Sovereignty, nationalism, and regional order in the Arab states system
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In the first address to the French Parliament by a U.S. President since Woodrow Wilson, in June 1994 President Bill Clinton spoke of the growing challenge posed by nationalism to international order. In decided contrast to Wilson, who came to Paris after World War I to champion the idea of national self-determination, Clinton arrived after the cold war to warn how nationalism undermines international stability. At present, nationalism is less identified with cultural autonomy, democracy, and sovereignty than with chauvinism, expansionism, and assaults on the Westphalian order. If during the cold war few practitioners or students of security politics fully considered the importance of nationalism, current circumstances have forced them to do so: some of the most important sources of regional and international instability clearly are rooted in contending national and ethnic claims and the failure of the state to capture the loyalties of its citizens.1 Today scholars and policymakers are less likely to write of nation-states than they are of nations against states.

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The explosive mix of nationalism and sovereignty is well-known to students of Arab politics. Although upon independence Arab states were quite willing to recognize the legitimacy of sovereignty's norms as the basis of their relations with non-Arab states, they debated vigorously among themselves the meaning of Arab nationalism and how they should organize their relations. Two stylized positions emerged. Perhaps most famous were those Arab nationalists who (1) claimed that an Arab state's authority derived not from its citizens but from the larger Arab nation that enveloped its borders; (2) urged Arab states to develop close economic, cultural, and security ties to deepen the Arab political community; (3) rejected the territorial and juridical segmentation of the Arab world; and (4) demanded that their territorial divisions be erased to bring the state and the nation into correspondence. Others, however, championed interpretations of Arab nationalism that were consistent with the territorial division of the Arab world and exclusivity associated with sovereignty. King Hussein of Jordan contrasted his understanding of Arab nationalism and how the Arab world should be organized with that of Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser in the following way: "My own concept...is quite different from Nasser's. He believes that Arab nationalism can only be identified by a particular brand of Arab unity. I disagree. Arab nationalism can only survive through complete equality."2 In general, while all Arab leaders identified themselves as Arab nationalists and advocated Arab unity, they held different interpretations of the political projects associated with Arab nationalism, yielding very different implications for organizing inter-Arab politics. National identities and aspirations frequently clashed with Westphalian principles and notions of territorial exclusivity, depositing a legacy of regional conflict.3

Yet Hussein's vision largely has carried the day. Whereas prior to 1967 the principal debate and a major source of conflict among Arab states concerned whether Arab nationalism was or was not consistent with state sovereignty and the territorial legacy, since then Arab nationalism as political unification is no longer championed, and Arab states, which are now routinely characterized as having a "real" existence and basis in society, seemingly have agreed on some basic "rules of the game" that are associated with the norms of sovereignty. Although inter-Arab rivalries and conflicts persist, the disappearance of the particularly deadly issue of state versus nation has advanced regional order.

This article employs an institutional analysis to show that the emergence of regional order in the Arab world was a consequence of the consolidation of state sovereignty and a changed meaning of Arab nationalism. Specifically, I

explore how the Arab states system moved from state versus nation and the acrimonious debate over the region’s organizing principles to the simultaneous existence of separate sovereign states and Arab nationalism and to the establishment of relatively stable expectations and shared norms to govern inter-Arab relations. I examine the original members of the League of Arab States, namely, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Syria, and Yemen. Although the league’s membership has expanded considerably since 1945, it is this original group that is the focus of most discussions of inter-Arab politics and highlights the changing relationship between state and nation.

I focus on three related issues to trace this relationship. First, “neither internal sovereignty, with its conception of citizenship and national identity and loyalty, nor external sovereignty, with its idea of mutual recognition of boundaries and authority over that territory, has a real counterpart in Arab-Islamic history.” However, state formation processes, which have increased the masses’ identification with the state, and interstate interactions, which have created greater differentiation between Arab states, have contributed to the institutionalization of sovereignty.

Second, many of the same domestic and regional practices that led to the consolidation of sovereignty also promoted an interpretation of Arab nationalism that is consistent with sovereignty. Although Arab nationalism has evidenced considerable conceptual elasticity and been associated with various political projects, a striking development is the disappearance of a definition that undermined sovereignty and the emergence of a more “centrist” conception that is compatible with it. Therefore, in contrast to those who claim that the emergence of state sovereignty came at the expense if not the very death of Arabism, I suggest that the Arab world has moved from states versus nation to states and nation(s), suggesting that the territorial nationalism and sovereignty of the various Arab states and Arab nationalism can accommodate each other. It is well-accepted that nationalism is “imagined,” and this article highlights how different imaginings of and meanings associated with the nation have very different consequences for regional politics.

The consolidation of sovereignty and the emergence of a “centrist” conception of Arab nationalism enabled Arab states to develop relatively stable expectations and shared norms, that is, to foster regional order. 


have a greater incentive and exhibit a greater willingness to recognize each other's sovereignty and honor the principle of noninterference as the bases of their relations. My understanding of the emergence of order in the Arab states system, therefore, contrasts with realist and neoliberal institutional approaches. Realism claims that regional order is dependent on material configurations and looks to balances of power, hegemonies, and the like; neoliberal institutionalism examines how state actors with given interests and identities construct institutions to advance cooperation. In contrast, I build on constructivist statements to trace how patterned interactions among Arab states led to the consolidation of sovereignty and a sovereignty-friendly conception of Arab nationalism—that is, nothing less than the development of new state identities, roles, and interests, which in turn facilitated the emergence of relatively stable expectations and shared norms that are associated with sovereignty.8

This article's first section offers an institutional framework for approaching the Arab states system and focuses on the relationship among institutions, roles, and order. The second section examines how statehood presented Arab states with two potentially contradictory roles (that of sovereign state and that of promoter of the Arab nation) that created regional instability. The third section considers how the self-interested actions of Arab leaders, namely through state formation and interactive processes, promoted a new institutional environment that transformed the meaning of Arab nationalism and institutionalized state sovereignty and its norms. This development in turn fostered regional order. I then forward a series of indicators to substantiate the claim that Arab states have established relatively stable expectations and shared norms associated with sovereignty to organize their relations.

An institutional approach to the Arab states system

Whether scholars understand institutions as relatively stable sets of roles and interests or as "persistent and connected set[s] of rules (formal and informal) that prescribe behavioral roles, constrain activity, and shape expectations," in Robert Keohane's words, roles frequent most definitional properties of

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institutions. Roles can be understood as how the individual (or state) participates in society according to a particular identity and comes to modify its behavior accordingly. The concept of roles raises three key issues for the present discussion. First, because roles modify and constrain behavior, an important distinction must be made between position roles and preference roles; the former generally are associated with formal institutions and have well-defined and detailed guides to action, while the latter are linked more closely to informal institutions and carry fewer constraints on behavior. Global politics contains both formal and informal institutions, and when investigating their effects on international processes it is important to recognize that each role type places greater or lesser boundaries on state action. Second, that roles shape but do not determine behavior highlights the necessity of examining the state's understanding of and the meaning it attaches to its role. The enactment of a role, then, is shaped by how each actor interprets that role, not unlike how different actors will bring different interpretations to the same role in a play. Finally, state roles have both international and domestic origins. To take seriously, first, that states are embedded in domestic and international environments and, second, that roles do not determine but shape behavior requires incorporating both how actors interpret their roles and how international and domestic politics affect those roles.

I employ an institutional analysis and focus on the concept of roles to address three central issues in inter-Arab politics: (1) the absence of regional order during the pre-1967 period; (2) the institutionalization of state sovereignty; and (3) the increased regional order after the 1960s. Institutional approaches are most closely associated with theories of change and stability, not theories of

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instability. Yet the recognition that states are embedded in myriad institutions that distribute different roles and behavioral expectations suggests that the state might occasionally be called upon to enact contradictory roles. Specifically, it is possible that the state’s actions that are consistent with the role requirements of and are stabilizing in one institution might be inconsistent with and destabilizing in those of another. Sheldon Stryker summarizes this situation by noting that role conflict “exists when there are contradictory expectations that attach to some position in a social relationship. Such expectations may call for incompatible performances; they may require that one hold two norms or values which logically call for opposing behaviors; or they may demand that one role necessitates the expenditure of time and energy such that it is difficult or impossible to carry out the obligations of another role.”

