SYRIAN FOREIGN POLICY FROM INDEPENDENCE TO
THE BAATH PARTY'S ACCESSION TO POWER: 1946-1963

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ABSTRACT

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In this thesis, pre-Baath period of Syrian foreign policy between 1946 and 1963 is analyzed. The main objective of this thesis is to examine the main characteristics of the Syrian foreign policy. This thesis argues that foreign policy perception of Syrian politicians regardless of their class, ideology and political orientations depended on historically rooted pragmatism in which interest calculations, shifting alliances and external patronage had special importance. In order to understand pragmatism in Syrian foreign policy, determinants of Syrian foreign policy will be examined by looking at three interacting environments: the domestic, regional and international. It will be showed that Syrian foreign policy was shaped by these interlinked environments and pragmatic responses of Syrian policymakers to opportunities and challenges coming from these environments. Syrian politics from 1946 to 1963 can be marked by excessive political instability in the form of factionalism, successive coup d'états and counter-coups. This thesis also examines the relationship between coups and foreign policy and whether coups affected Syrian foreign policy or not.

Key Words: Syrian Foreign Policy, Pragmatism, Domestic, Regional and International Determinants of Foreign Policy, Coups and Foreign policy.

ÖZ

BAĞIMSIZLIKTAN BAAS PARTİSİ'NİN İKTİDARA GELİŞİNE KADAR SURİYE DIŞ POLİTİKASI: 1946-1963

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Bu tezde, 1946 ve 1963 arasında Baas öncesi dönem Suriye dış politikası analiz edilmektedir. Tezin ana hedefi Suriye dış politikasının temel karakteristiğini incelemektir. Bu tez, Suriyeli politikacıların dış politika anlayışının onların sınıf, ideoloji ve politik yönelimlerine bakılmaksızın, içerisinde çıkar hesapları, değişen ittifaklar ve dış patronajın özel bir yere sahip olduğu tarihsel kökleri olan bir pragmatizme dayandığını savunmaktadır. Suriye dış politikasında pragmatizmi anlamak için, Suriye dış politikasının unsurları birbiriyle etkileşim halinde olan iç, bölgesel ve uluslararası çevrelerine bakılarak incelenecektir. Suriye dış politikasının birbiriyle bağlantılı bu üç çevre ve Suriyeli politikacıların bu çevrelerden gelen fırsatlar ve sorunlara verdikleri pragmatik cevaplar tarafından şekillendirildiği gösterilecektir. 1946 ve 1963 arasında Suriye politikası, hizipçilik, peş peşe gelen darbeler ve karşı darbeler şeklinde aşırı bir istikrarsızlık olarak karakterize edilebilir. Bu tez ayrıca darbeler ve dış politika arasındaki ilişkiyi ve darbelerin Suriye dış politikasını etkileyip etkilemediğini incelemektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Suriye Dış Politikası, Pragmatizm, Dış Politikanın İç, Bölgesel ve Uluslararası Unsurları, Darbeler ve Dış Politika.

To my wife Ayşe and my family

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For any errors or inadequacies that may remain in this work, of course, the responsibility is entirely my own.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Throughout its history, Syria has been the focal point in the Middle East for its geostrategic position, cultural and religious diversities. Syria has been a bridge between Eastern and Western worlds and cradled many civilizations. Due to its strategic geographical location, Syria underwent significant socio-economic and political transformations that were speeded up by the Ottoman Empire and Europe in the 19th century. Being a gateway for the Arab lands to the West and the Ottomans, the transformation of Syria profoundly affected the Middle East. For instance, Syria was the birthplace of Arab nationalism and the nationalist ideology spilled over to other parts of the Arab territories from Syria. Syria is one of the key countries in the Middle East, and for this reason, understanding economic, social and political dynamics of Syria in a historical perspective is a must to comprehend Middle East politics at large.

In this thesis, Syrian foreign policy from independence in 1946 to the Baath coup d'état of March 1963 will be analyzed. While analyzing Syrian foreign policy, this thesis will focus on the question ''what characterizes Syrian foreign policy between 1946 and 1963?'' In order to understand the main characteristics of the Syrian foreign policy, the determinants of Syrian foreign policy will be analyzed by examining three interacting and interlinked environments: the domestic, regional and international. Therefore, instead of relying on a single theory or level of analysis, this thesis will adopt a multi-causal perspective to explain Syrian foreign policymaking through internal and external factors and interactions between them.

This thesis will argue that Syrian foreign policy between 1946 and 1963 can be defined as one of the best examples of pragmatist approach[1] in foreign policymaking in which shifting alliances, interest calculations and external patronage played significant

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[1] Pragmatism, which measures the meaning and the truth of an idea or proposition with its practical consequences, emerged as a philosophical movement in the USA in the 19th century and was represented by Charles Sanders Peirce, William James and John Dewey. In general, there is no fixed definition of pragmatism and there are plenty of debates about pragmatism in philosophy. The main characteristics of pragmatism in foreign policy can be counted as adopting flexible and changeable policies towards chances and challenges, pursuing not fixed and easily changeable political goals and acting for self-interests rather than principles or ideologies. Similar to philosophy, there is a debate about the nature and place of pragmatism in international relations. See, Harry Bauer and Elisabetta Brighi (ed.), *Pragmatism in International Relations* (London: Routledge, 2009).

roles. Throughout the period examined in this thesis, it will be pointed out that all political actors in Syrian politics, traditional parties of the urban Sunni elites (the National Party and the People's Party), radical parties of the rural and rising middle classes (the Arab Baath Socialist Party, the Syrian Social Nationalist Party and the Syrian Communist Party) and the three military dictators, responded opportunities and challenges coming from three environments in a pragmatic manner.

In this thesis, it will be argued that since the 17th century decentralization process in the Ottoman Empire in conjunction with the transformation of the land tenure system prepared the ground for class formation of urban Sunni elites. By focusing on the political culture[2] of these urban elites which originated from the ''politics of notables''[3] or the patronage system since the 18th century onwards, this thesis will explore historical roots of pragmatism. In this process, what can be seen is that the Syrian elites pursued a ''clientelistic'' collaboration with a higher authority to realize their domestic interests. This behavioral pattern of policy making is inherited by Syrian politicians coming from different classes of society in the post-independence period and became the most significant aspect of Syrian foreign policymaking.

In this thesis, Syrian foreign policy will be analyzed in three periods. The first period between 1946 and 1949 can be described as democratic-liberal phase of Syrian history under the traditional land-owning class or the old-guards. The second phase is a military dictatorship between 1949 and 1954, and the third period is a praetorian era between 1954 and 1963, in which the army continued to rule behind the scene while the country was under a ''civilian rule''. In each period, domestic, regional and international determinants that affected Syrian foreign policy will be analyzed.

This thesis benefits from Raymond Hinnebusch's and Gerd Nonneman's approach to the foreign policies of the Middle Eastern states. According to Raymond Hinnebusch, there are several important problems of realism, and contributions of structuralism, constructivism, and pluralism to understanding of foreign policies of Middle East states are obvious. Hinnebusch argues that ''it is useful to assume that the

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[2] In this thesis, the term political culture is used for describing the policymaking habits, behavioral patterns, values and attitudes of Syrian politicians, which has been maintained through generations, rather than the masses.

[3] Albert Hourani, ''Ottoman Reform and the Politics of Notables,'' in *The Emergence of the Modern Middle East* (London: St. Anthony's College, Oxford, 1994).

foreign policies of Middle East states are shaped by the way their leaders negotiate the often conflicting pressures emanating from three conceptually distinct environments: the domestic level, the regional systemic level and the global (or international) level.''[4] Similarly, Gerd Nonneman stresses that it is quite impossible to understand the foreign policy behavior of MENA states by depending on a single theory of international relations since realism, neo-realism, structuralism and constructivism have certain deficiencies in explaining foreign policy behavior of MENA states and only cover some aspects of their foreign policy determinants. Therefore, Nonneman explains that in order to understand foreign policies of MENA states, foreign policy determinants must be examined on three interacting and interlinked environments as domestic, regional and international rather than relying on a single theory or level of analysis. Nonneman also emphasizes that foreign policies of MENA states are rooted in an eclectic complex model of international politics and foreign policy analysis must be multi-level and multi-casual as well as contextual. [5]

In this respect, the thesis will follow by looking at the arguments at each level: the domestic, regional and international. At the domestic environment, one of the most significant factors that shaped Syrian foreign policy between 1946 and 1963 will be described as the low level of state formation or lack of notion of ''stateness''. According to Hinnebusch, state formation or state-building can be defined as ''the effort of rulers to institutionalize state structures capable of absorbing expanding political mobilization and controlling territory corresponding to an identity community.''[6] As Hinnebusch correctly expressed, pre-Baath Syria (1946-1963) can best be described with the formulation of ''Syria as victim: instability at home, vulnerability abroad.''[7] Hinnebusch explains that ''during the pre-Baath period, Syria was a classical penetrated state, rapidly destabilized

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[4] Raymond Hinnebusch, ''Introduction: Analytical Framework,'' in *The Foreign Policies of Middle East States*, ed. Raymond Hinnebusch and Anoushiravan Ehteshami (Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002), 1-2.

[5] Gerd Nonneman, ''Analyzing the Foreign Policies of the Middle East and North Africa: A Conceptual Framework,'' in *Analyzing Middle East Foreign Policies and the Relationship with Europe*, ed. Gerd Nonneman (New York: Routledge, 2005), 7-11.

[6] Raymond Hinnebusch, *The International Politics of the Middle East* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 73.

[7] Raymond Hinnebusch, ''The Foreign Policy of Syria,'' in *The Foreign Policies of Middle East States*, ed. Raymond Hinnebusch and Anoushiravan Ehteshami (Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002), 145.

by interlocking domestic opposition and external threats. Thus, Syrian foreign policy could not prevent the country from becoming the prize over which stronger states fought owing to its instability at home and weakness in the region.''[8] The weakness of Syrian state directly affected Syrian foreign policy as external states easily manipulated domestic politics to affect foreign policy. The Syrian factions' relentless struggle for power and their allegiances towards rival regional states facilitated external intervention in domestic politics and foreign policy.

The most significant characteristics of destabilization in pre-Baath Syrian politics was coups and abortive coup attempts backed by regional Arab states or the Western states to change the regime in favor of them. Rival civilian and officer factions of Syria, in line with inherited behavioral pattern of pragmatism, sought collaboration with external powers or ''higher authorities'' to balance their domestic rivals and implement their foreign policy visions in conjunction with their external patrons. In this regard, the competing clientelistic allegiances of rival domestic factions to external powers rather than to their own state and their domestic bid for power resulted in vicious cycle of coup d'états from 1949 to 1963. At this point, the second question of this thesis will be put forward: ''is there a special relationship between coups and foreign policy and what were the impacts of coups on Syrian foreign policy between 1946 and 1963?'' It will be argued that coups were staged as a reaction to foreign policy choices and alignments of rival civilian and officer factions, and immediately changed Syrian foreign policy in line with the political orientation of the conspirator groups. Thus, it can be argued that Syrian foreign policy between 1946 and 1963 was shaped by ''factional interests'' of Syrian politicians rather than ''national interests'' of the state.

Steven David's omnibalancing concept is a very appropriate approach to explain policymaking context of the Syrian politicians between 1946 and 1963. According to David, decision makers balance between external and internal pressures, by looking at the main source of threats and opportunities. When primary threat is internal, a regime aligns with an external power (regional or international) to receive necessary resources to contain it. It also depends on an anti-imperialist rhetoric or irredentist policies to appease domestic opinion and to increase legitimacy in the eyes of people. If primary threat comes from the external environment, a regime can mobilize new domestic actors into

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[8] Hinnebusch, ''The Foreign Policy of Syria,'' 145.

politics to broaden internal power base and try to ally with other threatened states. In short, location of threats and opportunities internal-external or both of them together shapes foreign policy decision of leaders.[9] In the case of Syrian foreign policy between 1946 and 1963, ''omnibalancing'' is an obvious act of Syrian politicians in the Palestine War of 1948, series of alliance negotiations with different regional states and in the formation of United Arab Republic in 1958.

It is important to note here that, this thesis does not take ''identity'' as a determinant factor in Syrian foreign policymaking even though not fully ignoring it. As will be seen clearly below, although ruling Syrian politicians perceived themselves within the broader Arab nation against Western imperialism, they were generally disinterested in Arab unity schemes and pursued for a long time ''Syria-first'' policy in line with their pragmatic alliance with regional states to balance domestic rivals. When pro-unionist parties dominated the Syrian political scene like the People's Party (1950-1951) and the Baath Party (1954-1958), they advocated pan-Arab unity to neutralize their domestic opponents, secure their regime against external threats and appease nationalistic public opinion rather than their pan-Arab zeal.

At the regional level, geopolitical position of Syria or its immediate environment had profound impacts on Syrian foreign policy making between 1946-1963. According to Malcolm Kerr, ''Syria is the center of the contest for influence in the Arab world between Iraq and Egypt and this competition had nothing to do with ideology since it was a geopolitical struggle, reminiscent of countless occasions in the distant pasts when rulers of Nile and Mesopotamian valleys had disputed control of the area lying between them.''[10] In Patrick Seale's term ''the struggle for Syria'' among Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the Hashemite Iraq and Jordan within the framework of inter-Arab politics is the most significant determinant of Syrian foreign policy at the regional level in the post-independence period. Starting with the last years of the mandate, Hashemite Iraq and Jordan launched their irredentist pan-Arab and pan-Syrian unity schemes to seize the control of Syria. On the other hand, their unionist ambitions for regional hegemony were thwarted by the Saudi-Egyptian bloc in the form of political protection and economic aids to their allies in Syria. Syria was a key for regional hegemony between the Saudi-

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[9] Steven David, ''Explaining Third World Alignment,'' *World Politics*, No. 43 (1991): 233-256.

[10] Malcolm Kerr, *The Arab Cold War 1958-1967, A Study of Ideology in Politics*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 5.

Egyptian camp and the Hashemite camp of Iraq and Jordan. Their struggle for Syria highly influenced Syrian foreign policy as rival Syrian domestic factions skillfully manipulated the inter-Arab disputes and allied at times with the Saudi-Egyptian camp or in others with the Hashemites according to their interests and bid for power in domestic politics. Therefore, it is obvious that different allegiances of the Syrian factions to either the Saudi-Egyptian camp or the Hashemites rather than to their own ''state'' brought foreign intervention in domestic politics, coup d'états, and fluctuating foreign policy initiatives between 1946 and 1963 as will be shown in this thesis. After 1954, regional struggle for Syria combined with the Cold War preoccupations of regional states and polarized Arab states as pro-Western traditional monarchies or anti-Western radical republics. Thus, the struggle for Syria between Egypt and Iraq escalated with the advent of what Kerr has rightly called as the ''Arab Cold War''[11] in the Middle East. This directly affected Syrian foreign policy. It can be argued that even though the pro-Iraqi Syrian civilian and military factions sometimes took the lead in domestic politics, Syrian foreign policy between 1946 and 1963 was shaped mainly by the pro-Saudi-Egyptian camp due to the military power of Egypt and financial strength of Saudi Arabia among other Arab states. Therefore, it is obvious that combination of domestic and regional determinants shaped Syrian foreign policy and the challenges and opportunities coming from these two environments were responded by Syrian politicians in line with their interests.

At the international environment, the most significant determinant that shaped Syrian foreign policy was the core-periphery relations.[12] This thesis argues that it is significant to understand the core-periphery relations and peripherization process of the Middle East to grasp the three interacting environments that shaped Syrian foreign policy between 1946 and 1963. Even though, core-periphery relations continued to constitute the international environment of Syrian foreign policymaking in the post-independence period, it unquestionably affected the domestic and regional environments. To illustrate, imposition of the artificially and externally drawn borders on the Middle East and Greater Syrian territories by the Western powers a result of the core-periphery relations in the form of imperialism during the mandate and post-independence periods sowed the seeds

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[11] Malcolm Kerr, *The Arab Cold War 1958-1967, A Study of Ideology in Politics*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970).

[12] For detailed information about the core-periphery relations, see Hinnebusch, *The International Politics of the Middle East*, 14-35.

of the bitterness of the Arab people against the West. Besides, the partition of the Arab territories created tension between identity and sovereignty of Middle East states, which prepared the ground for pan-Arab and pan-Syrian irredentist foreign policies of the Hashemite Iraq and Jordan over Syria. Thus, the core-periphery relations directly affected regional determinants of Syrian foreign policy. In addition to inter-Arab politics, as a result of core-periphery relations, imperialist-sponsored creation of Israel in Palestine territories[13] also became another regional determinant that affected Syrian foreign policy and added security dimension to Syrian foreign policymaking.

