab Congress of 1913 in Paris, organized by these Societies and participated by reformist delegates to discuss the problems and national interests of the Arabs, revealed the growing political objectives of the movement. At the end of the Congress, the Societies declared their basic demands as: 'the immediate implementation of reforms, rendering the Arabic language as an official language, securing Arabs' political rights in the central administration, and decentralization of administration and provision of local military services in the Arab provinces' (Gelvin, 1999, pp. 192-195).

2.1.2. The Arab Revolt of 1916

In advance of WWI, coming for diverse reasons, the tension between the CUP leaders and Arab chiefs escalated as the power of the Ottoman declined. In such a context, the political nature of Arabism was put into effect with the Arab Revolt of 1916, led by the Sharif of the Hejaz al-Hussein. The McMahon-Hussein Correspondence of 1915 designates Great Britain's recognition of Arab independence on the condition of rebellion against the Ottomans. Accordingly, an independent Arab state (Arabia) ruled by al-Hussein would be established in an area offered by the British yet conflicting with those claimed by al-Hussein, including Palestine (Friedman, 2018). Interestingly, al-Hussein, formerly loyal to the Ottomans and an advocate of Islamism, was not a nationalist leader but a power-seeking politician over his Arab rivals (al-Idrisi and Ibn-Su'ud). Despite the recurrent negotiations, the political dispute between the CUP and al-Hussein did not reach to compromise and ended with the British proposal endorsed by the Arab societies. The other leader in the revolt, Abdullah (the future king of Transjordan), unlike his father al-Hussein, was inspired by nationalism and in coordination with the societies. To him, it was a national and religious obligation of Arabs to restore the Islamic order (under shari'ah and the caliphate) abandoned by the CUP, as they had a preeminent role in Islamic civilization (Dawn, 1973).

Flags, as a powerful political symbol of nation formation and cultural manifestation, "identify and differentiate one national community from others" (Smith, 2009, p. 51). The shared colors (green, white, black, and red) on most modern Arab states' flags have been adopted from the flag of the Arab Revolt. Despite the particular diverging signs (e.g., the eagle of Saladin, star, crescent, and sword) and historical changes, pan-Arab colors symbolize the Arab political culture and pan-Arabist ideology (Podeh, 2011). Originally, the flag of the Arab Revolt was drawn by the British diplomat Mark Sykes (the architect of the Sykes-Picot Agreement) and used by the Arab nationalists for uniting different tribes

under one banner and to fuel the revolt. Symbolically, each color on the flag holds a meaning related to the heydays of the Arab-Islamic civilization. The white is associated with the Umayyad dynasty (661-750); the black with the Abbasids (775-833), the Prophet Muhammad's period (570-632) and the Battle of Karbala (680); the green with the Fatimid dynasty (909-1171) and Islam; and the red with the struggle and the Hashemites—the tribe of al-Hussein and descendants of the Prophet Muhammed (Marshall, 2016, pp. 105-113).

The origin of such artificiality proves the external involvement in the design of the construction of perceptions and behaviors in the region. No doubt, it is the usual tactic of imperial powers to create favorable conditions or 'indirect rule' that would ultimately serve their ambitions, i.e., failed nation-building process because of arbitrarily drawn borders and indigenous autocratic regimes with incompetent economic structures. Undeniably, the Arab revolt helped not only al-Hussein and the nationalists but also British and French interests enabled by the mandate system under "White Man's Burden" (Easterly, 2006). Thus, it was an elite project employed by British agents to unite 'few' Arab tribes on Britain's side and support the Empire's partition. The Arab Bureau was a key British intelligence agency to direct Arab affairs. The Bureau's activities included propaganda, evoking nationalist ideas, support for Arab cooperation, and supervision of local tribes. The propaganda campaign aimed at denouncing the Ottomans and arousing sympathy for the Allied powers against the Ottomans. The mobilization of Arab opinion was also enabled by the distribution of the Arab Bulletin and the periodicals for monitoring regional developments, accompanied by politicized publications such as *al-Qibla* (the direction of Mecca*), al-Haqiqa* (the Truth), and *al-Muqattam* (Westrate, 1992, pp. 108-112).

Among his colleagues working for the Arab Bureau in Cairo—Lord Kitchener, Lloyd-George, Sir Mark Sykes, Gertrude Bell, Sir Percy Cox, and Henry McMahon—T. E. Lawrence (Lawrence of Arabia), the famous British agent, played a unique role in bringing about the nationalist revolt by inspiring Arab politicians. Having gained their trust thanks to his advanced knowledge of Arab culture, Arabic language, and even local dialects, Lawrence organized and educated the nationalist Arabs politically with material and emotional help while negotiating with London on their demands. He also contributed to drawing nation-state borders in the contemporary Middle East, which installed governments would lead. He offered, for instance, to take ethnic and sectarian lines as the basis for creating the national boundaries of the new political entities alongside the common heritage holding the native population together (Wilson, 1990, pp. 185-186).

The other remarkable British intelligence officer was Gertrude Bell, an explorer, archeologist, and writer. Traveling the Arab world from Jerusalem to Iraq and speaking Arabic, Bell gathered information and wrote about Arab tribes. Already having sympathy for Arab culture and affairs, she won the respect of Arabs, who called her *al-Khatun* ("The Lady") and the "Queen of the Desert." As a British spy, she was responsible for campaigning for an Arab uprising against the Ottomans. Bell established strong connections with Arab princes, especially King Faisal of Iraq, and influential local leaders thanks to her role and image in the region. To initiate the revolt, Bell organized significant negotiations between the British officers and Arab nationalist groups over their desires for independence and demands regarding the borders of future Arab states. Allying and working closely with Lawrence and Cox, the Chief Political Officer of Britain in Mesopotamia, Bell became the key figure in organizing the Arab revolt and drawing lines of the post-WWI Middle East, particularly modern Iraq (Wallach, 2005).

Given the tremendous impact of the urban elites and bureaucratic class—which had a key role in the production and dissemination of knowledge, such as the publication of local newspapers, besides the political and economic opportunities—in the promotion of nationalist ideology and mobilization of the people from above, the spread of Arab nationalist tendency in the region bears the supportive information for the constructivist understanding of national origins and the 'invention of tradition' thesis. The discursive practices—the spread of national narratives through slogans, symbols, ceremonies, demonstrations, publications, and public ceremonies such as the wave of the Arab flag and the celebration of martyrs—were frequently used by different nationalist communities in post-WWI Syria. They were to represent the message of belongingness to a unique national community as in an anthem instructed to the schoolchildren, "We are the youth of *al-Jazira* (the peninsula)/We are youths of the country/We inherited an ancient glory/From a time that has returned" (Gelvin, 1999, p. 233).

2.2. ANTI-WESTERNISM IN THE ARAB WORLD

Although it was not fundamentally nationalist-motivated, at least for al-Hussein, the revolt set a new political stage for Arabism soon after realizing the incompatibility between Western commitments and realities. The Anglo-French plan (The Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916) and the British pledge (The Balfour Declaration of 1917) delayed the self-determination dreams of the Arabs. The former, a secret agreement uncovered by the Russian Bolsheviks, provides for the division of the Ottoman Empire into French and

British zones of influence, called A and B, covering the "promised" lands of the Arab Kingdom to al-Hussein. The latter explains the decision of the British government to allow the Jewish people to establish a national homeland in the Palestinian lands, the Arab-populated province of the Ottoman Empire with vague borders (Schneer, 2010). The European 'deception,' domination, and vital support for the Jewish cause against Arabs, though not the starting point, fueled the anti-Westernism—a reactionary and nationalist sentiment towards the imperial and colonial policies of the Western world in the developing countries—in the Arab world (Tolan, Veinstein, & Laurens, 2013).

2.2.1. Western Colonialism and Arab Nationalist Reactions

As decided at the San Remo conference of 1920 and approved by the League of Nations, the former Ottoman provinces in the Arab world came under French (Syria and Lebanon) and British (Iraq, Egypt, and Palestine) mandate rule or protectorate. Accordingly, these newly created states would be governed by their mandate power for an undefined term on the ground of their "inability" to stand by themselves. The central problem with these arbitrarily formed administrations was a potential lack of social cohesion due to their ethnic and religious divisions. Together, creating the modern Middle East and its present-day problems constituted a powerful catalyst for the consolidation of pan-Arab nationalism and the enhancement of the anti-Western sentiments in the region (Fieldhouse, 2006).

In fact, the anti-Western sentiment was not new but had its roots in the onset of European expansionism towards the region, i.e., France's invasion of Egypt in 1798 and Tunisia in 1830. For example, the Urabi Revolution (1882), led by Colonel Ahmad Urabi, took place against Muhammad Ali and British imperialism in Egypt (1882-1922). Despite its failure, the revolution, especially its proto-nationalist slogan, "Egypt for the Egyptians," greatly impacted Egyptian nationalism. In addition, it was the first time the Arab press conducted a national mission by mobilizing the different sections of Egyptian society, from soldiers to students (Reid, 1998). Yet, the post-war Middle East was ideologically surrounded by anti-colonialism, a type of nationalism aimed at liberation from foreign rule. For instance, Syria was experiencing the region's largest and longest anti-colonial uprising, the Great Syrian Revolt of 1925, commanded by Sultan al-Atrash (a Druze and nationalist leader). Unifying the ethnically, linguistically, and religiously heterogeneous Syrian society for a shared goal was also crucial in forming the Syrian national identity, directed by the diverse urban elite. Ultimately, the armed uprising encouraged future anti-colonial upheavals and national politics in the region (Provence, 2005).

A legacy of the Western mandate rule is one of the world's most protracted and unresolved communal conflicts between the Palestinian and Jewish peoples. Palestine has become home to two nationalist ideologies claiming the same territory: Zionism (which seeks the establishment of a Jewish political entity in the Palestinian lands) and the Palestinian-Arab identity. Unsurprisingly, the Zionist invasion resulted in the birth of the Palestinian national liberation movement (Gorny, 1987). A continued influx of Jewish emigrants (*aliyah*) into the Palestinian territories, the domination of Jewish capital in economic life, and the seizure of their property either by force or by consent led to the socioeconomic collapse of the Arab population. Urban intellectuals had a prominent role in raising awareness of this situation and in the mobilization against the Zionist-imperialist alliance, the largest of which occurred in the 1936-1939 period. Poetry was a popular weapon to call for rebellion and criticize indifferent Arab regimes, as phrased in Abu Salma's lines, "Liberate the homeland from the kings, liberate it from the puppets / We are the ones who will protect the homeland and heal its wounds" (Kanafani, 1972, p. 31).

After a failure in 1925, the Syrian political, social, and economic life entered a period of transition from armed struggle to revolutionary politics, prompted by popular discontent and a split in the nationalist leadership. At the beginning of the Syrian liberation struggle (1927-1936), the French mandate granted several concessions, including a constitution and a parliament. After that, the inability of the French to appease the demands for full autonomy, often in the form of general strikes organized by the National Bloc party, and the socioeconomic damages of the Great Depression (1929) and WWII (1939-1945) in France brought complete independence in 1945 (Khoury, 1987). At this time, the Iraqi Revolt of 1920 spanned much of the country. as an armed insurrection against the San Remo decisions. Anti-British sentiment brought together nationalists with different motives, including the Shia and Sunni clerics and urban and tribal leaders (*sheiks*).

Nevertheless, Iraq came under the indirect control of the British with the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of 1922 which granted various concessions to the British, particularly in foreign affairs and Iraqi oil fields. To maximize its interests, Britain also established Western-style state institutions-a monarchy under King Faisal I, a constitution, and a parliament-and paved the way for modern Iraq's disintegrating sociopolitical structure, the Kurdish question, and the sectarian divide between the Shia and Sunni groups. The Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of 1930 brought Iraqi independence in 1932 but further secured the British military presence in the country (Sluglett, 2007, p. 211).

From 1882, Egypt became a British-dominated territory that provided a safe passage to India and produced raw materials for British industry. The Egyptian Revolution of 1919, which involved all levels of society, marked the revival of Egyptian nationalism and brought independence from the British protectorate in 1922. In neither country, despite de jure independence, British domination persisted through political, economic, and military ties, such as the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of 1936 that allowed Britain to station its forces along the Suez Canal. Thus, to achieve complete independence, they had to wait until the post-war period (Goldschmidt & Boum, 2016). The dependency relationship between Britain and Arab countries led to the climax of Arab nationalism in the post-1945 period. Britain's attempt to maintain its great power status and expand its control over regional politics was unacceptable to the newly independent Arab states. Then, the Palestinian crisis accelerated the anti-British sentiments among the Arabs, who were tired of foreign exploitation and pursuing socioeconomic and political development. The attitude of anti-alien rule in Egypt was manifested in 1945 with the demands for the British withdrawal and the Egyptian takeover of full sovereignty over the Canal, which was crucial for oil flow and the British economy (Louis, 1984). Soon, the anti-colonialist struggle peaked with the Suez Victory, allowed the incorporation of nationalism with socialist ideology, and the region came under the influence of pan-Arab thought.

2.3. ARAB SOCIALISM AND NASSERISM

In its socialist phase, when Arab nationalism took on a fundamentally different character, Nasser-led Arab socialism, or social Arabism, turned out to be the driving force behind the revolutions. Three countries, Egypt, Iraq, and Syria, largely determined the course of Arab politics and became the strongholds of Arab socialism. Yet, Arab socialism did not develop identically throughout the region and gradually lost its credibility among the masses.

The history of the Arab-Israeli conflict was exacerbated by the 1937 Report of the British Peel Commission and the 1947 United Nations (UN) Partition Plan (Resolution 181), which envisioned the partition of Palestine into three entities, i.e., an Arab state, a Jewish state, and an internationalized Jerusalem. At the immediate end of the British Mandate for Palestine on May 14, 1948, and the proclamation of the State of Israel on the same day, the first Arab-Jewish war broke out between the Zionist forces and four Arab countries (Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, and Lebanon). The Jewish victory displaced more than 700,000 Palestinians and created the refugee issue in the region and the Palestinian diaspora, which they mourn as *al-Nakba* (the catastrophe). It also sparked local unrest and Arab resistance (Ovendale,

2004). The British refusal to withdraw from the Canal zone, Egypt's receipt of arms from Czechoslovakia in 1953, and the blockade of the Strait of Tiran to Israel, which felt threatened, triggered the Suez Crisis of 1956. Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser responded to the United States (The US) and British refusal to finance Egypt's Aswan High Dam on the Nile by nationalizing the Suez Canal in July 1956 to finance the building of the dam. As Egypt strengthened its control over the Canal, the second Arab-Israeli War erupted immediately, when Israel, Britain, and France attacked Egypt to overthrow Nasser. The war ended with a cease-fire calling for the French and British withdrawal from the Canal, which the US insisted on for fear of a Soviet-Arab rapprochement (Varble, 2003).

Meanwhile, pan-Arab adherents in the region, despite the loose inter-Arab cooperation, institutionalized the quest for Arab unity with the creation of the Arab League (*al-Jamai'a al-Arabiyah*) in March 1945. As a regional organization, the league was to discuss and find solutions to common problems, notably the Palestinian issue. Other objectives were safeguarding its members' national interests and independence and internationally championing the Arab cause. In the Treaty of Joint Defense and Economic Cooperation (1950), members pledged to cooperate against external aggression and refrain from using force against each other (Toffolo, 2008, pp. 18-24). The Convention for Facilitating Trade and Regulating Transit (1953) was drafted to promote economic integration between members by reducing or abolishing tariffs on exchanged goods. The League members met at the Khartoum Arab Summit in 1967 to formulate a standard policy regarding the Palestinian issue. The participants adopted the Khartoum Resolutions that call to support the 'Palestinians' legitimate rights and reject the political entity of Israel with the principles of "No peace with Israel, no recognition of Israel, no negotiations with it," known commonly as the "Three Nos" (The Khartoum Resolutions, 1967).

2.3.1. The Appeal of Socialism and the Image of Nasser

Communism and socialism have been on the Arab political scene since the late 19th century as both reconciled with nationalism on the ground of anti-imperialist discourse. They attracted people with a revolutionary (*thawri*) drive as the number of working-class and social class divisions in the colonial context increased. However, communism, unlike socialism, has not been popular among Arab peoples due to its contradiction with certain Islamic doctrines. Influenced by the Soviet Revolution of 1917, many socialist or communist parties were founded throughout the region, such as the Egyptian Socialist Party (1921), the Turkish (1920), Syrian-Lebanese (1924), and Iraqi (1934) Communist

Parties, and the Tudeh/Masses Party of Iran (1941). While some came to power after independence, others were short-lived due to unfavorable conditions.

Nonetheless, they opened the way for the ever-lasting socialist thought that influenced social movements in the region, including the Arab Spring (Feliu, Izquierdo-Brichs, & Serra, 2019). Middle East became one of the battlegrounds of the Cold War rivalry between the US and the Soviets Union, which supported the opposite parties in the Arab-Israeli conflict. In addition to ideological affinity, their rapprochement was also pragmatic. While the Arab world was looking for political and military support against the capitalist bloc, the Soviets Union sought to find new 'clients' for the communist bloc through close ties resulting from financial and military aid (Laqueur, 2016, pp. 5-13).

The Free Officers, led by Colonel Gamal Abdel Nasser, carried out the Egyptian Revolution of 1952 to overthrow the pro-British King Farouk with the slogan "Freedom, Socialism and Unity." The revolution (*thawra*)—aimed at complete independence, ending the 'feudal' system, establishing democracy and a national army, and providing social justice—meant victory over imperialism and capitalist exploitation. After the triumph in Suez, the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC) attempted to nationalize the system according to socialist planning covered by the Constitution of 1956 and formed the socialist party, the Arab Socialist Union (1962). It marked the starting point for socialist Arab regimes in the rest of the region. As a nationalized form of socialist ideology, Arab socialism does not take its basis from Marxism but seeks to incorporate socialist ideas with Islamic principles, which include private property. Arab socialist thought developed based on common concerns between Islamic doctrines and socialism, e.g., socioeconomic emancipation, struggle against tyranny, equality of opportunity, fair redistribution of wealth, and social progress. In short, the core idea of Arab socialism was to achieve freedom, unity, and progress through the nationalization of resources in the hands of foreigners (Said & Ahmed, 1972, p. 93).

Nasser, the leading figure of pan-Arabism, has dramatically impacted Arab politics in the last century. From his early youth, Nasser committed himself to the independence of the Arab world. For him, "The Arabs are one nation, and what happens in any Arab country will affect all the other Arab countries," thus, requiring them to act in solidarity for collective interests (SawtakTv, 2010). After the British withdrawal, he became a national hero of Arab nationalism and the modern Saladin for the Arabs. He then implemented his

pan-Arab ideal, the establishment of the United Arab Republic (UAR) between Egypt and Syria (1958). However, the political rift in the Union led to the secession of Syria in 1961. A skilled orator, he delivered hundreds of speeches to the masses to connect directly with and call them to fight. In doing so, his enthusiastic messages raised the hope of restoring the dignity and pride of the Arabs. To balance the Western alliance and Israel, Nasser turned to the Soviets Union, as in other countries undergoing decolonization. As an alternative to Western arms, he concluded the Czech-Egyptian Arms Deal of 1955. He strongly opposed the Baghdad Pact (1955) and the Eisenhower Doctrine (1957). To him, the former was a foreign project to divide Arab unity, while the latter would merely replace Britain with the US, a new threat to Arab interests (Aburish, 2004, p. 127).

More importantly, Nasser sponsored several revolutionary movements, like the Algerian independence movement (1954-1962) against the French annexation of the country by supplying weapons to the Algerian National Liberation Front (FLN). He was one of the pioneer leaders of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), where he called the developing countries to resist the Cold War blocks, the capitalist and communist. At the 1955 Bandung Conference, the first international meeting of the developing countries to declare their independence, he voiced the Arab cause and its place in the nonaligned world (Luthi, 2020). In Nasser's view, the revolutionary process is essential and inevitable because "Every nation on earth undergoes two revolutions," political and social, to achieve self-government free of foreign occupation and classless society (1963, p. 24). Immediately, the Egyptian experience became a model for other countries that wanted to end their semi-independent status and long years of subjection. Not coincidentally, the military coup d'états and revolutions carried out by pro-Nasser Officers or Arab Socialists in Iraq (The 14th of July Revolution of 1958), Yemen (1962), Algeria (1965), and Syria (1966) had similar motivations and revolutionary strategies (Luttwak, 2016). Deeply impressed and supported by Nasser, Colonel Muammar al-Qaddafi, a pan-Arabist and Islamic socialist, followed the same path in his Revolution of 1969 (al-Fateh Revolution) and the foundation of Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya (Republic) (Harris, 1986). In his Green Book (2016), al-Qaddafi described socialism and nationalism as compatible with religion, inseparable forces that emerged in society, and the only way for national unity and survival.

