

THE RELATIONSHIP OF POLITICAL DIVISIONS TO NATIONALITY  
IN THE MIDDLE EAST

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Statement of the Problem: To provide information on the question,

"To what extent do the present boundaries of the nations of the Middle East reflect the unity of the people within those boundaries toward the attainment of a common national goal?"

General Considerations Affecting National Unity

The modern history of the Middle East has been characterized by emerging nationalism seeking a natural ethnic and geographic context for itself. In the process, social pressures have been generated to reconcile nationalism with political boundaries which at present inadequately express the scope and complex configurations of the various types and degrees of national consciousness.

The problem of nationalism in the Middle East is manifestly a dichotomous one. It falls into two distinct categories according to demographic criteria. On the one hand is the phenomenon of Arab Nationalism, common to all the Arab peoples irrespective of political divisions into separate states, and which transcends the particularist nationalism of individual countries; on the other, is the more conventional nationalism found in the non-Arab countries, which is inherently restricted to a specific geographical area. In certain respects both are subsumed under Pan-Islam, the civilization that has given the entire area its unique character as a single cultural complex.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Royal Institute of International Affairs, The Middle East, 2nd ed. (London: 1954) pp. 5-50; Philip Hitti, History of the Arabs, 6th ed. (London: 1956) pp. 1-22, 145f.

Of the new ideas imported into the Middle East from the West, nationalism and political democracy have been the most radical. This new ideology, with its material and secular orientation and the emphasis it placed on ethnic and geographic factors, was in direct conflict with the traditions and historic development of Islam, which revolved around the concepts of religious universality, political theocracy, and exclusive sovereignty. Originally Islam was a religion; later it became a state; and finally evolved into a culture. Today all three aspects have been synthesized in Arab Nationalism, which has come to dominate the life of the Middle East, motivating and giving direction to the course of political events.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Hitti, History of the Arabs, pp. 753ff; S. A. Morrison, Middle East Survey (London: 1954) pp. 93-128; Ruth A. Anshen, ed., Mid-East: World Center (New York: 1956) pp. 65-75.

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Basically Arab Nationalism is amorphous and depends on context for its form and specificity. Though the Arabs are in many fundamental respects a national unit, and vis-a-vis the non-Arab world are conscious of a national affinity with other Arabs, they are not by any means a united people. Several factors contribute to this lack of unity.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Albert Hourani, "Arabic Culture," Perspective of the Arab World, Atlantic Monthly Supplement (1956), pp. 5-11.

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The prevailing socio-psychological conditions of the area are somewhat analogous to the situation in Europe during the Middle Ages. Rather than national loyalties defined by political institutions, loyalties are decentralized locally along communal lines. The average Arab, except for the few intellectuals and the sophisticated political elites, thus identifies himself as a member of a particular social group according to ethnic, religious, cultural, or tribal ties. Generally this communal allegiance is experienced personally as a concrete part of everyday life and is focussed on the leader of the group to which one belongs. Any larger social context, such as the state, is at the present time for most people little more than an abstraction without even symbolic reality. The patterns of social organization remain essentially feudal; its parochial units have no concentric order of increasingly generic scope leading up to a universal awareness of common interests on a national level.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Hazem Z. Nuseibeh, The Ideas of Arab Nationalism (Ithaca, N.Y.: 1956) pp. 34-77; Fisher, The Middle East, pp. 115-123; The Middle East 1958, pp. 2-6.

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Historically, Middle East politics above the communal level have been predicated upon personalities rather than institutions. Powerful individuals repeatedly have risen and through conquest organized large but short-lived states. These usually had no political, cultural, traditional, or economic justification to exist as nations, other than that they were under the suzerainty of a single ambitious ruler or ruling class. The present political division of the Arab world into its respective sovereign states is equally the product of historical accident.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Fisher, The Middle East, pp. 77-143.

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Most of these states were created and given their present form as an arbitrary expedient, either for foreign imperialist considerations or as a compromise with the internal complexities and conflicting interests of the inhabitants of various regions. Few have natural frontiers based on clear geographic, social, economic, or historical factors. The political divisions therefore tend to be artificial and unstable.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Hourani, "Arabic Culture", *op. cit.*; RIIA, The Middle East, pp. 21-35; George Lenczowski, The Middle East in World Affairs (Ithaca, N.Y.: 1952), pp. 84-116.

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Religion is perhaps the most important factor militating against Arab unity. Confessional differences, felt intimately and intensely, have created serious cleavages not only between Moslems and non-Moslems but also between the various Moslem sects. The puritanical Wahabis of Arabia, for example, despise other Moslems for being decadent and lax in their faith, and in turn are criticized as primitive reactionaries. These religious loyalties often reach a point where they replace ethnic differences, so that a Shi' ah Moslem Arab considers a Sunni Moslem Arab an alien, and the Sunni looks upon a Maronite Christian Arab as a foreign enemy.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Hitti, History of the Arabs, pp. 138ff; Fisher, The Middle East, pp. 95-112.