Crawford Young points out that while “the role selected in response to any situation depends upon the definition and perception of particular events,” often situations structurally overlap such that it becomes difficult to predict which role will predominate. Because actors may be unable to conform to the requirements of one role, they may be unable to establish the mutual expectations that encourage order.

The possibility that pan-Arabism and state sovereignty allocated potentially contradictory roles informs my portrayal of the pre-1967 period. If Arab leaders were reluctant to treat each other as sovereign entities, frequently challenging one another’s authority and territorial basis of existence, it was because of the presence of a rival institution of pan-Arabism that allocated potentially contradictory roles and behavioral expectations. That state sovereignty is a social institution (not a natural artifact of states but rather a consequence of and dependent upon the discursive and nondiscursive practices of state and nonstate actors) is increasingly recognized in international relations theory, demonstrated in a variety of historical cases, and present in the case of the Arab states system. Because sovereignty is an informal institution, the behavioral expectations and norms that exist among sovereign states have varied considerably over the ages. That said, the enduring elements

14. Stryker, Symbolic Interactionism, p. 73.
of sovereignty are that it accords a measure of possessiveness and exclusivity to the state: the state has authority both over its domestic space and to act as a legitimate member of international society, and further, such entitlements are embodied in the principle of noninterference.\textsuperscript{17} Being recognized as sovereign amounts to a social permission granted by the community of states to act with certain powers and implies a certain measure of self-restraint by other members of this community, a live-and-let-live attitude, as it were.

That Arab nationalism also is an institution is less intuitive. Yet it can be viewed as such, albeit a weak institution, to the extent that it distributed particular roles to Arab states that duly constrained and shaped their interests, if not also their identities, and contained domestic and regional sanctions for those who were seen as violating its norms.\textsuperscript{18} This relates, however, to another important conceptual issue: Arab nationalism has evidenced considerable conceptual elasticity both historically and spatially, and institutions are taken as consequential to the extent that they have some degree of permanence and shape the behavior, if not the identities, of actors. Arab nationalism, in this reading, can be viewed as an institution to the extent that Arab states derive their interests from the Arab nation that envelops their borders and are expected to work toward political unification and a strengthening of the political community. It is this meaning of Arab nationalism that can best be understood as an institution, and one that conflicted with the norms of sovereignty. Moreover, it is this meaning of Arab nationalism that corresponds to most definitions of nationalism; nations are understood as having a shared identity, past, and future, and nationalism is a political movement that demands a correspondence between the nation and political authority.\textsuperscript{19} However, Arab nationalists have adopted definitions of the nation that borrow alternatively from the French and the Germanic traditions; whereas nationalists drawing on the former demanded that a nation is inconceivable without the state, others, drawing on the Germanic tradition, conceived of the nation as an organic entity that was reminiscent of Toinnes's notion of gemeinschaft and that was not dependent on a single political authority. A significant issue in the debate over the meaning of Arab nationalism, therefore, is whether nationalism entails the political unification of the Arab states or whether the nation can exist and generate political obligations among independent and sovereign Arab

\textsuperscript{17} For instance, Ruggie argues that the development of the institution of sovereignty differentiated "among units in terms of possession of self and exclusion of others," and created an international order that enabled states to become the principal unit of international life. See John Ruggie, "Continuity and Transformation in the World Polity," p. 145.

\textsuperscript{18} For a defense of pan-Arabism as an institution, see Michael Barnett, "Institutions, Roles, and Disorder: The Case of the Arab States System," International Studies Quarterly 37 (September 1993), pp. 271–96.

states. In order to maintain definitional and conceptual clarity, I refer to pan-Arabism as that version of Arab nationalism that demands political unification among Arab states because they derive their authority and legitimacy from the Arab nation. In general, an institutional perspective on the issue highlights how rival institutions established alternative demands on and expectations for Arab states and, therefore, impeded the search for regional order.

That institutions provide both the context for strategic interaction and encourage actors to occupy roles informs my understanding of the emergence of regional order in the Arab states system. Specifically, institutions shape historical change by providing incentives and constraints to action and representing the context of strategic interaction. To this extent, an institutional approach is consistent with the view that historical change is path dependent. Path-dependent patterns, observes Stephen Krasner, are “characterized by self-reinforcing positive feedback. Initial choices, often small and random, determine future historical trajectories. Once a particular path is chosen, it precludes others, even if these alternatives might, in the long run, have proven to be more efficient or adaptive.”

Initial choices persist because individuals and social groups come to identify with and benefit from past decisions and because the costs of change become more significant over time.

This path-dependent perspective, moreover, is linked to institutional change in a particular direction: the production of order. By “order” I mean the development of relatively stable expectations and shared norms to govern relations among actors, and in the instance of Arab politics I am interested in the emergence of the particular order associated with sovereignty. International institutions are now widely understood as offering the possibility of order and cooperation among states by encouraging them to adopt a particular role conception and to modify their behavior according to each other’s roles, behaviors, and expectations. Once state actors adopt a particular role they limit their behavior in a continuous and predictable manner that harmonizes mutual

21. This is consistent with Tibi. See ibid., p. 14.
22. For interesting parallels between the emerging European state system and the Arab state system, particularly as regards to leaders’ conceptions of states’ interests, see F. H. Hinsley, Power and the Pursuit of Peace (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1963), chap. 8.
24. Wrong, The Problem of Order, especially, chaps. 1 and 3. Oran Young similarly defines international order as “broad, framework arrangements governing the activities of all (or almost all) the members of international society over a wide range of specific issues. We speak of an international political order, for example, as a system of territorially based and sovereign states that interact with one another in the absence of any central government.” See O. Young, International Cooperation, p. 13.
expectations and increases system stability; that is, they establish relatively stable expectations and shared norms to govern their relations. This definition distinguishes between factual order and normative order, that is, between statistical regularity and behavior governed by shared rules and norms, and is consistent with many international relations theories that emphasize how shared rules of the game, including sovereignty, promote international order.

That said, international relations theories can be categorized according to whether they view international order as dependent on material factors (realism); as a consequence of how self-interested states establish norms and institutions to further cooperation and stability (neoliberal institutionalism); or as a consequence of how actors and institutions are implicated in a process of mutual creation (constructivism). Specifically, this last approach does not view institutions as necessarily a product of conscious choice and design but rather as a consequence of patterned interactions and allows for the possibility that institutions, as a potential source of state interests and identities, can generate order among actors. Below I briefly discuss how the shortcomings of both neorealism and neoliberal institutionalism lead me to adopt a constructivist approach to regional order in the Arab world.

Neorealist approaches examine how balances of power, the distribution of power, and hegemonies generate stability among states. In short, they elevate military forces to a preeminent position in preventing an outbreak of hostilities, deterring the use of force, and maintaining stability. Although some sophisticated versions of neorealism consider how rules might guide interstate life, because such rules are established by the powerful to serve their needs, the rules will change with a change in the power hierarchy. For instance, Robert Gilpin argues that “an international system is stable (i.e., in a stable equilibrium) if no state believes it profitable to change the system” and predicts a change in the rules of the game as a result of a shift in the distribution of power.


As many realists examine the ongoing negotiation of international order, they hint that order cannot be derived from power politics alone; simply stated, frequenting their discussions are references to how sociological factors also account for interstate stability. This is particularly true of many of the classic realist accounts that acknowledge how state practices and international stability are affected by normative forces. Henry Kissinger began his classic *A World Restored* by stating that the central issue for the post-Napoleonic order was the construction of a set of socially recognized and collectively legitimated principles, that is, what is permissible and prohibited; in short, he situates military power alongside normative power. In the founding neorealist statement, Kenneth Waltz argued that socialization helps to account for how states become like-minded. Although Waltz’s conception of socialization is limited to a change in behavior, the collectivist and sociological imagery points to the possibility that international order might be fostered by socializing processes that shape state identity and interests (which is more consistent with sociological usage).

This highlights an important feature of many realist-inspired narratives of global and regional politics: their insistence on the primacy of power politics is undermined by a more complex portrayal of the workings of the interstate system than either their critics or disciples suggest; and they frequently undermine their plea for individualist purity and the primacy of power politics by resorting to sociological variables when necessary. By thus resorting to theoretical categories that are residual to their primary claims, many realist scholars reveal some fundamental and unsolved tensions in their work and open the door to substantive theoretical challenges.