As for the Arab socialist revolution, secular worldview, and pan-Arab movement, Ba'athism (Resurrection or Renaissance of the Arab Nation) had far-reaching effects on Arab politics. The Ba'athist motto, "One Arab Nation with an Eternal Mission," codified

and guided the pan-Arab thought and agenda for decades (Karsh & Rautsi, 2003, p. 13). Formed as the Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party by the Syrian nationalist politicians Michel Aflaq and Salah al-Din al-Bitar in 1947, it developed separately in the Syrian and Iraqi contexts. While the Iraqi Ba'ath deposed the Hashemite monarchy, the Nasserists and pro-unionist Syrian Ba'ath came to power by overthrowing the separationists in the coup of 1963 (The Revolution of March 8). Under the banner of the Arab Revolt of 1916, the Ba'athist ideology compromised all elements of the pan-Arabist ideal. In collaboration with Nasser, early Ba'athists looked for decolonization, free Palestine, and the progress of the 'one' Arab nation through a political, economic, and cultural revolution by enlightened Arab youth. According to the Ideological Report of Ba'ath (*Muntalaqat*), declared in the Sixth Pan-Arab Congress of 1963, the Arabs had to fight the colonial legacy suppressing Arab sovereignty. With a partial reference to Islam, socialism and Arab nationalism were defined as the theoretical guide for domestic and external relations of the Arabs. Because only nationalization and the socialist transformation would end the class struggle and build a 'revolutionary democracy (Roberts, 2013, pp. 62-75). Likewise, Aflaq's writings and speeches stressed the role of the masses and the necessity of the revolutionary struggle to achieve liberty from imperialism and Zionists and establish Arab unity and renaissance within a nonfragmented 'homeland' (Michel Aflaq: Choice of Texts, 2016).

Nasser's legacy was not limited to political achievements but also extended to the ideological dimension. From the 1950s to the late 1960s, Nasserism (*al-Nasiriyya*) developed as a national movement throughout the Arab world based on Nasser's charismatic leadership and ideological vision of anti-imperialism, pan-Arabism, anti-Zionism, and Arab socialism. Due to the heroic image of Nasser, Nasserism and Arab socialism became almost synonymous with Arab nationalism. Its appeal to the masses rested heavily on Nasser's policy of consolidating political independence while achieving socioeconomic development and national integration by abolishing class distinctions. The transformation of Egyptian society under Nasser failed in democratization but raised hopes for the modernization of sociopolitical structures in underdeveloped Arab society. In addition to politics, he also influenced the reorientation of general culture through popular culture, especially music, poetry, and the performing arts. During his tenure, the state apparatus, such as the Higher Council of Arts, was used to increase Egyptian loyalty. Egyptian literature, especially patriotic songs and poetry, played a central role in conveying Nasserist ideology and forming collective memory (Podeh & Winckler, 2004).

During these ten years, more than a thousand patriotic songs and national anthems were recorded throughout the region, some of which Nasser promoted by himself. These songs—e.g., Man of Glory, Bells of Freedom, Orchard of Socialism, Wake Up Arab, Hand in Hand, March of Arabism, New Revival, Salute to Algeria, and Oath of Revenge)— became the voice of the Egyptian revolution, decolonization of the Arab world, the admiration for Nasser, and the dream of Arab unity ("Revolution Songs," n.d.). The mass media connected the geographically divided Arab nation and were also influential in aligning Arab identity and mobilizing the masses. The nationalized Egyptian press was busy consolidating Nasser's power and transmitting the Nasserist ideology to all levels of society. The newspapers, such as al-*Muharrir* (The Liberator), *al-Ishtiraki* (The Socialist), *al-Gumhuriyya* (The Republic), and *al-Ahram* (The Pyramids), were the mouthpieces of Arab socialism (Dabous, 1993). The radio station "Voice of the Arabs" ("*Sawt al-Arab*") was established in 1952 and utilized as a political tool by Nasser to fuel revolutionary movements across the region and promote Arab unity. Nasser provided not only technical assistance for the radio broadcasts but also popularized neoclassical Arabic to overcome dialectal differences (colloquial Arabic) among Arab listeners. The radio broadcasted daily news, live speeches, interviews by Nasser and his colleagues, and nationalist songs. Most importantly, a propaganda war was waged against the enemy and indifferent Arab leaders to foreign rule, while Egyptian achievements were frequently praised (Boyd, 1975).

Upon the loss of Palestine, the Palestinian national resistance underwent a significant transformation towards a socialist path with armed resistance groups, which had ideological and organizational ties with socialist groups, such as the Arab Nationalist Movement (ANM) and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP). Aside from taking the socialist system as a political model, they received financial, military, and logistic support from the Soviets Union and China, often with Nasser's intermediary. The most influential group, the Palestinian National Liberation Movement/al-Fatah (1958), originated in refugee camps under the political leadership of Yasser al-Arafat. It became a branch of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) established in 1964 with rightist and leftist factions. Al-Fatah's periodical, *Filastinuna* (Our Palestine), and the PLO radio strongly supported Arab unity and the Revolutionary liberation struggle. Increasingly, the military wing of al-Fatah, influenced by the Algerian FLN, engaged in guerrilla attacks against the Zionist forces (Amos, 1980). The mottos "Revolution until victory" and "Palestine is Arab!" exemplify the ideological nature of the PLO and Palestinian national

resistance at that time. In this line, Arafat rejected the advice for a 'peaceful' solution as it was a "life-and-death struggle." A military strategy was the only way to destroy Israel, which was leaving no room for the Palestinians to think otherwise. Following the Battle of Karameh (Dignity) in 1968, in which al-Fatah resisted the Israeli attack on the PLO refugee camps, Arafat became the symbol of Palestinian resistance (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 91).

2.3.2. Arab Cultural Resistance

Edward Said notes, "No identity can ever exist by itself and without an array of opposites, negatives, oppositions, hence, always requires the other" (1994, p. 52). To maintain its influence, an imperialist culture imagines and imposes itself (us) as supreme and innocent, whereas the imperialized community (them) is inferior and marginalized, which he defines as a ''cultural war'' (p. 301). Likewise, a nation under foreign rule tends to form and develop its 'national identity' in direct opposition to the imperial culture (Said, 1994). Consistently, 'resistance literature' in the world appeared as a unique aspect of the decolonization and deconstruction period of post-1945. It has significantly contributed to the thinking and acting in the developing world and redefining national culture, often against the Western narrative of the Third World and cultural imperialism. Cultural resistance—in forms of political discourse, education, the media, propaganda, literature, and even arts that are as valuable as armed resistance—served in the training and mobilization of society for liberation. In this way, in Barbara Harlow's words, the language has become "an arena of struggle in redefining the protagonist's identity, challenging the antagonist, and determining the strategy of the resistance" (1987, p. 55).

As part of the independence struggles and decolonization process, the Arab world also underwent profound 'cultural resistance' alongside military mobilization. The natural tendency of Arab poets throughout the period was to contribute to constructing an Arab political identity that would aspire to national resistance. Anti-colonialism became the central theme of Arab literature, particularly in many Arabic odes (*qasidahs*). In the interwar period, the Arab cultural resistance was inspired by the heroic myth of Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi/Saladin, turned against the modern 'crusades,' i.e., Western imperialism and Zionism, and became a zone of national upheavals (Wien, 2017, p. 41). The leading poets of the resistance and anti-colonial discourse addressed the national struggle for liberation, the overthrow of pro-Western regimes, and the prospects of a free state. One of them, the Egyptian Ahmed Shawqi (1868-1932), in his *"A Farewell to Lord Cromer"*—as opposed to the imperialist discourse of Lord Cromer, the British agent and consul

general in Egypt—equated Egypt's colonial experience under the British to the rule of Pharaoh [4] that was doomed to collapse. He also equated the resistance to the imperialists with the conflict between Islam and infidelity. Likewise, the Iraqi intellectual Abd al-Wahhab al-Bayati (1926-1999) reacted against British domination and the pro-Western regimes in the post-mandate period. In exile, he expressed his revolutionary ideas and hoped for genuine liberation with the lines "A great people awaken/Destroying its chains" (Kadhim, 2004, pp. 2, 201). In a popular sense, one of the most chanted slogans by Arabs dreaming of liberty in the post-1945 period was "Hold your head up, No more slavery!" in line with Nasser's words, "No one will rule over us!" (Al Jazeera English, 2022).

A striking feature of this period was the nationalists' reliance on the "cultural memory" based on historical figures, places, victories, and even defeats, and the central theme used in many fields, from literature to architecture. In the construction of nationalist feelings, using historical figures, national heroes, myths, and glorious periods by nationalists is a fundamental legitimating way for cultural revival and the creation of political identities. Saladin, the liberator of the holy site al-Quds (Jerusalem) from the Crusaders in 1187, was revived as the hero in the Arab nationalist narratives to raise a sense of national pride with historical consciousness. Many Arab poets, e.g., Ahmed Shawqi, Farah Antun, and Nagib Sulaiman Haddad, portrayed Saladin as a liberation symbol and model of the unification of Arab lands, particularly against Zionism. Al-Andalus, the Arab-ruled Iberian Peninsula (711-1492), was portrayed in a series of publications as the representative of the greatness of the Arab-Muslim civilization and its strive with the West (Wien, 2017, pp. 35-39).

From 1948 onwards, the expansion of Israel countered the rise of Arab cultural resistance. Like many Palestinian poets and authors of national resistance (*muqawamah*), Mahmoud Darwish (1941-2008) wrote mainly about the Arab-Jewish issue and the Palestinian identity, *al-Nakba*, and statelessness. In his iconic poem, Identity Card (1963), Darwish expressed his belonging and mourning of the 'lost homeland' with the lines "Write down/I am an Arab… Beware, Beware of my hunger and my anger" (Cohen-Mor, 2019, p. 48). Influenced by Marxist ideology, Ghassan Kanafani (1936-1972), a journalist and member of the PFLP, advocated a revolutionary way for the success of the Palestinian liberation movement. He interpreted the Palestinian resistance as "fighting for justice, dignity,

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[4] A title for the ancient King (s) of modern Egypt. Called *Fir'awn* in Arabic, the Pharaoh is known for his cruelty against the Prophet Moses and his followers and, thus, portrayed as the symbol of tyranny and destined for Hell in Islamic literature as he drowned in the Red Sea while chasing them to destroy.

respect, and human rights'' within the anti-colonial struggle around the world ("Ghassan Kanafani," 2020). Believing in the transformative power of literature in society, he founded several newspapers and magazines, like *al-Hadaf* (The Goal), and produced different forms of writings to serve the struggle of his people (Kilpatrick, 1999).

While the mass media constituted the principal vehicle to bind Arab audiences, musicians gained the opportunity to influence Arab social and cultural life during the 1950s and 1960s. Umm Kulthum (1898-1975), the famous Egyptian singer and one of the greatest Arab artists, became a symbolic voice of pan-Arab nationalism and cultural resistance. Living under British influence, she grew up in a musical context with the ideals of complete Egyptian independence, impressing her musical career. Having powerful connections with political and cultural elites, notably Nasser, Kulthum greatly influenced the consolidation of Egypt's national identity with her not only musical performance but also personality dedicated to the national cause so that she turned out to be the "Voice of Egypt" (Danielson, 1997). After 1952, her concerts and hundreds of songs broadcast by *Sawt al-Arab,* such as *Enta Omri* (You are My Life) and *Amal Hayaty* (Hope of My Life), became an instrument for pan-Arab propaganda and Arab cultural unity. Common themes in her songs were to promote Arab unity and celebrate the Egyptian victories against the British and French. Through tens of politically significant patriotic songs, such as *Habib al-Sha'b* (the People's Beloved), she helped enhance Nasser's image among the millions of Arabic-speaking listeners. In addition, she motivated Arab soldiers to fight Israeli forces, for instance, with *Allah Ma'ak* (God is with You) during the Six Days War of 1967 (Lohman, 2010, p. 22):

> *"Army of Arabness, brave one, God is with you!*
> *There is none more great, magnificent, or brave.*
> *The tragedy of Palestine drives you to the borders,*
> *Its pains are gunpowder in your gun."*

However, following the defeat, Nasser's unitary nationalist ideology lost its charm as the conditions that enabled the wide acceptance disappeared. Furthermore, the war opened a new phase in Arab political thought, profoundly affecting all aspects of Arab society.

2.4. THE DECLINE OF PAN-ARABISM

In its latest stage, pan-Arab ideology gradually lost its appeal and was replaced by state nationalism and the aspirations for an "Islamic Awakening" for overlapping reasons. A significant reason for the ideology's decline was the achievement of independence, the common denominator of Arab states. In 1971, no Arab land, except for Palestine, was

under occupation or direct foreign rule. From that point on, Arab crises have primarily stemmed from the legacy of the imperial era and internal dynamics, at least until the US invasion of the Arab territories. At that point, this chapter briefly analyses the pan-Arabic decline and emergence of the new regional system defined by sub-regional alliances.

2.4.1. The Loss of the Egyptian Leadership

The defeat of Arab forces in the 1967 Six-Day War against Israel was the turning point for the decline of Nasser's popularity, though not immediate, and of Arab socialism. The war broke out as a preemptive strike by Israeli forces against the forces of Egypt, Syria, Iraq, and Jordan, which were unprepared and misguided by the Soviets Union's intelligence. In a swift victory, Israel increased its territory threefold, capturing the Sinai Peninsula from Egypt, the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) from Jordan, the Gaza Strip from Palestine, and the Golan Heights from Syria (Oren, 2002). The UN Security Council Resolution 242 called for "a ceasefire, the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the occupied territories, and respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the warring parties" (UN, n.d.). However, the situation remained deadlocked because of Israel's refusal. As a long-term consequence, in addition to high military casualties and large numbers of Palestinian and Syrian internally displaced persons (IDPs), the war profoundly influenced the Palestinian resistance, which developed into a militant and separate path (Oren, 2002).

Three years after Nasser's death, under Nasser's vice president and successor, Anwar Sadat, Syria and Egypt entered the last large-scale Arab-Israeli conflict, the Yom Kippur War of 1973. In addition to Palestinian solidarity, the two nationalist allies felt that a military victory was necessary to restore territorial boundaries and Arab confidence and to compensate for the losses of 1967 (Rabinovich, 2004). Despite the help of advanced Soviet weapons for Egypt and Syria to attack Israeli forces, the oil embargo, which was put by OAPEC (Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries) on Western countries to reduce their support for Israel, brought about the ceasefire. It was the first time the Arabs used oil as a political weapon against Israel and its oil-dependent European supporters. The decline in oil supplies to the West and the rise in oil prices provided a strong incentive for the US and Soviets Union, on the brink of superpower confrontation, to mediate and push for a peace settlement between the warring parties (Siniver, 2013, pp. 1-4).

Negotiations mediated by American President Jimmy Carter between Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin and Egyptian President Anwar Sadat ended with the Camp

David Accords of 1978 ("the Framework for Peace in the Middle East"). Concluding the Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty the following year, Egypt became the first Arab country to recognize Israel for the return of its territories captured in 1967 (the principle of territory for peace). Contrary to the parties' claims, the bilateral agreement did not offer a concrete solution for the Palestinian question, which was the central concern of the negotiations, despite the promise of recognizing the legitimate rights of the Palestinian within five years. Unsurprisingly, it not only increased the US leverage in the Middle East but irrevocably exacerbated the problem by giving impetus to uncompromising Israeli aggression, as evidenced by the continued Israeli occupation of the West Bank and invasion of Lebanon in 1982 and ever-expanding illegal settlements (Quandt, 2016). A more general result of Camp David was the disruption of inter-Arab relations and the decline of the idea of pan-Arabism lacking Egyptian leadership. The disappointment with Egypt's disinterest in the Arab cause accelerated the disruption of Arab unity. Sadat's distance from the Palestinian cause and Arab socialism isolated Egypt from Arab affairs and led to his assassination by an extremist in 1981. The assassination marked the rise of Islamism and made Egypt even more authoritarian under the military regime of Hosni Mubarak (Ajami, 1992).

2.4.2. The Crisis of Arab Socialism

The decline of Soviet-Arab relations after 1973 indirectly contributed to the crisis of Arab socialism and pan-Arabism. Although the Soviets Union continued to support the Arab cause and Palestinian rights on the international stage and provided military and financial aid to its Arab allies, Egypt's rapprochement with the Western powers for economic interests changed Moscow's policy toward Egypt as the US blocked their realignment through multiple means. On the Egyptian side, Soviet interference in its internal affairs and changing attitudes towards the region reduced the attractiveness of Moscow's partnership. Increasingly, without Soviet aid and trade relations, it became difficult for socialist governments to manage socioeconomic problems, eventually pushing some of them to ally with the US for increased economic and military aid. Meantime, others (Libya, the Ba'athist Iraq and Syria, the PLO, and South Yemen) strengthened their multiple ties with Moscow based on joint opposition against the US and its regional allies. Upon this, the region polarized into two camps with a growing inter-state competition (Ismael, 2005).

The failure of the secular and leftist regimes to create peace and social prosperity has led to widespread frustration in many ways. State-directed economic policies initially brought rapid economic growth, but the population boom, insufficient industrialization, low

employment opportunities, and high military purchases, compared to low social spending, added by increasing foreign debt, led to economic stagnation. Another challenge for these regimes was to reduce tensions within the country, the legacy of artificially created borders, and to build a stable social and political order through an elite-oriented ideology. While the revolutionary way brought independence, it also strengthened the privileged position of the military in politics and the economy. Most of them, particularly the so-called Ba'athists Abd al-Karim Qassem, Hafez al-Assad, and Saddam al-Hussein, had a legitimacy crisis because of authoritarian tendencies and using brutal means to suppress social unrest. The primary reason for the socialist backlash was the discontent of religious elements with the state-imposed 'secularization.' The Islamic perspective claimed to solve the problems and emerged as the successor to Arab socialism (Humphreys, 1999). A well-known example of the politicization of religious tradition with rigid secularization and anti-religious reforms was under Habib Bourguiba of Tunisia (1955-1987), giving rise to the Islamist opposition in the country. In post-1956 Tunisia, Arab-Islamic identity, previously used for political mobilization against the French, was suppressed through a series of practices, such as the political exclusion of Islamist groups, the headscarf ban, and intolerance of the Islamic rituals, like fasting in Ramadan (McCarthy, 2014).

2.4.3. The New Trends: State Nationalism and Regionalism

While dealing with internal challenges, the Arab countries have become increasingly engaged in bilateral disputes and rivalries in the 1950s-1960s period. The regional fragmentation was an extension of the debate between pan-Arabism (*qawmiyya*) and state/local nationalism (*wataniyya*), shaped by foreign rule and modernity, which dates to the emergence of the Arab national movement. During this period, the development of Arab national consciousness in the local contexts, particularly in Egypt and Syria, generated a trend of local nationalist movements alongside the pan-Arab ideals. Although reconcilable and having similar objectives, the two concepts gradually created a division within the movement (Nafaa, 1987). For instance, the intellectual and theoretical debate between Sati' al-Husri, the pioneer of pan-Arabism, and local nationalist thinkers centered on the notion and elements of nationality. In his various writings, al-Husri criticized the definition of the national identity by local nationalists, especially the Syrian-Lebanese and Egyptian nationalists, such as Mustafa Kamil, Taha Hussein, and Antoun Saadeh. Unlike his pan-national understanding—which defines the Arab nation with a common language, culture, or religion without confining it to geographical borders—local nationalists

interpreted it as a group of people living on a territory defined with national borders, not necessarily homogeneous but sharing patriotic sentiments (Tibi, 1997).

To some extent, the ideological similarity was substantial in aligning regional countries with the two great powers, the US and the Soviets Union, i.e., anti-imperialism versus anti-communism. Likewise, the inter-Arab alliances before 1967 were shaped by ideological solidarity based on shared cultural traits and anti-imperialist and Zionist sentiments. In post-1967, ideology played a complex role, both divisive and unifying, in inter-Arab politics due to the changing power relations and national interests. The disputes between the revolutionary and pan-Arabist republics and conservative monarchies led to the formation of alliances under the shadow of superpowers' rivalry (Walt, 1990).