All of the Middle East countries, with few exceptions, are confronted with serious minority problems which have held back consolidation into national states. In some cases a large ethnic group has been denied national unity and split up among several states so as to form an unassimilable minority in each. Scores of other smaller minorities exist in scattered communities to form rejected or dissident elements that cannot be integrated into the surrounding population. Under the Ottoman Empire a modus vivendi to deal with this minority problem had been found in the millet system, whereby minorities enjoyed communal administrative autonomy. With the creation of the modern Arab states the system was discontinued and a more-or-less proportional legislative representation in the central government, along the Western pattern, was substituted. This has, for the moment at least, proven to be conducive to internal political instability, for by giving minorities recognition only on the state level the minorities per se are politically ineffective and no longer even have any control over their own local affairs. The situation is particularly frustrating when the size of the minority is large.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> RIIA, The Middle East, pp. 56-59; Fisher, The Middle East, pp. 80-94, 169-175.

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From a regional point of view, the major ethnic minority in the Middle East is the Kurds. They pose a serious problem, not only because of their large numbers, but also because they have been split up among several countries and yet have successfully resisted assimilation. An ancient people, who, despite a history of adverse political circumstances have retained their ethnic integrity, the Kurds speak a group of dialects that constitute a linguistic family related to Persian. They are organized along tribal patterns, lead a semi-nomadic existence, and are mostly Sunni Moslems. In the past they have been exploited as an instrument of policy by both the Turks and Russians as a counter-balance to other minorities, especially against the Armenians.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> RIIA, The Middle East, pp. 58, 59.

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The Kurd tribes inhabit an arc extending from Kermanshah in the northwest of Iran, through the northeastern districts of Iraq and Syria, then cutting across western Soviet Armenia, and taking in a large part of eastern Turkey. The entire territory is loosely referred to as Kurdistan. A few additional smaller communities are scattered in other areas. A 1948 estimate placed their distribution at one and a half million in Turkey, 800,000 in Iraq, 600,000 in Iran, 250,000 in Syria, and 20,000 in Soviet Armenia.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Fisher, The Middle East, pp. 114, 169f; Izzedin, The Arab World, pp. 342, 343.

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Although thus artificially segmented into separate elements that are isolated from each other by the frontiers of five different countries, the Kurds have continued to exercise a strong sense of national consciousness. Consequently they have not reconciled themselves to the division, nor to their status as minorities, and have frequently been in conflict with the authorities in each of the states where they are found. At times, as in Syria, Iraq, and Iran, they have undertaken civil uprisings and large-scale insurrections in an effort to win recognition as an autonomous national minority. In 1945 an independent Kurdish

Republic was briefly established during the period of Soviet-sponsored Azerbaijan autonomy, but was overthrown after the Iranian reoccupation the following year.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Morrison, Middle East Survey, pp. 22, 23; Lenczowski, The Middle East in World Affairs, pp. 126, 173, 177, 213ff, 227.

As a group, the Kurdish people are not sufficiently united or organized to assert themselves politically. Thus they do not strive effectively for consolidation and establishment of their own national state. For the present they remain so many dissident minorities.

A smaller but no less sensitive ethnic minority problem that is also of an international nature is the Armenians. With a continuous national history going back to the sixth century B.C., they are racially distinct, speak an independent language, and have their own Christian national church. Only in Russia do they have any formal political recognition of their national identity in the small autonomous republic of Soviet Armenia. Outside of Soviet Armenia there are scattered Armenian communities of varying size in a number of Middle Eastern States. Those of Syria and Lebanon are the largest, amounting to approximately 150,000 in the former and about 75,000 in the latter. Considerably smaller numbers are located in Egypt, Iraq, Iran, and Jordan. Their relatively high educational level and economic and social position, however, give them an importance beyond their size.

With respect to their host countries, the Armenians have the status of foreign refugees, both because of ethnic and cultural differences and their agitation for a national state in which to settle permanently. Locally, their political orientation is toward other Christian minorities. Thus, for the present, it appears that they will remain outside any national unity that might develop in the particular countries where they are now found.

The Assyrians constitute yet another ethnic minority posing nationality problems that defy solution. They are Nestorian Christians speaking a Syriac language and have their own national church. Thus, though their numbers are not large, totalling perhaps under 150,000 in separated communities in Iran, Lebanon, Syria, Turkey, and Iraq, linguistic and religious differences set them apart from the surrounding population. It is unlikely that their small numbers and scattered distribution will ever permit any degree of political recognition as a national group.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> RIIA, The Middle East, pp. 56ff, 60f; Fisher, The Middle East, pp. 171-173, 304.