These issues surface in many realist accounts of the Arab states system. Specifically, many realist narratives also claim that the post-1967 period is one of greater regional stability. This stability, they argue, was a consequence of a change in the distribution of power, notably Egypt’s defeat in the 1967 war (which led Nasser to withdraw his support for pan-Arabism) and also of the rise of the status quo-oriented Persian Gulf states. While Arab leaders


30. Moreover, Kissinger’s narrative intimates that these legitimation principles were not shaped by the distribution of military power alone. See Henry Kissinger, *A World Restored* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1964).


32. As Alexander writes, “For the sake of interpretation it is often more useful to move backwards, from one’s discovery of the residual categories back to the basic tensions which they have been developed to obscure.” See his *Twenty Lectures*, pp. 124–25. “It follows from this,” writes Parsons, “that the surest symptom of impending change in a theoretical system is increasingly general interest in such residual categories.” See Talcott Parsons, *The Structure of Social Action*, vol. 1 (New York: Free Press, 1968), p. 18.

33. For realist-inspired explanations, see P. J. Vatikiotis, *Conflict in the Middle East* (London:
frequently exploited Arab nationalism to serve their ends, and while the 1967 war had a dramatic impact on regional politics, viewing Arab nationalism as parasitic on material factors and looking to shifts in material power to understand these regional changes is unsatisfactory in three ways. First, changes in the regional distribution of power are not correlated with the decline of pan-Arabism. Shibley Telhami and Stephen Walt, both of whom offer elegant neorealist explanations of regional politics, mark the end of pan-Arabism at radically different historical moments. Specifically, Telhami claims that Egypt’s relative power vis-à-vis other Arab states was on the rise, not the decline, following the 1967 war, and that it was not until 1974 that pan-Arabism faltered.34 Walt stresses how the failed unity talks of the mid-1960s among Egypt, Iraq, and Syria undermined pan-Arabism and resulted “in a new pattern of inter-Arab alignments,” and, significantly, has little to say about the effects of the 1967 war on pan-Arabism.35 In short, two compelling neorealist accounts of inter-Arab politics come to very different conclusions about the timing of pan-Arabism’s decline, suggesting that the distribution of power provides at least an inconclusive explanation; indeed, Walt’s explanation arguably lends greater support to a process-oriented rather than structural model.

Second, while many of the best-known historical accounts adopt a realist narrative to explain these post-1967 changes, they frequently elevate the importance of normative forces that are independent of power politics to understand regional dynamics and developments. Although best known as a statement concerning the primacy of power politics in a region littered with the language of Arabism, Fouad Ajami’s classic The Arab Predicament frequently notes that Arab nationalist forces constrained the actions of Arab leaders and attributes the decline of pan-Arabism to a greater collective awareness that unification was both remote and misbegotten (and not solely due to changes in material power).36 Though aspiring to demonstrate the force of structuralism in a region that supposedly takes seriously its ideology, Walt remarks that “a different form of balancing has occurred in inter-Arab relations. In the Arab world, the most important source of power has been the ability to manipulate one’s own image and the image of one’s rivals in the minds of other Arab elites.”37 In short, many realist accounts call normative and ideational forces

34. Telhami, Power and Leadership in International Bargaining, pp. 94–104. Moreover, the rise of the Gulf Arab states postdates the widely observed decline of pan-Arabism.
35. Walt, The Origin of Alliances, p. 87.
37. Ibid., p. 149.
into play alongside the distribution of power to understand the constraints on state action and the dynamics of the region, suggesting that the emergent regional order cannot be derived from material forces alone.

Third, although realists assume that state interests are constant (and identities are irrelevant as an explanatory variable), many nonetheless insinuate that an emergence of new interests (and possibly identities) is tied to the declining salience of Arab nationalism.\(^{38}\) This suggests that the systemic focus overlooks how changes in state–society relations also shape the foreign policies of states; specifically, to understand why societal actors no longer responded to the prospect of unification in the same way or demanded that their governments be associated with the norms of pan-Arabism requires a greater sensitivity to changes in the domestic context. None of these criticisms implies that material factors are inconsequential for understanding regional changes but that they alone cannot account for the observed emergence of regional order, and that many realists in fact refer to normative factors when accounting for the dynamics of and the observed stability in Arab politics after the 1960s.\(^{39}\)

Because of these and other unresolved tensions in realist approaches, many scholars have considered how institutions and norms foster international order. It is important to differentiate between rationalist and constructivist approaches to institutions. Rationalist approaches examine how states establish institutions to clarify norms, rules, and principles to guide and define a range of acceptable behavior and hence alter (or create greater certainty in) a state’s expectations of another state’s behavior. Because such dynamics encourage actors to have greater trust in each other and the future, institutions enable states to escape the classic competitive trap fostered by the prisoners’ dilemma and thereby foster cooperation and stability. Moreover, such norms and institutions help to explain the persistence of stability in the face of changes in the distribution of power in the international system.\(^{40}\) This rationalist approach is consistent with the British school. For instance, Hedley Bull argues that states construct international institutions such as sovereignty to organize their relations and to increase the prospect of order. In this respect, a primary

38. See, for instance, Vatikiotis, Arab and Regional Politics in the Middle East; and Dessouki and Korany, The Foreign Policies of the Arab States.

39. Another view holds the superpowers responsible for the decline of pan-Arabism and the rise of statism. For this position, see Halim Barakat, The Arab World (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993). Although the superpowers have affected the region, and the Middle East can be understood as a “subordinate system”—it is penetrated and affected by great power rivalries—I agree with those who portray the superpowers as accommodating themselves to, accentuating, or mitigating already present inter-Arab dynamics. See Ajami, The Arab Predicament; Ben-Dor, State and Conflict in the Middle East; L. Carl Brown, International Politics and the Middle East (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984); Noble, “The Arab State System”; Baghat Korany and Ali Dessouki, “The Global System and Arab Foreign Policies,” in Korany and Dessouki, The Foreign Policies of Arab States, pp. 19–39; and Walt, The Origin of Alliances, p. 158.

goal of the society of states is the survival of the sovereign state, which is dependent on there being "a sense of common interests in the elementary goals of social life." This also parallels Bull's definition of international order as a "pattern of activity that sustains the elementary or primary goals of the society of states, or international society."41 The issue in the Arab states system, however, was an inability to establish some rules of interaction because of a debate over whether, in fact, Arab states should survive. Closer to the mark in this respect is R. J. Vincent's summation of Bull's view on disorder: "The precariousness of order in international society can be understood as a direct reflection of the degree to which these sovereign states have not agreed to fundamental rules, particularly those who view themselves as victims of this system."42

While constructivist approaches acknowledge that states might establish institutions to encourage cooperation, they differ from rationalist approaches by raising the possibility that institutions, first, might not be the product of conscious design but rather emerge out of patterned interactions that become routinized and institutionalized; second, represent an important source of state identity, roles, and interests; and third, encourage order by creating relatively stable expectations and shared norms among actors that occupy set roles.43 Roles always are formed in relation to others; it is in the process of interacting and participating within an institutional context that the actor comes to occupy a role.44 Institutions, then, are important socializing agents in that they comprise the social context in which norms and values are transferred from one actor to another and new identities and beliefs are formed.45 They encourage actors to occupy particular roles and modify their behavior accordingly.46 To be sure, actors will obey a particular order for reasons other than feelings of justice or an inherent belief in the norms involved, and this simply recognizes that order is produced in part by norms and in part by coercion.47 A reasonable

41. See Bull, *The Anarchical Society*, pp. 53 and 8, respectively, emphasis original.
assumption, therefore, is, first, that any type of order obtains through a mixture of both coercion and consent and, second, that this mixture can never be determined a priori but only through an empirical examination.

This perspective—how institutions shaped the interests and roles of Arab states—provides an alternative explanation for understanding the emergence of regional order. Once caught between pan-Arabism and sovereignty, Arab states have converged on the latter to order their relations. To understand this development requires an explanatory framework that does not view regional order as a consequence of balancing mechanisms or of hegemony and also not a result of how states, with given roles and interests, establish international institutions to govern their relations. Instead, it requires an account of how institutions, by providing the context of strategic action, might well shape the very interests and roles of state actors in such a manner as to encourage the development of relatively stable expectations and shared norms.