More significantly, the Palestinian cause has no longer been a major unifying factor in inter-Arab politics. Following the defeat in 1967, the struggle for the liberation of Palestine has remained chiefly in discourse and has been a helpful instrument for Arab regimes to hold political legitimacy. Based on many considerations about national security, political, and socioeconomic areas—despite stressing the elimination of differences among each other and calling for solidarity in the struggle against Israel at the Khartoum Summit (The Khartoum Resolutions, 1967)—Arab regimes increasingly followed divergent paths regarding the issue. Having been left alone against the Zionists, the Palestinian cause has set a separate way with a Palestinian-Arab identity (Kazziha, 2015). Upon the Israeli occupation of the West Bank, the Palestinian resistance increased its presence in Jordan and pawed the way for the deterioration of the Jordanian-Palestinian ties. The Jordanian regime felt threatened by the involvement of PLO in national politics, e.g., assassination attempts on King Hussein and guerilla attacks of the Palestinian *fedayeen* (self-sacrifices) from the Jordan-based refugee camps on Israel, which responded with counter-attacks. The conflicts between the PLO and Jordanian forces brought about the deportation of the PLO from the country and thousands of deaths, known as the Black September of 1970. Marking a crisis for Arab solidarity on the Palestinian issue, the incident also led to the consolidation of Jordanian national identity, excluding the Palestinian elements in the country and pan-Arab ideals, through a "Jordanization project" (Fruchter-Ronen, 2008).

As the system of Arab states changed, enforced by ideational and material factors, and a new 'regional order' emerged after 1967, many Arab states changed their understanding of Arab nationalism and interstate relations. As a version of Arab nationalism, state

nationalism replaced the supranational identity of pan-Arabism, even if it still meant Arab unity for some, and came to regulate inter-Arab politics through the interaction between states and shared norms of noninterference and mutual recognition of equal sovereignty. Institutionalizing state sovereignty, national interests, and security became the primary concern of Arab countries as the neighbors, and non-regional forces threatened them. The indicators supporting the argument are "the rising trend of sub-regionalism, the decline in unity efforts, the changing perceptions of the threat and the goals of Arab summits, and particularistic statements of Arab leaders" (Barnett, 1995, p. 508).

As Said argues, "Arab nationalism has not died but has all too often resolved itself into smaller and smaller units" (1994, p. 298). Despite the underlying need for political cooperation to solve common problems, notably the Palestinian question and economic integration to promote regional welfare, Arab leaders prioritized nation-state sovereignty. Hussein I of Jordan, for instance, expressed it as "I believe that the Arab world is never going to be a united nation, as had been hoped in the Arab Revolt. We have developed within each part of the Arab world our own identities, and unity in the future must be a unity of sovereign equals" (King Hussein I: Views on Selected Subjects, 1998). Saddam of Iraq, previously a vigorous supporter of the wider Arab nation, slowly shifted his priority to Iraq's national interests and unity, dealing with internal crises (Shia and Kurdish uprisings) and popular discontent accelerated by economic hardships. He often placed the identity of 'Iraqness' as a notion of *wataniyya* covering non-Arab elements above pan-Arabism despite merging them in his political discourse. For him, the Iraqi leadership, once completing its 'Ba'athification,' was the only one to bring Arab unity because "The glory of the Arabs stems from the glory of Iraq" (Karsh & Rautsi, 2003, p. 100).

The dissolution of the United Arab Republic in 1961 upon the political rivalry between the Egyptian and Syrian leaders and Iraq's refusal to be part of the Union revealed the interstate disputes and gradual departure from pan-Arab thinking. More apparent disunity occurred during the prolonged war between Iraq and non-Arab Iran (1980-1988). While nationalist regimes of al-Qaddafi's Libya and Assad's Syria supported Iran against Iraq, the Gulf countries gave financial aid to Iraq against the perceived Irani threats, while others remained largely neutral. Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990 fostered distrust of Arab coexistence and the dreams of Arab unity (Dawisha, 2016). Iraq's demands for Kuwaiti oil and revisionist claims regarding its borders with neighboring Kuwait brought about the war, violating the Arab League Charter and Arab Declaration of 1980, which prohibited

the use of force by Arab countries against each other. Apart from marking the military advance of the US in the Middle East, the First Gulf War (1990-91) exacerbated the polarization. The economic sanctions and the UN Security Council Resolution 678, authorizing the use of force against Iraq on the ground of "threatening international peace and security," were supported by most Arab League members, including Saudi Arabia, the Gulf states, Egypt, Syria, Morocco, and even Libya. While Jordan, Algeria, Tunisia, Yemen, the PLO, and Sudan sided with Iraq (Khadduri & Ghareeb, 1997).

The suspension of Egypt's membership in the Arab League following the peace with Israel left the anti-Israeli Arab coalition in disarray and weak. Yet, the Iran-Iraq war, dividing the Arab world into two camps, rendered the Arab-Israeli conflict the secondary issue as the two major enemies of Israel, Iraq, and Syria, entered a competition for regional leadership. Meanwhile, Iran's growing assertiveness following the revolution and support of anti-regime and radical groups in some Arab countries, notably those containing the Shia population, shifted their attention to the domestic challenges against the political authority. The interference of Arab regimes in the internal affairs of others by supporting opposition groups deepened the mistrust. The inter-Arab rivalry and internal challenges also caused the depletion of Arab resources, intensified by declining oil revenues, and exposed them to foreign penetration. Arab collective action, due to the lack of a common strategy, did not appear during the invasion of Lebanon by Israel. Moreover, the Cold War conditions profoundly affected the inter-Arab polarization, in which the pro-Soviet regimes maintained their ties with Moscow, even when the Soviets invaded Afghanistan and moved to the Gulf region in 1979. At the same time, the US-backed leaders were provided with military and financial aid against the Soviets Union (Sela, 1998).

The Arab world has launched several regional projects, such as the Arab Fund (1968), the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC-1969), and the Greater Arab Free Trade Area (GAFTA-1997). However, separate regionalism (*al-Iqlimiyya*), not on a pan-Arab but a micro-level, became a new trend in Arab politics in the 1980s and institutionalized the fragmentation. The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), for instance, was formed in 1981 with shared economic goals and security concerns—triggered by the Iranian Revolution and the Iraq-Iran War—of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), excluding Iraq and Yemen. In 1989, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, and Yemen established the Arab Cooperation Council (ACC) as a response to exclusive membership in the GCC and to promote bilateral trade, but it was dissolved when Iraq invaded Kuwait.

The same year, Tunisia, Morocco, Libya, Algeria, and Mauritania formed the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU) for economic and social integration modeled on European integration (Valbjørn, 2016). However, such kind of projects generally failed in regional cooperation because of foreign domination, weak institutionalization, rentier economies, inefficient intra-regional trade and foreign direct investment (FDI), self-interested political leaderships, and bilateral disputes among members (Legrenzi & Calculli, 2013, pp. 4-6). From the 1970s onward, oil rent has also created a cleavage between the oil-rich monarchies, which favored state nationalism, and the oil-poor pan-Arabist republics, bringing a slowdown in the inter-Arab solidarity and flow of aid (Beblawi, 1987).

2.5. THE RISE OF ISLAMISM AND ISLAMIST MOVEMENTS

Unlike the previous decades, ideological differentiation between the state elites and the masses appeared during the 1970s and 1980s. While Arab leaders arranged their foreign relations according to the sovereignty-based nation-state system, Islamism has attracted their subjects to challenge the regimes and alien domination, constituting a religious version of Arabism rather than erasing it. Following the collapse of secular nationalism, religious identity, which previously had been a tool for the consolidation of Arab national identity, turned out to be a significant force in the Arab national cause (Myhill, 2010). In fact, the decline of pan-Arabism and the rise of Islamism have a lot in common, such as urbanization, poverty, political illegitimacy, and unresponsiveness. Contextual conditions, thus, were central to the emergence and persistence of Islamist ideology. As Hroub notes, "Islamism is an expression of liberation against the Western domination, pressures of the modernity, and the failure of the postmodern state" (2012, p. 16). At this point, this section aims to explain such contextuality, the main premises, and the course of Islamist ideology. It also touches on three Islamist organizations as they claimed to represent Islamism.

2.5.1. The Islamist Identity

The Arab world embraces multiple identities; cultural, ethnic, regional, and political allegiances, some of which are acquired at birth, and others develop upon socioeconomic dynamics. Thus, rather than a complete uniformity, "It carries within it the potential for both unity and divisiveness…with conflicting orientations: unity versus fragmentation, tradition versus modernity, sacred versus secular, East versus West, and local versus national" (Barakat, 1993, p. xii). Contrary to popular belief that Islamic identity replaced national identity and that the two ideologies are exclusive, Islamism is closely related to national identifications. Unlike the European context, both doctrines are not mutually

destructive but contain common modern and cultural elements in the Middle East. Moreover, faith has significantly defined national identity from the beginning (Ozdalga, 2009). Both identities are anti-Western-driven despite their distinct path. While the former reacted to the Western socio-political and cultural influence, the latter struggled with political and military control of the West over the Arab lands. Although Arab socialism was the unrivaled ideology post-1945, religious identity has never disappeared but remained a constitutive force on the personal level until the 1970s (Dawisha, 2000, p. 87).

The roots of Islamist ideology go back to Islamic modernism and pan-Islamism of the late 19th century and the opinions of the early Islamist ideologues, especially Jamal al-Din al-Afghani and Muhammad Abduh. In modern times, it was the movement of middle-class intellectuals, religious scholars, professionals, and officials who sought an 'Islamic awakening' through which Muslims would overcome the new *jahiliyyah*, i.e., the Western culture. Islamism does not aim to return to the past but to reform society through applying Islamic law (*Shari'a*). Tibi (2012) interprets this ideal as an "invention of tradition for the project of de-secularization and de-westernization since Islam naturally is compatible with secularism" (pp. 154, 162). In contrast, Humphreys believes that the rise of Islamism was a sign of "uneasy coexistence between secular and religious politics," as Islam is essentially a political system rather than a purely personal belief (1999, p. xi). According to Ayubi, Islamism is the political but selective interpretation of Islam, a set of morality and faith that does not directly denote a system of governance. Thus, it is not a purely faith-based action but "the reconstruction process of the intellectuals, clerical class, to respond to a particular socio-political context" (1993, p. 118). All three scholars, however, agree that Islamists used the faith, in the absence of an alternative, as a means to manifest their anger at injustices and their quest to determine their 'true' place in changing world order.

2.5.2. The Role of the Iranian Islamic Revolution

The Iranian Revolution of 1979, led by Ayatollah Khomeini, gave rise to Islamist ideology and practices. The ideological basis of the Islamic Revolution was not significantly different from anti-colonial nationalism and the rise of Islamism in the region. As distinct from it, "Nationalism, socialism, and Islamism were all present in the wake of the Iranian Revolution" (Dabashi, 2006, p. xviii). In general, the widening socioeconomic gap, corruption, and the secret state apparatus (i.e., SAVAK-Organization of Intelligence and National Security of the Country) under Reza Shah's rule formed a joint mobilizing force among all opposition groups from different backgrounds. Decades of exploitation of Iran's

oil industry by the British and later by the US aroused anger among Iranian nationalists. For instance, Mohammad Mosaddeq's National Front was deeply inspired by the Suez Canal victory. The alienation of the socialist groups, especially the Tudeh Party, drove them to seek a collective revolution. The systematic oppression of Muslims through imposed secularization was the primary source of discontent among Shia clerics, who were the most crucial actors in the construction of Islamist and revolutionary ideology that developed in the previous four decades (Dabashi, 2006).

The ideology of the revolution was inspired and formed by the Quranic references about rebellion, which calls for collective action against the "evil social system," i.e., oppression, discrimination, luxury, corruption, exploitation, conservatism, and tyranny. Accordingly, Muslims are righteous to rise and even fight (*Qital*) for self-defense and responsible for establishing a moral and a just social system (e.g., faith in God, peace, progress, sharing, equality, brotherhood, liberation, mobility, and rationality). The revolutionary ideas and speeches of clergy and intellectuals, delivered through various communication tools such as tapes that disseminated Khomeini's preaches in mosques, mobilized millions of Iranians to revolt. In their Islamist discourse, the was imagined as the modern *Karbala*, where the Iranian people represented Imam Hussein and the Shah was his murderer, Yazid. It was the struggle defined with the 'good' versus 'evil' and Islam versus the 'infidel,' i.e., the West and its extensions, notably Israel, in the Muslim world (Lafraie, 2009).

Even though post-revolutionary Iran fell into a theocracy rather than a democracy, it was a critical event affecting regional geopolitics and inspiring worldwide anti-authoritarian movements. In the Middle East, the establishment of the Islamic Republic led to the formation of Islamist groups in the 1980s. Besides the similar sociopolitical and economic contexts, the ideological affinity, Islamist revolutionary ideology, appealed to the Arab Islamist resurgence. Accordingly, the motto of Islamist groups in the Arab world is that "The Qur'an is our constitution, the Prophet is our leader, jihad is our way, and death for the sake of God is our most valued hope" (Hroub, 2012, p. 15).

2.5.3. The Islamist Movements: The Ikhwan, Hezbollah, and Hamas

In the early 1970s, the region experienced the rise of many Islamist groups with certain sociopolitical goals. Among Islamist movements, the Society of the Muslim Brotherhood (*Jama'at al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin*), commonly known as the Ikhwan, occupies an important place. Founded by schoolteacher Hassan al-Banna (1906-1949) in Egypt in 1928, it became

a pan-Islamist and social movement with the motto of "Believers are brothers" (Helbawy, 2010, p. 65). With many branches and millions of followers throughout the Middle East, it has become one of the world's largest and most influential Sunni Islamist movements. For the Ikhwan, the main problem has been the imperial influence on the social order and its political extension in the holy lands, i.e., Zionism. The Islamic order, the only solution to the problems of the Arabs, was also in crisis. Secular socialist regimes were responsible for the moral decay of the Arab youth and the corruption of family life because of undermining Islamic influence and introducing foreign codes into society. By weakening its potency, fragmentation was another serious threat to the Muslim community and, thus, would be replaced by a kind of 'brotherhood.' In short, it was the moral duty of the Ikhwan to actively participate in the 're-Islamization' of the society (Mitchell, 1993).

The assassination of al-Banna in 1949, the dissolution of the Ikhwan in 1954, and the execution of Sayyid Qutb (1906-1966) under Nasser led to the radicalization of the movement. An energetic Egyptian nationalist, Qutb gradually turned to an Islamic position in the post-revolutionary period. In his view, Islam is not a religion confined to private life but a system with specific implications for all levels of society. Muslims, hence, need to replace the Western-inspired social and political order with a divine order with absolute sovereignty. The radical wing of the Ikhwan and other radical groups in the region increasingly drew inspiration from Qutb's worldview, though it did not directly call for militant activism. Some of his followers developed 'Qutbism' based on his writings and formed military groups, like the Secret Unit. They pursued an Islamic revolution, if necessary, through armed resistance to enforce the rules of the Qur'an (Calvert, 2009). Indeed, in his famous commentary on the Qur'an, *In the Shade of the Qur'an*, Qutb calls Muslims to struggle against the immutable enemies of Islam, i.e., Infidels, the Jews, and Hypocrites ("the enemy within"). For Qutb, implementing Islamic principles would bring social justice and a revival of Islamic civilization. Attacking Western values and 'materialism,' he asserts that "Muslims today need the Qur'an for a better and more realistic understanding of the world and their role in it," i.e., "the reconstruction of Muslim society… and assume the leadership of the world again" (2016, p. 20).

The successor to al-Banna, Hasan al-Hudaybi (1951-1973), was a critic of radical thought and the revolutionary path. From the beginning of the resistance to the British presence, al-Hudaybi and his fellows actively cooperated with Nasser and the RCC. However, Nasser, who favored the dissolution of political parties and viewed Ikhwan as a competitor

for his power, blocked their hopes of participating in the new political order and sparked enmity between the two groups. The ideological conflict between the secular and socialist Nasser and the Islamist and anti-communist Ikhwan constituted the other challenge to this relationship. During the period of persecution against the Ikhwan (1954-1971) (e.g., political deportation, imprisonment, and execution of members), al-Hudaybi failed to convince Nasser to share the political power (Zollner, 2009). Thus, Nasser was regarded as a 'despot' in the members' discourse. For example, a feminist activist and one of the leading figures of the Islamist opposition, al-Zainab Ghazali (1917-2005), showed her ideals and anger at Nasser's regime in her prison memoir, *Return of the Pharaoh*. To her, "The only way for the salvation of the nation was calling to Islam" and "the establishment of an Islamic state, which is an obligation on Muslims" (1994, pp. 2, 188).

The political ideology of al-Hudaybi regarding the formation and nature of Islamic society has shaped the theoretical basis of the Ikhwan today. In contrast to radical views, his followers under Umar al-Tilmisani (1973-1986) relied on moderate Islamist opposition and nonviolent means (gradual social change, voluntary engagement, education, and political participation) to advance the development of Arab society. With Sadat's presidency, seeking legitimacy through Islam, the Ikhwan gained legal status. It reorganized itself and became heavily involved in civil society and charity organizations, professional syndicates, and political activism. In this regard, it conducted various social projects not pursued by the governments, such as building mosques, schools, health centers, and clubs, which increased its sympathy in society. In the 1990s, with the internal reformation, the Ikhwan and its offshoots became a critical 'political actor' in the region, transforming from a purely religious and social movement to a political organization. Then, the new generation of Islamists established political parties across the Middle East, such as al-Nahda Party in Tunisia (1981), Hamas in Palestine (1987), the Movement for Society and Peace in Algeria (1990), and the Islamic Action Front in Jordan (1992). In arguing for the necessity of political and economic reforms, the Ikhwan became the most significant competitor to the military regime and one of the leading social and religious movements with its famous slogan "Islam is the solution" (Zahid, 2010, p. 120).

Hezbollah (the party of Allah/God), founded by Hussein Nasrallah in 1982, came out as the Shia version of political mobilization with considerable popular support. The main objective was to liberate Lebanese and Palestinian territories from the Israeli invasion. Then to build an Islamic system, through both its moderate and radical wings, that would

end the 'secular' corruption. The political and ideological vision of Hezbollah, financially, militarily, and strategically guided by Iran for the revolutionary campaign, is in the Iranian line, saying that "Neither East nor West" only Islam can rescue Muslims from the miserable situation (Norton, 2007, p. 36). In the meantime, the Palestinian national identity, which has always embodied religious elements, shifted in the same direction. From the late 1980s, the Islamization of the Palestinian cause came about amidst the Zionist expansion, and the weak positions of Arab leaders continued. Hamas/the Islamic Resistance Movement (*Harakat al-Muqawamah al-Islamiyya*) appeared to represent 'Islamic nationalism' in 1987. In Hamas's perspective, unlike the secular and nationalist al-Fatah, Islamic identity is the true basis of Palestinian nationalism since "Nationalism is part of the religious creed" (The Covenant of the Islamic Resistance Movement, 1988).

The founding leader of Hamas, Sheik Ahmad Yasin, made a clear connection between the displaced Palestinians and the first forcefully immigrated Muslims together with the Prophet because of their religion. Referring to the Qur'an, particularly the verses about the Jews, the struggle was depicted as the "war of faith" between Islam and Judaism, in which Jews were doomed to lose, and Muslims were ultimately victorious (Litvak, 1998, p. 157). The First Palestinian Intifada (uprising) of 1987 directly manifested the Palestinian version of Islamism. Hamas declared that the armed resistance to eliminate the Zionist occupation was 'legitimate' since it had the same rationale as the anti-colonial wars. Similar to the Ikhwan, Hamas's activity also includes social activities and later political participation, which would enable the Palestinians to establish their independent and Islamic state (Hroub, 2000). The Covenant of Hamas (1988) reveals its logic with a poem by Mohamed Iqbal (1877-1938)—a philosopher, the foremost advocate of the Pakistani-Islamic national movement, and one of the most outstanding representatives of Islamic poetry—"If faith is lost, there is no security and there is no life for him who does not adhere to religion. He who accepts life without religion has taken annihilation as his companion for life."

2.5.4. Symbolism in the Islamist Ideology

Aside from the political and militant activities and textual discourse like declarations and organizational charters, Islamist movements have resorted to various symbolic and discursive means, such as art, images, visuals, signs, flags, and songs, to convey their identities and tactics. Instead of ethnolinguistic identities, almost all use the concepts of martyrdom, holy war against evil, heroism, and paradise as central themes of their propaganda campaigns. The metaphors of Islamic history, like the lion associated with

Muslim heroes, are often used for the present (Ostovar, 2017, p. 99). The shared discursive element of Islamist imagery is the statement of Islamic faith (*shahada*), "There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is the messenger of Allah."[5] The flags are also typical elements to construct and exchange their messages and affiliation with other fellow groups. Despite specific differences, the flags' shared black, white, and green colors remind them of the heydays of Islamic history, while red stands for resistance and struggle (Ostovar, 2017).