Other ethnic minorities, who are religious minorities as well, are the few Circassian colonies located in various countries, and the once large Jewish communities in most of the urban centers of the Middle East. The bulk of the latter, since the establishment of Israel, have emigrated and the remainder no longer exist as significant minority groups.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> RIIA, The Middle East, pp. 56, 351, 466, 508; Lenczowski, The Middle East in World Affairs, pp. 47-50.

However, besides ethnic minorities, other less intrinsically defined group distinctions exist solely by virtue of context.

In most cases an overlapping of several contexts occurs either within or across the political divisions into which the Middle East is currently divided. Some of these are historical, some social; others are economic or geographic. Many internal and external factors affect the national unity of the respective countries. Thus, since the interaction of these factors and their relationship to present national boundaries vary from state to state, each country will be examined individually.

### The Arab Countries

#### Egypt

Of all the Arab countries Egypt best represents a national entity. The present geographical area corresponds to the distribution of a homogeneous population with an ethnic, cultural, economic, and political unity. The remarkable cohesion among the Egyptian people, which has been characteristic throughout history, is due largely to the geography of the land. The great bulk of the population has always been concentrated in the Nile valley, where over a long period of time a distinct racial sub-type has emerged from racial intermixtures. By now the population has become standardized enough to make the average Egyptian physically distinguishable as such.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> The Middle East 1958, pp. 93-95; RIIA, The Middle East, pp. 164f.

The population according to United Nations estimates of 1956 numbers 23,410,000, and is composed of more than 91% Moslems, the majority of whom are Sunni, and less than 8% Christians. Most of the Christians are Copts, who comprise the only minority group of any significance. However, the Copts do not consider themselves a political minority, nor have they in recent times been so identified by the Moslem majority. Racially they are the purest descendants of the ancient Egyptians. They have the same legal status as other Egyptian subjects, and are in all cultural respects Arabs; even the Coptic liturgy is Arabic. Similarly, many of the adherents of the other Christian sects of Egypt are Arabs. The few nomadic Bedouin also constitute a minority group, but only on cultural grounds, for they are Moslem Arabs.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 121; RIIA, The Middle East, pp. 59f, 165; The World Almanac and Book of Facts (New York: 1958) pp. 350, 351.

For almost the entire country, Arabic is both the official and vernacular language. The only exceptions are, besides the resident foreign colonies found in the larger cities, the sparse Berber-speaking villages in the western oases and the Nuba Nubians who inhabit the Nile valley above Aswan. However, although written Arabic is standard throughout the Arab world, the spoken Egyptian dialect differs from all other dialects of Arabic in the pronunciation of certain consonants and in the use of certain idiomatic expressions. These differences are sufficient to lend Egyptian Arabic a uniqueness that makes it readily identifiable as a distinct national dialect.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> RIIA, The Middle East, p. 166; The Middle East 1958, pp. 3f, 94f, 121.

Thus, the present boundaries of the Egyptian state are congruent to an integrated and a wholly-contained nationality unit. There are no dissident minorities of political significance within, nor politically isolated Egyptian national elements outside in other states. The only unrealized national aspirations of Egypt are directed outward, as the would-be leader of Pan-Arabism, championing the ideal of political unification for the entire Arab world. Egypt's particular interest in the Sudan, which has been essentially opportunistic in character and imperialistically motivated, is largely unrequited by the Sudanese.

#### Sudan

The Sudan as a country first came into being when it was conquered by Turko-Egyptian forces early in the nineteenth century and was organized for administrative purposes into roughly its present form. Due to Egyptian exploitation and British-Egyptian rivalry for control, as well as internal causes, Sudan did not realize any semblance of national existence until very recent times.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> The Middle East 1958, pp. 315ff; Fisher, The Middle East, pp. 148-150.

The population is estimated at 10,200,000, and is made up of a complex pattern of racial and cultural groups. It is probably the least homogeneous of any Arab state. The majority of Sudanese are Arabized Moslems, totalling about 6 million, who inhabit the north and central regions, but there are about 3 million negroid pagans in the south, and more than a million people in other non-Arab tribes in the west and east. The country is thus divided into two culturally contrasted zones marked by radical differences in race, language, religion, and outlook. Each area is occupied by a variety of separate ethnic sub-groups. Furthermore, the Moslems are split into two politically antagonistic sects, the Mahdists and the more orthodox Mirghani. Christians constitute a relatively insignificant minority, the largest element, the Catholic, numbering only 162,000.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> The Middle East 1958, pp. 229, 324; RIIA, The Middle East, pp. 417-426; Izzedin, The Arab World, pp. 120-123.

Since Sudan's independence dates back only to 1956, it is too early to judge whether her present boundaries adequately express a united national state. At the moment, the political consciousness of her people is not developed enough to conceive of nationality in terms of political institutions. The radical racial and cultural differences among the many elements of her population might prove that topographic and economic boundaries are too superficial a basis for national unity. A potential separatist minority exists in the south particularly. Similarly, the historic and ethnic affinities of the Arabized majority, carried along by the momentum of Arab Nationalism, may seek political identification with a larger national unit. On the other hand, the sheer variety and number of population elements may make for a cosmopolitan harmony if not unification.