The core-periphery relations also contributed to low level of state-building in Syria in the post-independence period. As a result of the British-French imperialist legacy in the Middle East, Syria emerged as a weak and fragmented entity owing to its externally drawn borders and partition of the Greater Syrian territories into mini-states of Lebanon, Palestine and Jordan. Artificial borders of the Middle East states and Syria directly affected different allegiances of Syrian domestic factions to regional states due to ill-organized nation-state by the imperialist states as mentioned above. Moreover, during the mandate period, French imperialism intentionally prevented the development of stable state apparatus which could absorb expanding political mobilization in the post-independence period. France also encouraged sub-state identities of Syrian religious minorities and historically rooted hostility among urban and rural populations of Syria by implementing divide and rule policy. All of these factors contributed to low level state formation of independent Syria, which affected its foreign policy making.

International dimension of the core-periphery relations that shaped Syrian foreign policy between 1946 and 1963 was Syria's ongoing economic, political and military dependence on the core states or its continuous state of peripherization in the world capitalist system. Syrian dependence on the Western powers reflected in pragmatic foreign policy behavior of Syrian politicians, as traditional urban ruling elites and military dictators pursued close relations with the West despite anti-Western sentiments of Syrian population. France continued to be the chief arms-supplier to Syria until Syrian politicians pragmatically manipulated the breakup of the core powers in the Cold War era by receiving economic and military aids from the USSR in the post-1954 period. Thus, understanding core-periphery relations is a key to understand three environments of Syrian foreign policy because it imposed Middle East regional system in the form modern

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[13] Hinnebusch, *The International Politics of the Middle East*, 123.

sovereign states which created inter-Arab politics, contributed to Syrian weak state formation and Syria's economic and military dependence on the core powers for a long time.

Following the introduction part, in the second chapter, I will focus on a broad historical setting in which the class formation of Syrian urban ''Sunni'' old bourgeoisie and aristocracy, who were the main political actors between 1946 and 1963. Besides, the nature of Ottoman administration in Syria, the transformation of the land tenure system and its impact on both the creation of Syrian provincial notables (or urban landowner families) and Syrian political culture will be discussed. In this respect, a special attention will be paid to the Land Code of 1958 in the formation of urban Sunni land-owning class. In Albert Hourani's term the ''politics of notables''[14] or ''the patronage system'' in which the notables' search for clientelistic collaboration with the higher authority of the state (or patron) to maintain their socio-economic power in Syria starting since the 18th century onwards will be described as the most significant feature of Syrian political culture and historical pragmatic behavioral pattern of Syrian politicians. This culture and attitude were directly inherited in foreign policymaking during the mandate and post-independence periods. Throughout the Ottoman rule in Syria, even in the age of centralization reforms of the 19th century, collaboration between the state and the notables was the key to understand Syrian politics. The Ottomans' reliance on the urban Sunni elites in governing Syria made them an unchallengeable socio-economic power and sowed the seeds of hostility between them and the rural heterodox groups (the Alawites, the Druze and the Ismailis).

In the second part, the thesis will look at the continuity of the aforementioned behavioral pattern of pragmatic policymaking in the pre-independence Syria during Faisal's short rule in Damascus (1918-1920) and the French mandate (1920-1946). In the 19th century, there were inter-familial and inter-generational tensions between younger educated members and old members of the same urban families due to their political stance against the Ottoman Empire. Acquainted with nationalist ideology in modern schools, the younger members of the urban land-owning class founded the first secret nationalist societies and propagated for a separation from the Empire in early 20th century. On the other hand, older members of the same families maintained their

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[14] Albert Hourani, ''Ottoman Reform and the Politics of Notables,'' in *The Emergence of the Modern Middle East* (London: St. Anthony's College, Oxford, 1994).

collaboration with state through the ''politics of notables''. When Faisal seized the power in Damascus, members of the second-generation of land owner families took the lead in Syrian politics and pursued irreconcilable foreign policy against Western imperialism and sought full sovereignty in line with their pan-Arab nationalist aspirations. Faisal, on the other hand, in alliance with the old generation of notables, immediately adopted the ''politics of notables'' and sought collaboration with France, the new higher authority, to continue his rule in Damascus rather than in a pan-Arab kingdom, thus prepared the ground for the ''Syria-first'' policy.

During the mandate period, it was interesting to see how the second generation changed their stance. Faced with the strength of the French rule, members of the second generation of the urban landowner class founded the National Bloc and gave up their ardent pan-Arab nationalism, adopted the ''Syria-first'' policy and sought collaboration with France pragmatically to rule the country without upsetting the nationalist Syrian public, that is to say, they finally came in line with their ancestors and the ''politics of notables''. Damascene members of the second-generation urban families ruled Syria directly between 1946 and 1949, and continued their behavioral pattern of pragmatism, unchangeable dimension of Syrian political culture, by aligning with external patrons for their domestic interests.

In the second chapter, I will also look at the emergence of core-periphery relations and Syria's peripherization into world capitalist system in the 19th century. I will touch upon the emergence of Arab nationalism both as a reaction and with the influence of the West and ideas of Muslim and Christian forerunners of Arab nationalism. Besides, I will evaluate the emergence of regional inter-Arab struggle for Syria during the mandate period, which became the most significant regional determinant of Syrian foreign policy in the post-independence period as mentioned above.

In the third chapter, I will analyze the Syrian foreign policy under the Damascene wing of the National Bloc or so-called the old-guards in general between 1946 and 1949 by looking at the domestic, regional and international environments. In the wake of the independence, Syria emerged as a weak state and the National Bloc fragmented into two parties along the old-lines of Damascus and Aleppo. The ruling National Party (NP) of the Damascus-based land-owning class allied with Egypt and Saudi Arabia to counter domestic and regional pan-Arab unity pressures and continued the ''Syria-first'' policy without claiming sovereignty over Lebanon and Palestine. The

People's Party (PP) of Aleppo-based landowning class, on the other, pursued pan-Arab unity with Iraq owing to its long-standing economic interests which were exhausted with the artificially drawn border of Syria with Iraq. Therefore, it can be argued that after the retreat of France, the old-guards found their new ''Sublime Porte'' in Cairo and Baghdad to gain political ascendance in domestic politics and maintained their pragmatic collaboration with a higher authority or a patron. This reflected in their foreign policymaking at the international level, in which the old-guards pursued close economic and political relations with the Western powers. When the Syrian army was scornfully defeated by the nascent Israeli state in Palestine, rising radical middle-class opposition and the army united their forces and toppled the Damascene old-guards through the coup d'état of Husni al-Zaim in March 1949.

In the fourth chapter, Syrian foreign policy during the military dictatorship between 1949 and 1954 will be analyzed. It will be argued that, like the old-guards, three military dictators of Syria pursued pragmatic foreign policies in regional and international affairs. After the Palestine catastrophe, Egypt was isolated from inter-Arab politics and pro-Iraqi sentiments increased in Syria in line with the rising power of the PP in domestic politics. After the coup, though Zaim first sought alliance with Iraq, he immediately changed his inter-Arab policy and pragmatically jumped on the Saudi-Egyptian bandwagon. He also sought a peace agreement with Israel which led to his ouster in the same year by Sami al-Hinnawi backed by pro-Iraqi politicians and army officers. After the Hinnawi coup, Syrian foreign policy came in line with Iraq and the Syrian-Iraqi unity issue dominated Syrian foreign policy agenda. However, this trend did not last long and Adib al-Shishakli staged the third coup of the same year against pro-Iraqi civilian and military faction. Shishakli's coup also immediately changed Syrian foreign policy in line with the Saudi-Egyptian camp. Like Zaim, Shishakli also wanted to sign a peace agreement with Israel, but his efforts came to naught owing to domestic opposition. Thus, during the period of military dictatorship, pragmatism in Syrian foreign policy continued in the form of alliance with an outside power and the ''Syria-first'' policy. Moreover, in this period, Syrian dependence on the core powers continued in the form of close military and economic relations, especially with France.

In the last chapter, I will focus on Syrian foreign policy during the praetorian era between 1954 and 1963. The significance of this period was the ascendance of the radical leftist forces (the Baath and the communists) in domestic politics at the expense of

the old-guards. Even though the Cold War started after the Second World War and early attempts were made by the Western states to embrace Syria into their camps during the course of 1950, the Cold War exactly penetrated into the Middle East in 1954. The Western powers' ambitions over Syria forced the Soviet Union to intervene in the Middle East affairs, which created new opportunities for Syrian politicians to implement their ''inherited'' pragmatism in foreign policy. The splintering of the core powers was a historical moment which provided Syrian politicians greater autonomy in foreign policy making from the West and leftist Syrian politicians pursued positive neutralist policy during this period to play off the superpowers against each other.

At regional level, the inter-Arab politics took the form of what Kerr has called as the ''Arab Cold War'' between traditional monarchies and radical republics. One of the most significant features of the period was the rise of Gamal Abd al-Nasser as a neutralist and pan-Arab hero, which deeply affected Middle East affairs and Syrian foreign policy as well. As a reaction to Western encroachments and covert operations in Syria in alliance with the rightist traditional politicians, the Baath and the communists united their forces and pursued pro-Soviet and pro-Nasser foreign policy between 1954 and 1958. However, when the two domestic powers began to see each other as enemy, the communists sought patronage from the Soviet Union and the Baath Party from Nasser's Egypt to win their domestic bid for power. The Baath Party, together with its allies in the army, pragmatically changed the ''Syria-first'' policy and advocated unity with Egypt to neutralize its communist rivals, secure the country from Western encroachments and Israeli retaliations as well as appease pan-Arab sentiments of the Syrian population, which culminated in the amalgamation of Syria and Egypt into UAR in 1958.

However, the UAR did not last long due to Syrian politicians' resentment against Nasser's centralization policies and ended with a separatist coup in 1961 organized by the old-guards. Between 1961 and 1963, inter-Arab politics became the dominant foreign policy issue, which shaped by pragmatic inclinations of Syrian factions to balance each other in domestic politics until the coup d'état of the Baath Party on 8 March 1963, which opened a new era in Syrian politics still continuing today.

After analyzing the domestic, regional and international environments of Syrian foreign policy and Syrian politicians' pragmatic responses to chances and challenges coming from these three environments between 1946-1963, main arguments of this thesis will be explained in the conclusion chapter.

CHAPTER 2

HISTORICAL SETTING

2.1. Legacy of the Ottoman Empire in Syria until the Tanzimat Era: Historical Formation of the Urban Sunni Elites and Syrian Political Culture

Much of the Arab lands were captured by the Ottoman Empire during the reign of Sultan Selim I (1512-1520). Under the command of Selim, the Ottoman army defeated the Mamluks at battles of Marj Dabiq in 1516 and Ridanieh in 1517, and destroyed the dynasty of Mamluks who ruled the Arab lands of Egypt, Syria and Western Arabia since 1250. As a result of these conquests, the control of Syria, Egypt and the Holy Cities of Mecca and Medina were taken by the Ottoman Empire and Selim assumed the title of caliph.

At the beginning, the Ottomans pursued a conservative policy based on the maintenance of the status quo in newly conquered territories. Selim established Ottoman direct rule in Syria and Lebanon by confirming the existing political order inherited by the Mamluks in the city centers as well as in mountainous areas and deserts, where the Bedouins, Druze and Maronite emirs and Turcoman chiefs were given the right to rule providing that they paid the taxes regularly.[15] Even though there were Ottoman pashas above these local forces, appointed by the sultan and supported by the Ottoman army in the region, they governed only important towns and their close neighborhoods directly.[16]

The maintenance of the Ottoman supremacy, collection of revenues, and the performance of the Hajj were the main concerns of the Ottoman officials in Syria. They preferred to contact with native population through local intermediaries of the region to supplement the power derived from Istanbul and fill the gaps in their local knowledge and experience.[17] On the other hand, keeping local forces in power meant that the Ottomans

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[15] Zeine N. Zeine, *Arab-Turkish Relations and the Emergence of Arab Nationalism* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1981), 11-12; Anne Sinai and Allen Pollack, eds., *The Syrian Arab Republic: A Handbook* (New York: American Academic Association for Peace in the Middle East, 1976), 18.

[16] Zeine, 12; Philip K. Hitti, *Syria: A Short History* (New York: The Macmillan Company Press, 1959), 214.

[17] Philip S. Khoury, *Urban Notables and Arab Nationalism: The Politics of Damascus, 1860-1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 2.

had to deal with challenging internal conflicts and rebellions throughout their rule in Syria.[18]

The Syrian population was not extremely diverse in terms of ethnicity and language, but sectarian differences were the most significant characteristic of Syrian people who fully represented three monotheisms along with almost all Middle Eastern heterodox beliefs.[19] The Muslim population of Syria was predominantly Arab; however, it was divided into Sunni, Shiite, Druze, Alawi (also called as Nusayri) and Ismaili sects. Sunni Muslims could be found in all regions of Syria from urban to rural areas and in all social strata of society from urban notables to peasants and nomads. The Ottomans always favored the Sunni-Muslim community of Syria economically and politically and forced other non-Sunni and non-Muslim sects to live within a Sunni dominated society, which created a historical hostility among Sunni and non-Sunni communities.[20] The Sunni-Muslim domination over the Syrian society was directly reflected in the socio-economic life of Syria and politics was commanded by the urban Sunni elites from independence to the 1963 coup d'état of the Baath Party.

Non-Sunni groups of Syria composed of three heterodox and extreme Shiite sects: the Ismailis, the Druzes and the Alawis who were not granted *millet* status and clashed with the Sunni Ottoman Empire.[21] Among them, the most important heterodox sect was the Alawis, who mainly lived in the Latakia region and especially in Jabal Nusayriyah. The Alawis were the poorest rural segment of the Syrian society, who were persecuted by the Ottomans and exploited by Sunni and Christian merchants and notables, which forced them to develop their own tribal confederations based on communal loyalty and solidarity.[22] During the mandate and post-independence periods, the Alawis managed to break the socio-economic and political domination of the Sunnis

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[18] Jane Hathaway, *Arab Lands under Ottoman Rule, 1516-1800* (London: Pearson Longman, 2008), 52-53; Hitti, 214-215.

[19] Daniel Pipes, *Greater Syria: The History of an Ambition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 16.

[20] John F. Devlin, *Syria: A Modern State in an Ancient Land* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1983), 26.

[21] Itamar Rabinovich, ''The Compact Minorities and the Syrian State, 1918-45,'' *Journal of Contemporary History*, No. 4 (1979): 693-695.

[22] Nikolaos van Dam, *The Struggle for Power in Syria, Politics and Society under Asad and the Ba'th Party* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1996), 7-8.

via the army and began to assume the political power in Syria, which became the most significant driving force of modern Syrian politics in the post-1963 period.

Apart from the Muslim population, Christians and the Jews were other components of the Syrian society. Both Christian and Jewish minority groups accepted the protection of European countries and particularly Christians became the forerunners of the Western political, social and economic penetration into the Arab lands in the 19th century, which sowed the seeds of hostility between the Muslim and non-Muslim communities in Syria.

After the conquest of Selim, the Ottomans divided Syria into three provinces (*vilayet* or *paşalık*) of Damascus (1516-1517), Aleppo (1521) and Tripoli (1570). Later, province of Sidon (also called as Beirut or Saida) was formed in 1614.[23] It is important to note that here the term Syria is very crucial since it is perceived as both a country and a concept.[24] Although the name Syria today is used for signifying one country, in the minds of the Arab people historical geography of Syria (or *Bilad al-Sham*) covers the territories of modern states of Syria, Lebanon, Israel, Jordan as well as occupied territories of Palestine and substantial portions of southeastern Turkey including Alexandretta, Cilicia and south of the Taurus Mountains, which is referred as Greater Syria**.** Even though there was no unified state called as Greater Syria comprising neither Syria nor other regions throughout history[25]; after the First World War, artificially drawn borders of the Middle Eastern countries and partition of the Greater Syrian territories by the great powers prepared the ground for pan-Arab and pan-Syrian nationalisms. This became one of the most significant factors in the making of Syrian foreign policy against the irredentist claims of neighboring Arab states in the post-independence period.

Starting with the second part of the 16th century and through the 17th century, owing to both internal and international challenges, the Ottoman Empire entered the age

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[23] Province of Damascus was composed of *sanjaks* of Jerusalem, Gaza, Safad, Nablus, Ajlun, Lajjun, Tadmor, Sidon, Beirut, Karak and Shawbak. Province of Aleppo was composed of *sanjaks* of Marash, Urfa, Zor and Aleppo. Province of Sidon was carved out from *sanjaks* of Sidon and Beirut after the defeat of rebellious Druze Emir Fakhr al-Din Ma'n II in 1614 to control Druze population and this province was abolished after a short time. It was reestablished by Köprülü Mehmed Pasha in 1660 after the defeat of rebellious Jelali Hasan Pasha. See Abdul-Karim Rafeq, *The Province of Damascus, 1723-1783* (Beirut: Khayats, 1966), 1-4; Zeine, 32.

[24] Derek Hopwood, *Syria 1945-1986: Politics and Society*, 2nd ed. (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 1.