Besides the green flag of the Islamist groups with *shahada*, the emblems of the Ikhwan and Hamas have explicit Islamic references. For instance, while their two crossed swords symbolize the honor and readiness to fight against the enemy, the Qur'an image on the Ikhwan emblem proclaims the 'spiritual' guide of the movement. The sign of al-Aqsa Mosque, centered on Hamas's flag and surrounded by the Palestinian flag with *shahada*, is to represent the religious character of the national struggle against the Zionist occupation of the holy site. The name of Hezbollah, on the other hand, bears a partial Qur'anic verse "The party of Allah (all who ally themselves with Allah, his messenger, and the believers) will be victorious" (5: 56, Translated by Safi Kaskas). Likewise, Ikhwan's motto is derived from a Qur'anic verse, which says all "Believers are but brothers" and calls them to make peace with each other (49:10, Translated by Muhsin Khan).

In the same vein, the usage of art significantly serves the different Islamist groups. Music, specifically, has always been a useful instrument to manifest the worldview of any political cause in the Arab-Islamic culture. For Islamist groups, *anashid* (the poetic chants used during events, especially by Hamas and Hezbollah) are the most popular musical means to raise political awareness of the audience and motivate resistance. The central themes in *anashid* are the commemoration of martyrs, the celebration of heroism, anniversary days, mourning, and attachment to the homeland (Berg, 2017). Even though such Islamist groups have maintained their claims for political power, the new neoliberal order brought the fall of Islamism, except for the radical groups. While claiming to offer economic welfare via economic openness, neoliberal globalization negatively affected underdeveloped societies, increasing socioeconomic inequalities. The Arab world was no exception to the situation and entered a path of the semi-liberalization process with complex socioeconomic and political structures examined below, which would increase intellectual opposition and social unrest, leading to the region-wide popular uprisings at the turn of the 21st century.

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[5] ‏"لا إله إلا الله محمد رسول الله"

CHAPTER 3

THE PATH TO THE ARAB UPRISINGS

In the last decades of the 20th century, the bipolar world system has been replaced by the US-led neoliberal order with a capitalist system and liberal democracy. On the eve of the Soviet collapse, the third wave of democratization (a transition process from a nondemocratic political system toward a democratic one) began in 1974 and lasted until the mid-1990s. The wave captured Europe, Asia, and Latin America, whereas the Middle East and Africa remained outside the trend despite parliament and elections (Huntington, 1991). Ultimately, it gave rise to the intellectual narrative of "Arab exceptionalism."[6] At the beginning of the 21st century, however, the region was shaken up by widespread uprisings, taking part in the debate on the fourth wave of democratization. Given that shared causes and experiences with cases in the former transition process—social inequality, the spread of democratic values and the rise of a pro-democracy class; the collapse and replacement of the dictatorial regime by reformist groups, the failure of post-revolutionary leaders in promoting liberalization, and reversals—the Arab uprisings were interpreted by some in the frame of the fourth wave of democratization (Abushouk, 2016).

Hereby, this chapter seeks to contextualize the Arab uprisings by investigating the contextual background of the unforeseen popular events. Since the unfavorable political and economic conditions in the Arab world have been the primary causes of the widespread dissatisfaction and the demands for democratic transition, the chapter elaborates on the historical socioeconomic and political context prior to the Arab uprisings, where the oppositional discourse and reformist social movements have flourished, including post-Islamist and liberal thought. In other words, it is essential to understand what factors influenced the emergence and features of the discourse of the Arab uprisings because, as Fairclough and Wodak affirmed, "Discourse is not produced without context and cannot be understood without taking context into consideration" (1997, p. 276).

3.1. ARAB POLITICAL ECONOMY

Arab political economy has dramatically been affected by colonial constraints, liberation struggles, the Arab-Israeli wars, fluctuating oil prices, the Cold War situation, and

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[6] An ongoing academic debate, covering also some Orientalist explanations reduced to cultural and religious bases, over the reasons for the resilience of the authoritarian rule in the Arab world.

globalization. Although the region's political economy in the 20th century had different economic models and growth paths, it has generally gone through three stages of development. With limited industrialization and semi-independent economies, most parts of the region depended on an export-oriented (1918-1954) economic model in which raw materials and intensive agricultural production were exchanged with European industrial products. In the second phase (the period between 1945 and the 1970s), characterized by import-substitution industrialization (ISI) and the growing state intervention in the economic sector, regional countries pursued centralization policies as part of political and economic nationalization efforts to protect their infant industries from the influx of industrialized economies. During these periods—under the devastating effects of WWII, financial crises, the costs of decolonization, and foreign debt—the regional economies could not sustain significant economic growth to meet growing domestic demand. In the third phase (since the 1970s), they adopted an open economy to keep pace with changing conditions and contain further social problems (Owen & Pamuk, 1999).

3.1.1. Crony Capitalism

By the 1980s, however, a circle of severe socioeconomic problems challenged the regime's legitimacy and political stability. Facing financial difficulties and indebtedness, the Arab governments could not formulate an effective development policy to create jobs, alleviate poverty, and sustain state-led economic programs. In addition, the rapid urbanization, the rise of poverty, water scarcity, food shortages caused by diminished agricultural production, and high unemployment and housing problems among the Arab youth created severe urban discontent against the political authority. In response, to overcome the mounting social pressures and appease political discontent utilized by Islamists, the Arab governments initiated a set of economic reforms in the 1980s (Richards, 2004). Economic openness (*infitah*) envisioned economic stability, deregulation, export-led growth, and greater trade liberalization. They began to operate economic programs drafted and funded by global financial institutions, the World Bank (WB) and International Monetary Fund (IMF). In spite of considerable reform efforts, the desired economic growth could not be achieved because of the slow rate of liberalization and low-level competition. The private sector investment and labor force level remained insufficient compared to the public sector. Consequently, the degree of openness in the Arab economies did not reduce youth unemployment and remained constrained despite the good progress of oil-exporting economies (see Figure 1) (Cammett, Diwan, Richards, & Waterbury, 2018).

The core feature of Arab capitalism was favoritism, i.e., the grant of economic opportunities to relatives (nepotism), the bureaucratic class, and friends of the ruling elites, which is called overall 'crony capitalism/cronyism' (close state-business ties). Though the Arab republics are diverse in the size and implementation of cronyism, the division between the outsiders with high barriers and insider groups—business elites with crony linkages and have privileged access to capital such as energy resources, land, state subsidies, and formal labor force—is rigid in all. In the long-term, cronyism hampered the socioeconomic development in the region so that the Arab masses could not benefit from economic modernization with no significant rise in the living standards stimulated by the market economy (Hertog, 2019). Nor could it result in political liberalization but new repressive policies, increasing the political instability. According to the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) of 2010, which measures the levels of corruption in administration and state institutions, the Arab world had problems with a high level of corruption just before the Arab uprisings of 2010-2011. While the oil monarchies had good scores in controlling corruption, ranking between the 19th and 56th, the Arab republics of Tunisia ranked 66th, Egypt 105th, Algeria 110th, Syria and Lebanon 134th, Yemen and Libya 154th, Sudan 172nd, and Iraq ranked 175th country out of 178 (Transparency International, 2010).

Figure 1

Economic Freedom in the Arab World, Average Scores (1995-2010)
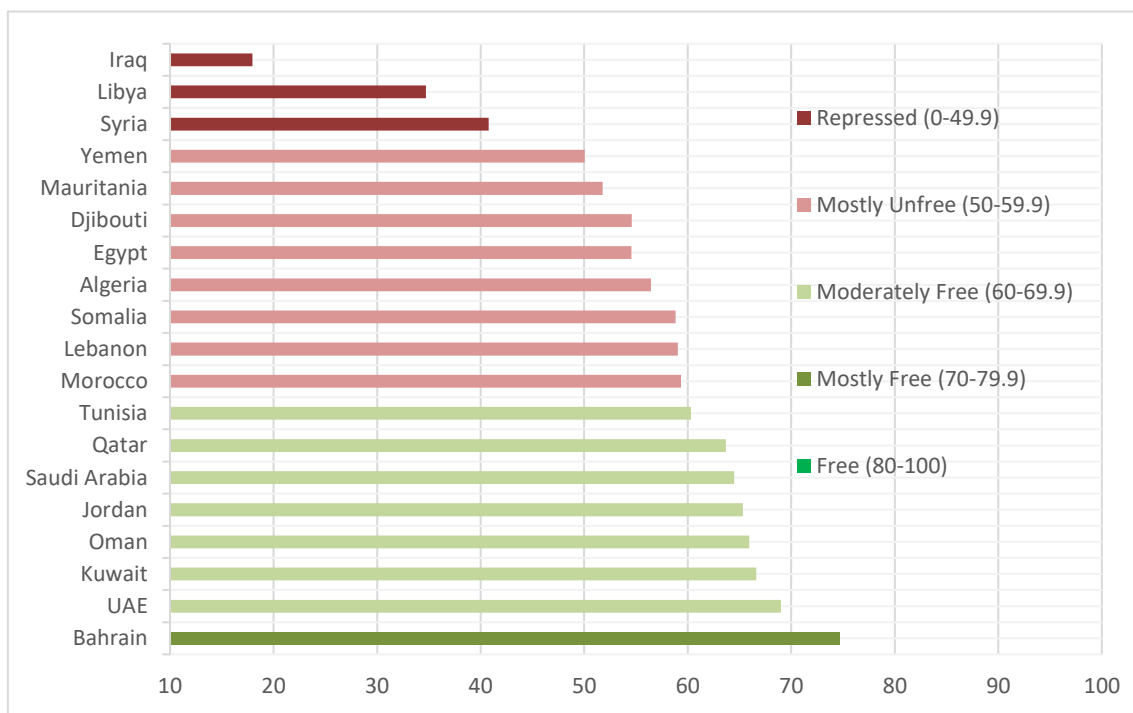
Source: The Heritage Foundation, Index of Economic Freedom (2022)

3.2. THE AUTHORITARIAN STATE

Considering the political leadership's central role, the nature of the state is a key variable in understanding Middle Eastern politics. Having no deep roots and practice, the notion of the nation-state in the region has taken three forms based on the historical transformations: the colonial, post-independent, and authoritarian state systems. The colonial state, possessing conditions of modern statehood, exercised under foreign influence and colonial practices rather than a national polity. The post-independent state, embracing a socialist and nationalist agenda, dealt with huge socioeconomic problems while expanding its central authority over the society and the state apparatus, i.e., robust administrative control, growing size of the military, bureaucratic expansion, the instrumentalization of religion and identity for political legitimacy, and influential role in social mobilization and the economic sector. The authoritarian state, the last stage of the regional state system, is characterized by and has prevailed through the consolidation of military power against the civil forces, the one-sided communication between the state and society, and the constant suppression of civil and political groups (Owen, 2004).

3.2.1. State-Society Relations

The governance in the majority of the Arab world is generally classified with authoritarian features based on state-society relations, political and institutional structures, and types of political economy. The authoritarian rule in the Arab region has its deep roots in colonial rule and legacy, foreign economic domination, top-down and arbitrary nation-buildings, Cold-War rivalry, and the globalized capitalist economy. The main instrument for consolidating authoritarianism was the "national modernization project," liberation from foreign rule and establishment of national sovereignty by mobilizing the Islamic and national identity. Despite variations, the major components of the authoritarian Arab state (single-party regime/republics and family rule/monarchy) include state expansion, ideology-driven leadership, coercion, and limited civil-society liberty (Pratt, 2006).

Revolutionary/socialist republics in the Arab world (Egypt, Iraq, Syria, Algeria, Libya, Sudan, and Tunisia) are characterized by single-party regimes, large bureaucracy, statism, socialist and nationalist ideology, control over the society, and populist corporatism (state-led development). Accordingly, the state introduced industrialization, privatization policies, and economic reforms under nationalization and development plans. The coalition of the President and his party and the military consolidated the political power of the regime and constituted a security-state (*dawlat al-mukhabarat*), in which social and civil

forces were kept in check and politically excluded. Arab monarchies (Saudi Arabia, UAE, Bahrain, Oman, Kuwait, Qatar, Jordan, and Morocco) are described with conservatism, semi-capitalist and rentier economy, corporatism, state patronage, and religious and tribe-based political culture. As the royal family has exclusive access to the state, economic, and military power, the excluded groups are satisfied through large public expenditures and welfare policies. Unlike the radical Arab regimes, some monarchies, such as Kuwait and Qatar, have liberal inclinations and provide relative autonomy (Ayubi, 1996).

In either regime type, however, the nature of state-society relations is defined by limited interactions between the extensive state authority and controlled civil forces. In this one-way communication, any opposition directed at the corrupt administration is responded to with violence or soft repression. The region largely lacks the principles of good governance, i.e., political inclusiveness, independent state institutions, separation of powers, a limited power of political leadership, transparency, accountability, and elections (free, fair, open, and competitive). According to the six dimensions of governance measured based on a set of defined variables (1996-2010), the Arab world has made no impressive progress in institutional quality (see Figure 2). The republics have failed in creating stable and effective political mechanisms. In particular, Iraq, under long years of invasion and economic embargos, had the worst scores in all measures (about 0-6 %), which Ghanim interprets as the "republic of corruption" (2011, p. 234). In each category, the Arab monarchies have scored above the regional averages and had better performance (over 60%) than the republics (below 30%). Yet, all Arab regimes have poor voice and accountability index results related to political participation and overall freedom.

The autonomous civil associations, such as religious-based, communal and professional groups in the Middle East, prior to the modern era have transformed into new forms with the decline in the global influence of the Muslim world and the rise of Western penetration. As the post-independence political system has strengthened state control over the society, they could not retain their autonomy outside the state authority as before. Within this framework, the Western notion and scope of civil society have developed nonlinear across the region. Under the long years of state suppression, they were banned from many activities, such as free access to media, legal status and protection, and government critics. They also have faced restrictions on operating freely in specific areas and on functional roles, i.e., the human rights issue and political liberties in the monarchies, and the opportunity of political groups to compete in the elections, like Islamist and communist

parties in the republics. Given these, despite the experience with liberalization programs in the post-1970s and the formation of thousands of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), civil society remained unable to limit state power, and the region remained an "exception" to democratic transition (Niblock, 2005).

Among the divergent explanations for the robustness of non-democratic rule in the region, the general trend is to associate it with the lack of prerequisites of democratization, i.e., effective civil society and state institutions, the market economy, hospitable culture, and widespread commitments to democratic values, geographical proximity to the liberal world, and educated class. Yet, none of these is unique and inherent to the region and true for all regional states, thus, cannot truly grasp the resistance of the Arab regimes to political liberalization. Instead, the prevalence of institutionalized 'coercive apparatus,' mentioned above, the intelligence services, and foreign support constitute the significant impediments. As Bellin argues, as long as the personalistic regimes retain control over the security apparatus through patrimonial links, a transition to democracy will remain unlikely (2004). Needless to say, no Middle Eastern conflict arises literally based on regional dynamics but is often manipulated by the nonregional powers, each pursuing its national interests in the region. Through diplomatic alliances and strong security ties with the Arab rulers, foreign aid and trading, and political manipulation of the regional crises, external actors have helped keep the Arab despots in power (Gardner, 2009).

Figure 2

Governance in the Arab World (Percentile Rank)
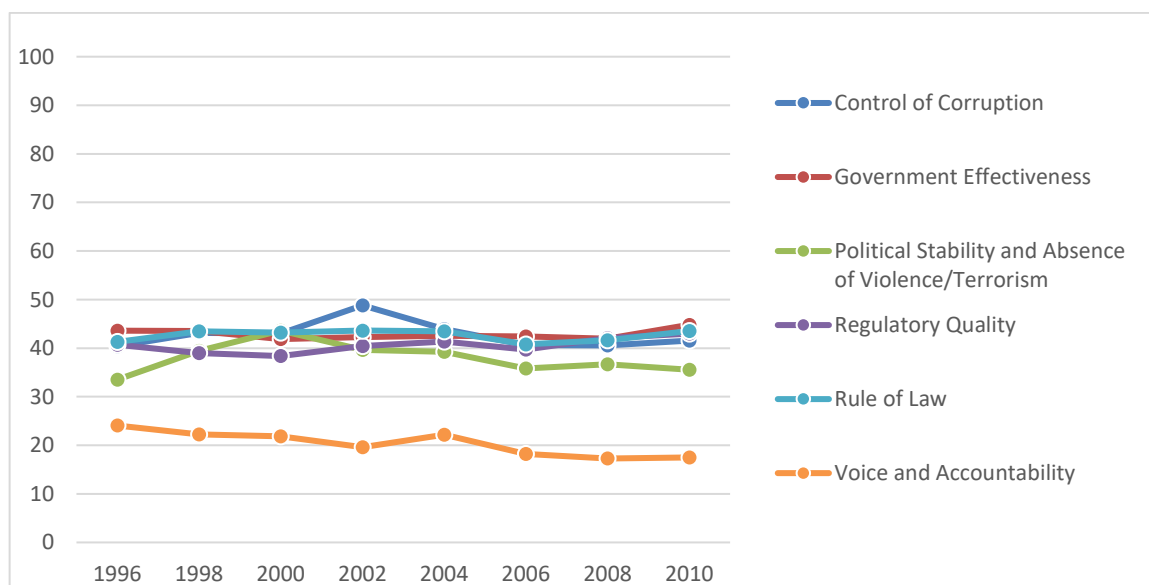
Source: World Bank, Worldwide Governance Indicators (2021)

3.2.2. Civil-Military Relations

The military is the oldest and has historically been the key state institution in Middle Eastern politics, playing a determinant role in state-building and national security. Beyond national security, the armed forces have been a significant agent of social transformations, identity formation, modernization, and Westernization. The patterns of civil-military relations in the Arab world have developed parallel to the historical and socioeconomic developments, i.e., colonial rule, liberation and inter-state struggles, the cold war situation, and globalization (Goldschmidt & Boum, 2016). In their relations to the military, the Arab states can be divided roughly into two categories, the radical and populist republics governed by military leaders and the monarchies free of military challenges. Had been created by the colonial powers, or developed against foreign rule, the colonial powers, the army in the republics have competed with the political and civilian groups to control the whole society completely. Unlike such an expansion, the armed forces in oil-exporting monarchies, which lack modern institutional capacity and military effectiveness, have a subordinated and supplementary role, i.e., the political survival of the rulers (Ayubi, 1996).

Amid the growing security problems caused by the Arab-Israeli wars, recurrent Israeli attacks on PLO forces beyond the Palestinian territories, and the ever-increasing assertiveness of the revolutionary and military Iran in the Gulf, interstate conflicts constituted significant threats to the Arab security system. Due to the regional fragmentation, however, Arab states failed to build a collective security system but embarked on large-scale military build-ups—including chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons—creating a security dilemma. Meantime, intra-state challenges posed by an Islamist insurgency and the mounting pressures on the governments to generate welfare constituted a source of the political security issue, putting the regime's survival at risk. In such a threatening environment, with power imbalances and external vulnerability of the states, national security has become the top priority for all Arab governments and increased their reliance on the armed forces, which had a limited capacity for response (Korany, Noble, & Brynen, 1993). Given this, through military professionalization (advanced training, equipment, institutional capacity, and modern internal regulations) after 1967, the region has made speedy progress in military modernization. Since the mid-1970s, it has contributed to the politicization of the army, or the militarization of politics, and made civil-military relations much more problematic. Ultimately, the excessive expansion of the military has hindered the civilianization of politics (Kamrava, 2000).

The military's political intervention has become a "natural course" throughout the past century. Between 1936 and 1970, the Arab countries experienced tens of successful military coups and coup attempts, most of which occurred in the 1950s-1960s. Besides the political succession, the military officers have been influential in the conduct of domestic and foreign affairs. Sociopolitical and economic underdevelopment under colonial rule and semi-independent political regimes could only be overthrown by liberation struggle led by nationalist officers, which was only the capable force of social revolutions (Beeri, 1970). Although this frequency declined in the post-1970s, holding coercive apparatus and governmental power, including the presidency, the armed forces have served as the guardian of the authoritarian status quo and a significant barrier to political pluralism. The state economy also turned out to be dominated by high-ranking officers acting as entrepreneurs by controlling public enterprises, development projects, financial resources, and industrial machinery. As the largest percentage of GDP has been allocated to military needs, social spending has remained low and insufficient, increasing the social problems. Not surprisingly, the Arab world ranks first in defense expenditure (see Figure 3). Yet, the endurance of the military rule is mainly enabled thanks to the patronage system and clientelism, which create a dependency relationship between the ruling elites and beneficiaries of the system (Picard, 2016).