#### Syria

From Roman times until the First World War the term "Syria" had been loosely applied to designate the whole of a territory stretching from the Euphrates to the Mediterranean, and from Sinai

to southern Turkey, an area now forming the modern states of Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Israel, and large sections of Iraq and Saudi Arabia. The events of the First World War helped crystallize Arab Nationalism along the lines of such a "Greater Syria", but the dictates of foreign imperialist policy, as well as internal rivalries, prevented its realization. The idea of a Greater Syria has remained in many quarters a political aspiration to the present day, although for the moment eclipsed by the ascendancy of Egypt and the more comprehensive Arab Nationalism sponsored by Nasser.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> The Middle East 1958, p. 341; RIIA, The Middle East, pp. 467-472.

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The modern state of Syria owes the fact of her existence, as well as the geometry of her boundaries, to external circumstances. The country came into being as a result of the Sykes-Picot Agreement and the subsequent French Mandate. Since there was no natural basis for such a political unit, the Syrian state has not been able to achieve a consciousness of national unity and completeness in her people. The population, numbering 3,856,000 according to U.N. estimates of 1956, is made up of many racial, cultural, linguistic, and religious elements having little in common. There is thus a variety of politically significant minorities.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> RIIA, The Middle East, pp. 465f; Izzedin, The Arab World, pp. 152-163.

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Most of the population are sedentary Arab-speaking peoples who are mainly Sunni Moslems. The interior desert is inhabited by Bedouin nomads organized into independent tribes who no more identify their nationality as Syrian than do the Bedouins in neighboring countries. Approximately 250,000 Kurds, who have a national and linguistic identity of their own, are located in the north, cut off by the frontier from their kinsmen. On several occasions the Kurds have undertaken large-scale uprisings against the central authority. In the northwest many Turkomans, as well as acculturated Turkish-speaking Arabs, occupy an area that formerly had been an autonomous Sanjak under the French Mandate. The 150,000 Armenians, who are Christians and have their own language, form large communities in the cities. Other racial-linguistic-religious minorities, which although small have an importance disproportionate to their size because of their relatively high economic and educational level, are the Circassians, Assyrians, Greeks and Jews.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> The Middle East 1958, pp. 342, 361; World Almanac, p. 383; RIIA, The Middle East, pp. 56-60.

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The large number of Druses concentrated in the south, perhaps 100,000 or more, are ethnically distinct and practice an occult religion which is usually considered as not being technically a Moslem sect. For a period of years the Druses had their own autonomous state of Jebel Druse under the French Mandate. Ismaili Moslems predominate in the Salamiya district, while almost a half million Alawis, who have a composite Christian-Moslem-pagan religion, occupy the Jebel Ansariyeh. Next to the Sunni, the Alawis form the second largest religious group in Syria, and they too had autonomous status under the French Mandate. Finally, there is the surprisingly large Christian minority, totaling

about 430,000, which is divided up into many sects; no less than ten separate churches are actively represented.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> The Middle East 1958, pp. 342, 361; RIIA, The Middle East, pp. 365ff; Morrison, Middle East Survey, p. 21.

The characteristically fierce intransigence of each of these many minorities has tended to preclude political cooperation or effective coalition-government within the context of the Syrian state itself. However, it is significant that in the larger context of Pan-Arab Nationalism a certain unanimity of national feeling prevails. The recent plebiscite as to whether Syria should join the United Arab Republic proved to be overwhelmingly favorable. The event clearly established that the boundaries of the Syrian state do not reflect a national entity.

#### Iraq

The existence of Iraq as a national state has some tenuous historic justification, although the boundaries are largely arbitrary. The country was created out of the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire following the first World War when a conjuncture of imperialist interests in Turkish Arabia resulted in various compromises for the political division of the spoils. Al-Iraq had been the Arab name for a loosely-defined territory which included the Tigris-Euphrates region known as Mesopotamia, and under the Turks contained the separately administered vilayets of Basra, Baghdad, and Mosul. It had not been in modern times a national political unit, nor had the designation ever been applied to as large an area as the frontiers now encompass. The scope of the present boundaries is unrealistic, if not capricious, for it includes sections that are properly by ethnic, economic, or geographic criteria parts of other countries. Depending upon perspective, it can be considered either too large or too small.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> RIIA, The Middle East, pp. 254, 259-269; The Middle East 1958, pp. 173-179.