[25] Pipes, 14-16.

of ''crisis and adaptation'' and some parts of the empire underwent a significant transformation process, signified as decentralization.[26] The main characteristics of the decentralization process were the transformation of the land tenure system and the emergence of new forces, composed of pasha and vizier households, the *ulema* and the janissaries, both in Istanbul and in the provinces at the expense of the central authority of the Sultan. The Arab lands, especially Syria, were directly affected by this decentralization process which was signified by the same symptoms, the change in the land tenure system (*timar*) and the emergence of new local forces in the 17th and the 18th centuries.[27] This decentralization process of the Ottoman Empire had deep impacts on socio-economic structure of Syria especially in the 18th century, which give us a key to understand the formation of the urban Sunni elites of the modern Syrian politics and the Syrian political culture which depended on the ''patronage system''.

In order to understand the transformation process and its impact on the historical formation of Syrian political elites and Syrian political culture, it is important to look at the land tenure system in the Ottoman Empire. After the conquest of the Arab lands, Syria had been put under the *timar* system, in which lands were the property of the Sultan and only tax revenues of lands were allocated to *timar*-holder, or timariots, in exchange for cultivating the land and raising horsemen for the cavalry forces, the backbone of the Ottoman army.[28] Since the latter part of the 16th century, instead of the cavalry, importance of infantry and firearms in European armies increased dramatically. As a reaction to this development, the Ottomans increased the number of janissaries, the elite land force of the army, which culminated in an urgent need for cash money for feeding an expanded infantry-dominated army taking salary directly from the state not the *timar*-holder. For this reason, the Ottoman statesmen left the *timar* system and passed to tax-farming (*iltizam*) system, in which tax collection was delegated to a tax-collector

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[26] Hathaway, 62.

[27] The Arab lands were heavily affected by the decentralization of the Ottoman Empire. Being an already loosely controlled territories by the Ottoman Empire, pasha and vizier households appeared in the Arab provinces, in which local notables trained up their mercenary army and their own entourage from Caucasian mamluk slaves. The growing effect of these 'eastern' enslaved Caucasian mamluks in the vizier and pasha households in the Arab provinces resulted in a clash between 'westerner' devshirme governor of provinces and their janissaries, which is defined as the East-West dichotomy. This dichotomy was a significant factor in the decentralized political culture of Arab provinces during the 17th century. For example, in Greater Syria; East-West dichotomy shaped the revolts of Fakhr al-Din Ma'n II in Lebanon, Ali Pasha Janbulad and Abaza Hasan Pasha in Aleppo. See Hathaway, 64-72.

[28] Hathaway, 49-50.

(*mültezim*), who paid the approximate price of the taxes for one region to the state before the tax season, which he expected to collect. Therefore, *mültezim* became the only authority to collect taxes in the Ottoman provinces instead of the state. In 1695, *iltizam* system was replaced by the *malikâne* system or lifetime tax-farms due to ongoing need of the treasury for long-lasting wars and a salaried army. In this system, the right to collect taxes was given for lifetime of *mültezim* instead of annually. When the central authority weakened in the provinces, *malikâne* system became the most effective tool to maintain Ottoman control in the provinces during the following centuries.[29]

The shift in power from the Sultan to the pasha and vizier households, the *ulema* and the janissaries both in the capital and in the provinces as well as the transformation of the land tenure system culminated in the advent of a new phase of Ottoman decentralization in the 18th century, which is commonly known as the age of the *ayan*s or provincial political notables. According to Albert Hourani, provincial notables can be divided into three groups; the *ulema*, the commanders of local garrison troops and the secular notables or the *ayan*s. Hourani describes the relationship between the state and local leaders as the ''politics of notables'' in which notables were described as natural leaders of provincial society, who can play a political role as intermediaries between the government and the people within certain limits.[30]

In the 18th century, the central authority of the Palace almost disappeared and power center apparently shifted from the Sultan to the *ayan*s, who unlike the 17th century pasha and vizier households held their entire careers in provinces and accumulated their economic and military power completely independent of Istanbul.[31] The most important factor that enabled the *ayan* households to accumulate wealth and power in the provinces was the aforementioned *malikâne* system which was at the hands of vizier and pasha households in Istanbul. In order to gain the right to collect the lifetime tax farms, the *ayan*s or provincial notables had to develop close relations with Istanbul, which made *malikâne* a system of mutual interest and bounded the *ayan* households and Istanbul to

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[29] Donald Quataert, *The Ottoman Empire 1700-1922* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 48-49.

[30] Albert Hourani, ''Ottoman Reform and the Politics of Notables,'' in *The Emergence of the Modern Middle East* (London: St. Anthony's College, Oxford, 1994): 40-45.

[31] William L. Cleveland and Martin Bunton, *A History of the Modern Middle East,* 4th ed. (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 2009), 58; Hathaway, 79-81.

each other. While the *ayan*s increased their wealth and power thanks to *malikâne*, the system enabled the Ottoman Empire to control the provinces through these intermediaries. Similar to other parts of the Empire, *malikâne*s constituted the essential part of the rise of the *ayan* households in the Arab lands, especially in Syria and Iraq.[32] In the second part of the 18th century, *malikâne* system partly disintegrated owing to the long-lasting Russo-Ottoman Wars. The Ottoman central government weakened and the *ayan*s became *de facto* rulers of several areas and gained to some extent the freedom of action in the provinces.[33] Besides, the rising demand of both internal and European markets for agricultural products contributed to the rise of the *ayan*s in the provinces.[34]

The *ayan*s or notables were significant political figures in Syria. To illustrate, there were three groups of notables in Damascus before 1860: the religious establishment or the *ulema* and *the ashraf*, secular dignitaries or tax collectors, and the *aghawat* or chiefs of janissaries.[35] Al-Azm family of Damascus is one of the best examples of the *ayan*s in the provinces to illustrate the politics of notables. Being a prominent Sunni Arab family, the Azms had collaborated with the Ottoman Empire since the 16th century. Through the *iltizam* system and later the purchase of *malikâne*s, they consolidated their power base in Syria in the 18th century.[36] The Ottomans appointed them as the governors of important towns of Syria in order to augment central authority via local collaboration. By appointing the *ayan*s to local governorships, the Ottomans let them to play an intermediary role between the state and the society and intended to prevent the emergence of an autonomous structure in the provinces.[37] Many members of the al-Azm and other *ayan* families became important political figures during the mandate and post-independence periods and dominated the socio-economic life in modern Syria until the 1963 coup of the Baath Party. Syrian provincial notables' collaboration with a higher authority in Istanbul (or the politics of notables) to maintain their socio-economic power

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[32] Quataert, 48-49; Hourani, ''Ottoman Reform,'' 50.

[33] Kemal H. Karpat, ''The Transformation of the Ottoman State, 1789-1908,'' *International Journal of the Middle East Studies*, No. 3 (1972): 249.

[34] Khoury, *Urban Notables and Arab Nationalism*, 18.

[35] Ibid., 11.

[36] Rafeq, 92; Hathaway, 88.

[37] André Raymond, *Osmanlı Döneminde Arap Kentleri*, translated by Ali Berktay (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 1995), 10.

in Syria became the most significant aspect of Syrian political culture and created a behavioral pattern of pragmatic policymaking, which was inherited by the Syrian politicians in foreign policymaking in the mandate and post-independence periods.

In the wake of the 19th century, as a reaction to the military defeats, the ascendance of the Western powers in global politics and weaknesses of the central authority, the Ottoman statesmen launched a series of modernization and centralization reforms so as to reestablish the central authority strengthen the army and cope with the colonial aims of the Europeans.[38] The weakness of the central authority and military defeats were responded for the first time by Sultan Selim III (1789-1808) and followed by Sultan Mahmud II (1808-1839) who launched a number of centralization reforms including the destruction of the *ayan*s in the provinces. However, their centralization policies had little impact on Syria, and rebellious or autonomous governors, Bedouin chieftains and mountain chiefs continued to rule their territories independent of the central authority.[39]

When Syria was invaded by Mohammed Ali's son Ibrahim Pasha in 1831 during the Egyptian Crisis, he achieved what Mahmud failed to do in Syria and centralized state system, applied regular conscription and disarmament, which led to breaking the military power of the *ayan* families. Besides, he developed a secular judicial system which deprived the *ulema* of their influential administrative and social positions.[40] One of the most important aspects of the Egyptian rule in Syria was that Ibrahim Pasha created an equal social milieu for the Muslim and non-Muslim communities of Syria within which Christians enjoyed full equality and complete security of life, property and honor for the first time. These equality measures of Ibrahim Pasha annoyed the Muslim community and alienated them from the Egyptian rule as well as giving them an experience of equality

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[38] Albert Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1991), 265.

[39] For example, Abdullah Pasha, *vali* of Sidon, openly disobeyed Mahmut II and after several attempts Mahmut failed to suppress him and recognized Abdullah as *vali* of Sidon. Furthermore, the Ottoman control over mountainous areas of Syria and Palestine was very weak such as in Jabal Druze, Latakia, Jabal Nablus and the mountains around Jerusalem where local chiefs ruled independent of Istanbul. Many attempts at bringing central authority in central cities such as Aleppo, Damascus, Tripoli and Jerusalem resulted in the outbreak of many popular rebellions which ended with the expulsion or death of Turkish pashas. See Moshe Ma'oz, *Ottoman Reform in Syria and Palestine 1841-1860:The Impact of the Tanzimat on Politics and Society* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), 6-10.

[40] Ma'oz, 12-14.

with non-Muslims for the first time. In this regard, the Egyptian rule prepared the ground for the coming of the Tanzimat reforms.[41]

2.2. Syria in the Age of Tanzimat Reforms: Ottomanism, European Intervention and Inter-communal Violence

Until the 19th century, the Ottomans had ruled their subjects through the *millet* system which divided societal groups according to their religious identities. In this system, the Christians and the Jews were incorporated into the Ottoman society by granting them the status of *dhimmi* (protected) and in turn for paying a special tax (*cizye*), they were allowed to live in the Muslim state as second-class subjects. They had autonomy in conducting affairs of their own communities and represented by their religious leaders in their relations with the state. The *millet* system was similarly applied in Syria; however, compact minority groups of Syrian population (Alawi, Druze and Ismaili communities) were not granted *millet* status as they represented extreme Shiite heterodoxy against the state-sponsored Sunni orthodoxy.[42]

The Tanzimat Era, a new age of reforms, started with the promulgation of *Gülhane Hatt-ı Hümayunu* (or the Noble Edict of the Rose Garden) in 1839 and lasted until 1876. The Gülhane Edict promised to secure the life, property and honor of all Ottoman subjects, to establish of orderly system of taxation by abolition of the tax-farms and to grant all subjects equality before the law regardless of their religion.[43] By providing equality among its subjects during the Tanzimat era, the Ottomans applied the policy of Ottomanism to create common Ottoman identity among its people by eliminating *millet* boundaries, decrease the nationalist tendencies of the Christians and ultimately prevent the disintegration of the Empire.[44]

Another vital development which had profound impact on the Ottoman economy and society in the 19th century was the core-periphery relations. Expansion of European capitalism and imperialism into the Ottoman Middle East resulted in the peripherization

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[41] For a good discussion of the Egyptian rule in Syria, see Roger Owen, *The Middle East in the World Economy, 1800-1914* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2005), 76-82.

[42] Itamar Rabinovich, '' The Compact Minorities and the Syrian State,'' 694.

[43] Eric Jan Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History*, 3rd ed. (London: I. B. Tauris, 2003), 51.

[44] Quataert, 67.

of the Ottoman economy into the world capitalist system. [45] The ongoing colonial rivalry between the world's two core powers Britain and France for gaining political influence on the way of India resulted in Napoleon's Egyptian campaign in 1798, which forced Britain to interfere in the Middle East to protect its colonial routes. The advent of Britain in the Ottoman Middle East deeply transformed the region since Britain was experiencing the Industrial Revolution at that time. So as to cater for the growing need of its industry for raw materials, Britain entered the Ottoman market and began to exploit it by importing the raw agricultural materials and exporting manufactured goods. This was also supplemented by technological developments and finally culminated in a trade boom in the region. The rivalry between Britain and France, growing trade relations between Europe and the Middle East, and technological developments were accompanied with the construction of seaports as well as railways and highways, which changed the facade of the Middle East, especially its coastal cities such as Beirut. The immediate result of this unequal trade relationship between Europe (core) and the Middle East (periphery) was the collapse of traditional enterprises depending on the hand-work of the local population of the Middle East. [46]

Liberal policies of the 19th century Ottoman statesmen further aggravated the economic situation. With the signing of the Anglo-Ottoman Convention in 1838 and the following free-trade agreements with other European powers between 1838 and 1841, the Ottoman economy was totally peripherized and semi-colonized by the core powers and the Ottoman Empire became a ''dependent state'' in the world capitalist system. The Christian merchants that benefited from the capitulations and liberal trade via the *berat* system at the expense of the Muslim community in previous centuries transformed into a comprador bourgeoisie class in the Middle East. This class benefited from enormous trade relations with Europe and dominated the Ottoman economy. They became European agents in the Middle East as well as the bearer of new socio-political ideas of the West, which later prepared the ground for the emergence of nationalist ideology in the Middle East. [47] The growing European economic influence in the Ottoman Empire

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[45] Hinnebusch, *The International Politics of the Middle East*, 14.

[46] Albert Hourani, ''The Ottoman Background of the Modern Middle East,'' in *The Emergence of the Modern Middle East* (London: St. Anthony's College, Oxford, 1994): 15.

[47] Kemal Karpat, *Ortadoğu'da Osmanlı Mirası ve Ulusçuluk*, translated by Recep Boztemur (Ankara: İmge Kitabevi Yayınları, 2001), 61-62.

subsequently coupled with the political encroachments that made the Middle East a ''penetrated region''. The immediate result of the European economic and political intervention was the emergence of the Eastern Question, i.e. partition of the Ottoman Empire.[48]

When we look at Syria in the Tanzimat Era, we see that at odds with the spirit of centralization reforms of Tanzimat, the Porte did not indent to bring a direct rule from Istanbul to Syria so as to gain popular support in the post-Egyptian period as Ibrahim Pasha had pursued brutal policy towards Syrians, totally changed the socio-political structure and implemented centralization reforms successfully. For this reason, the Ottomans allowed local forces to build up their traditional power and rearmament again as well as the Porte restricted *vali*'s authority in the provinces which helped the trend of reconstruction of the local notables' power. By doing so, the Ottomans missed the chance, left by Ibrahim Pasha, for establishing the central authority in Syria until the 1860 events.[49] Furthermore, centralization policy of the Tanzimat was not fully applied in Syria because of Ottoman officials' unfamiliarity with the provinces to implement policies of Tanzimat such as raising conscription and direct taxation.[50] Similar to previous centuries, the Ottoman officials continued to depend on local notables to implement their policies in Syria. Thus, the collaboration between the state and the *ayan*s or the politics of notables continued to be the most effective tool in governing Syria during the Tanzimat Era. This trend continued until the 1860 Damascus events, which gave the state a chance to liquidate the power of the traditional local notable families and implement its central authority in conjunction with its new identity politics of Ottomanism.

Besides, when the local councils (*meclis*) were set up by Mustafa Reşid Paşa, who was the prime mover of the Tanzimat reforms, to assist the provincial administration in financial, administrative and judicial affairs in 1840s, these institutional structures further contributed the consolidation of notables' power in Syria. The Porte aimed to establish *meclis* by appointing government officials and Muslim and non-Muslim religious leaders as well as including Muslim and non-Muslim deputies elected by their communities. However, short after the establishment of local councils, the *ayan*s and the

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[48] Hinnebusch, *The International Politics of the Middle East*, 14.

[49] Ma'oz, 75-77.

[50] Hourani, ''Ottoman Reform,'' 59.

ulema dominated these bodies by bribing some persons in Istanbul or in Syria. Even though there were Christian and Jewish deputies in local councils, they had no equal status with notables, they were represented disproportionately and sometimes forced to resign.[51] Thanks to the *meclis* system, the notables bolstered their positions in the provinces by directly participating in government administration.[52]

The politics of equality in Syria starting from the rule of Ibrahim Pasha onwards continued during the Tanzimat Era. The growing European influence on the economy and society via non-Muslims, European protectorate over the non-Muslim subjects and the consulates' interference in local politics caused the loss of privileged position of Muslim community in Syria.[53] The Christians began to enjoy this equality publicly, which augmented the anti-European and anti-Christian sentiments among the *ulema*, the *ayan*s and the masses, which finally culminated in the outbreak of a brutal inter-communal violence among different communities. The 1850 Aleppo events, the Nablus riots in 1856 and the massacres of the Christians in Lebanon and Damascus in 1860 were the examples of these anti-Christian grievances among the Muslim community. Especially Lebanon and Damascus events of 1860 affected the Middle East and Syria deeply. In summer 1860, a bloody confrontation between the Druze and the Maronite communities of Lebanon spilled over Syria and the mobs consisted mainly of unemployed Muslim artisans who were displaced by the entrance of European manufactured goods in local markets attacked Christian community in Damascus and killed thousands of them with the help of the *ulema* and the *ayan*s. The 1860 events led to European political interference in Lebanon and Syria to protect their protégés and as a result of the crisis, autonomous *mutassarıfiyye* of Mount Lebanon was established and Christian Maronites, at the expense of the Druzes, were given superior position in newly established autonomous structure.[54]

Grand Vizier Fuad Pasha came to Damascus short after the 1860 events and punished through exiles those who participated in Christian massacres, especially the

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[51] For detailed information about the nature and functioning of local councils in Syria during the Egyptian and Tanzimat periods, see Ma'oz, 87-93.