Figure 3

Military Expenditure in the Arab World (% of GDP)
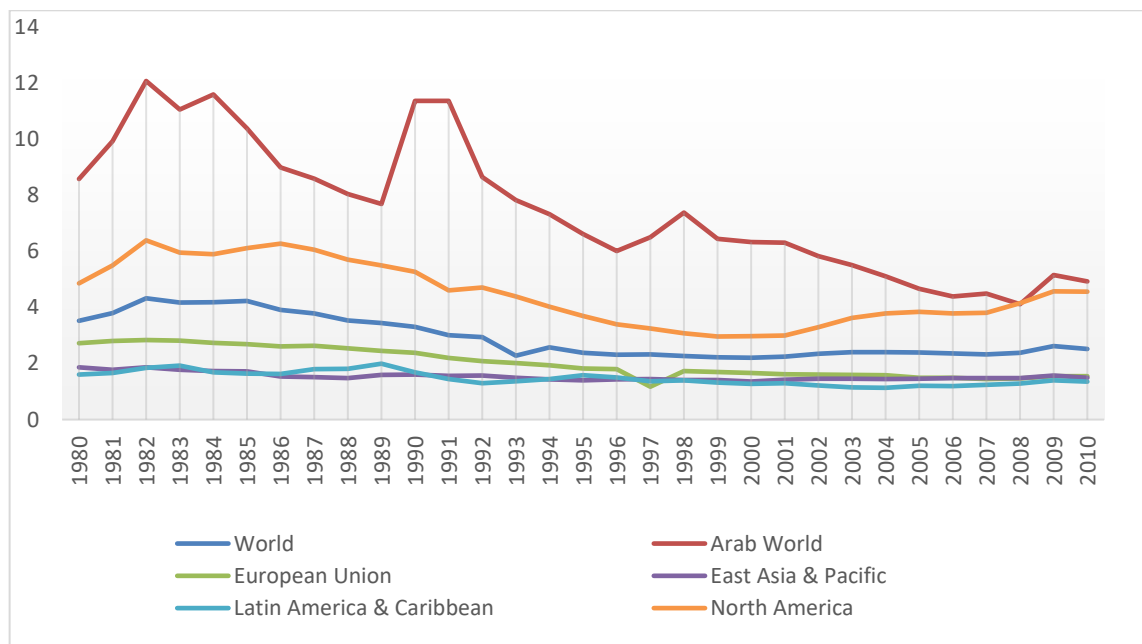
Source: World Bank, Military Expenditure Database (2022)

3.3. ARAB LIBERAL THOUGHT AND POST-ISLAMISM

In Kandil's words (2011, p. 86), "Ideas do not evolve in a vacuum, but within particular socioeconomic and political structures." In this regard, the intellectual climate of the Arab uprisings was shaped by overlapping factors under the authoritarian context mentioned above. As neoliberal globalization—a two-fold process proposing economic growth through the introduction of economic liberalization and integration to the worldwide economic linkages—allowed the state elite in the Arab world to restructure and increase the resilience of authoritarianism, instead of undermining it, the politically and economically underrepresented social groups sought to voice their grievances in various ways (Guazzone & Pioppi, 2012). While Islamism was still the prevailing ideology against the rising authoritarianism in the 1970s-1980s, the modernization and liberal discourse of the contemporary Arab intellectuals re-emerged marginally and, later on, were added by reformist social movements. At this point, this part presents the characteristics and development of Arab liberal thought from a historical perspective.

3.3.1. Defining Arab Liberalism

Above all, defining liberalism is still controversial even in its birthplace, the Western world. Implementing liberalism as a political system, i.e., liberal democracy—an elected government through free and fair elections, pluralism, the rule of law, and civic freedom—is also problematic worldwide. For instance, despite having a liberal economic model and civil society, or vice versa, some countries do not have a functioning democratic regime. Having its roots in the European Renaissance of the 14th-15th centuries and developed in the Enlightenment Age of the 17th-18th centuries, liberalism refers to a set of beliefs and ideas committed to the reason and accomplishments of human beings. The core principles of liberalism are 'individualism, rationalism, justice, freedom/liberty, and tolerance.' As a political ideology, liberalism—having different types with diverging priorities such as classical liberalism, modern liberalism, and liberal democracy—indicates a challenge to absolute and authoritarian rule and advocacy of freedom at individual, economic, and political levels. Granting rights and responsibilities to individuals, liberalism emphasizes human progress through personal autonomy, civil liberty, equality before the law, economic freedom and property rights, the rule of law, and freedom of thought, expression, and religion. In the political sense, liberalism, or liberal democracy, envisions a political regime upon self-determination, representative governance, constitutionalism, separation of powers, political pluralism, and civil society (Heywood, 2021).

On the other hand, the definition and scope of Arab liberalism—the origins of which date to the early Arab Liberal Age of the 18th-19th century—though almost all ideological groups have embraced liberal ideas to varying degrees, have not been agreed upon as the Arab intellectual tradition consists of varying and even conflicting viewpoints. Therefore, the core values of Western-defined liberalism, such as individualism and democracy, have been interpreted inherently on diverse grounds. Moreover, several facts have prevented liberal ideology from getting momentum in the region. In the identity dimension, it was the anti-Western sentiment caused by European exploitation of the region, the domination of defensive nationalism bound to socialism, and the rise of Islamism. The political constraints on liberal reformers put by Arab regimes, lack of coherence among the liberal circles, and widespread sympathy in public towards them have delayed the progress of Arab liberalism. Last but not least, the Western world's repetitive interventions and counterproductive policies in Arab politics have been the most significant predicaments of the Arab liberal movement (Hatina, 2020).

More importantly, Arab portrayal of liberalism, as in the other ideological shifts, has been influenced mainly by structural changes in regional politics and the lengthy authoritarian context, where post-colonial Arab intellectuals have been subject to state pressure, like political imprisonment. The shared visions of the Arab liberal thinkers from various ideological views thus centered on political liberty associated with freedom of speech, press, association, and participation in public affairs. Contemporary Arab intellectual history and the advent of mass politics in the region, on the other hand, have been deeply influenced by neoliberalism and globalization. During the age of globalization, the Arab world has increasingly established international linkages and imported the rising global liberal trends through new media, satellite TV, and the internet (Weiss & Hanssen, 2018).

3.3.2. The Nahda Movement

Like the other modern ideologies, the emergence of the early Arab liberal thought dates to the invasion of Egypt and the modernization era of the late Ottoman rule. The Nahda Movement (Arab Renaissance/Awakening), well-known as the Arab Liberal Age from the 1790s to 1940s, emerged as a modernist cultural movement in Egypt, Syria, and Lebanon. It was the period of Arab Enlightenment developed during the Tanzimat (Reorganization) Era (1839–1876) of the Ottoman Empire, which was the period of modernization in the administration and society through a series of reforms such as the introduction of secular education and European-modeled law. Upon the breakup of the Empire and the advent of

colonial rule, it turned into a national movement with a strong emphasis on nationalized knowledge (Di-Capua, 2015). Constituting the classical tradition in Arab thinking, the Nahda was increasingly upheld by many Arab reformers with diverging backgrounds, i.e., secular, liberal, nationalist, and religious reformists. Rather than renewing the glorious past, they looked for 'Arab progress' by reforming sociopolitical and cultural spheres upon the European model. To this end, the Arabs would be reawakened through the regeneration of thinking with modernized education, techniques, and new forms of knowledge (Sheehi, 2004). The developing intelligentsia embarked on the creation of a public Arabic with periodicals such as the literary and scientific magazines of *al-Hilal* (1892-) and *al-Muqtataf* (1876-1952). Al-Bustani (1819-1893) introduced a Western-style Arabic encyclopedia and dictionary in which he created new words (Di-Capua, 2015, pp. 60-61).

The early Arab liberals were Western-educated and influenced by the French Revolution of 1789 and the Enlightenment thinkers of Voltaire, Rousseau, Renan, and Montesquieu. Besides the formation of the nation-state and the introduction of a parliamentary system, they advocated the cultivation of positivism and rationalism, the emancipation of women, the implementation of justice, and the protection of human rights. Though all were strong critics of absolute power and adherent to the representative system, Arab thinkers differed on the means and ends. The Egyptian scholar al-Tahtawi (1801-1873), a supporter of Islamic liberalism, sought the reconciliation of Islamic thought with the modern theory of state and society to create a nation-state based on the Egyptian identity rather than a pan-Arab one. Like Muhammad Abduh (1849-1905), the first Islamic modernist but a critic of European materialism, the Ottoman-Tunisian diplomat Hayreddin Pasha (1820-1890) was in favor of reorganizing the Muslim community through European-style institutions.

Conversely, the Christian-Arab thinkers, notably the nationalist scholar al-Bustani, defended secularism, equality of religious communities, and civic nationalism (Hourani, 1983). Likewise, Jurji Zaidan (1861-1914)—a Lebanese scholar and a great contributor to the development of Arab nationalism and Arab Enlightenment through his theorizing and writings in various fields—strongly advocated a secular national identity empowered by European liberal thinking. Considering the Arabic language as the "most sublime language in the world" and a unique transmitter of Arab history and civilization, Zaidan claimed that "Arab collective identity depends on preserving the literary language" (Philipp, 2014, pp. 195-196). Even though the Enlightenment age declined in the post-1948 period, Arab liberals among the new generations have followed their path.

3.3.3. The New Arab Liberals

The 1967 War became a turning point for contemporary Arab intellectual history and a driving force for the ideological reorientations in Arab society. As Laroui indicates, "The Arabs were impressed by the essentially political, and therefore social, character of the 1967 defeat" (1977, p. 93). The defeat of 1967 and the dramatic events following it, notably the rise of Israeli aggression on neighboring Arab countries, brought about a debate on the causes of the defeat and urged 'self-criticism' not only among the political elite but also in the intelligentsia. The primary concern of the post-1967 Arab thinkers was to 'deconstruct' the Arab identity and restore the dignity of Arab peoples through the regeneration of society. Yet they had various challenges, such as the ideologically polarized intelligentsia and fragmented society preoccupied with economic crises and the state's excessive role. The liberal discourse, among the modern Arab currents, had historically been the most silent and 'defensive' until the early 1990s when it appeared to be the "only viable one" despite its shortcomings (Abu-Rabi, 2003, p. 75).

Liberal ideas have taken part in all Arab ideological movements throughout the 20th century. Yet, Arab liberal thought did not decisively determine the political scene until the last decades because of being politically ineffective, ideologically dispersed, and strategically indecisive. Identifying themselves as "new liberals," the post-1967 Arab liberals (writers, scholars, sociologists, human rights activists, clerics/*ulama*) formulated their vision based on the legacy of the Nahda. In this respect, for promoting social sciences and democracy, they established civic associations (e.g., The Association of Arab Rationalists and The Ibn Khaldun Center), produced texts and periodicals *(*e.g., *al-Dimuqratiyya*-The Democracy), and declared manifestos (e.g., The Manifesto of New Arab Liberals), which were drafted by liberal discourse and emphasized the need for renewal of the liberal age (Hatina, 2015). Although they differed on the ideological basis—i.e., Islamic-oriented, anti-Islamic tradition/secularism, socialist/leftist, and pro-Western culture—the new liberals called for the construction of liberal identity, the introduction of a democratic system and political parties, and the promotion of civil rights, especially those of women. While some of them, considering it the major obstacle to the Arab enlightenment, favored the elimination of religious identity from Arab thinking, others advocated the depoliticization of Islam (Govrin, 2014).

Among the post-1967 Arab intellectuals, the Egyptian politician and writer Faraj Ali Fuda (1945-1992), with a robust anti-Islamist stance, particularly against the Ikhwan, wrote on

the importance of separation of religion from politics and a functioning multi-party system. In this respect, Fuda founded *Hizb al-Mustaqbal* (The Future Party) in 1991 with his fellows. The party platform of the Mustaqbal declared its commitment to the democratic process and promised to guarantee freedom of thought, expression, religion, and women's rights under the guidance of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. To stress the secular identity of the Party, it was affirmed that "Religion is for Allah and the motherland is for the people" (Hatina, 2007, p. 227). In parallel to Fuda, Morocco's post-independence philosopher Abdallah Laroui (1933-) offers to reconstruct Arab thought and transform the society based on "universal logic" as an overall solution to the chronic problems in the Arab world, such as ensuring national unity and struggle against the Zionists. In *The Crisis of the Arab Intellectual*, he criticized the intelligentsia for relying on traditional epistemology and methodology and attacked the Islamic culture on the ground of hindering Arab "rationalization" (Laroui, 1977).

Among the new liberals, nationalist scholar Constantine Zurayk (1909-2000) had an intellectual influence on modern Arab thought with his various works. Zurayk's principal reason for the Arab "backwardness" was intellectual dogmatism and determinism. The military and strategic weakness of the Arabs against the Zionists was essentially due to the Arab denial of Western achievements and resistance to modern civilization (Faris, 1988). As an overall solution, Zurayk offered a "revolution of reason" as "it is with rationalism that these peoples realize that their first problem is cultural underdevelopment." He also dreamed of Arab national unity based on a "humanistic nationalism and secular democracy" (Kassab, 2010, p. 70). As a secular critic of Islamism, Aziz al-Azmeh (1947-) focuses on the conceptions of Arab identity, which he claims to be populist, essentialist, romantic, and out of rationality (Kassab, 2010, pp. 231-232). From the feminist side, Moroccan writer Fatima Mernissi (1940-2015) supported Arab liberalism vigorously but, unlike her secular counterparts, with faith in blending democratic values with Islamic culture. In *Islam and Democracy: Fear of the Modern World* (2002), Mernissi argues that experience with Western exploitation caused the Arabs to draw 'cultural' boundaries with modernity and have 'baseless' suspicions towards liberal concepts. By claiming that "Arab women are not afraid of modernity, because for them it is an unhoped-for opportunity to construct an alternative to the tradition that weighs so heavily on them," she shows an optimistic stance on the end of 'masculine' authoritarian power through liberalization upon overcoming fears of the past and present (Mernissi, 2002, p. 150).

3.3.4. Post-Islamism

With a complex nature and growing diversity, Islamist ideology has gradually evolved into two distinct forms under historical circumstances. Following the First Gulf War and the US-led coalition's involvement in the region and emboldened by the Soviet defeat in Afghanistan by the Islamist resistance fighters (*mujahidin*), the minority group within the Islamist movement (e.g., al-Jihad and Jamaat al-Islamiyah) has taken a radical path to challenge regimes at home and operate transnationally. International pressures generated by September 11 (2001) and the invasion of Afghanistan (2001) and Iraq (2003) have opened a new phase in relations with the West and deepened the split between the two Islamist trends. The majority group has adopted political activism, relying on nonviolent means, giving rise to the term "post-Islamism" (Bokhari & Senzai, 2013).

The failure of Islamism in many respects, not the disappearance but the decline of its political appeal, has intensified the search for political modernity. The crisis of Islamist movements in addressing modernity, creating an Islamic order, building an effective Islamic economy, and creating a stable social environment raised the question of future direction. Beyond morality, they could not present an alternative political model to the traditional order. Iran, for example, failed to ensure pluralism and maintained the autocratic tradition. The realization that it is difficult to achieve political goals with the current agenda has also accelerated the 'reorientation' (Roy, 1994). Influenced by global dynamics, most Islamists, which are also diverse, reconsidered their primary goals, especially the ideals of an Islamic state, toward the end of the last century. In contrast to the revolutionary path, contemporary Islamists have adopted legal methods, despite the rise of radical movements such as al-Qaeda and Daesh, which emerged as a reaction to unsuccessful modernization and globalization and arguably foreign infiltration. Moreover, the concept of the Islamic *ummah* has been replaced by a particularistic one with national agendas, i.e., "Islamo-nationalism" (Roy, 2020, p. 172).

What Bayat (2013) and Roy (2020) call "post-Islamism" implies a general shift in the objectives and strategies of a branch of Islamist movements. Under the effects of globalization and pressures from within, like the rise of pro-democracy elements, they have embraced the coalition of religious thought and political freedom, replacing the goal of the Islamic order with a constitutional framework. While rejecting the use of violence and the ideals of a religious state, post-Islamists emphasize individual rights and duties defined by citizenship. Yet, though claiming no major role for religion in the administration, they still

highlight the essential role of religious principles and morality in society (Bayat, 2013). By the 2000s, standing for the compatibility of Islamic values with democratic principles, many Islamist parties have entered the electoral competition as "conservative" parties with a new agenda to transform society through political action. Considering their new political programs, the Green Movement in Iran, the Justice and Development Party in Morocco, the Ikhwan and its counterparts in the region, the al-Nahda Party in Tunisia, the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) in Algeria, and the Islamic Action Front (IAF) in Jordan are examples of this vision despite their different experiences with democracy (Roy, 2004).

Rached Ghannouchi, the co-founder and leader of Tunisia's al-Nahda Party, is a notable reformist among contemporary post-Islamist political leaders. In his youth, Ghannouchi participated anti-Bourguiba groups driven by Islamic concerns. Yet, having been a Western-educated young and influenced by both Western and Eastern literature, he embraced a political thought connecting Islamic values with a liberal current, including the issue of gender equality (Tamimi, 2013). In his book, *Public Freedoms in the Islamic State* (2020), written in prison in the 1990s, Ghannouchi criticized despotism in the region and discussed the Islamic and Western perspectives on the concepts of universal human rights and civic freedom. With an in-depth analysis, he thinks that Islamic principles and liberal democracy are not exclusive but supportive of each other. To emphasize the ideological transition of the Islamist movement in Tunisia, Ghannouchi claims that his party's retreat from the nonpolitical agenda (cultural and religious issues) as the repressive context of the 1980s for the Arab Muslim identity is dramatically changing. Stressing the need for democratization and separation of religion from politics, Ghannouchi concludes that "Ennahda has moved beyond its origins as an Islamist party and has fully embraced a new identity as a party of Muslim democrats. Therefore, the party no longer accepts the label of Islamism" (Ghannouchi, 2016, pp. 58-59).

3.3.5. Reformist Movements

In contrast to the narrative about the irrelevance of civic culture in the Arab world, the concept was already on the agenda and among the major concerns of the public opposition. Given the ongoing socioeconomic crisis and state repression, the rise of human rights movements and intellectual discourse on the issue is noteworthy in assessing Arab engagement with the concept. Under international human rights conventions, civil associations—e.g., the Moroccan League of Human Rights (1972), the Tunisian League for Human Rights (1976), the Palestinian Al-Haq (1979), and the Egyptian Organization

for Human Rights (1985)—are committed to promoting the democratic principles. They have also participated in relevant regional congresses, such as the International Conference of the Human Rights Movement in the Arab World (1999-2001). In several declarations, they affirmed the inalienability of universal human rights for the Arab peoples and called on the Arab governments to implement them (Chase & Hamzawy, 2008). In the political dimension, various liberal parties across the region declared to work for the establishment of an Arab liberal political system based on secularism, freedom, and a market economy. For instance, the Arab Liberal Federation (ALF) was established in 2008, in Cairo, as a political network by liberal political parties and organizations, such as the Free Egyptians Party (FEP), Afek Tounes (AT) of Tunisia, Popular Movement of Morocco, the National Liberal Party of Lebanon, and Free Thought Forum of Jordan (Szmolka, 2021, p. 71).

Social movements (the collective action aimed at social change), one of the most important effects of globalization, have also appeared as an agent of change in the Arab world, which has a large young population. As an alternative to state-owned mainstream media, press, and TV channels, urban Arab youth, struggling with the growing circle of state intimidation, have relied on information technology sources, i.e., social media, to identify and express themselves (Lim, 2012). A notable example of such a reform-oriented social movement, Kefaya (*Enough!*), or the Egyptian Movement for Change, was founded in 2004 as an opposition movement by a national coalition of anti-government and pro-reform activists. With the slogan "No to inheritance, no to extension," the movement mobilized against Mubarak's intention to extend his term as president and leave the rule to his son Gamal Mubarak. The movement sought regime change beyond the reforms with a broad base of various anti-Mubarak groups (Islamists, secularists, liberalists, nationalists, and leftists). In conveying its messages to the public, Kefaya used various modern means, such as the Internet, social media, and publications. Organizing peaceful protests, Kefaya has inspired future movements in the region (Oweidat, 2008, pp. 18, 13).

Altogether, the failure of political power in providing peace and stability to the people, the exhaustion of ideological movements in offering a functioning alternative, the partial implementation of neoliberal economic initiatives, and the improved access to information technology with globalization allowed the intellectual environment and social movements to speak up against the authoritarian state and the deteriorating socioeconomic conditions and contribute to the course of uprisings that broke out in the last days of 2010, which is the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION: ARAB LIBERAL DISCOURSE?