The population, according to U.N. estimates of 1956, numbers 4,842,000, and is made up of many shades of racial and cultural mixtures. Arabic, the official and most widely used language, is spoken by about 75 per cent of the people. Approximately 17 per cent speak Kurdish, and are predominant in the north; four per cent, who are mostly in the east, use Persian; three per cent speak dialects of Turkish and are found in the northwest; and Syriac, current in the Nestorian Christian communities in the north, together with Armenian occur among perhaps one per cent. Much of the area of Iraq is occupied by nomad tribes. The Bedouin who inhabit the Syrian Desert in the west, as well as non-Arab tribes in the north and east move regularly between Iraq and one or more neighboring countries.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., pp. 255f; World Almanac, pp. 363f; The Middle East 1958, pp. 172, 182.

Over 90 per cent of the population are Moslems. The Arabs of upper Mesopotamia, the Bedouins, the Kurds, and the inhabitants of Baghdad and Basra are mainly Sunnis, while the remaining Arabs of the south and the Iraqi Persians are Shi' ahs. The Sunni and Shi' ah sects are suspicious and intolerant of each

other. The Shi'ahs hold a conditional majority, inasmuch as they slightly outnumber the Sunni Arabs but are less than the Sunni Arabs and Kurds, who are also Sunnis, combined. Iraq thus, along with Iran and Yemen, is one of the three countries where Shi'ah adherents are in the majority.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> RIIA, The Middle East, pp. 53f, 256-259; The Middle East 1958, p. 192.

Christians are found in all of the principle towns but are concentrated mostly in the Mosul district. The largest Christian group are the Melkite, among whom the Chaldean Rite, which is identified with the Assyrians, is the most important. The Assyrian Christians constitute a distinct ethnic minority with their own national church, language, and history.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> RIIA, The Middle East, pp. 59ff, p. 258; Fisher, The Middle East, pp. 100-112.

Until the initiative was seized by Egypt, Iraq had been the leader in directing Arab Nationalism toward the political realization of a "Greater Syria". In large measure this was indicative of Iraq's lack of self-sufficiency as a nation state in her present form.

#### Lebanon

In many respects Lebanon is a microcosm of the whole Middle East. Its present boundaries do not reflect the national unity of a people inhabiting its area. On the contrary, as recent events have demonstrated, the conflicting irreconcilable loyalties articulated by the various elements of the population have generated internal pressures that threatened the political collapse of Lebanon as a state.

Because the racial affinities of the Lebanese are many and complex, the population is often referred to as "Levantine". Almost all Middle-Eastern ethnic strains are represented. Arabic is the official and vernacular language current over the entire country. However, despite these common denominators, religious differences pose insurmountable barriers that divide the population and isolate one group from another. The resulting divisions are not merely cultural, but political and economic, and manifest themselves socially and psychologically.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> The Middle East 1958, pp. 265f; Izzeddin, The Arab World, pp. 152-187 passim.

The territory of "Mount Lebanon" proper was originally the area immediately east of Beirut but was later gradually extended to include the coastal strip directly north and south of Beirut. It has had a national character and a tradition of political identity going back to the Crusades and formally acknowledged in Ottoman times when the Porte granted it autonomy within the Empire. The French during the Mandate continued to recognize Lebanon's traditional autonomous status. However, after it had been expanded into "Great Lebanon" and took in surrounding territories occupied by various Moslem peoples, the original national character was lost.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., pp. 267-270; RIIA, The Middle East, pp. 467-473.

Lebanon's population, according to U.N. estimates of 1956, is 1,425,000, almost evenly divided between Moslems and Christians. The Christians are mainly Maronites, a Uniate sect of the Roman Church, but also include substantial numbers belonging to several other denominations. The Moslems are about equally distributed between Sunnis and Shi' ahs, plus the 77,000 Druses, whose secret religion is not strictly a branch of Islam. The Maronites are concentrated for the most part in the old "Mount Lebanon" centering around Beirut; the Sunnis are found through the northern districts, while the Shi' ahs inhabit the southernmost area along the Israeli frontier; the Druses are located between the latter two. Small numbers of other ethnic and religious minorities also exist. Approximately 21 per cent of the total population is made up of refugees from Palestine.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> The Middle East 1956, pp. 271, 281; RIIA, The Middle East, pp. 465-467.

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Thus, so many diverse population elements in close juxtaposition within the confines of a single small political unit, and with none predominating, has at best made only for compromise in an effort to achieve a working political balance, as a sort of dialectic between opposing forces. The result has been a continuing re-emphasis of existing differences, which has not been conducive to the development of a unified Lebanese nation. In fact, during the current crisis in Lebanon there have been indications that some Moslem Lebanese felt a greater sense of national identity with Syria than with their Christian countrymen. The present boundaries do not reflect a homogeneous national unit. Altering them to comply with existing population divisions would mean the dissolution of Lebanon as a state.

#### Jordan

Of all the Arab countries Jordan probably has the least national basis for existence as a sovereign independent state. Both the fact of her existence and the geometry of the boundaries were arbitrarily determined by political expediency and historical circumstance.