[52] Khoury, *Urban Notables and Arab Nationalism,* 17.

[53] For a good analysis of the economic and social situation in Greater Syrian provinces, see Owen, 153-173.

[54] Veysel Ayhan and Özlem Tür, *Lübnan: Savaş, Barış, Direniş ve Türkiye ile İlişkiler* (Bursa: Dora Yayıncılık, 2009), 39-44; Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples*, 277-278.

traditional notables (the leaders of the al-Azm and al-Yusuf families) and the *ulema* of Damascus (leaders of the al-Ajlani, al-Ghazzi and al-Kaylani families). The Ottomans utilized the 1860 events by breaking the power of the traditional *ayan*s and bringing them in line with the Tanzimat reforms though not completely liquidated them. Moreover, the state went further and backed lower-class notables (the al-Abid, Mardam-Beg, al-Quwatli, al-Sam'a, al-Rikabi, al-Haffar, al-Hakim, al-Azma and al-Barudi families) and middle-class *ulema* (al-Hasibi, al-Jazairi, al-Bakri, al-Muradi and al-Hamza families) to balance the traditional notables and the *ulema* of Damascus, which led to the creation of an alternative group for the politics of notables by enforcing the transformation of urban Sunni leadership. However, soon after Fuad Pasha's departure from the city, many traditional notables returned Damascus[55] and the politics of notables continued to be the most significant aspect of Syrian political culture in the 19th century.

2.2.1. The Land Code of 1858 and the Provincial (*Vilayet*) Law of 1864

The breaking point in the rise of the *ayan*s' power in the provinces was the Land Code of 1858 as it legally allowed urban families to have the means of production (land). According to this law; sale, purchase, mortgaging, the private ownership and the inheritance of the lands were officially allowed by the state.[56] Through the enactment of this law, the Ottoman statesmen wanted to reverse the long-lasting implications of the *iltizam* and the *malikâne* systems by establishing direct connection with cultivator peasants by allowing them to register their lands in their names and giving them the right to have formal documentation of ownership or title deed (*tapu*) so that they could directly deal with the state rather than tax farmers.[57] On the other hand, the peasants were suspicious about the enactment due to their fear of taxation and conscription and they registered their lands in the name of their local patrons. This naïve preference of the peasants led to the emergence of opposite outcome of the Land Code which indeed aimed to establish direct relationship of the state with the peasants and weaken the power of the local notables. Thanks to 1858 enactment, the state's huge unoccupied cultivable lands

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[55] Adil Baktıaya, *Osmanlı Suriyesi'nde Arapçılığın Doğuşu Sosyo-Ekonomik Değişim ve Siyasi Düşünce* (İstanbul: Bengi Yayınları, 2009), 204-210.

[56] E. Atilla Aytekin, ''Agrarian Relations, Property and Law: An Analysis of the Land Code of 1858 in the Ottoman Empire,'' *Middle Eastern Studies*, No. 6 (2009), 938-941. In this article, Aytekin analyzes the articles of the Land Code of 1858 and considers it as the bourgeoization of the Ottoman land law and the development of capitalist notion of property.

[57] Karpat, ''The Transformation of the Ottoman State,''58.

also were taken by the local notables and these lands were used for their commercial agricultural purposes. As a result, the notables dramatically increased their wealth and influence in the governance of the provinces as well as in the state bureaucracy.[58] Aforementioned *meclis* system facilitated the *ayan*s' seizure of lands from the onset as the Land Code was applied by the members of the *meclis* in the provinces.[59] This law was a breaking point in the social stratification of the Middle East and the *ayan*s long-lasting transformation, as a result of which the land tenure system was totally changed.[60]

After 1860 events, a boom in agrarian commercialization as a result of core-periphery relations, implementation of the Land Code of 1858 and the state's centralization and modernization efforts, both old and new members of the *ayan* and the religious families of Damascus transformed into land-owning families. The secular dignitaries evolved into the landowning-bureaucratic families and the religious establishment to the landowning-scholar families. Some of the famous representatives of the landowning scholars were al-Ajlani, al-Ghazzi, al-Kaylani, al-Hasibi and al-Jaza'iri families. Al-Azm, al-Abid, al-Yusuf, Mardam-Beg, al-Quwatli, al-Sham'a and al-Barudi families were the representatives of the landowning-bureaucratic class. These twelve families who composed of both old and new landowning families were the top-ranked and the strongest political agents in Damascus along with other middle and low-ranked landowning families. [61]

As mentioned above, with rise of new power groups, the politics of notables continued to be the most important aspect of Syrian political culture in the second half of the 19th century. After the 1860 events, the local notables became less ambitious and aimed to realize their interests by continuing their intermediary role between the society and the Empire. They assisted the Ottoman Empire in implementing stability as well as modernization and centralization reforms in Syria. In turn for their assistance, the local notables used their local power to acquire lands and then used agricultural profits to buy posts in local administration. However, there was a fierce competition among landowning

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[58] Khoury, *Urban Notables and Arab Nationalism,* 27-28; Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples*, 287-289.

[59] Hourani, ''Ottoman Reform,'' 61.

[60] Karpat, *Ortadoğu'da Osmanlı Mirası ve Ulusçuluk*, 103.

[61] Khoury, *Urban Notables and Arab Nationalism,* 26-44.

families for high ranks. Therefore, some landowning-bureaucratic families began to consolidate their power base by contracting marriages with other landowner bureaucratic and religious families. To illustrate, the al-Azm, al-Abid and al-Yusuf families constituted a social bloc; al-Quwatli, al-Barudi and al-Bakri families formed a second bloc through intermarriages in Damascus. Besides, provincial elites adopted themselves in changing administrative patterns of the state by sending their sons to modern secular schools opened in Istanbul in the second half of the 19th century. The Ottoman lifestyle affected Syrian urban culture, thus the social status and political power in Damascus were closely identified by the state ideology of Ottomanism.[62] The sons of Syrian upper class attended generally to modern public administrative schools rather than military academies due to the notables' despising and hostile attitude towards the military service, which continued during the mandate period and finally culminated in their downfall after the Second World War.[63]

In the Tanzimat Era, another vital enactment was the Provincial (*Vilayet*) Law of 1864 which was promulgated to redesign the historic provinces of the Empire and implement central authority. The *Vilayet* Law created larger and hierarchical administrative units from the existing provinces to be governed by *vali*s. According to the Provincial Law, each *vilayet* was divided into *liva*s or *sancak*s, each *liva* composed of several *kaza*s, each *kaza* was the collection of *nahiye*s and each *nahiye* consisted of *karye*s or villages. The *Vilayet* Law created councils or *meclis* at each level which extended the representative and elective principles in the functioning of provincial administration. The Provincial General Assembly (*Meclis-i Umumi-i Vilayet*) was created with the election of two Muslim and two non-Muslim by each *sancak*s. Thanks to reorganization of local councils with the *Vilayet* Law, many Muslim and non-Muslim notables were elected to *meclis* and involved in medium or low administrative positions which increased their identification with their province and developed their local

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[62] Ibid., 46-51.

[63] Philip S. Khoury, ''Syrian Political Culture: A Historical Perspective,'' in *Syria: Society, Culture and Polity*, ed. Richard T. Antoun and Donald Quataert (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), 18.

patriotism.[64] During the First and the Second Constitutional periods, provincial notables in the *meclis* elected deputies of their regions and sent them to Istanbul.

The *Vilayet* Law was immediately applied to Syria and the *Vilayet* of Syria was established in 1865. The *Vilayet* of Syria was created with the union of the provinces of Damascus and Sidon, without the province of Aleppo and the autonomous *mutasarrıfiyya* of Mount Lebanon. The new *vilayet* was composed of almost whole territories of Greater Syria including present-day Syria, Ottoman Palestine, Eastern Transjordan and Lebanon, without Aleppo and Deir az-Zor. By creating a Syrian entity, the Porte aimed to prevent political intervention of the Western Powers in the Syrian region and hamper Syrians' possible demand for autonomy like neighboring *mutasarrifiyya* of Mount Lebanon after the 1860 events.[65] Midhat Pasha, who was one of the founding fathers of the *Vilayet* Law, became *vali* of the *Vilayet* of Syria between 1878 and 1880. During his short term, Midhat Pasha succeeded in reforming the civil service, financial system, public security and education in the Syrian province and he applied the system of federalized Empire based on German model. His main orientation was towards the consolidation of two principles; namely Ottomanism and decentralized state system.[66] Creation of Syria as a territorial entity through the implementation of the *Vilayet* Law and Midhat Pasha's protection over the intellectual activities had profound impacts on the development of Arab nationalism in Syria, which will be evaluated below.

2.3. Syria and the Emergence of Arab Nationalism: The Christian Arabs and Islamic Modernists as the Forerunners of Arab Nationalism

As mentioned before, the peripherization of the Middle East in the capitalist economic system led to the emergence of a new elite group composed mainly of Christians. The advent of a new socio-economic environment in the Middle East via Syria prepared the ground for proto-Arab nationalism or Arab cultural awakening (*Nahda*),

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[64] Standford J. Shaw and Ezel Kural Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey: Vol. 2, Reform, Revolution and Republic: The Rise of Modern Turkey 1808-1975* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 89-90; Fruma Zachs, *The Making of a Syrian Identity: Intellectuals and Merchants in Nineteenth Century Beirut* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 93-94.

[65] Zachs, 95-101.

[66] Ibid., 114-119. For a good analysis of the period of Midhat Pasha as governor of Vilayet of Syria, see Najib E.Saliba, ''The Achievements of Midhat Pasha as Governor of the Province of Syria, 1878-1880,'' *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, No.3 (1978): 307-315.

which later made Syria the center of Arab nationalist movement in early 20th century. The first forerunners of Arab nationalism were the Christian Arabs who were educated in European and American missionary schools that accompanied the European economic penetration into the Middle East and Syria. The first missionary activities and European way of life had come to Syria during the rule of Ibrahim Pasha and increased enormously after the 1860 events. French, Russian and American missionaries opened their schools in urban and rural areas of Syrian territories. Especially, University of St-Joseph (1875) and Syrian Protestant College (1866), established by American missionaries in Beirut, were two famous examples of these missionary schools. There emerged a new Christian Arab intelligentsia from these schools who acquired the knowledge of their Arab culture and the Western ideas through learning Arabic and foreign languages. Inspired by Western political ideas and their native culture, this intelligentsia class established printing presses and initiated a literary movement in which Arabic books, newspapers and journals had special importance.[67] Main representatives of this class were Butrus al-Bustani, Khalil al-Khuri, Marun al-Naqqash and Faris al-Shidyaq who established literary societies such as *Jam'iyyat al-Adab w'al-'Ulum* (The Literary and Scientific Society) and *Jam'iyya al-'Ilmiyya al-Suriyya* (The Syrian Scientific Society).[68] After the 1860 events, this intelligentsia developed the idea of Syrian patriotism depending on common language, culture, fatherland (*watan*) and secularism, which became later the main basis of Arab nationalism. According to them, Arab peoples could be gathered via secular identity because the 1860 events showed that religious loyalty was dangerous for political life.[69] The literature movement and societies of the early cultural Arab nationalists revitalized Arab language, culture and civilization, which later contributed to the emergence of Arab nationalism in the 20th century.

Besides, creation of the *Vilayet* of Syria affected profoundly the Christian Arab intellectuals who had started to imagine the Syrian territory as their homeland. With the establishment of the *Vilayet* of Syria, economic and political imagination of these intellectuals took shape as an administrative reality. Depending on their education, they

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[67] Arthur Goldschmitd Jr. and Lawrence Davison, *A Concise History of the Middle East*, 8th ed. (Colorado: Westview Press, 2006), 205-207.

[68] Bassam Tibi, *Arab Nationalism: between Islam and the Nation State*, 3rd ed. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 103.

[69] Ma'oz, 241-243.

drew similarity between the *Vilayet* Law and the American federal system. They perceived the Ottoman Empire as their big *watan* composed of small *watan*s including Syria. It is important to note that their Syrian patriotism was not an obstacle for their Ottomanism or being a part of the Ottoman Empire.[70]

In addition to the Christian Arab intelligentsia, Muslim scholars further contributed to the revitalization of Arab culture and identity. The growing Western encroachments on Muslim lands, replacement of Islamic institutions with Western ones and of Islamic law with secular legislation as a result of peripherization of the Ottoman Empire was coupled with the European influence over the Muslim way of life, which shocked and urged Muslim intellectuals to think about the weaknesses of the Islamic *umma* and recovery of the backwardness in the Muslim world. In this respect, it is clear that early beginnings of Arab nationalism emerged both as a result and as a reaction to Western economic and political penetration into the Middle East, and both Christian and Muslim intellectuals contributed to the Arab renaissance movement or *Nahda*.

Jamal al-Din Afgani (1839-1897) was the first Muslim intellectual who proposed a worldwide Islamic unity, solidarity and action against the Western imperialism and called for returning back to the true principles of Islam. In addition to Afgani, Mohammed Abduh (1849-1905), one the close associates and pupils of Afgani, was another important thinker as he contributed to the development of the Islamic modernist reformist movement.[71] Among the Islamist reformist thinkers Abduh's ideas and thoughts had deep impacts on the early figures of Arab nationalism in Syria; after the 1860 events newly emerging middle-class *ulema* of Syria under the leadership of Tahir al-Cezayirî followed the line of Abduh in explaining Islam in accordance with modernity and its emphasis on Arab identity later evaluated by the new generation as an expression of Arab nationalism. This generation became the first representative of Arab nationalism, which made Syria the hub of nationalist activities in the 20th century; among them Rafiq al-Azm, Muhammad Kurd Ali, Abd al-Hamid al-Zahrawi, Abd al-Rahman al-Shahbandar ve

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[70] Zachs, 103-104.

[71] For a good discussion of the ideas and thoughts of Afgani and Abduh, see Majid Khadduri, *Political Trends in the Arab World: The Role of Ideas and Ideals in Politics* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1970), 56-65.

Muhib al-Din el Hatib became the leaders of first Arab nationalist committees in the wake of the First World War.[72]

Abd al-Rahman al-Kawakibi and Rashid Rida of Syria, devoted disciples of Abduh, also contributed to Islamist modernist movement.[73] It is important to note that here, whether Christian or Muslim, aforementioned 19th century Arab intellectuals never propagated for the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire or separation of the Arabs from the Turks, their Arab awakening remained within the boundaries of cultural activities and never crystallized into a political activity until the early 20th century. In contrast, proto-Arab nationalism gained a political character in the 20th century as a reaction to the policies of the Committee of Union and Progress (*İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti*) and the new generation of Arab nationalists began to demand separation from the Ottoman Empire.

2.4. Syria from Cooperation to Separation: The CUP Regime, the First World War and the Dismantling of the Ottoman Empire

In the second part of the 19th century, the transformation of the Ottoman Empire entered a new phase and for the first time the Ottoman Parliament or *Meclis-i Mebusan* convened in Istanbul in March 1877. The Arab lands became an integral part of this transformation as there were 32 Arab deputies out of a total of 232 in the first parliament. Needless to say, having been influenced by every major development in the Ottoman Empire; the Arab provinces of Aleppo and Syria were slightly overrepresented in *Meclis-i Mebusan* owing to their geographical proximity to Istanbul. Great Syrian territories were represented by the modern educated and younger members of the local notable families, elected by the provincial administrative councils or the *meclis*. Nafi al-Jabiri of Aleppo, Khalil Ghanem of Beirut, Ziya al-Khalidi of Jerusalem, Sa'di and Manuk of Aleppo, Nikula Naqqash, Nawfal, and 'Abd al-Rahim Badran of Syria were some of them. [74]

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[72] Baktıaya, 319-320.

[73] See Ernest Dawn, *From Ottomanism to Arabism: Essays on the Origins of Arab Nationalism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1973), 133-140; Adeed Dawisha, *Arab Nationalism in the Twentieth Century: From Triumph to Despair* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 21-23.

[74] Hasan Kayalı, *Arabs and Young Turks: Ottomanism, Arabism and Islamism in the Ottoman Empire, 1908-1918* (California: University of California Press, 1997), 25-26.