The emergence of sovereignty and Arab nationalism

Until the late nineteenth century, inhabitants of the Fertile Crescent existed within a variety of overlapping authority and political structures. The Ottoman Empire, Islam, and local tribal and village structures all contested for and held sway over various features of peoples’ lives. While the Ottoman Empire’s decline, imperialism, and new ideas of nationalism combined to challenge local political structures and identities, great power intrusions primarily were responsible for setting into motion statist and transnational forces that created a disjuncture between where political authority was to reside and the political loyalties of the inhabitants of the region. Specifically, while the great powers established a new geopolitical map, the political loyalties of the inhabitants enveloped these boundaries and challenged the very legitimacy of that map. Because elsewhere I have detailed how the simultaneous presence of pan-Arabism and state sovereignty created role conflict for the Arab states and disorder in the Arab states system, here I will discuss these features only briefly.

The disintegration of the Ottoman Empire in combination with the end of World War I enabled the great powers to reconstruct the Arab world. In the aftermath of World War I and through the mandate system, France ruled Lebanon and Syria and Britain controlled Iraq, Jordan, and Palestine. The


49. For a full discussion, see Barnett, “Institutions, Roles, and Disorder.”

50. For a detailed study of this period, see David Fromkin, A Peace to End All Peace: The Fall of
mandate system represented a powerful force behind statism and sovereignty; that the Arab world was divided administratively rather than ruled within a single political unit shaped future political activity. Specifically, anticolonial movements fought for "state" independence rather than Arab independence per se. George Antonius observes, "When Great Britain occupied Egypt in 1882, at a time when the national awakening had already begun to translate itself into a politically-minded movement, a new current of ideas emerged whose inspiration was specifically Egyptian and whose aim was, first and foremost, to agitate for the withdrawal of the British army of occupation. Thus was Egyptian nationalism born and thus did its leaders adopt a course which, as the years went by, made it increasingly distinct from the general Arab movement." Even if it was not the mandatory powers' intent to calm a pan-Arab movement that was beginning to generate considerable support and enthusiasm, the mandate system spawned new anticolonial movements and, with them, new categories of political actors; that is, the political actor was becoming shaped and defined—from an Arab political identity to an Egyptian political identity, and so on. Although many independence movements were using the language of Arabism and expressing a greater interest in other Arab lands (and particularly in Palestine), the strongest of them directed their activities at immediate independence and only secondarily at Arab unification. Although most Arab leaders favored the Western-created map, many of the residents of these newly established political units did not share in their


52. This charge that the mandate system was designed to divide the Arab nation is raised by Antonius, The Arab Awakening, pp. 248–49, and by Majjid Khadduri, "Towards an Arab Union: The League of Arab States," American Political Science Review 40 (February 1946), pp. 90–100 and p. 90 in particular. On the shifting basis of mobilization and collective action, see Alan Taylor, The Arab Balance of Power System (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1982), p. 15; John Breuilly, Nationalism and the State (New York: St. Martin's, 1982), p. 124; Antonius, The Arab Awakening, pp. 325–26; and J. P. Sharma, The Arab Mind: A Study of Egypt, Arab Unity, and the World (Delhi: H. K. Publishers and Distributors, 1990), p. 18. One possibility is that had the Arab world remained politically whole, and not divided into separate administrative units, Arab independence movements might have become more pan-Arab in character. For a similar observation concerning the West African states, see Jackson and Rosberg, "Why Africa's Weak States Persist."

satisfaction and were beginning to express a common political identity with those in other lands. "A map anticipated reality, not vice versa," observes Benedict Anderson. "A map was a model for, rather than a model of, what it purported to represent."54 Prior to World War I, pan-Arab movements, responding to new ideas of nationalism, Jewish immigration to Palestine, increased visibility of Western institutions in everyday life, and the Ottoman Empire's attempt to assert control over the area, and capitalizing on new means of communication, transportation, and education, began organizing in Damascus and Beirut and maintaining that Arabs shared common identities, enemies, and interests. These social movements, filling a political and intellectual vacuum because of the inability of political institutions to confront the challenges of the day, began to articulate an alternative vision of Arab political life and to nurture and promote an Arab identity.55 At this point, however, the idea of Arab political independence and unification had little force in a region where many Arab nationalists also considered themselves Ottomanists.56

World War I, the Arab revolt against the Ottoman Empire, the death of the Ottoman Empire, and the perception that the region was being assailed by European imperialism through the mandate system and by Jewish immigration to Palestine caused the region's inhabitants to reconsider their political identity and what sorts of political arrangements would be most meaningful and desirable.57 By the beginning of World War II, Arab nationalism became a potent political force. According to Albert Hourani, although there was still no singular meaning to Arab nationalism, many who identified themselves as Arab nationalists, and this was particularly so for those in Iraq, Jordan, and Syria, believed that (1) "there is or can be created an Arab nation, formed of all who share the Arabic language and cultural heritage"; (2) "this Arab nation ought to form a single independent political unity"; and (3) "the creation of such a unit presupposes the development among the members of the consciousness . . . [and] that their being members is the factor which should determine their political decisions and loyalties."58

Once the Arab states gained independence in the mid-1940s, a defining issue in inter-Arab politics became how to reconcile the existence of the separate sovereign states and a pan-Arabism that viewed them as artificial and demanded their unification. That state elites had a vested interest in this territorial division became immediately apparent after independence when

54. Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities, p. 73.
56. Tibi, Arab Nationalism, p. 16.
Arab leaders met in Alexandria, Egypt, in 1943 to consider the territorial future of the Arab world. While Iraqi leader Nuri al-Said proposed a federation among Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, and Syria, which would then join with Iraq, the conference rejected this pan-Arab aspiration and essentially embraced sovereignty and independence. Alan Taylor characterized that outcome by writing, “it was as if the founding members [of the Arab League] . . . set out deliberately to create an Arab system which did not in any substantial way threaten the vested interests of the respective regimes.”

Despite the construction of the League of Arab States with sovereignty at its core, Arab states continued to occupy two social roles that conferred contradictory behavioral expectations: sovereignty demanded that they recognize each other’s legitimacy, borders, and the principle of noninterference; while pan-Arabism held that Arab states were to defend the Arab nation, to uphold regional standards of legitimacy, and indeed to deny the very distinction between the international and the domestic. Because pan-Arabism provided the opportunity for—in fact, expected—Arab leaders to involve themselves in each other’s domestic affairs, it severely complicated the search for stable expectations and shared norms upon which any regional order would be based. If role conflict and regional disorder were to subside, and if stable expectations were to emerge, then either pan-Arabism or state sovereignty would have to bow to the other, or the norms associated with one would have to become more consistent with the norms of the other (my interpretation).

The emergence of regional order

If the first twenty-five years of the Arab states system was marked by tremendous rancor over how Arab states should organize their relations, since then those debates have quieted and the Arab states apparently have settled on sovereignty to govern their relations. If Arab leaders could begin to breathe a little easier on the outside, the inside also offered greater respite. For many scholars the surprise of the post-1967 period was the stability, permanence, and


longevity of many Arab regimes. While Arab leaders, like their counterparts elsewhere, continually concerned themselves with their domestic standing and responded automatically (and frequently repressively) to any hint of turmoil, such challenges were targeted at the legitimacy of the government and not at the state's borders. The simultaneous and related increase in the Arab states' juridical and empirical sovereignty accounts for why Arab leaders now began consistently to adopt the roles and adhere to the norms associated with sovereignty.

State formation

At independence, the Arab states lacked both external and internal authority because of the colonial legacy in general and pan-Arabism in particular and were dependent on an Arab identity to legitimate their policies and actions. The problem confronting Arab leaders was maintaining the state's sovereignty against the backdrop of an Arab nationalism that acted as both an instrument of political support and as an obstacle to state sovereignty. In this way, Arab leaders replayed the dilemma that Andrew Linklater describes as having confronted European rulers in the seventeenth century:

The modern European state emerged within the confines of a single civilization united by the normative and religious power of Christendom. During its rise the state sought to free itself from the moral and religious shackles of the medieval world. But while it pursued this aim the state was aware of the dangers of totally undermining earlier notions of an international society. . . . Quite clearly, the state set out to employ the notion of a wider society of states for the explicit purpose of maintaining international order. Its aim was to enjoy the benefits of preserving an international society without incurring the risk that individual citizens would challenge the state's legitimacy by proclaiming their allegiance to a higher cosmopolitan ethic.

The principal difference, of course, between Arab leaders and their European compatriots three hundred years earlier was that the latter did not have to contend with the idea of nation-states. The paradox, then, was that Arab leaders often needed Arab nationalism to provide a basis for their actions, yet its logical conclusion threatened to undermine their bases of power.