Jordan's population can be divided racially between the Arabs living east of the Jordan River, who are ethnically akin to the Bedouin desert peoples of Syria, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia, and the sedentary Arabs of the Jordan valley and Samaria-Judea, who are of mixed racial stocks. There are also small colonies of Circassians from the Caucasus, as well as a few Armenians. However, the population element that has had the greatest impact on the recent course of events in Jordan is the Palestinian refugees.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> The Middle East 1958, p. 245; RIIA, The Middle East, pp. 348-351.

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In 1948 before the Arab-Israeli war Jordan's population was approximately 400,000 and consisted mainly of pastoral Bedouins. It is now, according to U.N. estimates of 1956, 1,500,000. The increase is accounted for partly by the 400,000 residents of the west bank of the Jordan, the territory annexed in 1948. But the Palestinian refugees who fled to Jordan number 475,000. In addition, another 100,000 Palestinian settlers, not classified as refugees because they are tradesmen and professionals who have been absorbed into the economy, have also established themselves in Jordan. Altogether, the original Jordanians are outnumbered three to one. Furthermore, since the Palestinian refugees and

settlers and the west-bank residents are mostly sedantary townsmen with a different culture and outlook, the indigenous Jordanian population finds itself in the position of a minority in its own country both in kind as well as number. However, the most disruptive influence on national unity are the refugees, who form a discontented minority that amounts to one third of the total population.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> The Middle East 1958, pp. 246-249; RIIA, The Middle East, pp. 352-361.

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Religion does not play a very important divisive role in separating the population into elements, largely because it is overshadowed by other factors. Over 80 per cent of Jordanians are Sunni Moslems, while 100,000 Christians, living mainly in the towns, and small groups of non-Sunni Moslem sects, make up the remainder.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> The Middle East 1958, p. 257; RIIA, The Middle East, p. 351.

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The overriding problem of Jordan is the limited natural resources and low level of economic development in relation to size of population. Jordan is not a self-sustaining country. The fact that her present boundaries do not reflect an economic unit may well preclude an organic national state ever being achieved. All political considerations aside, the territory of Jordan belongs naturally, according to ethnic, economic, geographical, and historical criteria, to one or more national complexes other than Jordan.

#### Saudi Arabia

The Arabian peninsula has neither historical nor political unity. All of its inhabitants are Moslems and speak Arabic, but because of territorial rivalries it has been divided up into several states independent of each other. By far the largest and most important is the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

The population of Saudi Arabia, estimated at roughly 7,000,000, is homogeneous and of relatively pure racial composition. It is mostly Bedouin or of Bedouin descent, except for the coastlands of the southwest and east where it is of mixed racial stocks. However, there are no ethnic minorities as such. The great majority of the peoples are Sunni Moslems of the Wahabi persuasion, although the Hasa region is mostly Shi' ah. Wahabism, an austere puritanical sect, is the chief reform movement of Islam. Besides being the vehicle of Saudi Arabian national feeling, it has gained considerable importance through control of the pilgrimages to Mecca and as custodian of the holy places, thus lending Saudi Arabia a powerful influence over the Moslem world.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> The Middle East 1958, pp. 28-39; RIIA, The Middle East, pp. 31-35.

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Generally, there appears to be little consciousness of national unity among the people. Their insular isolation from outside as well as from one another, the primitive conditions, and the cultural patterns of tribal life have all made for a parochial outlook and communal loyalties. The present boundaries of the country are largely established by geography, rather than

ethnic or economic criteria, and where Saudi Arabia confronts the interior of neighboring coastal states the frontiers are not even demarcated.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> RIIA, The Middle East, pp. 92-99; The Middle East 1958, pp. 27f.

So far, political institutions have not evolved enough to give expression to whatever sense of national identity the inhabitants of its territory possess or are potentially capable of developing. The current economic revolution that is occurring as a result of the oil industry might eventually make it possible for Saudi Arabia, in much the same physical form she now has, to become a self-contained national state.

#### Yemen

Yemen is the only other completely independent sovereign state of the Arabian Peninsula. Next to Saudi Arabia in population, her estimated 5 million people are of uniform racial and cultural composition. Practically all are Shi'ah Moslems of the Zaidi sect. There apparently are no dissident minorities of any consequence, nor any displaced Yemeni in other states.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> The Middle East 1958, pp. 42f; Lenczowski, The Middle East in World Affairs, pp. 357-363.

Although the country has historical antecedents going back to 950 B.C., there is little national basis for the present boundaries, either in an ethnic or geographic sense, other than isolation. As an indication, the interior frontier with Saudi Arabia is not clearly defined. The predominantly feudal patterns of social organization that prevail do not make for political consciousness of national unity in the bulk of her people.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid.; RIIA, The Middle East, pp. 100-108.