The first Ottoman experiment in democracy did not last long and Abdülhamid II used the Russo-Ottoman War as a pretext for suspending the parliament in 1878 and ruled the Empire with an iron fist for thirty years. During his rule, Abdülhamid pursued policy of pan-Islamism which aimed to gain loyalty of the Arab peoples of the Empire. In this regard, he continued the politics of notables and incorporated the urban landowner classes into the state mechanism by employing them in the bureaucracy and in the provincial administrative posts and also by taking their sons into the modern schools in Istanbul.[75] Acquainted with modern political ideas in these schools, the sons of the *ayan*s later formed the backbone of nationalist bureaucratic and military cadres of Syria during the mandate and post-independence periods [76] as well as they played an important role in socio-political life of Syria until the coup d'état of Baath in 1963.

With the end of the tyrannical rule of Abdülhamid and Young Turk Revolution of 1908 the early honeymoon between the Arabs and the CUP began to fade away. Even though there were good relations between the CUP and Syrian Arabs at the beginning of the CUP regime, relations started to deteriorate at the end of 1909 as the CUP leaders deposed their Arab comrades and prominent Arab families in the administrative posts of the bureaucracy so as to strengthen their power in the capital and establish a more centralized state.[77] Those who suffered from this policy were the long-established Arab notable families of Syria who actively participated both in provincial and in central politics during the reign of Abdülhamid such as al-Abid and al-Azm families.[78]

The Arabs were disappointed by the imposition of Turkish as administrative and education language and closing down of their societies, which they completely perceived as ''Turkification'' policy of the CUP and violation of the principle of Ottomanism.[79] The CUP's secular and pan-Turanian orientations also aggravated the relationship between the Arabs and the Turks and ultimately resulted in the emotional separation of two sides irreversibly. During this period, Greater Syria became a hub of political opposition and young Syrians dominated the leadership of political Arabism, which demanded

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[75] Ibid., 35-36.

[76] Hourani, ''The Ottoman Background,'' 18.

[77] Kayalı, 57.

[78] Khoury, *Urban Notables and Arab Nationalism,* 56.

[79] Zeine, 84.

decentralization of the Empire against to CUP's centralized interpretation of Ottomanism.[80] As a reaction to the CUP's nationalist and racial superiority policies, younger Arab nationalists organized their own societies and parties such as *al-Ahd* (The Covenant) and *Al-Fatat* (The Young Arab Society).[81]

In Syria, the local notables did not form a unified political movement against the Young Turk regime and they were divided between the CUP and the dissident liberal politicians. The former wing of the *ayan*s were represented in the pro-Unionist Ottomanism and benefited from the politics of notables by collaborating pragmatically with the regime, while the latter and younger members of the *ayan* families propagated for Arabism or decentralization of the Empire.[82] During the First World War and in Faisal's Kingdom, the most remarkable characteristic of the Syrian politics was this intra-elite and intra-family factionalism.[83] The younger generation of the *ayan* families or *Al-Fatat* and *al-Ahd* members played important roles in the Syrian and Iraqi politics during the mandate and post-independence periods.

During the First World War, Syria was very important for the CUP since they were suspicious about the pre-war cultural and political Arab societies as well as close ties of the Christian Arabs with France. Thus, the CUP appointed Jamal Pasha as the governor of Syria in December 1914 whose rule turned out to be a terror regime after the failed Suez Canal operation in February 1915.[84]During the early phases of the war, some Syrian politicians had contacted with Britain for a revolt against the Ottomans. Furthermore, clandestine *al-Fatat* and *al-Ahd* societies had decided to contact with Sharif

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[80] Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples*, 310.

[81] Zeine, 80; Tibi, 109-110.

[82] Khoury, *Urban Notables and Arab Nationalism,* 64-65.

[83] From the landowner bureaucratic families Muhammad Fawzi al-Azm, Abd al-Rahman al-Yusuf, Muhammed al-Ajlani, Ahmad al-Sham'a, Sami Mardam-Beg, Ata al-Ajlani, Muhammed Arif al-Quwatli, Muhammad Ali al-Abid and Nasib al-Hamza pursued pro-Unionist and conservative policies to maintain their position and political stability in Syria. On the other hand, Shafiq Mu'ayyad al-Azm, Rushdi al-Sham'a, Hashim al-Atasi, Shukri al-Asali, Abd al-Rahman Shahbandar, Rafiq al-Azm, Muhammed Kurd Ali, Jamil Mardam-Beg, Fakhri al-Barudi, Abd al-Hamid al-Zahrawi, Nasib and Fawzi al-Bakri were the younger members of same families who followed the anti-CUP policies and propagated Arab rights and Arab nationalism. Members of the latter became the first ruling elites of Syria in the mandate and post-independence periods. See Khoury, *Urban Notables and Arab Nationalism,* 67-75.

[84] Cleveland and Bunton, 154-156.

Hussein to prepare a joint plan for revolt in Syria.[85] Both revolt attempts came to naught and Jamal launched a ruthless policy towards the inhabitants of Syria and persecuted wide range of both the Christian and Muslim Arab leaders via executions and deportations. He hanged eleven Arab notables in Beirut in 1915 and following year twenty-one Muslim and Christian leaders in Beirut and Damascus.[86] Jamal's anti-Arab policy was a watershed in the Turkish-Arab relations in terms of the widening of the gap further between the two sides and the emergence of Arab demands for separatism.[87] When Sharif Hussein's son Emir Faisal came to Syria for meeting with Arab nationalists to determine their seriousness about the revolt in 1915, he was affected by Jamal's executions and after turning to Hejaz persuaded his father to rebel against the Ottomans.[88]

After the executions, Arab nationalism gathered momentum and many Arab officers in the Ottoman army radicalized and became the leading figures of Arab nationalism. They later attended Sharif Hussein's rebellion and supported the British-Hussein alliance.[89] Especially, members of *al-Fatat* and *al-Ahd* actively participated in the revolt at various stages.[90] It was clearly thought that Arab political independence and Arab national sovereignty were necessity for the Arab people. These motivations of the Arabs were encouraged by the Allied Powers, which ultimately resulted in the outbreak of Sharif Hussein's revolt on 16 June of 1916.[91]

In the famous Hussein-McMahon correspondence between July 1915 and March 1916, Britain promised an independent Arab Kingdom in parts of Iraq, Arabia, interior Syria and possibly Palestine under Hashemite rule, in exchange for a revolt against the impious Young Turks. When Hussein started his famous revolt, his call for fight against the Ottomans did not attract all Arab provinces except for some parts of Syria. In contrast,

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[85] Elizer Tauber, *The Formation of Modern Syria and Iraq* (London: Frank Cass, 1995), 5-7; Dawn, 150.

[86] Zeine, 102; Kayalı, 192-194.

[87] Tibi, 113.

[88] Goldschmidt and Davison, 212.

[89] Kayalı, 198.

[90] Tauber, 7.

[91] David Fromkin, *A Peace to End all Peace: The Fall of the Ottoman Empire and the Creation of the Modern Middle East* (New York: Henry Holt, 2000), 218-231.

the vast majority of the Arab people did not seek separation from Istanbul as well as many leading Arab leaders condemned Hussein as he was dividing the Ottoman-Islamic Empire when the unity was much more needed.[92] Although the Syrian-Arab movement continued with the news of revolt against the Turks, they were deprived of their power by Jamal's administration and were unable neither to give active support nor to organize a revolt in Syria.[93] During the Sharif's revolt, *Al-Fatat*'s agitations in Syria did not attract the Syrians generally and many landowner bureaucratic families maintained loyalty to the Ottoman administration and they retained their administrative posts throughout the war.[94] Therefore, it can easily be argued that the Sharif Hussein revolt was not approved and participated by the Arabs generally, and remained a limited Bedouin armed movement supported by Britain against the Ottomans.

While Britain was encouraging Hussein for an Arab revolt, it had signed the secret Sykes-Picot Agreement with France in May 1916, which proposed the partition of the Middle East and allocation of Syria and Lebanon to France while Iraq, Palestine and Transjordan were given to Britain. This treaty was an open violation of McMahon's promises to Sharif Hussein and when it was implemented by the great powers after the war, it became the symbol of Western betrayal to the Arab cause. Another violation of McMahon's promises was the Balfour Declaration, which promised a Jewish national homeland in Palestine, by British Foreign Minister Arthur Balfour in 1917. The proposed Jewish State in the Greater Syrian territories was another blow to nationalist aspirations of the Arabs and their dream of unified Arab Kingdom under the Hashemite rule. A fatal blow to the Hashemites came after the war, when Ibn Saud attacked Hejaz and drove Sharif Hussein out of Mecca in 1924. Britain, the closest ally of the Hashemite house, did not intervene in the conflict in favor of the Hashemites and finally recognized the Saudi regime in 1927. Consequently, the seeds of long-lasting enmity were sown between the Hashemite and Saudi family, which became one of the most important factors of inter-Arab politics and struggle for Syria in the mandate and post-independence periods.

It is undeniable that the outbreak of the Arab revolt during the First World War weakened the Ottoman resistance against the Allied Powers and accelerated the Ottoman

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[92] Karpat, *Ortadoğu'da Osmanlı Mirası ve Ulusçuluk*, 154; Dawisha, 37-38.

[93] Dawn, 155.

[94] Khoury, *Urban Notables and Arab Nationalism,* 78.

retreat from the Middle East, which increased the Arabs' hope for independence. The forces of Emir Faisal invaded Ottoman Syria and finally entered Damascus on October 1, 1918, which marked the Ottoman retreat from the Middle East and the end of four hundred years of Arab-Turkish relations. After the Ottoman retreat, historical Syria was divided into three zones under British and France occupation. Occupied Enemy Territory Administration (OETA) West, which included Lebanon, was given to Georges Picot as High Commissioner of French Administration. OETA East, including most of inland Syria was to be under Allenby's military administration and Picot was accepted as chief political advisor.[95] The Southern Occupied Zone (Palestine) was placed under the British authority as well.[96]

2.5. The Rise and Fall of Faisal's Kingdom in Syria (1918-1920): Between Domestic and International Constraints

Three days after the British forces, Amir Faisal and his Arab army entered to Damascus on 4 October 1918 and Faisal's twenty-two-month rule in Syria from October 1918 to June 1920 started. Before the arrival of Faisal, General Allenby had appointed pro-Faisal Ali Rida al-Rikabi, former Ottoman officer and one of the prominent members of *al-Fatat*, as the military governor of Syria or OETA East.[97] When Faisal entered Damascus, he immediately confirmed al-Rikabi as head of the first Arab Government, which was composed mainly of the *al-Fatat* members and Britain allowed the Hashemite authority to extend its authority in all the Eastern Zone. [98]

On 7 November 1918, Britain and France issued the following declaration, ''the definite emancipation of peoples so long oppressed by the Turks' and to the establishment and recognition of national governments… deriving their authority from the initiative and

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[95] D. K. Fieldhouse, *Western Imperialism in the Middle East, 1914-1956* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 59.

[96] Abdul-Karim Rafeq, ''Arabism, Society and Economy in Syria, 1918-1920,'' in *State and Society in Syria and Lebanon*, ed. Youssef M. Choueiri (New York: St.Martin's Press, 1994): 4.

[97] Tauber, 11.

[98] In Faisal's Syria, many government officials were the members of *al-Fatat*. At the beginning of the Faisal's rule, members of the society held the following high rank positions: Ali Rida al-Rikabi-military governor and head of temporary government, Adil Aslan-assistant to the miltary governor, Rashid Tali-minister of interior, Yasin al-Hashimi-chief of the General Staff, Ali al-Tamimi-director of the Damascus police, Ala al-Din al Durubi-wali of Damascus, Shukri al-Quwatli- secretary to the wali of Damascus, Jalal Zuhdi-president of the Court of Appeal, Ibrahim Hashim-prosecutor-general in the Court of Appeal, Jafar al-Askari-governor of Salt and later governor of Aleppo. See Tauber, 15.

free choice of the indigenous populations''.[99] Although this statement created excitement in Syria, *al-Fatat* did not satisfy with it because the society was aware of that Britain and France did not recognize full independence of Syria.[100] In December 1918, *al-Fatat* drafted a new constitution, composed of 80 articles, for Syrian society and established its political party *Hizb al-Istiqlal* or the Independence Party.[101]

During Faisal's short rule in Syria, the ongoing intra-elite and intra-familial factionalism and tension since the second half of the 19th century onwards reached its zenith. When Faisal started to build up an independent Arab state in Syria, many administrative posts were in the hands of the pro-Ottoman local notables since the CUP regime, who maintained their traditional intermediary role between the state and the society. With Faisal's regime, their pro-Ottoman ideology faded away and Faisal as well as his younger Arab nationalist entourage (*al-Fatat*) became the only authority in Syria. To illustrate, pro-Ottoman notables of Damascus in a pragmatic manner decided to reconcile with the Hashemite regime and jump on the bandwagon of Arab nationalism to protect their local political impact. However, they were ignored and deprived of their administrative and political impact on the society by Faisal and his young nationalist entourage. For the first time, the *ayan* families were subordinated to a minority position status in their own city.[102]

Between 1918 and 1920, three political extra-governmental organizations dominated Syrian politics: the Arab Club of Palestinian nationalist *(al-Nadi al-Arabi)*, *al-Fatat* and *al-Ahd*.[103] Among three organizations, *al-Fatat* became the most influential political power in Syria as Faisal himself was the member of the society since 1915.[104]

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[99] Fieldhouse, 59.

[100] Tauber, 12.

[101] Khoury, *Urban Notables and Arab Nationalism,* 84.

[102] Ibid.*,* 79-81.

[103] After the First World War, *al-Ahd* was limited to army officers and divided along the geographical lines of Syria and Iraq. Although some Iraqi *al-Ahd* members participated in Faisal's government, the society mainly focused on the affairs of Iraq rather than Syria. See Khoury, *Urban Notables and Arab Nationalism,* 85.

[104] Tauber, 15.

After the capture of Damascus, *al-Fatat*'s nationalist leadership was reconstituted by embracing many Sharifian officers.[105]

While *al-Fatat* was strengthening its position in domestic politics, Faisal was giving his full energy to international affairs for the future of Arab lands in Paris Peace Conference in November 1918. Although Faisal and his nationalist entourage, at the beginning, were ardent supporters of an independent unified Arab Kingdom composed of Greater Syria, Iraq and Hejaz; soon faced with Anglo-French conspiracies, they realized the impossibility of their aims and adopted a ''Syria-first'' policy and satisfied with independent Syria including Lebanon and Palestine. [106] Even Faisal reached an agreement with the Zionists for increased Jewish infiltration to Palestine in turn for Zionist support for his Arab state in Syria.[107]

Faisal attended the Paris Peace Conference as the representative of Sharif Hussein on 18 January 1919 and submitted a memorandum to the conference about the future of the Arab lands in which he demanded that the Arabic-speaking population in south of a line between Alexandretta and Diyarbakir be recognized as sovereign people under League of Nations guarantee within the boundaries shaped on the basis of self-determination. However, Faisal was aware of the imperialist aims of the European powers in the Middle East and he showed his willingness to give up Iraq and Palestine, in turn for independent Syria including Lebanon under his kingship.[108] Especially France opposed Faisal's initiatives and the Article 22 of the Covenant of League of Nations was accepted, which stated that ''the Arab provinces that had been liberated from the Ottoman Empire would be placed under a Type A mandate, under which the mandate power would advise and assist them until they could handle their own affairs.''[109] Faisal was disappointed by British and French attitudes during the congress and returned back to Syria in April 1919.

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[105] The members of the first central committee after the capture of Damascus were Shukri al-Quwatli, Rustum Haydar, Izzat Darwaza, Rafiq al-Tamimi, Yasin al-Hashimi, Tawfiq Natur and Ahmad Qadri. See Tauber, 14.

[106] Rafeq, ''Arabism, Society and Economy in Syria,'' 5; Dawn, 45.

[107] Khoury, *Urban Notables and Arab Nationalism,* 85.

[108] Fromkin, 395.

[109] Tauber, 118.