To rid them of that paradox and to better ensure their domestic survival, radical and conservative Arab leaders alike embarked on state formation projects that were designed to encourage the transfer of subnational and

transnational identities to the state and, therefore, to enhance the state’s legitimacy and domestic stability. State formation projects were instrumental in producing new political identities, shrinking the salience of transnational loyalties, and increasing the ability of state actors to act in a manner that is consistent with sovereignty.

State formation can occur through a myriad of activities and processes, but figuring centrally in the comparative politics and the Middle Eastern literatures are material incentives, external threats, and the manipulation of symbols. First, although Arab leaders situated in dependent economies might opt for etatist rather than market-oriented policies for economic reasons (i.e., late industrialization), etatism offered important political benefits as well. Chief among them is the ability of the state to become the caretaker—to act as the populace’s primary financial guardian and material source of support. Economic development came to be associated solely with a state-led effort (for good or for bad). Consequently, citizens linked their material interests to the state and not to local or international actors. To be sure, this was a major reason why the capitalist class in the newly independent Arab states were most loyal to the state’s independence and most resistant to pan-Arabism, and why the lower classes generally were more sympathetic to pan-Arabism and a new regional order. Accordingly, the promotion of a welfare state would link the citizens’ material interests, and political loyalties and identities, to the state. In this model, then, material forces propel changes in political identities. The danger, of course, is that using material benefits to win support is both no guarantee that it will alter an individual’s political identity and a highly costly affair for most resource-poor states.

External threats have played an important role historically in the growth of state power. Not only do wars and external threats generally act as important impetuses behind the state’s penetration and control over society but also they can build a sense of “we-ness” and develop a national identity. Whereas conflicts between Arab and non-Arab states increased an Arab identity and unity (witness the increase in pan-Arabism following the 1956 war), the chronic infighting and rivalry among Arab states has only highlighted their perceived differences (more on this later). For instance, as reported in the *New York Times*, some Arab officials suggested that one of the paradoxes of the Persian Gulf War was that Saddam Hussein’s attempt to cast himself as leader of the pan-Arab movement only “sharpened a sense that pan-Arabist slogans had outlived their relevance,” and consequently increased the sense of

65. For additional claims that state building has hardened the Arab territorial state and led to a decline in pan-Arabism, see Brynen, “Palestine and the Arab State System,” p. 606; and Gause, “Sovereignty, Statecraft, and Stability in the Middle East.”


difference between neighboring Arab states.\textsuperscript{68} There is little doubt that Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait bolstered the idea of a Kuwaiti national identity.\textsuperscript{69} Moreover, separate state-national identities also were reinforced by the Arab–Israeli conflict, wars that were waged ostensibly in the name of the Arab nation (though not for Arab unification). Conscripts were trained in state armies, wore state uniforms, were buried in state graves, and were honored with state holidays. In general, external conflict accelerated the sense of separateness and the growth of state-national identities.\textsuperscript{70}

Finally, Arab leaders have wielded and manipulated a variety of symbols to create a state-national identity. Manufacturing consent through the reconstruction of political identity can prove to be a cost-effective method of creating support, and evidence abounds that nearly all Arab leaders attempted to infuse the state with a sense of permanence. For instance, even Mu’ammar al-Kaddafi, who aspired to become the leader of pan-Arabism after Nasser’s death in 1970, attempted to create a “Libyan Arab” national identity through historical texts, holidays, and monuments.\textsuperscript{71} And in Iraq the Ba’athist party, which stresses pan-Arabism and the singularity of the Arab people, established an ongoing project to demonstrate the existence of an Iraqi identity that had roots in Mesopotami.\textsuperscript{72}

Additionally, many Arab leaders attempted to appropriate and be associated with the symbols of Arab nationalism, but in a way that was consistent with the state’s interests. Because many Arab leaders feared that their counterparts would seek to appropriate pan-Arabism to enhance their regional power and to destabilize their neighbors, they attempted to minimize their susceptibility to transnational issues by imposing their own interpretation on Arabism’s demands—one that was consistent with the state’s interests.\textsuperscript{73} According to Roger Owen, “Little by little the vocabulary of Arabism was altered to accommodate ideas and concepts designed to highlight regional differences and local particularity.”\textsuperscript{74} This attempt to define “Arab” issues in ways that

\textsuperscript{73} See Brynen, “Palestine and the Arab State System,” p. 611; and Owen, “Arab Nationalism, Arab Unity, and Arab Solidarity,” p. 21.
\textsuperscript{74} Owen, ibid.
were consistent with the state's interests led to a decreased sensitivity to Arab causes. For instance, because of Palestine's centrality in Arab politics, Arab leaders strove to ensure that their definition of and solution to the problem was not outstripped by another Arab leader's appraisal; the attempt by the Egyptian government to insulate its citizenry from pan-Arabism led to "an increasing passiveness toward" Arab causes in general and toward the Palestinian cause in particular.  

In sum, as Arab leaders worked for integration at one level, they promoted fragmentation at another. Solid empirical evidence at the regional and state levels shows that a state-national identity is better able to compete with an Arab identity because of a deliberate strategy to pursue what Baram terms "territorial nationalism," and that these states are now "legitimate in the eyes of society, or at least of a significant part of it," in Hourani's words. Central to the situation as it exists today is that populaces have greater allegiances to the state, that state-based identities are better able to compete with Arab nationalism for the citizens' political loyalties, that Arab societies are less likely to demand that their leaders follow pan-Arabism's cues, and that Arab leaders have less incentive to resort to pan-Arabism's demands to enhance their legitimacy.

Interstate interactions

My concern in this subsection is how inter-Arab interactions contributed to a decline in pan-Arabism and greater differentiation between Arab states. Alexander Wendt's discussion of how reciprocal interactions can create new and separate roles and interests provides a useful organizing device for considering how the interaction between Arab states produced a decline in transnational identities and obligations. While prior to the initial interaction actors might have cautiously optimistic or wary feelings about one another, this first contact generates expectations for future encounters. Not only does such knowledge inform future behavior but also this patterned behavior encourages the formation of the roles and interests of these actors. In short, while the initial interaction can be positive or negative, to the extent that it and subsequent behavior appears threatening, "the self is forced to 'mirror' such behavior in its conception of the self's relationship to the other," observes Wendt; ominous behavior produces a more wary and cautious outlook,

77. The quotations are from Baram, "Territorial Nationalism in the Middle East"; and Hourani, A History of the Arab Peoples, p. 448, respectively. Also see p. 451 of the Hourani volume. Gause shows that an increasing percentage of the gross national product of these states is utilized by the government, demonstrating that the citizens' needs are more closely linked to the state. See Gause, "Sovereignty, Statecraft, and Stability in the Middle East," p. 460.
a sense of conflicting interests, and the potential for distinct identities.\textsuperscript{79} Path-dependent behavior becomes institutionalized and establishes separate roles that are rather impervious to change.\textsuperscript{80} Therefore, anarchy alone cannot account for the emergence of these roles. Rather, these roles are created by actors themselves and through their actions; it is structure through action.\textsuperscript{81}

This process-oriented model nicely captures how initial pan-Arab sentiments, comprising a sense of shared identity and interests, were steadily replaced by greater fragmentation between Arab states and an acceptance of the roles and behavioral expectations associated with sovereignty. Consider the following historical sketch. At independence, Arab leaders expressed considerable ambivalence toward each other. While they recognized that Arab states had shared interests, this cooperative spirit was coated with tremendous apprehension and suspicion that pan-Arabism was a Trojan horse for Arab leaders. Initial encounters, therefore, were laden with mutual ambivalence if not outright suspicion. This approach-avoidance behavior emerges as a major theme of many excellent historical narratives of the period.\textsuperscript{82}

Future interactions only reinforced these suspicions and fears. Indeed, perhaps most damaging to the spirit of pan-Arabism were the outcomes of pan-Arab projects. Most significant were the twin failures of the 1960s: the death of the United Arab Republic (UAR) in 1961 and the 1967 Arab–Israeli War. If the UAR began with much public fanfare, privately both Egyptian President Nasser and Syrian leaders were only too fearful of the costs associated with this unification agreement.\textsuperscript{83} Such fears were prophetic. In 1961, Syria withdrew from the UAR amidst charges that it was little more than a vehicle for Nasser to expand his power at Syria’s economic and political expense.\textsuperscript{84} If the Egyptian–Iraqi–Syrian unification talks of the following years provide evidence that unification remained a formidable force, that such talks


\textsuperscript{81} Deirdre Boden, “The World as it Happens: Ethnomethodology and Conversational Analysis,” in George Ritzer, ed., \textit{Frontiers of Social Theory} (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), pp. 185–213 and p. 189 in particular. This view, of course, is consistent with Wendt’s phrase, “anarchy is what states make of it.”