#### Minor States of the Arabian Peninsula

Stretching from Yemen along the southern and eastern coasts of Arabia to the northern shores of the Persian Gulf is a collection of principalities and petty shiekhdoms bound together by treaties with Great Britain. These are further broken down into individual tribal territories. With the exception of the Aden Protectorate, Muscat and Oman, and Kuwait, few have populations over 100,000. They exist as separate states largely because of imperialist and economic considerations. Their respective boundaries hardly reflect national units.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> The Middle East 1958, pp. 27, 44-60; RIIA, The Middle East, pp. 109-137; Izzeddin, The Arab World, pp. 214-216.

#### The Non-Arab Countries

The non-Arab countries of the Middle East are characterized by a less equivocal national identity. Each is a distinct national unit historically, ethnically, linguistically, and politically. With the exception of Israel, they have a relatively consolidated national population contained within their present boundaries. However, except for Iran, they manifest some degree

of irredentism or encourage immigration to repatriate nationals isolated in other countries. Conversely, all three have internal minority problems.

#### Turkey

The beginnings of Turkey's national identity go back to the Seljuk Turks of the eleventh century, but it was under the Ottomans in the late thirteenth century that Turkey was consolidated politically into the nucleus of a great empire which persisted until the end of the First World War. The rise of Turkish national consciousness of being an ethnic, linguistic, and political unit, however, is relatively recent. It first manifested itself in the Pan-Turanian and Pan-Ottoman movements of the nineteenth century. The peace settlement after the First World War of necessity restricted its development to a more limited but at the same time more specific and natural context.

By virtue of situation, the modern state of Turkey has the advantage of a measure of physical integrity as a geographic unit which is not enjoyed by most countries of the Middle East. The designation Asia Minor is synonymous with the territory that makes up the greatest part of Turkey. Only three per cent of her total area lies beyond the Bosphorus in Europe.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> RIIA, The Middle East, pp. 506-508, 510f; The Middle East 1956, pp. 373ff; Anshen, The Middle East: World Center, pp. 15-17.

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The Turkomans who conquered Turkey were of western Mongoloid ancestry, but because of their relatively small numbers contributed little to the racial character of the Turkish people. The present population is primarily a mixture of Mediterranean and Armenoid strains. Compared to other Middle Eastern countries, the Turks are to a high degree homogeneous; sufficiently so, to form a united nation-state in the Western sense.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> The Middle East 1958, p. 372.

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The population, according to U.N. estimates of 1956, is 24,797,000. The Turkish language, which was introduced in Seljuk times, is spoken over most, but by no means all, of the country and is now written in Roman script. It belongs to the Ural- Altaic family, and dialects of Turkish are spoken in an area extending across central Asia as far as northwest China. Ninety-eight per cent of the population is Moslem, most of whom are Sunni, but there are four or five million of the Shi' ah sect who are treated as a distinct group apart from the Sunni majority.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> The Middle East 1958, p. 372; World Almanac, pp. 384ff.

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There are a number of linguistic and religious minorities. The largest and most troublesome are the Kurds, estimated at one and a half million, who occupy large areas of southeastern Turkey. Incipient Kurdish nationalism, which broke out in revolt in 1925, 1930, and 1937, is a serious internal problem, although it has not developed into an organized separatist movement coordinated with Kurd minorities in other countries. The Arabic-speaking minority, also in the southeast, is about 250,000, while the Greeks are at present only about 100,000. In the late 1920's a

million and a half Greek residents living in Turkey were returned to Greece in exchange for 700,000 Turks who were repatriated. Most of the remaining Greeks are concentrated in Istanbul, as are the Armenians who were once widespread but now number no more than 65,000. In the northwest 68,000 Circassians still retain their ethnic identity. Other minorities, speaking Hebrew, Laz, Georgian, and a few other languages, together total perhaps an additional 250,000.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> RIIA, The Middle East, pp. 507-510; The Middle East 1958, pp. 376ff; Lenczowski, The Middle East in World Affairs, pp. 117-134.

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Since 1930 there has been a continuous immigration of Moslem Turks from the Balkans amounting to an estimated 400,000. In 1950 and 1951 Bulgaria alone deported 158,000 until Turkey closed the frontier. Many Turks still live outside Turkey in former Ottoman provinces. The 80,000 on Cyprus serve to support in part Turkey's claim to the disputed island.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> RIIA, The Middle East, pp. 509-510; Lenczowski, The Middle East in World Affairs, pp. 131ff.

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Despite these internal divisions, modern Turkey is one of the few integrated nation-states in the Middle East. The political unit described by the present boundaries in general corresponds to a complete nationality unit.

#### Iran

Persia has had a long history of political identity and a continuity of cultural integrity as one of the world's great civilizations. Although a long train of Promethean renaissances can be traced back to Achaemenian times, her existence as a nation in the modern sense goes back to the Safavid revival of the sixteenth century. Because of geographic location, many peoples have passed through or settled in the country, so that present-day Iran has numerous ethnic elements of widely differing origin. Despite repeated invasions and periods of foreign domination, the Persians largely preserved their national character and assimilated the invaders. Much of the cultural content of the Islamic civilization is of Persian derivation. However, inherent national character has not in recent times manifested itself in political unity as a nation-state.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> RIIA, The Middle East, pp. 372-380; Fisher, The Middle East, pp. 161-167.