When Faisal came to Syria, there was a growing political unrest and division among the political leadership of Arab nationalists. For this reason, Faisal decided to call for an elected congress to be convened in Damascus.[110] By convening a congress, Faisal aimed to channel the activities of nationalist organizations into a support base for his regime and establish unified representative body for Syrian independence against the European powers.[111] For this reason, the Syrian Congress convened officially for the first time on 6 June 1919, including 85 elected members and 35 invited ones from Palestine and Lebanon, totally 120 in all.[112] The elections were held for the congress and traditional pro-Ottoman landowning-bureaucratic families of Damascus, Aleppo, Hama and Homs defeated the list of nationalists in their towns. Although nationalists were defeated at polls, they dominated the congress owing to their cooperation with previous pro-Ottoman landowning-bureaucratic families of Aleppo, Hama and Homs who jumped on the Arab nationalist bandwagon after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire.[113] For this reason, young nationalists took the lead in Damascus and even though conservative Muhammad Fawzi al-Azm of Damascus was to be the president of the congress, he was forced to resign and Hashim al-Atasi, a prominent *al-Fatat* member, was elected as president of the Syrian Congress.[114] The First Syrian Congress announced a set of resolutions which demanded full independence of Greater Syria including Lebanon and Palestine and rejected any foreign domination or mandate power.[115]

In September 1919 Faisal left Syria for a second round of negotiations for the future of Arab lands with Britain and France. When he arrived in London on 18 September 1919, Faisal was shocked by the Paris Agreement signed between Britain and France, which proposed a French mandate over Syria and evacuation of the British forces from Syria in November 1919. Faisal denounced this agreement as an unjust policy of

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[110] According to Khoury and Fromkin, the call for a Syrian Congress came from Faisal, but, Tauber accepts it as the initiative of *al-Fatat* and the Independence Party for influencing the King-Crane Commission. See Tauber, 16; Khoury, *Urban Notables and Arab Nationalism,* 86; Fromkin, 435.

[111] Khoury, *Urban Notables and Arab Nationalism,* 86.

[112] Members of the First Syrian Congress came predominantly from pro-Ottoman bureaucratic-landowning families. For the list of members of the Congress, see Dawn, 175.

[113] Khoury, *Urban Notables and Arab Nationalism,* 86-88.

[114] Tauber, 17.

[115] Fromkin, 436.

colonialism and betrayal to the Arab cause.[116] Disappointed by the British attitude, Faisal went to France on 10 October 1919 to reach a compromise with French Prime Minister Clemenceau. While Faisal was in Paris, British evacuation from Syria started and finally completed on 26 November 1920. [117] For defending their Arab state, *al-Fatat* formed the Committee of National Defense and sent to the western border of Syria.[118]

In January 1920, Faisal and Clemenceau signed an agreement which openly made Syria a French mandate.[119] After this agreement, differences of opinion between Faisal and *al-Fatat* reached its climax and Faisal resisted the central committee and accused them of damaging the interests of the state. During its confrontation with Faisal and his foreign policy choices, *Al-Fatat* reached the peak of its power.[120] So as to balance his radical nationalist entourage, Faisal decided to return to his former enemies, pro-Ottoman conservative notables of Damascus, deprived of their power since 1918. With the support of Faisal, they established the National Party (*al-Hizb al-watani*) and quietly sought a compromise with France in consistence with the Faisal-Clemenceau Agreement and their pragmatic historical politics of notables to find a new ''Sublime Port'' for maintaining their political influence in the administrative system. These notables were not committed to the independence of Syria and they were eager for recognizing a Jewish national homeland in Palestine as well.[121] The first foreign policy initiatives of the previous pro-Ottoman and newly Arab nationalist *ayan*s depended on a pragmatic approach, which was later adopted by other nationalist elements during the mandate and post-independence periods and became the main characteristic of Syrian foreign policy.

At the San Remo Conference on 24-26 April 1920, the French mandate was imposed on Syria and Lebanon and British one for Iraq and Palestine. With the declaration of mandate over the Arab lands, determination of younger nationalists to fight

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[116] Zeine N. Zeine, *The Struggle for Arab Independence for Arab Independence: Western Diplomacy and the Rise and the Fall of Faisal's Kingdom in Syria* (Beirut: Khayats, 1960), 108-112.

[117] Rafeq, ''Arabism, Society and Economy in Syria,'' 7-11.

[118] Khoury, *Urban Notables and Arab Nationalism,* 89.

[119] Fromkin, 436; Zeine, *The Struggle for Arab Independence*, 126.

[120] Tauber, 26-27.

[121] Khoury, *Urban Notables and Arab Nationalism,* 89-90.

against French reached its zenith regardless of the costs of their armed resistance.[122] Under heavy pressures from extremist nationalist leaders and the Syrian people, Faisal demanded the recognition of the independence of Syria from General Gouraud, commander of the French army in the Levant. Gouraud gave a negative response to Faisal and sent an ultimatum demanding the recognition of the French mandate and the dismissal of extremists among his supporters. Although Faisal accepted the ultimatum before the deadline, Gouraud marched towards Damascus and defeated irregular Arab forces under Youssef al-Azma at Khan Maylasun. On 25 July 1920, victorious French army entered to Damascus, Faisal's Arab Kingdom collapsed and Syria came under the French mandate.[123] Political scene was shattered, the old members of the notable families took the lead in supporting France and Faisal was forced into exile in Britain only to be brought back as the King of British mandate Iraq. Many young nationalist leaders fled to Iraq, Transjordan and Palestine and continued their struggles these own countries and their Arab cause acquired a regional characteristic.[124]

Partition of the Arab territories by the imperialist Great Powers was completed with the establishment of mandate regimes in Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Palestine and Transjordan. For the British mandate Iraq, Faisal, was enthroned as king of Iraq in October 1921. Besides, Britain drew another artificial mandate border and created a state in the lands of Transjordan for Faisal's brother Amir Abdullah in 1921.

2.6. Syria under the French Mandate: Emergence of Truncated Syrian Entity

With the establishment of the mandate states, peripherization process of the Middle East since the 19th century onwards was politically completed and the Middle East regional system took its final form (except for the establishment of Israel) during the mandate period. The role of new Middle Eastern states in the world division of labor continued as the production of primary products and raw materials, and importation of

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[122] Zeine, *The Struggle for Arab Independence*, 152-156; Khoury, *Urban Notables and Arab Nationalism,* 91.

[123] Zeine, *The Struggle for Arab Independence*, 180-185.

[124] Khairia Kasmieh, ''An Evaluation of the Arab Government in Damascus 1918-1920,'' in *State and Society in Syria and Lebanon*, ed. Youssef M. Choueiri (New York: St.Martin's Press, 1994): 30.

manufactured goods from the core capitalist powers.[125] It is important to note that the imperialist powers accomplished the formation of Arab ruling class by continuing the policy of private land ownership under the control of the urban notables. They also implemented state apparatuses in the new states and chose ruling elites from the new upper classes vacillating between collaboration with imperialist power and the nationalistic independence movements. In turn for these imperialist gestures, the land owner classes maintained their pragmatic traditional policy of collaboration or the politics of notables with a new higher authority (in Syrian case the French mandate). This relationship depended on mutual interest between the imperialist powers and the notables, and it ironically both created and helped de-legitimization of the newly created states and their first ruling elites in the eyes of the local population who saw them as clients of imperialism.[126]

Socio-political structure of Greater Syrian territories was profoundly transformed by the French authorities during the mandate period. Even though it was claimed that the mandate was established to prepare the Arab lands for independence, France created suitable conditions to continue its rule in the Levant by implementing the policy of ''divide and rule'' in Greater Syria territories. The first political division of Greater Syrian territories was declared by the first High Commissioner General Gouraud with the establishment of Greater Lebanon in 1920. France detached Biqa Valley, Beirut, Tripoli, Tyre and Sidon from Syria and added these territories to old *mutasarrifiyya* of Mount Lebanon.[127] By creating Greater Lebanon in Greater Syrian territories, France aimed to establish a Maronite dominated state and secure his traditional position in the Levant with a Christian state.

In line with their divide and rule policy, French officials implemented ''la Politique Minoritaire'' to encourage existing religious and regional divisions among the heterogeneous Syrian society by establishing autonomous Druze and Alawi states apart from the Sunni dominated parts of Syrian territories. France's divide and rule policy, and emphasis on sub-state identities contributed to separatist tendencies of compact minorities

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[125] For detailed information about the political economy of the mandate regime in Syria, see Roger Owen and Şevket Pamuk, *20. Yüzyılda Ortadoğu Ekonomileri Tarihi* (İstanbul: Sabancı Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2002), 89-99.

[126] Hinnebusch, *The International Politics of the Middle East*, 19-20.

[127] Ayhan and Tür, 49-50.

and prevented the strengthening of Syrian national identity in Syria.[128] France divided Syria into four administrative units to emphasize the existing differences among different segments of the society: the states of Damascus and Aleppo in 1920, the Druze state in 1921 and finally the Alawi state in 1922 were established with separate governors.[129] France also granted autonomy to the *sanjak* of Alexandretta. Alawi and Druze states were ruled independent of Damascus, except for the period from 1936 to 1939, until 1942. By doing so, France excluded the Alawi and the Druze population from the political arena and allowed urban Sunni elites to dominate national politics during the mandate period, which later became an important factor of political instability after independence.[130]

Another factor that would contribute to the future political instability was the foundation of the Homs military academy in 1920 to train up military officers for the *Troupes Spéciales du Levant*, a locally recruited gendarmerie force (composed of 10,000 soldiers) to protect French interests in Syria and Lebanon, which remained operational until the end of 1945. In addition to the former Syrian Ottoman officers, the majority of the army members came from the compact minority groups of the society. French authorities deliberately discouraged the Muslim population from joining the academy and the army while encouraging the non-Sunni groups, as well as the urban Sunni elites traditionally scorned and refrained from sending their sons to the military academy. Through military academy and *Troupes Spéciales*, children of the rural lower classes or heterodox minorities, especially the Alawis, found the easiest way of upward social mobilization.[131] The social composition of the military academy and *Troupes Spéciales* had long-lasting implications on Syrian politics after independence. The future army corps, with rural compact minority backgrounds, brought the army to the political scene and began to destruct the dominance of Sunni urban elites in Syrian politics.[132]

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[128] Itamar Rabinovich, '' The Compact Minorities and the Syrian State,'' 696-700.

[129] Tayyar Arı, *Geçmişten Günümüze Ortadoğu: Siyaset, Savaş ve Diplomasi*, 4th ed. (Bursa: Mkm Yayınları, 2008), 160.

[130] Cleveland and Bunton, 219-222.

[131] Amos Perlmutter, ''From Obscurity to Rule: The Syrian Army and the Ba'th Party,'' *The Western Political Quarterly*, No. 4 (1969): 830.

[132] Van Dam, 26-27; David Roberts, *The Ba'th and the Creation of Modern Syria* (London: Croom Helm, 1987), 27.

France's tight control over the political, judicial, economic and even religious institutions alienated many segments of the Syrian population from the French mandate which eventually culminated in the outbreak of a great revolt in Jabal Druze led by the Druze chieftain Sultan al-Atrash in 1925. Initial military victories of rebellious forces against French troops created a wave of excitement among Syrian population and the revolt spilled over to almost all cities of Syria including Homs and Damascus, even into Lebanon.[133] France ultimately managed to suppress the revolt through air and artillery bombardments in 1927 but realized its unsustainable mandate policies that had devastating impacts on French economy and human resources. This situation forced France, like the Ottomans, to find clients within the Syrian society in governing Syria and France to allow the elections for the Constituent Assembly under new liberal High Commissioner Henri Ponsot.[134]

While France was developing a new strategy for Syria, a number of exiled nationalists albeit their differences of opinion had continued their activities in Cairo and established the Syrian-Palestinian Congress in 1921. With the strengthening of French mandate in Syria after the Druze revolt, the leadership of the congress decided to change their radical strategy and sought a compromise with France. The congress organized a conference in Beirut on 25 October 1927, which was a watershed in the relations between the nationalists and France. The congress declared that ''we are certain that in France the nation supports our national cause…we believe in the necessity of collaboration based on the reciprocity of interests and on the determination of mutual obligations.''[135]

This clear expression of a realist strategy evolved into the emergence of a new loose coalition of the nationalist Syrian elites, the so-called National Bloc (*al-Qutla al-Wataniyya*) in 1928. The seven core members of the Bloc were participants of Beirut Conference[136] and the leading figures of the Bloc were mainly well-educated members of

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[133] The main drive behind this revolt was the unification of Lebanon with Syria and the prevention of France's aides to the Christian Maronites. The revolt was also supported by the Druze people in Lebanon. See Ayhan and Tür, 51.

[134] Khoury, ''Syrian Political Culture: A Historical Perspective,'' 20-22.

[135] Philip S. Khoury, *Syria and the French Mandate: The Politics of Arab Nationalism, 1920-1945* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1987), 248.

[136] The core seven members were Ihsan al-Sharif, Najib al-Barazi, Abd al-Qadir al-Kaylani, Ibrahim Hananu, Abd al-Rahman Kayyali, Mazhar Raslan and Hashim al-Atasi. They were later joined by Fawzi al-Ghazzi, Lutfi al-Haffar, Faris al-Khuri, Husni al-Barazi, Sadallah al-Jabiri, Jamil Mardam,

the urban landowner classes, who had participated in *al-Fatat* and Independence Party during the Faisal era, which made them direct descendants of the pre-1914 nationalist societies.[137] Inspired by their ancestors' pragmatic strategy of politics of notables, the Bloc explained its political strategy as ''honorable cooperation'' designed to maintain balance between France and the Syrian people.[138] Bloc members adopted the ''Syria-first'' policy instead of a pan-Arab unity to achieve independence. In their hands, Arab nationalism was a means to rally Syrian society behind them and force France to recognize their intermediary role between society and France, and maintain status quo in favor of them.[139] In order to maintain their interests in the socio-political life, the Bloc had to cope with old conservative notables[140] with whom France had collaborated since the beginning of the mandate as well as the newly emerging radical middle-class nationalists who formed the League of National Action (*Usbat al-Amal al-Qawmi*) in 1933 and strongly opposed collaboration with France.[141] Zaki al-Arsouzi, who was later considered as one of the founding fathers of the Baath Party, was one of the prominent members of the League. The League continued to be an important nationalist organization until it suspended its activities with the outbreak of the Second World War and it later gave way to other nationalist parties, most notably the Baath Party.[142]

When the elections were held in 1928, members of the National Bloc dominated the Constituent Assembly and Hashim al-Atasi was elected as president of the parliament. The Bloc's draft constitution stressed the territorial unity of Greater Syria including

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Fakhri al-Barudi, Nasib al-Bakri, Muhammad al-Nahhas, Zaki al-Khatib, Tawfiq al-Shishakli and Ahmad al-Rıfai. See Khoury, *Syria and the French Mandate*, 248-251.

[137] Khoury, *Syria and the French Mandate,* 251.

[138] Ibid.*,* 539.

[139] Philip S. Khoury, ''Continuity and Change in Syrian Political Life: The Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries,'' *The American Historical Review*, No. 5 (1991): 1389-1390.

[140] Shayk Taj al-Din al-Hasani, Haqqi al-Azm, Ala al-Din al-Durubi, Ata al-Ayyubi, Subhi Barakat, Abd al-Rahman al-Yusuf, Kamil al-Qudsi, Shakir Nimat al-Shabani and Badi al-Muayyad were among these old guards who closely collaborated with the French regime to continue their political impact on the society. See Fieldhouse, 282-284.

[141] For detailed information about the formation of the middle-class radical nationalists and the League of National Action, see Khoury, *Syria and the French Mandate*, 400-406.

[142] Nabil M. Kaylani, ''The Rise of the Syrian Ba'th, 1940-1958: Political Success, Party Failure,'' *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, No.1 (1972): 3; Dawisha, 80

Lebanon, Palestine and Transjordan.[143]   After this time, the National Bloc became the dominant power in Syrian politics and continued negotiations with France for gaining independence. During these negotiations, there emerged rival factions[144] in the National Bloc owing to their stance towards France and the Palestine Question. [145]

On the eve of the Second World War, Syria underwent strict French rule once again. The French High Commissioner Gabriel Puaux suspended the Syrian constitution and gave greater autonomy to Latakia and Jabal Druze regions again and ceded officially the Sanjak of Alexandretta to Turkey in 1939.[146] The failure of the Franco-Syrian agreement and the loss of Alexandretta, which were perceived as a natural part of Greater Syria by nationalist leaders, were two fatal blows to the nationalist aspirations and showed the weakness of the Bloc leaders against France. The loss of Alexandretta later became the cornerstone of Syrian foreign policy towards Turkey in the post-independence period.

2.6.1. The Emergence of Inter-Arab Politics and Early ''Struggle for Syria'' during the Mandate Period

During the mandate period, as a result of the core-periphery relations, arbitrarily and artificially imposed borders of the Middle Eastern states in the form of Westphalian style nation state system and separation of Greater Syrian territories into four mandates of Syria, Lebanon, Palestine and Jordan by the core powers according to their imperialist needs and wishes at the expense of pre-existing cultural and linguistic unity created tension between identity (the nation) and sovereignty (the territorial state) of the new Arab states.[147] Thus, supra-state identities of pan-Arabism and pan-Syrianism transcending the existing state boundaries as expressive of pre-existing cultural unity and challenged state sovereignty. To illustrate, irredentist nature of Iraq's pan-Arabist and

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[143] Khoury, *Syria and the French Mandate*, 340-345.