\textsuperscript{83} Seale, \textit{The Struggle for Syria}.

\textsuperscript{84} Malcom Kerr, \textit{The Arab Cold War} (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971); Taylor, \textit{The Arab Balance of Power System}, p. 37; Vatikiotis, \textit{Arab and Regional Politics in the Middle East}, p. 84; and Owen, \textit{State, Power, and Politics in the Making of the Modern Middle East}, p. 88.
ended not with a unification agreement but with a flurry of accusations only dampened the desire for Arab unity.85

The other major defeat of pan-Arabism came as a consequence of Israel’s military victory in June 1967. Because Arab leaders paved their road to war with Israel with the language of pan-Arabism, Israel’s victory represented a defeat not only for the Arab states but also for pan-Arabism.86 That the 1967 war dealt pan-Arabism its fatal blow, however, is a testimony to its already-frail condition. It was in this context, the fading popularity of pan-Arabism and the possible Arab response to Israel, that Arab leaders gathered in Khartoum in autumn 1967. If the pretext was to discuss the collective Arab response to Israel’s military victory, the prominent subtext was the meaning of Arab nationalism. During the immediate months after the June war, Arab leaders exchanged indictments, and the underlying theme was the extent to which pan-Arabism, which represented the principal cleavage in the Arab world, could be blamed for the defeat. Jordan and Saudi Arabia were particularly vocal in claiming that any successful confrontation of Israel was premised on greater inter-Arab cooperation, that is, jettisoning the radical pan-Arab agenda. Amman’s newspaper ad-Dustur reflected the emerging mood: “Coexistence is a need which we must recognize at the present stage. An attempt to force others to adopt a certain system would . . . eventually divide the Arab ranks.”87

To close these divisions and increase inter-Arab cooperation would mean concluding the five-year confrontation in Yemen between Egypt and Saudi Arabia. The Egyptian troop intervention in Yemen in 1962 represented a flashpoint between radical and conservative Arab states and a symbol of Nasser’s attempt to export his revolution; the continuing Egyptian presence five years later, therefore, was an obstacle to inter-Arab cooperation. Accordingly, the continuing conflict in Yemen was an important agenda item at the 1967 Khartoum summit, and the subsequent agreement by Egypt and Saudi Arabia to end the war was considered one of the summit’s crowning achievements. Nasser agreed to resign as the sponsor of pan-Arabism and to target his activities and energies against Israel, and not his Arab brethren, and Saudi Arabia agreed to help him financially to do so.

The result of these developments was a broadening consensus on the basic norms that should govern Arab relations, aptly symbolized by Nasser’s shift in rhetoric from “unity of ranks” to “unity of purpose” and the “new pragmatism,” which suggested that cooperation need not imply unification.88 The Jordanian ad-Dustur summarized the prevailing view: “We [the Arab world]

85. For more on these talks see Kerr, Arab Cold War.
86. Ajami, The Arab Predicament.
87. BBC World Broadcast, ME/2519/A/8, 18 July 1967.
have not yet reached the state where we can overcome problems created by the existence of separate entities, which would, thus, pave the way for the complete elimination of separateness. This in turn imposes on us the duty to tolerate more than one viewpoint. . . . Because, if we do not tolerate the interaction of Arab experiments, we will never progress toward Arab coexistence and will never approach our basic aim—Arab unity.” In short, through an ongoing interactive process, Arab states converged on both sovereignty and relatively stable expectations concerning how to organize their relations.

Inter-Arab relations since Khartoum only have reinforced this path of fragmentation—a belief that Arab states might have distinct interests and that they should organize their relations with each other around sovereignty’s norms. The decision by Nasser and others (but not Syria) to abstain from intervening in Jordan during its military campaign against the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) in autumn 1970 was viewed by many as recognition of the arrival of sovereignty and the new conservatism in the Arab world—even the PLO, the representative of the Palestinian people and the conscience of the Arab world, should not challenge the sovereignty of the existing Arab states. Although the 1973 war and the subsequent oil embargo suggested the possibility of a greater collective spirit in the Arab world, Egypt’s decision to take a separate road to peace with Israel signaled that state interests and Arab interests did not always coincide, even on defining issues. The emergence of subregional organizations such as the Gulf Cooperation Council and the Arab Maghrebi Union rather than of pan-Arab associations was the dominant trend in inter-Arab cooperation in the 1980s. The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait ushered in a new era in inter-Arab relations, as Arab leaders became less apologetic about defending their policies of furthering the state’s—as opposed to the Arab nation’s—interests.

In sum, the historical legacy of inter-Arab interactions is not greater cooperation and a deepening of the political community but rather greater differentiation and particularism among Arab states.

89. BBC World Broadcasts, ME/2561/A/6, 6 September 1967. Also see the editorials in the Baghdadi al-Fajr al-Jadid and the Egyptian al-Akhbar al-Yawm, reprinted in British Broadcasting Company, BBC World Broadcasts, ME/2558/A/3, 2 September 1967, and ME/2559/A/4, 4 September 1967, respectively. For a fuller treatment of the symbolic significance of the Khartoum summit, see Ajami, The Arab Predicament.

90. The decline of pan-Arabism also encouraged more regional affiliations and loyalties: “A North African (maghribi) or a Gulf Arab (khaliji) identity, which had once been an anathema, was no longer so, and the ‘Egypt-first’ slogan that had once been held in check gradually became acceptable.” See Salame, “Inter-Arab Politics,” p. 322.

91. For instance, Shaykh al-Nuhayyan of the United Arab Emirates observed that, “The Arab nation’s split and fragmentation existed before the Gulf War, but this war has aggravated and deepened this split.” See “President on Prospects for Arab Unity,” Foreign Broadcast Information Service—Near East (FBIS-NES), 20 March 1994, p. 25. Also see Bernard Lewis, “Rethinking the Middle East,” Foreign Affairs 71 (4 1992) pp. 103–4; and Ibrahim Karawan, “Arab Dilemmas in the 1990s: Breaking Taboos and Searching for Signposts,” Middle East Journal 48 (Summer 1994), pp. 433–54.

92. The rise of statist interests shaped post–Persian Gulf War regional security patterns. The
Although such developments spell the demise of pan-Arabism, they do not necessarily mark the end of Arab nationalism. If Arab states are more fully treating each other as having a real existence, Arab leaders and masses alike apparently have converged on a more centrist definition of Arab nationalism that implies interstate cooperation and consultation—but little else.\textsuperscript{93} Arab nationalism and sovereignty, therefore, no longer are contradictory concepts. The meaning of Arab nationalism and the expected behaviors derived from it are increasingly tantamount to those of international society.\textsuperscript{94}

The ascendance of this centrist conception of Arab nationalism is a product of some of the same state formation and interactive processes that are responsible for the institutionalization of sovereignty. Political concepts cannot be divorced from political practice, from their historical context, or from the meaning that actors attach to those concepts and that address new difficulties in new surroundings.\textsuperscript{95} Briefly, three broad periods in inter-Arab politics, defined by three different international and domestic contexts, affected the debate over and the meaning of Arab nationalism. The first was from the late nineteenth century through the early twentieth century, defined by the breakdown of the old order as a consequence of the demise of the Ottoman Empire, the emergence of nationalism, and the spread of the world economy. As their political, economic, and cultural institutions crumbled, individuals in the Fertile Crescent were forced to reconsider their political identity and how they wanted to live with one another; that is, who constituted the political community.\textsuperscript{96} Modernity and imperialism provided an impetus for Arabs to discover their common identity and destiny and to suggest that a meaningful response to these economic, cultural, and political dislocations required

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\textsuperscript{93} As Lewis notes, "The decline of Pan-Arabism as a force shaping the policies of Arab governments can be measured in the level and intensity of their support for other Arab governments and peoples." See Lewis, "Rethinking the Middle East," p. 100.

\textsuperscript{94} Hourani, \textit{A History of the Arab Peoples}, p. 451.