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The estimated population of Iran, as of 1956, is approximately 18,000,000, excluding the nomad tribes who probably number an additional one or two million. Several languages are current. Modern Persian, which is written in Arabic characters, is the only official language and is spoken in the north and center of the country, where most of Iran's population is concentrated. Older forms of New Persian are also spoken however. Various dialects of Kurdish are found among the Kurd tribes, who number about 500,000 and live in the region of the Zagros mountains of the northwest. The Kurds form the main dissident minority of political significance. Some Turkish-speaking tribes, who together total perhaps 500,000, are also located in the same general area, as well as in the northeastern sections. Baluchi occurs in

the extreme southeast, while Luri is current among both the 350,000 Lurs and about 200,000 Bakhtiaris of the northwest. There are a few Arabic-speaking groups in the southwest, and minor isolated communities of other linguistic minorities also exist.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> RIIA, The Middle East, pp. 374f; The Middle East 1958, pp. 144ff, 150; World Almanac, p. 363.

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The great majority of the population is Moslem, predominantly of the Ithna Ashari version of the Shi' ah sect. Only about seven or eight per cent are Sunni, mainly among the Kurds, Turkomans and Baluchis, and the remaining few are Christians, Jews, Bahais, or Zoroastrians. Of the non-Moslems, the 120,000 Armenian Christians located in the larger towns are the only group of any important size. Iran is considered the center of the Shi' ah faith and contains shrines and holy cities to which pilgrimages are made by Shi' ah Moslems from other countries. Thus, a common religious bond exists to some extent between Iran and Iraq, as well as with Yemen, the three countries where Shi' ahs are in the majority.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> The Middle East 1958, p. 160; Fisher, The Middle East, pp. 283-286; RIIA, The Middle East, p. 375.

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In addition to differences of language and religion, internal decentralizing influences have held back the latent consciousness of national unity from finding expression in political institutions on the state level. Established demotic patterns are local in scope. The social organization of most of the sedantary population is feudal, and that of the migratory nomads, tribal. Group identities have been further defined by tradition and custom. These factors, coupled with widespread poverty and backwardness, make for rigidly drawn distinctions between population elements at the expense of over-all unity. The resulting social attitudes and outlook are thus parochial. Nevertheless, in general the present boundaries, except for the northwest, accurately describe by Middle East standards a self-contained national entity.

#### Israel

As a polity, the modern state of Israel did not evolve organically but came into being by design. The present boundaries have little natural basis, for the frontiers were defined by armistice agreements signed with neighboring Arab states and correspond to the military front as it existed in 1949. However, in the most literal sense they do reflect the national unity of a people, for they are the product of dynamic national aspiration almost exclusively.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> RIIA, The Middle East, pp. 301-306; The Middle East 1958, p. 205.

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The population, which keeps increasing with the continual flow of Jewish immigrants, numbered an estimated 1,943,480 as of August, 1957, of which 1,733,163 were Jews. Of the 210,317 non-Jews, approximately 145,000 were Moslems, mainly of the Sunni sect. The remainder consisted of 50,000 Christians, 20,000 Druses, and small numbers of other minorities. Hebrew, in its Sephardic form of pronunciation, is now the dominant language both officially and as the vernacular. Arabic, which had

formerly enjoyed equal status under the British Mandate, has greatly declined following the flight of the 868,000 Palestinian Arab refugees.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> The Middle East 1958, pp. 206, 211-225; World Almanac, pp. 364f; RIIA, The Middle East, pp. 293-201.

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The fact that the Israeli national state is intrusive and is rapidly building up an internal need for territorial expansion, that in the process must further dislocate other ethnic groups, has proved to be a strong stimulus to Arab Nationalism. Reaction to Israel brought a measure of Arab unity by providing a specific focus and highlighting common bonds that transcend lesser differences between various elements. Conversely, Arab antagonism has tended to give Israeli nationalism an exaggerated solidarity. The immediacy of the Arab threat has made for a defensive consciousness of national identity, in some respects almost to the point of chauvinism. Thus, for the moment at least, the population contained within the present political limits of Israeli territory represents the greatest national unity of any country in the Middle East.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Izzeddin, The Arab World, pp. 254-264; Lenczowski, The Middle East in World Affairs, pp. 288-296.

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The accidental configuration of the present boundaries of Israel is of necessity transitional. Although these boundaries reflect a self-contained national unit ethnically, they do not coincide with any logical geographic or economic unit. Nor do they reflect any basis for a stable balance between opposing national pressures contending for hegemony over the same area.