[144] Jamil Mardam faction, Shukri al-Quwatli faction, Faris al-Khuri faction, and Nasib and Fawzi Bakri brothers' faction, see Fieldhouse, 298.

[145] Philip S. Khoury, ''Divided Loyalties? Syria and the Question of Palestine, 1919-39,'' *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 21, No. 3 (1985): 328-345.

[146] Fieldhouse, 298.

[147] Raymond Hinnebusch, ''The Middle East Regional System,'' in *The Foreign Policies of Middle East States*, ed. Raymond Hinnebusch and Anoushiravan Ehteshami (Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002), 29-33.

Jordan's pan-Syrianist foreign policies targeted neighboring Arab states especially the artificial entity of Syria to create unified regional states.[148] On the other hand, irredentist territorial ambitions of two Hashemite kingdoms of Iraq and Jordan against Syria were curbed by an alliance of Egypt and Saudi Arabia against the Hashemite regional hegemony attempts during the mandate and post-independence periods. Hence, it can be argued that the peripherization process and creation of the artificial Middle Eastern states resulted in the emergence of inter-Arab politics and inter-Arab struggle for Syria between the rivaling camps in the region, which became one of the most significant regional determinants of Syrian foreign policy from 1946 to 1963. During the mandate and the post-independence periods, similar to their aforementioned pragmatic policy towards the core powers, Syrian notables pursued a pragmatic regional policy within the context of inter-Arab struggle for Syria by cultivating regional allies for their own domestic political ascendance and their factional interests.

The initial Hashemite ambitions over Syria in the name of pan-Arab nationalism were represented by was Faisal of Iraq who never forgot his old capital Damascus and aimed to achieve the Iraqi-Syrian unity throughout his rule in Baghdad.[149] Faisal, who did not miss any chance to interfere in Syrian affairs in favor of his Hashemite family, began to propagate his pan-Arab unification plans with Syria in the wake of the outbreak of the Great Syrian Revolt in 1925, which gained momentum from 1929 onwards owing to the growing Arab-Jewish confrontation in Palestine. Faisal's increased his pan-Arab initiatives by intervening in the Palestine crisis and put forward his federative plans depending on Iraqi-led Arab territorial unification schemes for the sake of both the Arabs and the Jews so as to solve the conflict in Palestine. However, his initial attempts were thwarted by Britain because it was unwilling to remove mandate over Palestine at that time.[150]

When Iraq gained substantial independence with the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of 1930, Faisal's pan-Arab ambitions over Syria came to the fore once again.[151] To achieve his

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[148] Hinnebusch, *The International Politics of the Middle East*, 54-56.

[149] Patrick Seale, *The Struggle for Syria: A Study of Post-War Arab Politics 1945-1958* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1986), 8; Nur Masalha, ''Faisal's Pan-Arabism, 1921-1933,'' *Middle Eastern Studies*, No. 4 (1991): 679.

[150] Masalha, ''Faisal's Pan-Arabism,'' 683-685.

[151] Pipes, 85.

Iraqi-Syrian unification scheme, Faisal launched a set of regional and international initiatives. However, Ibn Saud rejected enthronement of a Hashemite as the King of Syria and proposed his son Faisal as a candidate for the Syrian throne in 1931. Egypt's Wafdist leader Mustafa al-Nahhas expressed his discontent with Iraqi-led Arab unification. Furthermore, Faisal's brothers Abdullah and Ali opposed to his ambitions over the Syrian throne. Although there were some pro-Hashemite Syrian nationalists within the National Bloc, such as Faris al-Khuri, supporting Faisal's candidacy for Syria; the Bloc in general did not want to be an annexed province ruled from Baghdad. Above all, Britain and France were not keen to give up their authority in the Middle East to a Hashemite. With the death of Faisal in 1933, his plans were also death with him.[152]

Another Hashemite pan-Arab unification attempt came from King Abdullah of Jordan. Like Faisal, Abdullah's claims over the throne of Syria depended on Hashemite historical rights over the Arab territories and Faisal's getting the Iraq throne, which had been allocated to him. Having lost the throne of Iraq, Abdullah demanded compensation from Britain in the form of Greater Syria Kingdom under his rule. His ambitions over Syria started from his enthronement as the King of Jordan in 1921 and further consolidated with the Colonial Secretary Winston Churchill's promise him about the future of Syria.[153] Abdullah launched his first pan-Arab unification scheme with the death of Faisal in 1933 and called for immediate unity of Transjordan, Iraq, Syria and Palestine. He further declared his ambitions over territorial unity of Jordan, Syria and Palestine during the 1936 the Franco-Syrian negotiations. After the Palestinian Revolt of 1936, he intensified his activities by recruiting some nationalist leaders to his Hashemite camp such as Nashashibi family of Palestine, Dr. Abd al-Rahman Shahbandar, Sultan al-Atrash, Nasib and Fawzi Bakri Brothers in Syria.[154]

In 1941, Abdullah with Churchill's promise in his mind launched his most serious pan-Arab unity scheme and announced his famous ''Greater Syria'' plan, which was based on the reunification of four territories of Greater Syria under his kingship. In this plan, an immediate unification of Syria and Jordan followed by a subsequent attachment

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[152] Masalha, ''Faisal's Pan-Arabism,'' 686-690.

[153] Yehoshua Porath, ''Abdallah's Greater Syria Programme,'' *Middle Eastern Studies*, No. 2 (1984): 172-173.

[154] Ibid., 176-180.

of Palestine and Lebanon to these territories on the model of the United States of America or Swiss Confederation was proposed. Furthermore, Abdullah aimed to solve the Palestine problem by granting administrative autonomy to the Jews within his Greater Syria plan.[155]

On the other hand, Syrian President Shukri al-Quwatli publicly denounced Greater Syria plan by claiming its inconsistency with the Syrian national aspirations and added that ''if Transjordan really wants unity, she let her people join the mother country (Syria) as a free republic.''[156] In addition to the Syrian leadership, Egypt and Saudi Arabia declared their unwillingness for any Arab-unity schemes under the Hashemites especially Abdullah.[157] The reason for nationalists and other Arab states' grievances towards Abdullah was the suppression of the Rashid Ali revolt and the reestablishment of the Hashemite regime in Iraq via the British army and Abdullah's Arab Legion. This event marked the breaking point of the divorce between the Hashemites and the Iraqi and Syrian nationalists.[158]

Abdullah's Greater Syria plan was also opposed by Iraq's Prime Minister Nuri al-Said who launched his own pan-Arab unification scheme with the name of ''Fertile Crescent Plan'' in 1943. According to Nuri's plan, Syria, Lebanon, Palestine and Transjordan should be unified into Greater Syria, then, it should immediately join Iraq in an Arab League headed by a permanent council nominated by member states and presided over by one of their rulers. The plan proposed semi-autonomy for the Jewish minority in Palestine and Christians in Lebanon under international guarantee. Nuri al Said's plan aimed to create an expanded Syria bound to Iraq in a Fertile Crescent association which in process would culminate in a union of the Arabic-speaking world.[159] There aroused similar objections from other Arab states against Fertile Crescent plan like that of Faisal. King Abdullah, Mustafa Nahhas Pasha and Ibn Saud rejected Nuri's ambitions over Syria. Even Shukri al-Quwatli declared that only a son of Ibn Saud can be

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[155] Reeva S. Simon, ''The Hashemite 'Conspiracy': The Hashemite Unity Attempts, 1921-1958,'' *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, No. 3 (1974): 317-318; Pipes, 76.

[156] Simon, ''The Hashemite Conspiracy,'' 317.

[157] Porath, ''Abdallah's Greater Syria Programme,'' 186.

[158] Simon, ''The Hashemite Conspiracy,'' 324.

[159] Pipes, 86-87; Dawisha, 119.

a candidate to the Syrian throne.[160] Nuri's ambition over Syria was not the only one coming from the Hashemite Iraq; also Prince Abdul-Ilah, Regent of Faisal II and son of Amir Ali whose throne of Hejaz was captured by the Saudis, sought to retrieve Damascus throne for himself. Abdul-Ilah's ambitions over Syria continued during the independence era.[161]

In 1943, Mustafa al-Nahhas of Egypt organized initiatives and talks against the Hashemite aggressions over Syria in the form of the Greater Syria and the Fertile Crescent plans to build a pan-Arab unity platform to discuss inter-Arab affairs and solve the problem of Lebanon which dominated the agendas of Arab leaders during the November Crisis of 1943 between France and Lebanon.[162] Starting with the Second World War, Egypt directly involved in the pan-Arab unity schemes and assumed the role of leader of the Arab countries with the British aid. For this reason, Nahhas began to hold a series of talks with the leaders of Iraq, Transjordan, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Lebanon and Yemen and seven Arab states to establish a regional Arab organization, the Arab League, which culminated in the declaration of the Alexandria Protocol on 7 October 1944. According to this protocol Syria recognized the independence of Lebanon and in turn Lebanon was accepted as a part of the Arab world. After this time, the ''Syria-first'' policy did not embrace Lebanon. Moreover, problem of Palestine became the responsibility of the whole Arab world. With the establishment of the Arab League, Britain aimed to direct pan-Arab ambitions into a controllable channel under the leadership of Egypt and control territorial ambitions of Iraq and Jordan over Syria, which made Egypt the direct rival of Iraq for regional hegemony of the Middle East and Arab leadership. [163] Eventually, The Arab League officially came into existence on 10 May 1945. Inter-Arab politics and unity issue became the most significant regional factor in Syrian foreign policymaking.

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[160] Yossi Olmert, ''A False Dilemma? Syria and Lebanon's Independence during the Mandate Period,'' *Middle Eastern Studies*, No. 3 (1996): 52.

[161] Simon, ''The Hashemite Conspiracy,'' 318.

[162] Olmert, ''A False Dilemma,'' 60; Porath, ''Abdallah's Greater Syria Programme,'' 183-184.

[163] Seale, 18-23.

2.6.2. Syria's Way to Independence: Second World War and Its Aftermath

Syria was directly affected by the political developments of the Second World War. When France was invaded by Nazi Germany in 1940, the collaborationist Vichy regime under Marshal Philip Pétain was established in Paris. The government change in France reflected in the administration of the Levant and the control of Syria and Lebanon were taken by French officials loyal to pro-Nazi Vichy regime, which made the Levant mandates the hub of the Axis influence in the Middle East. The Vichy regime in Syria was destroyed with a joint military attack by Britain and France in 1941.[164]

Before the military intervention, France had promised unconditional independence of Syria and Lebanon.[165] Although France issued independence of Syria and Lebanon in 1941, De Gaulle was so proud of colonialist past of France that he had no intention to give up the control of Syria and Lebanon. Under British pressure, De Gaulle reluctantly restored the constitution of 1936 and allowed the holding of free elections. The National Bloc won the elections of June 1943, Sadallah al-Jabiri became the prime minister and Shukri al-Quwatli was elected as president of Syria. In July 1944, both the Soviet Union and the Unites States established diplomatic ties and recognized independence of Syria and Lebanon.[166] Especially, the recognition of the Soviet Union, newly emerging anti-imperialist super power, gave Syria a chance to balance French hegemony and imperialist territorial designs in the Levant.[167] From 1944 to 1946, Syrian politicians targeted one goal: political independence. Against British and French imperialism, Syrian politicians skillfully cultivated post-war superpowers, the USA and the USSR, neither of them had imperialist record in the Middle East, to gain its independence. Therefore early Syrian policy towards the superpowers may be described as ''pragmatic/calculative nationalist neutralism''.[168] De Gaulle was not ready for giving independence to the Levant states and in order to restore French hegemony in the region he launched a military attack on Lebanon and Damascus in early 1945. In addition to British reaction, the US and the Soviet Union involved in the issue during the Potsdam

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[164] Fieldhouse, 275.

[165] Olmert, ''A False Dilemma,'' 47.

[166] Cleveland and Bunton, 229-230; Hopwood, 29.

[167] Rami Ginat, *Syria and the Doctrine of Arab Neutralism: From Independence to Dependence* (Brighton, Portland: Sussex Academic Press, 2005), 29-32.

[168] Ibid., 36-40.

Conference in July 1945. Syrian and Lebanese politicians were uneasy about both British and the French military existence in the Levant and brought the issue to the United Nations Security Council in February 1946. The Soviet Union and the US supported their national cause against Britain and France in the UN. Finally, British and French forces evacuated Syria in April 1946 and Lebanon in December 1946 and both states became fully independent.

CHAPTER 3

SYRIAN FOREIGN POLICY IN THE WAKE OF INDEPENDENCE: 1946-1949

When the last French troops evacuated Syria on 17 April 1946, Syria gained its independence for the first time throughout its history. In the wake of independence, the main political actors continued to be urban Sunni elites in Syrian politics. In this respect, the main focus of this chapter is to pursue historical continuity in these elites' policy making. In this chapter, Syrian foreign policy from independence in 1946 to 1949 military coup will be examined on domestic, regional and international environments. The opportunities and challenges with which Syrian decision-makers faced emanating from these three interacting and interlinked environments will be explored. First of all, domestic factors that affected Syrian foreign policy: factionalism among political elites, new opposition groups and weak-state formation will be explained. Secondly, regional determinants of Syrian foreign policy: inter-Arab struggle for Syria and the emergence of Israel will be analyzed. Lastly, international dimension of Syrian foreign policy: the core-periphery relations and the Cold War will be examined.

3.1. Domestic Determinants of Syrian Foreign Policy: Factionalism, New Opposition Groups and Weak-State Formation

3.1.1. Dominance of Urban-Sunni Families in Syrian Politics: Aleppine and Damascene Factions

First of all, inter-elite and inter-family factionalism among Syrian politicians was one of the most important domestic determinants of Syrian foreign policy in the wake of independence. With the end of the mandate, the old pattern of politics or the politics of notables no longer existed in the absence of supreme political authority and now the National Bloc had to take the lead and rule the country directly.[169] The National Bloc, composed of the first-generation nationalists or the second-generation of prominent families, automatically gave up their intermediary role and assumed the only political authority in Syria from 1946 to 1949.

Members of the urban Sunni families continued to rule Syria owing to their socio-economic power in the wake of independence; President Shukri al-Quwatli and Prime

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[169]Albert Hourani, ''A Note on Revolutions in the Arab World,'' in *The Emergence of the Modern Middle East* (London: St. Anthony's College, Oxford, 1994):72-73.

Minister Sadallah al-Jabiri continued to hold their posts since 1943. However, the Bloc, weak coalition of the second-generation of landowner families headed by President Shukri al-Quwatli and Prime Minister Sadallah al-Jabiri, showed poor administrative performance to rule the country and run the state affairs. They could not manage to solve the acute political, economic and social problems of the newly independent country and eventually lost their credibility in the eyes of Syrian people.[170] From April 1946 onwards, rapid deterioration of parliamentary and governmental procedures, nepotism, corruption, economic crisis and inflation as well as the Bloc's despotic measures against free press culminated in gradual political unrest in the country. When public demand for a new democratic electoral law emerged, the Jabiri government was severely attacked by opposition groups in the parliament because of its delaying tactics. Eventually the government fell when old Jabiri resigned on 23 December 1946. President Quwatli asked another veteran nationalist Jamil Mardam to form a government immediately and he succeeded.[171]

The escalation of the political unrest in the country resulted in the disunity and splintering of the National Bloc, suffering from internal strife and factionalism since its formation during the mandate period, into two camps through the old geographical lines of Damascus and Aleppo. The splintering of the National Bloc into two camps had deep impacts on Syrian foreign policy in following years as two rival camps had different foreign policy agendas. Before the July 1947 elections the ruling wing of the National Bloc transformed into the Damascus based National Party (*al-Hizb al-Watani*) led by Shukri al-Quwatli, Jamil Mardam, Faris al-Khuri, Lutfi al-Haffar and Sabri al-Asali. The National Party (NP) was far from being a modern political party; its most significant character was family connections and loyalties in Damascus rather than unified hierarchical party structure.[172] Owing to its leaders' connections with Saudi Arabia and Egypt, the NP pursued pro-Saudi-Egyptian camp foreign policy in the following years.

The dissident Aleppo wing of the Bloc against Quwatli faction, which was led by Rushdi al-Kikhia, Nazim al-Qudsi and Mustafa al-Barmada, formed People's Party (*Hizb al-Shab*) in August 1948. The party represented interests of the northern Syrian

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[170] Gordon Torrey, *Syrian Politics and the Military, 1945–1958* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University, 1964), 73-74.

[171] Ibid., 78-88.

[172] Hopwood, 31.

politicians who were traditional rivals of the Damascene politicians. The merchants and bankers, who were the backbone of the People's Party (PP), were traditionally close to Mosul and Baghdad rather than Damascus owing to their long-lasting commercial relations. Hence, they suffered from arbitrarily drawn borders between Iraq and Syria, and strongly supported union with Hashemite Iraq.[173] People's Party's foreign policy agenda was predominantly shaped by the Syrian-Iraqi union issue, which caused tension with the Damascene camp.