\textsuperscript{95} James Farr, "Understanding Conceptual Change Politically," in Terrence Ball, James Farr, and Russell Hanson, eds., \textit{Political Innovation and Conceptual Change} (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 24-46 and p. 33 in particular. For a related discussion, see the introduction to the second edition of Tibi, \textit{Arab Nationalism}.

\textsuperscript{96} For a discussion linking the demise of empires and the rise of nationalism, see Charles Tilly, "States and Nationalism in Europe, 1492–1992." \textit{Theory and Society}, vol. 23, no. 1, 1994, pp. 131-46.
collective action on an expansive scale. The emergence of a pan-Arabism that attempted to link up with the modern-day project of nationalism and the creation of a nation-state is directly related to how individuals responded and attempted to make sense of these fundamental transformations.

The period from political independence through 1967 was defined by the coexistence of state sovereignty and pan-Arabism. During this time, Arab leaders were desirous of building strong and modern states in relation to, first, an international system that left them vulnerable; second, other "artificial" states with whom they shared a history, language, and destiny; and third, their own societies that treated them as illegitimate and artificial. Therefore, the debate over Arab nationalism is related to the attempt by Arab leaders to reconcile the desire to protect and promote the interests of both the Arab nation and the Arab state due to transnational and territorial logics, respectively. Accordingly, the debate over Arab nationalism was a debate not only over the degree to which Arab states had uniform interests but also over the necessity of political unification to give meaning, permanence, and purpose to the Arab nation.

Due to state formation projects and interactive processes, Arab states began to be increasingly regarded as having a real basis. The growing differentiation among the states produced a corresponding change in the meaning of Arab nationalism. Specifically, the language of Arab nationalism can still be heard as Arabs continue to confront the fundamental changes in the international and domestic politics within a new context—that of sovereign Arab states responding to perceived common challenges. While there is little support for unification, the continued existence of an Arab identity that serves as a bridge between Arab states, and the awareness by Arab states of the permeability of borders to cultural and economic forces, preserves an interest in close relations.97 Arab nationalism, therefore, still provides a powerful pull on Arab states and provides a symbolic incentive for cooperation. This is particularly true when states are viewed as being under assault by non-Arab (notably Western) forces.

In sum, Arab leaders have a greater incentive to act consistently with the role allocated by, and norms associated with, sovereignty because of domestic and international changes. State formation processes have increased the masses' willingness to identify more closely with the state; accordingly, Arab leaders no longer have either the same incentive to be seen as working toward Arab unification or the necessity of legitimating their actions in the name of pan-Arabism, because that language no longer has the same salience for their citizenry. Interstate interactions, moreover, have undermined pan-Arabism, if not the very desire for close cooperation, and encouraged greater differentiation among Arab states. Domestic and international processes institutionalized sovereignty, promoted a more sovereignty-friendly definition of Arab national-

ism, and enabled Arab leaders both more consistently to adopt the roles associated with sovereignty and to develop relatively stable expectations concerning how to organize their relations.

Indicators of change

The institutionalization of sovereignty and the changed meaning of Arab nationalism encouraged Arab leaders to act more consistently with the behavioral expectations associated with sovereignty, which in turn increased regional order. Yet on what basis can we claim that sovereignty has been institutionalized? Although many scholars of Arab politics also have observed a fundamental shift in behavioral patterns in the Arab states system, that they frequently base their claims on selected historical episodes (for instance, Egyptian President Anwar as-Sadat’s trip to Jerusalem, the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, and more recently the Declaration of Principles between Israel and the PLO) raises a number of methodological and conceptual issues. First, actors might share common interests, goals, and definitions of the situation yet differ over the appropriate measures and actions required to achieve their objectives. Second, actors might have numerous and possibly conflicting interests, and the fact that one set of interests emerges over another at any particular moment does not represent conclusive evidence that other interests might not also be present. As William Connolly puts it, overlooking these two issues “would run the risk of misinterpreting a contingent choice reflecting immediate constraints for one representing the more basic and stable interests of the agent.”98

Third, many historical episodes can be interpreted as a vindication of either Arab nationalism or of sovereignty; that is, as the result of either Arab norms or the norms of international society. Consider Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait, which many offer as conclusive evidence that Arab nationalism is dead because one Arab state invaded another, supposedly violating a cardinal tenet of Arab nationalism.99 Not only have inter-Arab military conflicts occurred regularly since 1945, but the fact that a norm has been broken is not evidence of its absence. Indeed, the immediate and shocked reaction of the Arab states to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait can be taken as evidence that the normative prohibition against Arab states invading each other was broken; that is, evidence of the norm can be detected in the reaction of those observing its violation. Finally, both sovereignty and pan-Arabism permit a range of behaviors that often overlap. For instance, because sovereignty allows for political unification, it is theoretically consistent with pan-Arabism’s goal of unification; neither the active nor abandoned search by Arab states for regional integration represents conclusive evidence of the institutionalization of sover-
eighty. In general, the same event used by some to indicate Arab nationalism’s decline can be appropriated by others to indicate the very opposite.

To make the case that sovereignty has been institutionalized, pan-Arabism has declined, and Arab states have established relatively stable expectations and shared norms to govern their relations requires greater attention to those practices that are fundamentally inconsistent with sovereignty. Specifically, that Arab states have ceased challenging each other’s authority and debating the rules of the game is evidence of the institutionalization of sovereignty. I briefly discuss three indicators to support the claim that Arab states have converged on sovereignty and its norms to organize their relations: (1) the decline of unity talks and agreements; (2) the agendas at Arab summit meetings; and (3) the failure of Arab leaders actively to promote themselves as champions of pan-Arabism and political unification.

Perhaps the clearest and simplest expression of the rise of sovereignty is the near extinction of unification talks and treaties. Whereas seven unity agreements between Arab states of the Fertile Crescent were in force between 1949 and 1964, the lone post-1967 instance came in October 1978 between Iraq and Syria. The dramatic downturn in the number of unification efforts suggests the institutionalization of sovereignty. Recognize that in contrast to current European integration efforts that are advocated primarily on economic and political grounds, Arab unification efforts derived from a belief in the Arab states’ artificiality and lack of legitimacy and in the desire to bring the state and nation into correspondence. What matters, then, is not the attempt of integration per se but rather the meaning and motivation attributed to such actions. Therefore, a decline in unification talks suggests a decreased belief in the artificiality of the Arab state among Arab state and nonstate actors. Moreover, because a prominent interpretation of these unification efforts is that they represent an attempt by Arab leaders to maintain their domestic legitimacy, a decline in such efforts provides an indirect indicator of both an increase in the Arab states’ legitimacy and empirical sovereignty and/or a decrease in the luster of pan-Arab claims. Relatively, the language of legitimation has changed: while Arab leaders still claim that their actions further the interests of the Arab nation (though after the Persian Gulf War Arab states are less reserved in defending their policies in the name of state interests), they no longer present their actions as designed to accomplish the ultimate goal of political unification.

The agendas of Arab summit meetings represent another avenue for tracing the rise of sovereignty, the decline of pan-Arabism, and the development of shared norms and relatively stable expectations to organize the relations

100. Malik Mufti, Pan-Arabism and State Formation in Syria and Iraq (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, forthcoming). Indeed, the 1978 Syrian–Iraqi agreement produced little excitement and was given little significance outside a narrow political spectrum or the state’s borders, as it was widely interpreted by other Arab leaders as a blatant attempt by Iraq to replace Egypt as leader of the Arab world and by Assad to consolidate his domestic position. See Owen, State, Power, and Politics in the Making of the Modern Middle East, p. 91.
among states.\textsuperscript{101} Although the formal agendas of pre-1967 meetings concerned Arab-Israeli issues, their informal agendas and many presummit preparatory meetings had as a central issue the debate over pan-Arabism and political unification.\textsuperscript{102} Simply put, being debated were the basic norms that should govern inter-Arab relations. The post-1967 agenda, however, is no longer colored by issues of political unification or debates over how to organize interstate relations. Although these summits are still fraught with conflict, such tensions revolve around differences over how to solve and coordinate their responses to issues of mutual concern, rather than whether Arab states should accept the norms of sovereignty to guide their relations.