Arab nationalism and Islamism were the two main political ideologies in the Arab world in the last century. The deep dissatisfaction with absolute power and the shared motivations of almost all social groups (nationalists, Islamists, socialists, secularists, feminists) has generated the desire for a change in Arab thought revealed in the context of the Arab Spring (*al-Rabi al-Arabi*). With a focus on popular uprisings, this chapter contextualizes the discourse of the Arab peoples during the uprisings with collected examples, including a revolutionary orientation and liberal terminology. Because discursive practice is a component of an ideological framework and reflects unobservable thought, the discourse analytic approach can provide a valuable way to grip ideational orientations. It also explicitly presents the relationship between the construction and perception of socially produced meaning among social groups (van Dijk, 2007). The chapter concludes with a social constructivist analysis of the discourse and political activism of the Arab uprisings.

No social research is free of limitations that potentially affect the interpretation of the findings and make it difficult to generalize. The component of limitations—which also may exist in this thesis—is caused by conditions, the scope of the research, time and technical constraints, language barriers, and the bias of the researcher (Shipman, 2014). The Arab region is not ethnically, religiously, ideologically homogeneous, or politically identical. Therefore, the ideological orientations of the Arab leaders in charge do not necessarily reflect their citizens' views or vice versa. Arguably, no major development in the region can be interpreted properly without considering Western influence. However, with some exceptions, internal dynamics and politically oriented discourse of the Arab citizens during the uprisings are the basis of this thesis. Besides, the study focuses on some of the large discursive data due to the scope of the thesis, time limit, and linguistic barriers. It analyzed the first stages (from December 2010 to May 2011) of large-scale upheavals in Tunisia, Egypt, Syria, Libya, Bahrain, and Yemen, while others experienced relatively short-lived ones. A sample of empirical data (public opinion surveys, statements, slogans, graffiti art, and language of media and social figures) was gathered from accessible online sources in English or Arabic, i.e., videos, news, documentaries, and blogs. Lastly, liberal discourse and political identity here imply the calls for a liberal governance system, or liberal democracy, which connotates an accountable and effective state.

4.1. THE OUTBREAK OF THE UPRISINGS

When the young Tunisian Mohamed Bouazizi (at age 26) set himself on fire on December 17, 2010, because of the worsening socioeconomic injustices, the political system in the Arab world seemed no longer sustainable, and mass demonstrations broke out in the country, spreading to almost the entire region. However, the domino effect of political upheavals has not produced identical outcomes in all parts of the region. While many regimes responded with a combination of coercion and force, social spending or political concessions (e.g., granting women the right to vote and be voted), and financial rewards to prevent the downfall, few others immediately plunged into revolutionary change, bringing parliamentary elections and new political groups to power. In addition to the similar roots of the demonstrations, the aspirations of the protesters (Islamist, leftist, feminist, and secular groups, as well as workers and students) for "Freedom, Social Justice, and Dignity" constituted the common objectives. Admittedly, these leaderless and civic uprisings have reaffirmed the power of the individuals as nonstate actors in IR theory. In the course of ongoing debates, they have also significantly affected Middle East studies, Orientalist narratives, and realist and monolithic perspectives (Sadiki, 2016).

To describe the transformative aspect of the uprisings, Dabashi (2012) uses the terms "end of post-colonialism" and "exhaustion of Islamist ideology." By assessing the uprisings in the same frame as the Iranian Green Movement of 2009 (a pro-democracy social movement), Dabashi draws attention to the ideological shift in the region as the liberation and open-ended revolutions have challenged tyranny and the "regime of knowledge" (the dominant mode of knowledge production and Orientalist narrative about the region). According to Telhami (2013), after two decades of studying Arab public opinion regarding democracy and the West, we can draw two fundamental lessons from the uprisings. Arab peoples favor a democratic political system though not taking a Western country as a model because of the counterproductive US-led democracy promotion in the region. Bayat refers to the events as "post-Islamist refo-lutionary (a mixture of reforms and revolutions)" and as an expression of "the post-Islamist orientation and the growth of democratic sensibility in the region" (2014, p. xvi). Bayat bases this argument on the absence of Islamist discourse and the civic nature of the uprisings, which involved almost all social forces with different backgrounds but identical political environments and shared objectives. Despite the ongoing debates about the roots and outcomes of the events, scholars agree on the shift in the region's political vision and geopolitical landscape.

4.1.1. The Large-Scale Demonstrations

The end of quasi-monarchical and personal power, the presidency of Arab rulers for life, most of whom were military in origin and appointed their son as a potential successor, was one of the primary motivations of the uprisings. The anti-presidential sentiment was fueled by the centralized state, characterized by political patronage, arbitrary arrests, military trials, corruption, security apparatus, and the crackdown on opposition forces. In addition, the main beneficiaries of the neoliberal-caused increase in GDP were not the civilian population but the crony capitalists around the Presidents. The demonstrators were also motivated by nationalist concerns about the alliance between the domestic regimes and foreign powers and, for some, the defensive position toward Israel. All of these regimes experienced the largest protests in the region and the sudden overthrow of presidents-Zein El Abidine Ben Ali of Tunisia (1987-2011), Hosni Mubarak of Egypt (1981-2011), al-Qaddafi of Libya (1977-2011), and Ali Abdullah Saleh of Yemen (1978-2012). Bashar al-Assad of Syria (2000-present) and Omar al-Bashir of Sudan (1993-2019), on the other hand, were able to hold onto power after the revolts (Owen, 2014).

In Tunisia, in addition to the authoritarian rule and domination of Ben Ali's family in the economy, the failure to privatize the bureaucracy-owned business sector and to meet the expectations of the Tunisian youth fueled the resentment against the regime. The decisive democratic upheavals and characteristics of the Tunisian population—high education rates, internet use, urbanization, and political awareness—and the military's reluctance to use force against civilians led to the resignation of Ben Ali in January and elections in October 2011. The unforeseen and successful revolution in Tunisia, the Jasmine Revolution, immediately triggered Egypt's January 25/Tahrir Revolution of 2011 and other mass protests throughout the region (Angrist, 2013). Egyptians—who make up the largest population in the region with more than 100 million people, at least 51% of which consists of youth aged under 25 (World Population Review, 2022)—lived under increasing poverty, inadequate social services, and class exploitation. After the Tunisian Revolution, Egypt's 18-day uprisings involved millions of Egyptians, socially marginalized and independent youth, and indirect support from the armed forces, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), arguably the most decisive factor in the downfall of Mubarak yet prioritizing the protection of self-interests. The fall of Hosni Mubarak's 30-year rule was followed by the electoral victory of the Ikhwan in 2012, under Egypt's first democratically elected president, Mohamed Morsi (Tschirgi, Kazziha, & McMahon, 2013).

Although small and oil-exporting Bahrain and poor Syria have little in common, they have experienced the same fate during the process. In both countries, ruling elites hold high positions in the power, economic sector, and security forces to protect the regime. Discrimination and exclusion of the Shia community from the bureaucratic positions and security forces for fear of losing balance to the Shias, who make up the majority of the population, has been the main source of discontent among Bahraini protesters. Meanwhile, Syrians have been fed up with the dictatorial rule of al-Assad (2000-present) and economic hardship. While Bahraini protesters demanded a representative government and political equality in the face of a violent response, Syrians opposed emergency laws and torture by the intelligence services and called for an inclusive constitution and a fair economic system. However, neither achieved the desired results mainly because of foreign intervention favoring the ruling elite, which increased brutal means to crack down on the opposition. Furthermore, civil protests in majority-Sunni Syria (under the Alawite rule) and majority-Shia Bahrain (under the Sunni monarchy) have gradually been sectarianized and evolved into continuing internal conflicts (Gelvin, 2015).

The Libyan and Yemeni cases also have certain similarities, namely the tribal systems and international interests in the countries (oil and strategic energy routes) and the transformation of anti-government revolts into internal conflicts after foreign involvement. Al-Qaddafi's Libya and Saleh's Yemen, one of the most corrupt regimes, had turned out to be dictatorships under international economic sanctions. While economic difficulties fueled public pressure, coercion became a means of deterrence to quell public opposition. In March 2011, one month after the protests began, the UN Security Council handled the clashes between the protestors and security forces with Resolution 1973 (2011), aimed at "protecting" Libyan civilians. Thereupon, military intervention conducted by a coalition of states led by NATO (the North Atlantic Treaty Organization) in Libya overthrew the 42-year rule of al-Qaddafi. However, the intervention ushered in a new, violent, and chaotic phase in Libyan history (Lynch, 2013). Meanwhile, the Yemeni political crisis—caused by the delay of parliamentary elections, enhancement of security forces, and Saleh's intention to transfer the power to his son—accelerated the anti-Saleh protests. Ultimately, the continued peaceful demonstrations and international pressures forced Saleh to resign. However, post-Saleh Yemen failed to overcome the political instability and security crisis as it has become the ground of the Iran-Saudi Arabia rivalry, leaving millions of Yemenis in an extreme humanitarian crisis (Lackner, 2017).

4.2. WRITTEN DISCURSIVE PRACTICES

In the transformation of the modern Arab world, the political discourse has been shaped throughout and subsequently accompanied by ideological frameworks of nationalism, pan-Arabism, socialism, and Islamism, as mentioned above. When we came to the early 21st century, the political course of the region turned out to be dominated by 'liberal discourse' in the context of Arab uprisings. In conducting a DA, this and the following subtitles discuss the data classified as written and spoken discursive practices drawn from the uprisings, even though the term text is not confined to written language but any discourse by discourse analysts. The written discourses examined here include public opinion surveys, oppositional statements, and selected social media posts and media content.

4.2.1. Arab Public Opinion

As an effective method of social science research, public opinion surveys can provide insightful analysis for understanding the political attitudes of any population group. Given this, the findings of several empirical studies conducted on the eve of the 21st century in the four Arab countries of Egypt, Morocco, Algeria, and Palestine (West Bank and Gaza) have shown that the Arab public emphasizes the importance and necessity of democratic institutions, accountability, and free and regular elections for the development of society. In contrast to the argument that Islam and democracy are incompatible, data support the view that religious affiliations are not necessarily associated with anti-democratic tendencies (Tessler, 2002). The region-wide polls conducted on the eve and in the early stages of the Arab uprisings show that Arab public opinion, notably the younger generation, strongly supports the components of liberal values: secular and nonideological politics, political modernity and pluralism, economic freedom, limited state, separation of powers, and human rights, while preferences for gender equality were still relatively low.

These facts are seen in the results of a few opinion surveys (Annual Arab Public Opinion Survey, Arab Opinion Index, and Arab Barometer Public Opinion Surveys, 2010-2011) conducted at a time when the 2011 uprisings shook the region revealing that a large majority of respondents supported the revolutions and Arab solidarity to achieve civil liberties, social justice, and equality for all citizens. The respondents preferred citizenship, Islamic identity, and Arabness as the essential affiliations to identify themselves. The results also indicate that Arab people were optimistic about the success of the uprisings, the establishment of a democratic system, and the building of a better future. The studies conclude that a high percentage of Arabs still view the Palestinian question as the Arab

cause. The second Arab Youth Survey (2010) by ASDA'A BCW [7] showed that Arab youth (aged 18-24) viewed democracy and transfer of power upon electoral competition as the most favorable governance model for their countries having a legitimacy crisis. Better infrastructure and the possibility of access to the best university education, employment, and a safe environment were the top concerns after "living in a democratic country."

4.2.2. Statements by Civil Society

Although the movements lacked clear leadership, civil society and social movements from different ideological backgrounds became the spokesperson for the riots with activism and statements on behalf of the public. While the manifestos and declarations focused on the local context, they also transmitted the common demands of all the protestors. All were raised for the establishment of an independent and effective national, political, and economic system and the restoration of national dignity. The Statement of Principles of the Local Coordination Committees of Syria in April (2011) called for coordination between opposition groups. Aside from the demands for "the principles of freedom and human rights, national dignity, a free press, an independent judiciary, regular elections, a limit on the number of presidential terms, a democratic transition, and the establishment of national institutions," the Syrian opposition was concerned with national unity upon the end of governmental discrimination against any ethnic, religious, or sectarian community through the constitutional recognition of the diversity of the Syrian society. Likewise, the Statement of the April 6th Movement (2011) in Egypt stressed the need to preserve unity among "all Egyptians who suffered under Mubarak's rule" and stability in the country.

Bahrain's Coalition of February 14 Youth (CFY), the country's most influential oppositional group coordinated on social media, aimed at the complete transformation of the Bahraini political system through a popular revolution. Declaring that "We are determined to liberate our precious homeland from dictatorship, and build a nation of justice, dignity, and equality for all its citizens," the Coalition issued the 'Pearl Charter' in which they outlined the key objectives of the movement: "the fall of the al-Khalifa regime and ensuring the right to self-determination, an independent and fair judiciary, separation of powers, fair distribution of wealth, and preserving national unity" (Jones, 2012). In this

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[7] A research agency conducting annual surveys through face-to-face interviews to figure out the opinions and political attitudes of the over 200 million of Arab youth related to a specific topic since 2008.

sense, the people of Bahrain considered the transition to liberal democracy the only way to eliminate inequality and lack of legitimacy.

The Libyan Youth Movement (LYM) declared its objectives on its Facebook page (2011) as "to awaken our people from the unjust oppression and remove the ring of corruption and despotism, and provide stability and security of the Libyan citizens." On the other hand, the process enabled women, who experienced sexual violence, torture, and humiliation before and during the uprisings, to be more visible and active social actors—as Raghida Dergham (2011) called women "Rise up and be heard, Arab sisters"—struggling for equality (Egyptians Protest Against Beating of Women, 2011). The role of female activists and Women's Rights Movements had two visions, political liberalization, and women's emancipation through the revision of patriarchal gender codes. The leading women's rights activists—Dalia Ziada (Egypt), Maria Al-Masani (Yemen), Lamees Dhaif (Bahrain), and Danya Bashir Hobba (Libya)—worked to guarantee equal treatment and political rights, economic freedom, education, and inviolability of body for women (Bohn, 2012).

The short-term uprisings in the Palestinian territories were mainly concerned with improving the living conditions and unity in the national resistance, namely the reconciliation between al-Fatah and Hamas. The Gaza Youth Manifesto (2010) criticized the government's violations of human rights, their "separation from the rest of the world under the Israeli blockade, and the indifference of the international community." They summed up their concerns as "We want to be free. We want to be able to live a normal life. We want peace." A worker-concerned group Egypt's Revolutionary Socialists (RS), calling for a popular revolution that would bring socioeconomic equality and "restore Egypt's independence, dignity and leadership in the region," actively participated in anti-regime rallies and issued a public statement calling for the resignation of the government. Claiming that "Mubarak's departure is the first step, not the last step of the revolution," they stood for a complete systemic change as the successor to Mubarak would be among his cronies, the 'clients' serving the interests of the US and Israel. To them, unless the means of production were nationalized and the county's wealth returned to the Egyptian people, there would be no real revolution (Socialist Worker, 2011), concluding that:

> *"Glory to the martyrs!*
> *Down with the system!*
> *All power to the people!*
> *Victory to the revolution!"*

4.2.3. Social Media Discourse

"We use Facebook to schedule the protests, Twitter to coordinate, and YouTube to tell the world," said Twitter activist Fawaz Rashed (2011). That is to say, "online activism" emerged as a viable source of information and determined the social mobilization and course of the uprisings. Social media connected the geographically dispersed groups and provided a context for the followers to communicate and act simultaneously. Through the formation and spread of the liberation discourse, symbols, and images, Twitter, Facebook, TV channels, YouTube, and websites became powerful agents of collective action and change (Lim, 2012). As an alternative to the state-controlled mass media, modern tools of communication, i.e., satellite TV, the Internet, radio stations, blogs, and social media were crucial for coordinating the masses and providing a platform for civil resistance. As Nasser had done throughout the anti-imperial campaign, the media connected Arabs speaking local dialects through standardized Arabic. They also enabled youth to organize street demonstrations and spread the stories with shared cultural codes and digital propaganda, giving rise to the term "Social Media Revolution" (Bossio, 2014, p. 22).

While the state-controlled or pro-government TV channels, newspapers, and journalists remained silent about the unexpected popular mobilizations, some media agencies such as BBC Arabic and Al Jazeera facilitated the production and dissemination of the oppositional meaning. The Qatar-based satellite TV channel and broadcaster Al Jazeera, which emerged in the period leading up to the uprisings, has become a source of the transnational network between Arab nations and anti-government disinformation campaigns. By offering an alternative way of information and discussion, the channel has played a substantial role in shaping contemporary Arab public opinion (Zayani, 2005). From the beginning of the uprisings, it consistently took a pro-demonstration and anti-regime stance. Through live broadcasts of the events, in both Arabic and English, and daily news, video clips, on-the-ground reports, documentaries, debates, and interviews with local and foreign figures, the channel encouraged the exchange of political views among Arab viewers. In this way, they profoundly contributed to the escalation of the protests. The content of broadcasts by Al-Jazeera during the course of events consisted of critical portrayals of the Arab leaders, the demands of the demonstrators, and the brutal treatment of the protesters by the security forces. Some political terms such as democracy movement, freedom of expression, reform, revolution, Arab 'nations,' civil unrest, transition, people, military, and dictator (s) were frequently used by the channel in documenting the uprisings (Al Jazeera, 2011).

The Facebook group with millions of users, We Are All Khaled Said, provides a glimpse of the power of social media in educating and encouraging youth to engage in political activism. It was created in 2010 by Egyptian activists to express their anger against the human rights abuses and the murder of Internet activist Khaled Said by police because of his critique of police corruption. The rapid spread of the image of his story through postings on the site provoked millions of Egyptians to launch revolutionary street demonstrations. In doing so, the page called for "collective action" by all Egyptians to eliminate systematic torture, corruption, underdevelopment, and social hierarchy (Lim, 2012, pp. 241-242). A YouTube video released by young activist Asmaa Mahfouz was also key in the Egyptian uprising that brought the fall of the Mubarak regime. In the video, which led hundreds of thousands of people to meet at Tahrir Square the next day, she called the Egyptians to overthrow the government by inciting that they had nothing to lose but dignity:

> "…Four Egyptians have set themselves on fire thinking maybe we can have a revolution like Tunisia, maybe we can have freedom, justice, honor and human dignity… I am making this video to give you one simple message: We want to go down to Tahrir Square on January 25th. If we still have the honor and want to live in dignity on this land, we have to go down on January 25th. We will go down and demand our rights, our fundamental human rights" ("Asmaa Mahfouz & The YouTube Video," 2011).

According to the Arab Social Media Report (2011), with a significant increase in the number of new social media and internet users in the Arab world, especially Facebook and Twitter, social networks have created a platform for "political conversations" and raising political awareness among civil society organizations and ordinary people. The report shows that the number of tweets written in Arabic, French, and English increased by 41%. Another report, revealed by the Project on Information Technology and Political Islam (2011), analyzed the political re/orientation of Arab youth that developed before the uprisings based on the content of millions of tweets, Facebook posts, and YouTube videos. According to the Project, the political topics and keywords covered in the posts of different groups (political parties with different positions, labor unions, and civil society organizations) inside and outside the region were related to political leadership and resignations, the economy, and news of the events. A large proportion of posts increasingly dealt with political freedom, revolution, and democracy, while the term 'Islam' came last. The conclusion, thus, can be drawn from the recurrent themes in the social media posts is that the principal concern of Arab social media users was to create a political tool to express their demands and enforce the government to implement the needed reforms.

4.3. SPOKEN AND VISUAL DISCURSIVE PRACTICES

Spoken discourses, regarded as important as written ones by discourse analysts, were used much more during the uprisings process and even as the main source of expression for widespread dissatisfaction. In this sense, the objective of this section is to analyze the slogans, politically significant graffiti on the walls, and the language of several social leaders who actively involved and encouraged the people in the demonstrations.

4.3.1. Slogans and Poetry

As part of the opposition action, slogans and signs were resorted to as the iconic way of expression. The signs held by protesters, supporting the slogans and other forms of discourse, were adapted and reproduced regionally with minor changes, presenting a sample of interdiscursivity. Likewise, the transnational slogans, especially "The People Want" and "Revolution," were repeated countless times in various forms of protests, from marches and signs to cartoons and painted walls across the region. Despite the differences among the demonstrators, the common motivation was the change for a better future. Some messages on many signs, such as democracy and freedom, were delivered in English to make their voice heard by the world, calling on world leaders to side with the pro-democracy protests and stop supporting the Arab leaders (Jadaliyya Reports, 2011).