Another method for demarcating the emergence of sovereignty derives from the definition of the threat to regional stability. Threats may originate from considerations other than military power alone: they might derive from those state and nonstate actors that challenge the principle of sovereignty and the authority of the state. In this respect, revolutionary actors are those that present and promote an alternative principle for organizing international relations. Prior to the 1960s, the threat frequently posed by Arab states was not military but presentational: their willingness and ability to forward a particular understanding of the Arab state’s role and relationship to other Arab states. By suggesting that the purpose of the Arab state was to work toward political unification, those Arab leaders who aligned themselves with pan-Arabism undermined the state’s external and internal sovereignty. Accordingly, an Arab state that successfully wielded the pan-Arab card threatened to subvert the state’s internal and external security. In this respect, even relatively weak states represented a potential threat to stronger states.

It is noteworthy that while the post-1967 period still contains attempts by Arab leaders to claim leadership in the Arab world, such bids revolve around leadership on issues of mutual interest rather than on overturning or defending the region’s organizing principles. For example, Walt catalogues numerous alliances in the Middle East since the 1950s; however, their number significantly decreases after 1967 and the identified source of these threats is no longer associated with Arabist challenges, that is, a threat to the region’s organizing principles.\textsuperscript{103} In short, the changed definition of the threat in general and that Arab leaders no longer actively promote themselves as the champion of political unification suggest the institutionalization of sovereignty.\textsuperscript{104}

\textsuperscript{101} For a full treatment of the methodological and theoretical issues involved in using agendas to trace shifts in international politics, see Richard Mansbach and John Vasquez, \textit{In Search of Theory} (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), chap. 4. Sela argues that the very decision to convene an Arab summit in 1964 signaled that Nasser was beginning to abandon pan-Arabism. See Avraham Sela, “Middle East Politics and the Arab–Israeli conflict,” manuscript, Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

\textsuperscript{102} That no summit occurred in 1966 was testimony to the re-emergence of Arab radicalism. Vatikiotis, \textit{Arab and Regional Politics}, p. 87.

\textsuperscript{103} Walt, \textit{The Origin of Alliances}, pp. 287–88.

\textsuperscript{104} For other arguments and indicators concerning the willingness of Arab leaders to recognize the principle of noninterference, see Salame, “Inter-Arab Politics”; Brynen, “Palestine and the Arab State System,” p. 603; and Lewis, “Rethinking the Middle East,” p. 117.
Changes in these three indicators—unity attempts, the agendas of Arab summits, and a changed presentation of purpose for the Arab state and the definition of the threat—underscore a significant development in inter-Arab politics: the institutionalization of sovereignty, the acceptance of a meaning of Arab nationalism that is consistent with sovereignty, and the development of relatively stable expectations and shared norms for organizing regional life.

Conclusion

Since the beginning of the Arab states system state and nonstate actors have engaged in an active and occasionally violent dialogue over how regional life should be organized in general and how the Arab states should manage the legacy of Westphalia and the demands of Arab nationalism in particular. Such a debate highlights how Westphalia and the norms of international society conflicted with (and shaped) the existing (and emerging) regional society. Arab states were not only sovereign states but also, at a basic level, Arab states, deriving their legitimacy from and representatives of the Arab nation; these different social identities contained very different behavioral expectations. Interstate conflict, therefore, was not solely a product of insecurity driven by anarchy; rather it was a product of insecurity driven by transnational forces. The transfer of sovereignty to the Arab world represented an institutional revolution for organizing regional political life; and as with most revolutions, it was neither uncomplicated nor conflict-free.

State sovereignty emerged once the state understood itself as occupying certain roles and a “revolution in loyalties” occurred, such that subnational loyalties were transferred to the state and transnational loyalties receded in importance. The combined effects of regional interactions and somewhat successful state formation projects increased the state’s internal and external sovereignty and encouraged the differentiation between domestic and international space. The boundaries of the Arab states system and the desired and realized normative structure, therefore, were a result of both material and ideational forces. Material forces, embodied in external and internal threats, the collapse of empires, and economic forces, decidedly altered the incentives and interests of state and nonstate actors. Yet ideational forces, reflected both by contending and shifting national identities and by new intersubjective understandings of the role and purpose of the Arab state, also contributed to the development of shared norms to govern relations. In any event, institutions such as sovereignty generate their stabilizing properties once actors consistently adopt a particular role conception; modify their behavior according to

105. For the general theme of the interaction between the expanding norms of international society and regional systems, see Bull and Watson, The Expansion of International Society.
each other’s roles, behaviors, and expectations; and generate relatively stable expectations and shared norms. My approach to regional order, therefore, highlights not balancing mechanisms in the international system, or how states with preestablished interests and identities construct institutions, but rather how, first, preexisting institutions encourage (and socialize) state actors to adhere to a stable set of roles and behavioral expectations, and second, how institutions, roles, and shared norms develop from the interaction among actors.

Yet sovereignty is not permanently anchored. Arab leaders must continually work to reproduce the state’s sovereignty, its domestic and international authority, and the distinction between domestic and international space. While pan-Arabism has receded as a threat to the state’s authority and, as summarized by Ghassan Salame, Arab states are not generally “threatened by a higher level of integration, . . . statist ideologies are still unable to convince the Arabs that the present states are resilient against all kinds of challenges, or that there is no possible loyalty beyond state borders. In fact, both nationalism and isolationism (qawmiyya and qutriyya) seem to be in a historical impasse.”107 The failure of statist ideologies has resurrected primordial, ethnic, and, most famously, religious identities, which in turn represent a potential threat to state sovereignty.108 The existence of social forces that continually challenge the state’s sovereignty remind us that state leaders are endlessly engaged in differentiating between domestic and international space. Far from a completed task, the reproduction of state sovereignty is an ongoing, all-consuming project for nearly all Arab leaders.

Many of the social processes and patterns that furthered the consolidation of sovereignty also altered the meaning of and the political projects associated with Arab nationalism. This challenges how we generally study Arab nationalism and the relationship between nationalism and international order. Much of the scholarship on Arab nationalism has an either/or quality: the Arab nation either takes precedence over all other identities or it is meaningless; either Arab nationalism necessitates political unification or it is without force. Arab nationalism’s consistent meaning is the expectation of a strengthening of the Arab political community, but such a desire has not always been associated

108. While Islamic movements may or may not be compatible with juridical sovereignty, they do challenge the internal sovereignty of many Arab states. For an argument concerning the compatibility between Islam and juridical sovereignty, see James Piscatori, Islam in a World of Nation-States (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986). For the opposing claim, see Bassam Tibi, “Religious Fundamentalism and Ethnicity in the Crisis of the Nation-State in the Middle East,” working paper 5.4, Center for German and European Studies, University of California, Berkeley, 1992. For a discussion of the relationship between Islam and Arabism, see Tibi, Arab Nationalism, pp. 17–20. On subnational identities, see Philip Khoury and Joseph Kostiner, “Introduction: Tribes and the Complexities of State Formation in the Middle East,” in Philip Khoury and Joseph Kostiner, eds. Tribes and State Formation in the Middle East (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), pp. 1–22.
with a demand for political unification. The danger of adhering to a restrictive definition of nationalism, then, is that it prematurely dismisses both the presence of national sentiments and the possibility of mass political mobilization for political projects short of political unification.

Relatedly, whereas once the prominent theme of inter-Arab politics was nation versus state, over the last few decades it is increasingly nation(s) and state. An intriguing feature of Arab politics is the existence of contending national identities and political allegiances that occasionally accommodate each other, sometimes blur into one another, and do not always portend regional instability. In other words, though it is tempting to assume that national identities are mutually exclusive and have clearly differentiated boundaries—that is, the “us” and “them” are clearly demarcated, Arab politics suggests that national identities are more fluid than are frequently acknowledged. It is quite possible, for instance, for an Iraqi to identify with the Iraqi and the Arab nation; in Jordan, Palestinian, Jordanian, and Arab national identities mingle and only occasionally come into conflict. Therefore, as we continue to think about the relationship between nations and states in the modern era, it is perhaps wise to avoid “pigeonholed definitions of nation” that discount the possibility of the simultaneous existence of nation-state nationalisms and more inclusive nationalisms and to recognize how different conceptions of nationalism hold different consequences for international order.

109. For examples of statements that do not equate nationalism with the creation and maintenance of a territorial state, see Anthony Smith, National Identity (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1991), chap. 1; and John Hall, “Nationalisms: Classified and Explained,” Daedalus 122 (Summer 1993), pp. 1–28.