The most voiced political slogans, which appeared simultaneously on signs, were "The People Demand Removal of the Regime" (*A"l-Sha'b Yurid Isqat al-Nizam"*) (see Figure 4), "Freedom, Social Justice, Dignity" (*Huriyyah, Adalah Ijtima'iyah, Karamah*), "Enough!," "Game Over," "Go Away/Leave!" (*Irhal*), "Revolution until Victory," and "Peaceful, Peaceful" *(Silmiyya, Silmiyya).* The Tunisian slogan "The People Want" was borrowed by the rest of the region and reproduced with local concepts, sometimes with the posters of Nasser and Che Guevara. They chanted the same slogans as the manifest of frustration in the modern Arabic dialect and produced separate ones unique to their country (Global Voices, 2011). In Egypt, facing high food prices, unemployment, and wide nepotism, the end of poverty was one of the primary quests of the crowds, as stated in the slogan "Bread, Freedom, and Social Justice." A piece of bread (*aish*), meaning also life in Arabic, was held often during the anti-regime protests across the region to symbolize the public anger with poverty and demands for survival (Malterre-Barthes, 2017). The Libyans reiterated the speech of al-Qaddafi that defined the protesters as the "enemy" of Libya to be hunted down, "inch by inch, house by house…alleyway by alleyway, person by person"

(Middle East Eye, 2021). Frustrated with poverty, corruption, and long-lasting military rule, the Yemenis summarized their demands with the notions of "Peace" and "Civil State" (Al Arabiya, 2011). The grievances of the Bahraini Shias against discrimination and human rights violations were embodied in the calls for "Justice" (Shiite Protesters, 2011).

A distinctive feature of the slogans and signs was the self-identification of the protesters not with ethnic or religious affiliations but with civic concepts as a common identity, like the People (*al-sha'b*) and Citizens. Using the terms *naḥnu* (we) and *hum/hu* (they/he), the protestors imagined the two camps in which the opposition groups were liberating the nation from foreign agents. A good example was the setting of a common slogan by the Syrians for the marches against al-Assad. Organizing online they chose a saying, "A revolution for all Syrians," to unite all citizens under the same banner and avoid cleavages of ethnic and sectarian identities manipulated by the regime (Atassi & Wikstrom, 2012). Similarly, the Yemeni slogan captioned on the national flag, "No partisanship! No parties, Our Revolution is a Revolution of the Youth," was to indicate the nonideological nature of the uprisings (Day, 2011). In response to Mubarak's policy to create a religious split, the Egyptians presented religious tolerance, voicing that "Christians and Muslims, We Are All Egyptians" (No Comment TV, 2011), like the Bahrainis who presented the Shias and Sunnis in unity. The usage of the term *nizam* (order) indicated that the uprisings sought a genuine systemic change rather than a mere power transition, as seen in the slogan, "No to Hosni, no to his regime, no to his supporters" (Coglianese, 2011).

Figure 4

The Common Slogan of the Arab Uprisings

Note. An image captured by Popo le Chien in Tahrir Square on February 12, 2011, and released into the public domain via Wikimedia Commons. Available at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ash-shab_yurid_isqat_an-nizam

Throughout Arab history, literature, traditional music, and poetry have been the primary means of forming and transmitting Arab thought. In modern times, they were a reflection of cultural resistance. In each, the fundamental message is that the people were fed up living under deteriorating conditions, coercion, and divisive and unresponsive rule, which needs to be down entirely for true freedom and peace. Among many revolutionary songs, there are some hits throughout the region: "Rais Lebled" (Mr. President-Tunisia), "Irhal" (Egypt), "Zenga" (Alleyway-Libya), "Huriyyah" (Freedom-Yemen), "Irhal, ya Bashar" (Leave-Syria), and "Iradat al-Hayat" (The Will to Live-Morocco) (The Soundtrack of the Arab Uprisings, 2020). The famous rap song "Rais Lebled ("Mr. President") by Tunisian rapper El General summed up the motivations of the masses and became the voice of the pro-democracy protests in the region. His lyrics attacked President Ben Ali's ignorance of the voice of the Tunisian people, who suffered from poverty and injustice, lived in humiliation, and were treated like "animals" by the illegitimate government, which was supposed to and promised to serve the nation:

> *"Mr. President, today I am speaking in name of myself and of all the people*
> *Who is suffering in 2011, there are still people dying of hunger*
> *Mr. President, you told me to speak without fear*
> *But I know that eventually I will take just slaps*
> *I see too much injustice and so I decided to send this message even though the*
> *people told me that my end is death*
> *But until when the Tunisian will leave in dreams, where is the right of expression?*
> *They are just words"* (Michelangelo Severgnini, 2011).

Similarly, the revolutionary poetry of various Arab poets brought the people together on the streets and urged them to realize their dreams of freedom and democracy. For example, the Syrian poet Nizar Qabbani (1923-1998), a nationalist, feminist, and pro-democracy figure, was recalled for criticizing the autocracy (Ismat, 2019). During the mass protests, the anger and hopes of the Arab public were embodied in his words written in 1967, "When will you go away?" describing the Arab leaders as the "puppets" of foreign actors (Moubayed, 2018). The Syrian singer Ibrahim Qashoush, the writer of the iconic chants (see an example below), like "Yalla, Irhal ya Bashar," became a symbol of the resistance after his murder by the security forces. Qashoush and his Syrian fellows mainly focused on the concept of 'freedom' to articulate the authoritarian context of the Syrian society, which has been under harsh state censorship, economic restrictions, and the intimidation of intelligence services. Qashoush defined the Syrians as "We" (Muslims, Christians, Druze, and Kurds) in his song Freedom. In contrast, al-Assad and his supporters were portrayed as infiltrators of Iran and thieves (*haramyy*) robbing their lives (Syrian Chants,

2020). The famous poem "The Will to Life" by Tunisia's national poet Abu al-Qasim al-Shabbi (1909-1934) incited the people with his encouraging words, by which he signified that the only power would be the will of the people once they committed it (Colla, 2012):

> *"If one day, the people want to live, then fate will answer their call*
> *And their night will then begin to fade, and their chains break and fall…"*

"Syria Needs Freedom!" (By Ibrahim Qashoush)

> *"When we demanded freedom,*
> *They (Assad loyalists) labeled us terrorists.*
> *Our revolution is a peaceful revolution!*
> *It is written on our flag,*
> *Bashar is a traitor to our homeland*
> *Death over humiliation!"*

The uprisings were inherently multifaceted with political, economic, and social concerns. Yet, the feelings of humiliation and backwardness against the inhuman conditions often overshadowed the economic hardships. Faisal al-Qassem, a journalist for Al Jazeera, expressed this in 2003, saying that "Why does every nation on Earth move to change their conditions except for us?" (Lynch, 2011). Like, Asmaa Mahfouz criticized the apathy with "People, have some shame!" ("Asmaa Mahfouz & the YouTube Video," 2011). Thus, psychological elements, for example, the phrase "Proud of" with national affiliations, were a significant part of the discourse that called for progress. Remarkably, the terms dignity, respect, and honor mattered as vital as economic and social well-being for the masses who felt they had lagged behind modern societies. Indeed, the concept of human dignity (the principle that all human beings inherently enjoy equal rights, respect, and treatment) is significantly upheld by traditional Islamic civilization and Arab culture with a direct reference to the Qur'anic verse, "We have conferred dignity on the children of Adam…and favored them far above most of Our creation" (17: 70, Translated by Muhammad Asad).

4.3.2. Symbolism and Graffiti

Cultural resistance, a part of the Arab liberation struggle during the age of colonialism, was also resorted to during this period but with various modern means, e.g., visual expressions, besides poetry and novels. Besides the written discourse, some specific act of rebellion by the protestors manifested their pursuit of free will, especially in Egypt, Tunisia, and Libya. The visual and spoken discursive practices—including slogans, poetry, graffiti, images, marches, songs, and sit-in protests—effectively unified the people and articulated their cause through intertextuality between the discourses.

Symbolism as a means of communication was utilized in the protests to construct a civic public. Since the public space and time represented the control of the authoritarian order, they sought to 'reconstruct' the space and time through the occupation of the public squares and arrangements of the demonstrations on specific days. First, they challenged the national holidays determined by the post-colonial state by holding protests on Fridays. The choice of January 25 (The Egyptian National Police Day) to revolt against the regime was not a coincidence but symbolic as it marks the massacre of the tens of Egyptian police by British forces, sparking the Egyptian Revolution of 1952 that abolished the monarchy and established the Republic (El Tawil, 2018). Then, they reimagined the public squares, which were perceived as a reminder of personalistic rule, and built new arenas that would become the symbol of civic activism and peoplehood as the agent of anti-status quo movements (Sadiki, 2015). Egypt's Tahrir (*liberation*) Square, which was constructed under British rule and renamed by Nasser as Tahrir after the Suez victory, has been the center of unity, mass resistance, revolutionary changes, and civic life in the country. The uprisings renewed the status of Tahrir as the symbol of resistance and freedom (Nassar, 2011).

As Khatib denotes, "No political development in the Middle East has been as highly visual as the Arab Spring" (2013, p. 117). The use of imagery, which has not been used so much before, indicates the limitation of legal ways to make people's voices heard. When peaceful demonstrations were not allowed or were met with violence, the civilians developed an alternative form of self-expression. By creating a space to communicate the revolutionary discourse of the movements, public art, especially graffiti, became a creative form of critique of the excessive state power, so some use the term "Art Revolution." The anti-regime graffiti occupying the walls of urban centers had significant symbolic meanings. The political discourse of the graffiti and murals dealt with police brutality, poverty, critique of political leadership, national unity and solidarity, revolution, freedom, patriotism, gender equality, and political humor. The language of the revolutionary images painted with the colors of the national flags, the sign of victory, and pictures of "the martyrs" depicted the events as a struggle between the oppressed and oppressor, and the good and evil. The painted walls also suggested a close tie between the assumed enemies, Israel and the US, sometimes with the image of "Uncle Sam," and the Arab leaders working as foreign agents against the 'nation' (Egypt Political Graffiti Tahrir Square, 2013).

The political signs portrayed the people (in-group) acting in solidarity and the Presidents (out-group) in two opposite directions. While Mubarak was equated with Hitler, the

Pharaoh, and the devil, the people were struggling to survive ("Egypt Protest Signs," 2011). Like, al-Qaddafi was depicted as a rat with a green cap, the symbol of his Green Theory and a reminder of his description of the protesters, and of being thrown into the dustbin of history which included the Nazis. In this sense, the leaders were equated with the same kind of brutality. Graffiti also conveyed hopes for the future using revolutionary slogans with images of martyrs who sacrificed for freedom (Graffiti & The Arab Spring, 2012). The unresolved gender issue and women's emancipation were among other concerns of the revolutionary graffiti. The public assault and sexual violence against female opponents had been a usual tactic of intimidation under patriarchal rule. Many murals depicted female victims of discrimination, violence, humiliation, and underrepresentation in politics. Those captioned "There is no such thing as 'exclusively for men,'" "Whatever is or is not revealed, my body is free, it is not to be humiliated," "Don't categorize me" (see Figure 5), and "Girls and Boys are Equal" exhibit the feminist discourse of the resistance (Abaza, 2013). By these, they signaled the dreaming of new social order and respect for merely being human rather than based on the gendered social roles, worldview, and outfit.

Figure 5

The Gender Dimension of the Arab Uprisings

Note. A graffiti by Noun Al Niswa, an activist group campaigning for gender equality, with the caption "Do not categorize me!" The photo taken by Megapress in April 2012, in Cairo. Adapted with a purchased license. Available at https://www.alamy.com/stock-photo-pro-revolutionary-women-stencil-graffiti-on-mohamed-mahmoud-street-47445135.html

4.3.3. The Language of Revolutionary Figures

"We need a new relationship between the ruler and the ruled, one that is not based on fear," said the Saudi reformist cleric Sheik Salman al-Ouda (Filiu, 2011, p. 160). Despite the lack of charismatic leadership, al-Ouda and other scholars, who have millions of followers in the region, contributed to the pro-democracy protests with their public sermons. Participating actively in nonviolent demonstrations and civil activism, social leaders with different ideological orientations sought to give the message to the people that "You are the Power!" Despite the diverse means (e.g., religious doctrines, human rights values, socialist ideas, and poetry), the shared language of the reformist figures focused on the establishment of an inclusive political regime upon the destruction of the existing system identified with coercion, that would produce policies according to the will of the people.

For instance, Egyptian scholar Yusuf al-Qaradawi, the spiritual leader of Ikhwan today, has supported the revolts from the beginning through a series of religious edicts (*fatwa*). In his book, *State in Islam*, he asserts that the true state of Muslims is "civil," in which rulers come to power through public consent and lose their legitimacy if they do not serve the nation (2004, p. 37). Al-Qaradawi based his arguments about the Islam-democracy relationship on Qur'anic verses, the practices of the Prophet, and Islamic history. In his view, Muslims are responsible for restoring the nation through reforms but "with the will of the people and by the people themselves" (Reform According to Islam, 2004). Since the political leader is supposed to ensure justice for the citizens, they have the right to resist tyranny. He also called on the world to support the transition and oppose the killing of civilians by the regimes, which he called the *zalimin* (wrongdoers) (Alinur A, 2013). In his speech addressed to the crowd in Tahrir Square for Friday Prayer, al-Qaradawi defined the revolution as the victory of the entire Egyptian nation over "the descendants of the Pharaoh" and those killed by them as the "martyrs of freedom." Referring to Mubarak's fall, he called on the Arab leaders not to resist the change as "the world has changed, moving forward, and the Arab world is changing internally" (Ghuraba Media, 2011).

The protesters were motivated by also a range of social figures and intellectuals, including artists, writers, and activists. A remarkable example is an Egyptian writer and leading feminist, Nawal al-Saadawi ("The Mother of the Revolution"), who championed the role of women in the revolution. Al-Saadawi fought against not only the Sadat and Mubarak regimes, which, for her, were factors behind the fragmentation and radicalization of the society, but also against the patriarchal system in the region. Advocating for the

participation of women in national politics, she noted that "There can be no real democracy without women because women are half of society or more than half of society" (Al Jazeera, 2011). The Yemeni journalist and human rights activist Tawakkul Karman played a determining role in mobilizing people, so she became the international representative of the Yemeni case. To Karman, the revolution had a single demand, "A life in a democratic and civil state governed by the rule of law," so that "the oppressed people have decided to break free and walk in the footsteps of the civilized free peoples of the world" (Democracy Now!, 2011). Bahraini political activist and the co-founder of the Bahrain Centre for Human Rights (BCHR), 2002, Abdulhadi al-Khawaja actively worked to promote human rights awareness in the country by forcing the regime for reforms through civil. Criticizing the abusive use of power, al-Khawaja organized the Bahraini protests, for which he was jailed for life. Even in prison, he has been still the symbol of the Bahraini protest with his statement, "If I die, in the next 24 hours, I ask the people to continue on the path of peaceful resistance," and motto, "Freedom or Death" (Abdulhadi al-Khawaja, 2018).

Among many poets of the uprisings that inspired the youth, Ahmed Fouad Negm (1929-2013)—Egypt's "poet of people" and a strong advocate of the Palestinian cause and secular politics—was a significant figure with his lifestyle and impact on revolutionary poetry. From 1958 he was prisoned, and his poets were banned several times because of criticizing the Presidents, i.e., Nasser, Sadat, and Mubarak (Keyte, 2016). To Negm, "The job of the poet is to wake them up." Even in his 80s, he was still attacking the regime and inviting people to join rallies with his iconic lines, "The brave men are brave/The cowards are cowardly/Come with the brave/Together to the Square!" (Artscape: Poets of Protest, 2012). In the Tahrir Square protests, Negm became the voice of the poor with his well-known poem "Who Are They, and Who Are We?" (see several lines below) (2014). By this, he distinguished the people and whole regime with their socioeconomic and political status, stressing the gap between the ruled and rulers, who remain concerned merely with their privileges and unresponsive unless the ruled rise up to determine their destiny:

> *"They are the princes and the sultans*
> *They are the ones with wealth and power*
> *And we are the impoverished and deprived!*
> *Use your mind, guess...*
> *Guess who is governing whom?*
> *We are the army liberating the land*
> *They are the men of politics...*
> *They're one specie; we are another*
> *Use your mind, guess...*
> *Guess who will defeat whom?"*

4.4. A SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVIST PERSPECTIVE

The Arab uprisings have tremendously impacted regional and international politics and attracted the attention of various academic fields. However, the mainstream IR theories have largely remained reluctant to explain the process via the theoretical lens. The existent literature has dealt mainly with the ongoing courses and geopolitical outcomes of the events for the Arab world and broader Middle East region through the lens of Comparative Politics discipline, notably the transition theories. Nevertheless, a limited number of IR studies attempted to explain the social and ideational underpinnings of the uprisings with different assumptions, either with weak or insightful explanations.

4.4.1. Explaining Arab Spring

Among the mainstream IR theories, the neorealist approach, disregarding the impact of the internal and ideational factors, focuses on structural changes in world politics and international relations (the shift from the bipolar world system to the liberal-led unipolar one) and the distribution of power among regional countries affecting the domestic sphere. Critical theory, especially the feminist view, interprets it in terms of the capitalist economic process that led to the oppression of the masses and drove them to revolt for emancipation. In contrast, the neoliberal theory interprets the revolutionary drives for progress through an economic framework. Drawing attention to the role of neoliberal economic reforms and the role of non-state actors, neoliberalism addresses the issue by claiming the spillover effects of neoliberal globalization and democratization trends (Bustos, 2017).

According to Nuruzzaman, though the Syrian crisis (1911-) provides some empirical evidence for a neorealist understanding of the subject, especially the 'alliance formation' and contention between two rival axes (the US-Israel-Saudi Arabia versus Russia-Iran-Syria alignment), it is insufficient to explain social roots of the conflict (2021, p. 4). With a focus on state-centric and systemic level dynamics, the neorealist approach also overlooks the impact of developments out of high politics, including globalization and neoliberal economic policies. Indeed, the neorealist scholar Stephen Walt (2011) acknowledged the inability of realism to predict and explain the outbreak of events in Egypt and the broader region. Additionally, despite giving much more attention to the newly emerged realpolitik in the region, Walt underlines the need to take social dynamics, particularly the demands for democratic change, into account to succeed in power politics. What draws the attention of the Marxist approach to the Arab Uprisings, as in the work of Mohamed (2012), is whether the applicability of Karl Marx's class conflict theory to the

struggle between the oppressive regimes (the dominant class) and oppressed masses, exploited by the state–bourgeoisie alliance, during the revolutionary movements. By confining the events into the economically-defined class struggle, the Marxist theorizing misses the historically situated social and ideational relations between the ruling class and people compromised of all segments of society, not merely the working class/proletariat.

Critical theory has claimed to have much relevance in explaining the events compared to neorealist and neoliberal approaches. According to Abozaid (2021), critical theory can provide a useful account concerning the emancipatory nature of the uprisings participated by politically and economically marginalized social groups. As a justification, he states that millions of ordinary peoples across the region "marched to the streets and public squares not to claim or demand security, stability or R2P as positivist approaches claim, instead they yelled for freedom and emancipate from fear, needs, and exclusion" (2021, p. 125). Though some explanations of critical theory fit the sparks of uprisings, it does not adequately explain the creation and exchange of those ideas from country to country in a speedy process. Actually, since the process is complex and multi-dimensional, both pre- and post-uprisings provide valuable grounds for different perspectives for interpreting the events, especially critical theories. Although each approach concentrates on a time scale and different dimensions of the political upheavals, the common ground of all is the changing conditions. However, the outbreak of the uprisings had a deep ideational background that those approaches have largely ignored. The commonly missed point is to analyze the common identity and vision that the masses developed during the process.

In addition to the discourse that has been a traditional means of running Arab politics, the role of religion, culture, and language in politics has already proven social constructivism a key framework for understanding Arab politics (Gordon & Oxnevad, 2016). Given the impact of ideational factors in political change, i.e., actors' shared experiences, interests, identities, knowledge, and ideas along with structural constraints (Wendt, 1992), constructivism can offer a larger explanation for the 'early' phases of the uprisings for several reasons, i.e., diffusion of norms and ideas and the role of the human agency seeking to bring structural change and reconstruct the social identification through socialization (Barnett, 2020). Even though it may inadequately grasp the post-uprisings realpolitik in the region, it still can develop a broader insight for interpreting the outbreak and spread of the events, as well as the underlying forces of intra-state conflicts related to sectarian divisions, and the rise of ethnicity, e.g., in post-2011 Syria and Bahrain, to some extent.

4.4.2. Regional Diffusion of Norms and Ideas

The notion of diffusion, defined in the framework of interdependence in IR discipline, refers to a process of transmission of particular ideas, norms, and policies that emerged in a place into another (either in an international, regional, or domestic context), such as the spread of nationalist ideology championed by the French Revolution to the rest of the world dramatically. The diffusion process occurs in many ways, such as "coercion, competition, learning, and emulation," according to Gilardi (2013, pp. 461-466). Yet it proceeds in common steps, i.e., the spread, adoption, and application of the situated perspectives. In this view, the worldwide spread of the liberal economic model and democratization under the influence of Western culture or through its political and economic domination over developing societies has been caused by transnational diffusion (Gilardi, 2013). Wendt (1999) explains this kind of diffusion with the emergence, social learning (or socialization), and imitation of new rules that would eventually bring changes in collective identity formation, social structures, and politics, at the domestic or international level.

Given the sequence of events, the uprisings present a significant example of norm diffusion, though it has produced divergent outcomes and has not necessarily resulted in revolutionary change across the region. The spread of liberal values (ideational factors), such as the idea of the will of people, human rights, and democratic rule can be explained by social learning patterns. It was directly related to the growing political awareness among the youth, enabled by urbanization, education, and modern communication technologies. Among North African countries, Tunisia and Egypt have closely interacted with the West from the beginning. While Egypt is the region's intellectual capital, Tunisia has been hosting Europe's Democracy Promotion project since the early 2000s. Not surprisingly, both succeeded in overthrowing the regimes and became a model for other countries. Substantially, the modern communication devices (material factors)—transmitting news, documenting the human rights violations by the state police, and expanding the activism of human rights groups—not only disseminated the diffusion of norms on human rights but also facilitated their adoption by the people, notably in Bahrain, Egypt, and Tunisia with the highest rate of internet use in the region. Each country experienced the rise of advocacy for human rights regime emerged upon the tight state repression on individual rights, economic downturn, and demographic burden, except for Bahrain, which was dealing with demands for equal treatment between the Sunnis and Shias—all of which are the catalysts for internalization of the principles (Harrelson-Stephens & Callaway, 2014).

With social interaction and the political socialization process, the locally and internationally conditioned liberal ideas and norms (Barnett, 2020) have incited the minds to reconstruct the social structure. In contrast to the Islamist and socialist-nationalist discourse in the Arab political currents of the last century, the civic and democratic discourse has been constructed and adopted by the masses through the diffusion of liberal ideas calling for the civilization of the system, the introduction of participatory politics, the concept of freedom, and the elimination of socioeconomic inequalities among the people. Despite the complexity of communicative patterns, the demonstrators developed a collective political discourse through interdiscursivity and intertextuality between the different discursive practices that included specific political themes such as regime, repression, accountability, and popular will. For instance, the region-wide known slogan, "We sacrifice our blood and soul for…"—associated with Saddam but vowed alternately for such as al-Aqsa and Yasser Arafat—was developed to "We will sacrifice our blood and soul for our nation/homeland" (FRONTLINE, 2019). The words of the famous Arab freedom poets, providing critiques of the previous leaders, made up a significant part of the slogans with current themes and targets. In developing such patterns, particularly the content of the slogans and tactics of the protests (e.g., rally, symbolic action, art, labor strikes, civil disobedience, and digital activism), they often were inspired by their counterparts in other parts of the region.

Even the leaders followed the same strategies (e.g., shutting down the Internet, offering political concessions, economic reforms, and financial incentives) adapted from country to country to ease the unseen political upheavals and survive politically (Abouzzohour, 2021). For instance, initially responding violently to the civilians, Ben Ali's regime was forced to make political concessions (freeing the press and planning legislative elections) and eventually withdraw from power upon the escalation of protests (Rifai, 2011). After the unexpected Tunisian Revolution, protests broke out in Egypt and immediately spread to the rest of the region (The New Arab Staff & Agencies, 2020). Civil society, one of the most suppressed groups by legal restrictions, had a critical role in the cognitive changes and mobilization of the youth through political socialization. Before the uprisings, websites and bloggers spread the stories of human rights violations by the governments through video documenting and political thinking related to the governance structure. For instance, Kefaya and the April 6 Youth Movement organized the largest anti-government protest under Mubarak on Facebook and Twitter on January 25, 2011 ("the Day of Rage") through a series of instructive posts (Egypt Police Disperse Anti-Mubarak Protesters, 2011).

4.4.3. The Youth as an Agency

It was written that "Our Weapon was Our Dreams" on an activist's paper in Tahrir Square (Amir Eid, 2011). An important lesson from the events, thus, was the growing power of people in politics, especially the younger generation with higher education and mobile devices. From a constructivist perspective, learning emerges from the social interaction between and used by agents of change in the construction of the social world as "practices and consciousness are interdependent" (Onuf, 1989, p. 118). The "shared new youth culture" enabled the transnational diffusion of democratic norms and acts in coordination (Gordon & Oxnevad, 2016, p. 32). "It is only when the oppressed find the oppressor out and become involved in the organized struggle for their liberation that they begin to believe in themselves," said Freire in his influential book (2014, p. 65). With this, he pays attention to the integral parts of every emancipation of human beings, knowledge, willingness, and conscious action. The social interaction among the oppressed and geographically dispersed millions of ordinary people, thanks to electronic media, increased the awareness of collective power and made spreading revolutionary events across the region possible.

As phrased in Morsi (1951-2019)'s quote, "The revolutions of the Arab Spring happened because people realized they were the power" (Mohammed Morsi Quotes, n.d.). The actors of the most significant development in the modern history of the Middle East were surprisingly not the traditional political leadership but individuals. For constructivists, social agents, not merely the state elites and international actors, are major sources of knowledge and rule production through discourse (Onuf, 2013). As Wendt (1992) claims, the shared ideas developed through interaction and social structure and the mutually constitutive relationship between the structure and agency (Onuf, 1989) were the main drivers of the revolutionary actions. To change the rules of the context through conscious practice (Wendt, 1999), the educated and unemployed Arab youth lacking political leaders spoke of a new and imperative language that challenged the dominant political structure, rejecting the old style of governance exclusive to the ruling elites. They practiced such thinking most often with civil disobedience, especially when facing police repression not to leave the streets and tearing the portraits of the leaders on billboards and in public buildings, chanting the slogan "The People Want to Bring this Regime Down!" (Almiraat, 2011). Like, civil society organizations across the region not only scheduled widespread protests but also continued to save the revolutions by sharing information and coordinating people. Meanwhile, social leaders from different worldviews contributed to transforming

identities by interacting with the protestors (Grieco, Ikenberry, & Mastanduno, 2015, pp. 92-95). Therefore, contrary to the cultural explanations, Arabs did not maintain a political passive stance but showed that they could be the driving forces of political change.

Since the use of language is a social practice, discursive patterns of the uprisings reflected the cognitive changes developed over certain sociohistorical conditions (Reus-Smit, 2013). The identities and preferences of the actors (the Arab masses) and structure or material forces (the sociopolitical and economic environment and communication devices) in the Arab world have mutually constructed each other (Adler, 2013). While the ideas have emerged in a given social environment, the agents have attempted to reshape them (Barnett, 2020). Colonialism, imperialism, occupation, foreign domination, and war as a social practice have historically created a structure that has shaped the interests and formation and adaption of modern political ideas in the Arab world. The social context on the eve of the uprisings was defined by both external and internal changes, such as the spread of neoliberal principles and rising expectations of the growing young population.

4.4.4. Reconstruction of Perceptions

From a constructivist perspective, identities develop and evolve based on a historical context, perceptions, discursive power, and intersubjective meanings. Because they "perform three necessary functions in a society: they tell you and others who you are, and they tell you who others are" (Hopf, 1998, p. 175). The context in the Arab Middle East before 2010, namely the repressive, ineffective governance system, and limited civil liberties, enabled the creation of a new sense of individual and group identification by saying and practicing. The new social identification and a sense of national solidarity were not Islamically oriented but inherently civic. Unlike the traditional narratives of collective Arab identity, which predominantly was defined by nationalist and Islamic values and anti-Western sentiments, the protestors reconstructed the 'self' and 'other' alongside the civic publics built by themselves outside the state hegemony. The people with various backgrounds in the pro-democracy protests constructed an inclusive social and political identity based on shared anger and aspirations without referring to Islamism. The heterogeneous social groups defining themselves with various affiliations, particularly in Egypt, Syria, and Tunisia, imagined a new sense of belonging to a collective group ("the people") with identical problems and demands for their solutions. Another example of the changing perceptions and changing reality was the idea that unarmed civilians could overthrow the leaders whom the people previously considered 'unchallengeable.'

Contrary to the arguments for religiously-motivated political activism, survey data conducted in 2011 regarding the profile and opinions of the protesters show that the fundamental goal behind the uprisings was 'secular' politics. However, religious creeds and practices, notably Friday Prayer and the value of martyrdom, induced pro-liberty attitudes, notably in Bahrain (Hoffman & Jamal, 2014). The events also provide remarkable results regarding the debates on Arab nationalism. Besides the local political identity (patriotism), the Arab peoples, living within the separately defined nation-state borders, retained the cross-border communal identity conditioned by a shared past and pan-Arabic sentiments. Just as in the previous decades of collective identity formation, the components of the new perception of the self and others are rooted in those 'shared' aspects (common language, history, tradition, culture, cause, and enemy, and now a transnational Arab media as a source of information and connection). While pan-Arabism prevailed at a cultural level, a new sense of Arab solidarity, which is called by some the "New Arabism," with the enduring concern for the Palestinian cause (Sawani, 2012, p. 390).

When the Egyptians escalated their revolt against the Mubarak regime, which blocked access to Twitter and Facebook to interrupt the flow of information among the millions of Egyptian users (Hussaini, 2011), Syrian bloggers and internet users, inspired by the Tunisian and Egyptian uprisings, supported them by hacking the government's websites, posting the events, and calling for action in Egypt and Syria (Qtiesh, 2011). Meanwhile, the Bahraini opposition groups held a protest in front of the Egyptian Embassy in Bahrain to declare their support for the Egyptian protestors and were considering adopting the Egyptian term the "Day of Rage," like the Yemenis and Syrians, for their national case planned to be achieved on February 14 (York, 2011). Indeed, it was a local event that caused the Arab fellows to consider themselves unified and take the streets in coordination and create a domino effect in the neighboring Arab countries. In particular, the raised flag made from the flags of 22 Arab countries, alongside the national ones, during the demonstrations indicates that the Arab nationhood was still a unifying factor but without political unification (The Arab Spring: A Decade Later, 2021). In such a way, the protesters have portrayed all the countries where the riots are taking place as the link of a chain and a social network, in which Tunisia was the first, Egypt second, Libya third country reached freedom and awaiting others, which was connected and would help each other, as seen in the Twitter post by @HuriyaAkhdar: "#Egypt, #Tunisia #Algeria #Morocco help #Libya and free North Africa from dictators from the Med to the Red Sea" (Hussaini, 2011).

Although the social forces benefited from collective memory, they embraced a sense of belonging to their nation-state accompanied by liberal thought. In new social identification, the opposition groups represented a nation (us) struggling for national liberation from the autocrats (them) surrendered by a crony network, which was the new 'Pharaoh' and biggest enemy of the national will and threat to social stability and economic prosperity as they stated: "We have no state and no security!" (Almiraat, 2011). Besides, the common foreign enemy of the former decades, namely the imperialist alliance between Great Britain and France later accompanied by the Western-backed Israeli occupation of Arab lands, now has been replaced by the strategic partnership between Israel and the US, which has intervened militarily in the region, left irreparable damages in Iraq and marginalized the Palestinian cause over the last decades. Nor did they envision the Arab state being governed by Islamic law, instead by a civil rule that would serve the nation as a whole. Because the protesters demanded not the establishment of the Islamic state or re-Islamization of the society, but a civic and political system since the identities and interests of the agents are continuously changing, as claimed by constructivists (Barnett, 2020).

The changing role and image of Arab women, who now were leading the street protests, posting videos on their blogs to encourage the people, and speaking about their demands for reforms, was manifested with their civic engagement and active participation in the anti-regime protests alongside the men (Cardenas, 2011). A remarkable example of the changing role model of females was the Yemeni blogger Afrah Nasser, who motivated women to have their sayings with her posts calling for the revolution despite the threat (Abrougui, 2011). The overall changed perceptions of the demonstrators were indicated through the conceptualization of envisioned order and social roles. The iconic mottos of the last century, i.e., "Freedom, Socialism and Unity" of the Nasserists and "Islam is the solution" of the older generation, Islamists, were updated to the narrative of "The People Want Democracy" (Jadaliyya Reports, 2011). The dichotomy between the Arabs and colonialists and Muslims and non-Muslims/Hypocrites now turned out to be the "citizens" versus the "rulers." The concept of martyrdom, an integral part of the mourning culture, retained its symbolic meaning. Yet, the political images of the martyrs now represented the struggle for not national independence or on behalf of Islam/Allah but emancipation of "the people." All in all, the mutual construction of context and discourse, ideational roots of the uprisings, the pivotal role of the non-state actors, and dissemination of ideas through social interaction among the social agents support the constructivist view of the uprisings.

CONCLUSION

This study has aimed to show that identity has essentially been a driving and reflective force of sociopolitical change in the Arab world. In particular, it has sought to examine the shift in contemporary Arab political identity towards a post-Islamist and liberal direction articulated in the popular uprisings, yet discarding the post-uprisings process, which swept the entire region and led to a rethinking of assumptions about Arab political thought. To this end, it examined the use of language during the protests using Discourse Analysis (DA) as a method. The study's findings have shown that each ideational frame in the region is a product of historical conjunctures and social structures. Another important finding is that 'reactionary' and 'diversity' are the terms that define Arab political identity as a whole, which should not be reduced to a single ideological frame and cannot be fully addressed without considering the context in which it emerged and evolved.

In the Arab world, all modern ideologies were adopted through interaction with the West, just as they were in the various parts of the world affected by the Western expansion. Nevertheless, it was specific sociopolitical and economic circumstances that allowed one of these ideologies to drive the Arab mind. Arab nationalism found its intellectual basis in the West, which envisioned a limited national movement for the region, and turned out to be a weapon directed against its birthplace. It also became the most influential ideology dominating the Arab-Western and inter-Arab relations from the late 19th to the second half of the 20th century. Arab nationalist identity developed in three phases: the period of cultural revival concerned with Arab progress and Islamic reformism (late 19th century), the anti-colonialist (interwar period), and the revolutionary or socialist current (post-1945). After 1914, Arabism took on a political character with various forms of nationalism, i.e., separatism, unification, secession, decolonization, and secular/socialist and religious ones. Although the notion of Arab nationalism is used interchangeably with pan-Arabism, this study has also shown that the term refers to both a supranational and local national identity.

The reasons for the decline of pan-Arab nationalism and the rise of Islamist ideology were closely related. When the secular regimes failed to deliver on their promises, except for national independence, and lost their former credibility, 'Islamic identity' appeared as an alternative to revising the Arab position. In the meantime, the military regimes managed to hold on to power by holding the state apparatus and complex roles, manipulating public

opinion, and proving to be an obstacle to democratization to this day. Regardless of their outcome, the Arab uprisings have reshaped the geopolitical landscape of the entire Middle East. They are also a strong indication of identity transformation in the Arab world and the growing role of the individual as a political actor, reinvigorating the debate on identity politics in the Arab world through various assumptions. Overall, Arab political identity, which is complex and reflective of modernity, consists of four major ideological orientations: nationalist, leftist/socialist, Islamic, and liberal.

Throughout the 20th century, Arab social identification has constantly produced a sense of 'us' and 'them.' While the late Ottoman rule constituted the 'other' and major impediment to Arab autonomy in the Arab nationalist discourse, Western colonialism and the advent of Zionism in the holy lands post-1920 replaced it as the new enemy to liberate from. In the post-1945 period, the Arab world witnessed the rise of socialist leaders, notably Gamal Abdel Nasser, as a symbol of national sovereignty and anti-imperial resistance. When the revolutionary ideology was enforced with armed force, the Arab world achieved the dream of independence under Nasserist leaders after several decades. However, when the socialist and statist governments could not meet the rising expectation of the population in the globalizing world, they were challenged by faith. Therefore, the socialist and secular regimes, initially portrayed as 'liberators' of the Arab world from foreign subversion, turned to be the 'enemy within' in the post-independence period in the Islamist discourse.

Just like the anti-colonial nationalist discourse, the Islamist discourse attacked the political, economic, and social legacy of foreign domination. However, Islamist ideology claimed not only to liberate Arabs from underdevelopment and moral decay but also to set the politics by religious doctrines. In recent decades, the biggest enemy of the Arab world has come to be the 'autocratic rulers' perceived as illegitimate, being under foreign influence, and incapable of fulfilling the reason of the state. While the resistance to Western colonialism shaped the political agenda and discourse in the Arab world in the last century, autocratic and ineffective Arab regimes have emerged as the primary factor in this arena since the mid-1980s. Meanwhile, the post-1967 nationalist thinking shifted from the unitary version to a nation-state one despite maintaining the sense of Arabism.

Since the 1920s, revolutionary identity has been at the heart of the ideologies that have mobilized the Arab masses against the order to be overthrown. Each ideology pursued by the Arabs aimed to create a new order that would realize its essence. By the end of 2010,

the idea that profoundly influenced Arab politics was neither pan-Arab nor socialist nor Islamic, but liberal. The Arab liberal identity, though it had flourished much earlier, has drawn upon the dissatisfaction with the system associated with long-standing autocratic leaders. What drove people to revolt in the streets were the shared anger and ideas. Although the popular uprisings have varied, they share a common context that produced a "common narrative" during the protests. Despite the commonalities and shared language of the Arab uprisings, each case had specific conditions reflected in its discourse. The slogans chanted for national independence against colonial rule in the last century now were directed against the domestic regimes and Arab rulers for political freedom.

Although Arab political identity has not developed identically and linearly throughout the region and history, it has been subject to an active and constant process of social construction. In addition to context, three main forces have effectively shaped, articulated, or manipulated it: the political elites, intelligentsia, and social forces. This study, therefore, takes the constructivist assumptions and the method of discourse analysis as a starting point to find out what factors have determined the construction and perception of the self and others in Arab political identity. To a considerable extent, the establishment of modern means of communication in the region has enabled the interaction between the intelligentsia and the population and between the social groups and contributed to the formation and dissemination of modern ideas, which supports arguments for the social construction of political identity in the Arab world. Certain patterns seen by social constructivists as a means of identity construction make social constructivism applicable to the theoretical analysis of the Arab uprisings, where a new self-identification was constructed and manifested through various discursive practices. More importantly, the unprecedented youth-led protests demonstrated that the main actors setting the political agenda can also be individual and social. A contextual and constructivist analysis of such discourses shows that a post-Islamist political identity emphasizing liberal ideas determined the early course of events during the Arab uprisings of 2011.

A decade after the eruption of the uprisings, the people's demands for freedom, democracy, and social justice have not yet been met. It remains unclear whether the discourse on political and civil rights that emerged in the context of the Arab Spring will have the opportunity to revive and dominate Arab political thinking in the following decades of the 21st century. Although it is not easy to predict the future in such a dynamic sociopolitical environment, identity politics is likely to retain its importance in the Arab world.

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INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS DEPARTMENT

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1. Does not perform experimentation on animals or people.
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Student No:	N20134909
Department:	International Relations
Program:	International Relations with Thesis
Status:	☒ MA ☐ Ph.D. ☐ Combined MA/ Ph.D.

ADVISER COMMENTS AND APPROVAL

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Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Kadri Kaan Renda

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ULUSLARARASI İLİŞKİLER ANABİLİM DALI BAŞKANLIĞI'NA

Tarih: 12/09/2022

Tez Başlığı: Arap Baharı Bağlamında Arap Siyasi Kimliğinin Evrimi: Sosyal İnşacı Perspektif

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Student No:	N20134909
Department:	International Relations
Program:	International Relations with Thesis

ADVISOR APPROVAL

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Tarih: 12/09/2022

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Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Kadri Kaan Renda

THE EVOLUTION OF ARAB POLITICAL IDENTITY IN THE CONTEXT OF ARAB SPRING: A SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVIST PERSPECTIVE

Emine ALP

2022

Hacettepe University Graduate School of Social Science

Department of International Relations

THE EVOLUTION OF ARAB POLITICAL IDENTITY IN THE CONTEXT OF ARAB SPRING: A SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVIST PERSPECTIVE

Emine ALP

Master's Thesis

Ankara, 2022