From 1946 to 1949, Syrian foreign policy orientation in inter-Arab politics was directly shaped by factions and their allegiances towards regional Arab states. The Damascene politicians, who were in power between 1946 and 1949, pursued close relations with Saudi Arabia because of the Quwatli faction's close regional association with this country (Quwatli family had long been commercial agents of Saudi family in Damascus) and a large amount of Saudi financial aid against the Hashemite aggressions.[174] The second dimension of foreign policy was Quwatli's pro-Egyptian policies as he believed that only Egypt, the largest Arab country and the strongest military power in the Middle East, could protect republican and democratic system of Syria under the Arab League umbrella against the Hashemite irredentism. On the other hand, it is important to note that the faction factor in Syrian foreign policymaking brought fluctuating foreign policy strategies in alliance formation and unity issue during following years. Therefore, although alliance or unionism became one of the crucial components of Syrian foreign policy, it was highly bound to political factions and their competing loyalties towards the neighboring Arab countries or their ''patrons''.

During their short term, traditional families or so-called the old-guards regarded politics as a means of achieving political and economic interests of their class rather than the people. Their incompetence in running the state affairs and ongoing local rivalry weakened their prestige among the already divided society with the family, the religious community, the tribe and the local bounds. As a result, ideologically nascent political

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[173] Andrew Rathmell, *Secret War in the Middle East: The Covert Struggle for Syria, 1949-61* (London: I.B. Tauris Publishers, 1995), 9.

[174] Sonoko Sunayama, *Syria and Saudi Arabia: Collaboration and Conflicts in the Oil Era* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007), 16-20.

parties of younger radical groups, representing new middle class[175] mobilization and rural unrest, came to the fore and began to challenge traditional dominance of the urban Sunni families.[176] Their growing impact on domestic politics due to their nationalist discourse forced traditional politicians to act radically in foreign policy issues, such as the Palestine Question.

3.1.2. Emergence of Radical Parties in Syria: the SSNP, the Youth Party and the Baath Party

In addition to the urban elites' failure to rule and their factionalism, economic structure of Syria was another important factor in the rise of radical parties. In the wake of its independence, Syrian economy was, by and large, a free market economy, where the state played a limited role confined to non-profit services and infrastructure. The Syrian economy depended on agriculture, in which big estates played a significant role, owing to the current political system that was dominated by the old-guards. In the industrial sector, the dominant force was free market rather than the state. Even though the state gained a significant role via nationalization of privileged French companies in infrastructure such as roads, highways, air and seaports etc., it did not possess any industrial organization for commercial purposes. Free market economy of Syria was dominated mainly by traditional Sunni Muslim and Orthodox Christian merchants.[177]

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[175] According to Elisabeth Longuenesse, the ''middle'' or ''intermediate class'' can be described as ''mass of non-productive salaried workers''. ''They are employees of the administrative or commercial services of the industrial or agricultural sector as well as banks, commerce, state administration, and teaching etc. The social position of the middle strata, which is selling labor power and not owing means of production, drives them towards the working class and their ideological stance connects them with the petty bourgeoisie strata which contain self-employed and independent artisans, shopkeepers as well as salaried employees, who are neither working class nor capitalist bourgeoisie''. Longuenesse makes a clear distinction between the middle class and the petty bourgeoisie groups, ''while the petty bourgeoisie is direct descendant of the pre-capitalist petty bourgeoisie, the middle strata is a product of capitalist development, extension of the market, the multiplication of banks, the development of schooling, and the intensified involvement of the government in social and economic life.'' Among the radical parties, especially the Baath Party is generally described as a petty bourgeoisie nationalist party, whose social origins stem from the intermediate strata of the cities and partially in poor peasantry. Therefore, according to Longuenesse, the term petty bourgeoisie should be used in a broad sense, in which the middle strata were included to the petty bourgeoisie class. Elisabeth Longuenesse, ''The Class Nature of the State in Syria: Contribution to An Analysis,'' *MERIP Reports*, No.77 (1979): 3-4.

[176] Itamar Rabinovich, *Syria under the Ba'th 1963-66: Army-Party Symbiosis* (Jerusalem: Israel University Press, 1972), 2-5.

[177] Syed Aziz-al Ahsan, ''Economic Policy and Class Structure in Syria: 1958-1980,'' *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, No. 3 (1984): 301-302; also see Owen and Pamuk, 203-204.

In the wake of independence, the Syrian agricultural sector was feudalistic in nature owing to high level of inequality in land distribution. About 82 percent of the rural population did not own land and worked as sharecroppers or small peasant owners who possessed individual lands less than 10 hectares. As a result of the dominance of the large land-owning class or the old-guards in the land tenure system since the Ottoman Empire onwards, inequality in distribution of lands, unequal distribution of wealth, and poor living standards of rural population living in the countryside, a new ideology emerged, which aimed to remove big land-ownership, destroy monopolistic power of the merchant and business families in economy via nationalizations and give state a dominant role in commanding the economy by implementing economic planning.[178] It is obvious that these mottos of the new economic ideology aimed to undermine the dominance of the old-guards in economic and socio-political life of the country. These economic policies were represented by radical rising middle-class parties, which were alternative opposition groups to the National Bloc.

The first radical party that emerged as a strong political power center in the post-independent Syria was the SSNP, founded by Greek Orthodox Antun Saadeh in Beirut in 1932. The SSNP ideology basically based on three pillars: radical and secular reform of society, a fascist-style ideology and Greater Syria.[179] The most significant aspect of the party was its dedication to attain the goal of creating Greater Syria including Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, Sinai Peninsula, Jordan, Palestine and Cyprus.[180] Antun Saadeh's pan-Syrian nationalism did not depend on race, language and religion but on territorial nationhood of Syrian people going back to the ancient times.[181] In this regard, Saadeh rejected any form of pan-Arabism or pan-Islamism, and his party's secular outlook became attractive to ethnic and sectarian minorities of Syria.[182] The SSNP was the first party that infiltrated the army by recruiting military officers from the Homs Military Academy.[183]

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[178] Ziad Keilany, ''Socialism and Economic Change in Syria,'' *Middle Eastern Studies*, No. 1 (1973): 63.

[179] Pipes, 101.

[180] Malik Mufti, *Sovereign Creations: Pan-Arabism and Political Order in Syria and Iraq* (New York: Cornell University Press: 1996), 48.

[181] Roberts, 11-12.

[182] Mufti, 48.

[183] Kaylani, ''The Rise of the Syrian Ba'th, 1940-1958,'' 8; Pipes, 102.

The second party was the Youth Party of Akram al-Hawrani, which was established in 1939. Hawrani was a young political activist and ardent opponent of the traditional land-owning families of Hama. Imbued with socialist ideas, he gained a strong support base among youth and peasantry against landed feudalism in Hama, which made him an unquestionable political leader. Hawrani transformed his Youth Party into Arab Socialist Party in 1950 and extended his influence over the young cadets of the Homs Military Academy, who mostly came from lower middle class families. Hawrani's impact on the army officers made him a strong political figure during the post-independence period since he was a close associate of the first three military leaders of Syria. Later, in 1953 Hawrani's Arab Socialist Party unified with the Baath Party and amalgamated into the Arab Baath Socialist Party (the Baath Party), which became the most dynamic leftist political movement in Syrian politics against the old-guards in the post independence period.[184]

Above all, the Baath Party, founded by Greek Orthodox Michel Aflaq and Sunni Muslim Salah al-Din Bitar in 1943,[185] had profound impacts on Syrian politics. Inspired by Marxism during their university years in Paris, Aflaq and Bitar formulated the Baath ideology by combining some aspects of Arab nationalism and socialism. The Baath ideology basically was designed as the trinity of ''unity, freedom and socialism''.[186] According to Aflaq and Bitar there is only one single Arab nation ''with an eternal mission'' that must be unified into one state, which will bring freedom, socialism and democracy to the whole Arab nation and rescue it from all kinds of foreign domination, social injustice, class exploitation and feudalism.[187] To achieve their goals of Arab unification and then freedom from internal feudalism and external imperialism, the Baath ideologues adopted social and spiritual revolutionary activism or *Inqilâb*.[188]

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[184] Hopwood, 82-83; Roberts, 35-36.

[185] The core members of the Baath Party were Dr. Munif al-Razzaz, Dr. Madhat Bitar, Dr. Ali Jabir, Dr. Abdullah Abdul Daim, Dr. Wahib Ghanim, Dr. Jamal al-Atasi, Dr. Musa Rizik, Badi al-Kasm, Sami al-Droubi and Abdul Birr Iyun al-Sud. See Kamel S. Abu Jaber, *The Arab Ba'th Socialist Party: History, Ideology, and Organization* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1966), 23.

[186] For detailed information about the Baathist ideology, see John F. Devlin, *The Ba'th Party: A History from its origins to 1966* (Standford, California: Hoover Institution Press, 1976), 23-45 and Jaber, 97-109.

[187] Kaylani, ''The Rise of the Syrian Ba'th, 1940-1958,'' 5-6.''

[188] Khadduri, 153-157.

The Baath held its founding congress on 4 April 1947 which was attended by 247 people and became a formal political party under the leadership of Secretary-General Michel Aflaq.[189] During its first congress, the Baath became the first political party which promulgated neutralism or nonalignment as the principle of foreign policy in the Arab world. Aflaq stressed Baath's foreign policy vision as follows, ''aligning with either Soviet Union or Anglo-American bloc will do nothing but harm to the Arabs.'' In addition to its neutralist foreign policy, anti-Western attitude of the party was clear due to the ongoing British and French domination in the Middle East and North Africa.[190]

When we look at the Baath's social power basis during the early phases of independence, we see that its secular pan-Arab ideology and socialism mostly appealed to urban lower middle-class families and younger university and high school students as well as the compact minorities living in the countryside (especially the Alawis[191]) where party branches spread quickly rather than city centers dominated by Sunni land-owning classes.[192] The Baath Party was not confined to Syrian borders and new branches of the party (or Regional Commands) were opened in Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq between 1948 and 1951 and many recruits were taken from all around the Arab world.[193] Also, Baath Party's commitment to pan-Arab nationalism made it the chief adversary of Antun Saadeh's SSNP in the following years.[194]

In addition to these three parties, the Communist Party of Khalid Bakdash and the Muslim Brotherhood began to strengthen and challenge the domination of the traditional

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[189] Devlin, *The Ba'th Party*, 15.

[190] Jaber, 26-27. For a detailed analysis of neutralist thought in Baathist ideology, see Ginat, 45-49. According to Ginat, during its formative years between 1940s and 1950s, the Baath party adopted ''ideological/doctrinaire neutralism'' with the impact of theoretical foundations of Nehru, but in 1950s with the impact of Nasser, it pragmatically changed its neutralist stance as ''positive neutralism'' to benefit from superpower rivalry.

[191] In addition to Aflaq and Bitar, Zaki al-Arsouzi, an Alawi born in Alexandretta in 1900, was one of the significant actors in the genesis of proto-Baath ideology. Arsouzi not only contributed to the development of nationalistic and mystical elements in Baath ideology but also his early comrades later attended Baath Party and bridged between the Alawis and the party. See Devlin, *The Ba'th Party*, 1-10; Rabinovich, *Syria under the Ba'th*, 6.

[192] Van Dam, 15-18.

[193] John F. Devlin, ''The Baath Party: Rise and Metamorphosis,'' *The American Historical Review*, No. 5 (1991): 1399.

[194] Mufti, 49.

old-guards in domestic politics. In short, the weakness and illegitimacy of the old-guards and pan-Arab nationalist mobilization of the middle class and the masses against them ushered in the era of political instability through military coups and the rise of radical parties.[195]

3.1.3. Syria's Weak State Formation and Its Impact on Foreign Policy

In the wake of its independence, Syria was the most unfortunate independent Arab state suffering from the legacy of the core-periphery relations and French colonialist legacy both in domestic politics and foreign policy. Similar to other Arab states, Syria emerged as a territorial state rather than as a nation state, which depended on distinction between the state itself and its neighbors or between ''us'' and ''them'' . Syria was a territorial state not a nation-state meaning that it was a part of an ''imagined community'' of the wider Arab nation since its inhabitants, similar to that of the Arab states, considered themselves as members of the same nation linguistically, culturally or historically, or in terms of common destiny.[196]

In the post-independence period, Syrian state was obviously a weak and fragmented political entity due to its externally and artificially drawn borders, lack of state apparatus to absorb expanding political mobilization, lack of national resources, absence of monarchical power, low level of national awareness, lack of upper identity over heterogeneous population, the rise of peripheral forces of various tribes and ethnic groups, factionalism between the old-guards of Aleppo and Damascus, economic and social backwardness, and governmental inability of the Damascene old-guards.[197] All of these factors made Syria a classical penetrated state and a ''prize'' in inter-Arab struggle between the Hashemite camp and the Saudi-Egyptian bloc for regional hegemony as mentioned above. Thus, it is obvious that Syrian lack of state-building, which was direct result of the core-periphery relations, became an important domestic determinant of Syrian foreign policy between 1946 and 1963 since the level of state formation makes a

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[195] Hinnebusch, *The International Politics of the Middle East*, 21.

[196] For a good anaylsis of the nature of state in the Arab world and specifically in Syria, see Ebelhard Kienle, *Ba'th v. Ba'th: The Conflict Between Syria and Iraq 1968-1989* (London: I.B Tauris, 1990), 17-24.

[197] Michael Eppel, ''Syrian-Iraqi Relations during the 1948 Palestine War,'' *Middle Eastern Studies*, No. 3 (1996): 75.

state victim of systemic regional and international environments or an effective actor in these environments as Hinnebusch puts it.[198]

Within this context, Syria had a special position in the Middle East owing to its artificially created entity out of *Bilad al-Sham* territories and pan-Arab sentiment of its population, which brought external penetration in Syrian politics in the form of supra-state ideologies of Iraqi pan-Arab and Jordanian pan-Syrian nationalism or the Saudi-Egyptian intervention. The external influence easily penetrated into domestic politics of Syria since political factions shifted their political allegiance to external actors whom they perceived to be representatives of their cause owing to their special historical ties with them. Domestic demands of rival factions and struggle for Syria among the regional states overlapped. In this respect, domestic factions pragmatically sought external support, or more appropriately ''patron'', for their self-defense and interests in domestic politics which enabled neighbor Arab states to influence Syria's domestic affairs through their clients by mobilizing resources for them. Owing to the shift in political allegiances of domestic factions towards external states, home and foreign affairs considerably blurred, which was a clear indication of the lack of notion of stateness in Syria.[199]

3.2. Regional Environment of Syrian Foreign Policy: Inter-Arab Struggle for Syria and the Emergence of Israel

3.2.1. Inter-Arab Struggle for Syria: The Hashemites versus the Saudi-Egyptian Camp

According to Patrick Seale, post-independence Syria can best be described as ''a political football, kicked back and forth between rival Arab and international players''.[200] Secondly, from 1946 to 1949, the first significant foreign policy challenge that the ruling Damascene old-guards had to confront at the regional level were irredentist unity schemes of Iraqi Fertile Crescent and Jordanian Greater Syria plans, which were counterbalanced by Egypt and Saudi Arabia in the form of backing of Syrian sovereignty

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[198] For detailed information about aspects and phases of state formation see, Hinnebusch, *The International Politics of the Middle East*, 74-85.

[199] Kienle, *Ba'th v. Ba'th*, 25-27.

[200] Patrick Seale, ''Syria,'' in *The Cold War in the Middle East*, ed. Yezid Sayigh and Avi Shlaim (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997): 51.

and the republican regime through offering bribe money and defensive alignment against the Hashemite encroachments on Syria. [201]

King Abdullah of Jordan maintained his expansionist ambitions over Syria after gaining his independence in March 1946. Greater Syria plan became one of the cornerstones of the independent Jordanian foreign policy until his assassination in July 1951. In November 1946, Abdullah announced Greater Syria as the formal principle of his foreign policy and explained that ''there is neither great nor little Syria; there is only a single country bounded to the west by the sea, to the north by Turkey, to the east by Iraq and to the south by the Hejaz-which constitutes Syria.''[202] Abdullah's claim over Syria was opposed automatically by the Egypt-led Arab League which passed a resolution in the same month and declared Abdullah's ambitions incompatibility with its pact. Furthermore, Ibn Sa'ud threatened Jordan to reclaim his territorial demands for Aqaba and Ma'an if Abdullah did not stop his ambitions over Syria.[203] On the other hand, Abdullah showed his persistence in the Greater Syria plan and declared that ''I shall never cease my efforts to achieve the unity of Syria.''[204] Furthermore, he denounced the Arab League as ''everyone knows that the Arab League was no more than a game organized by Nahhas Pasha for his own ends.''[205] By relying on his strong and organized Arab Legion Army, Abdullah did not give up his pan-Syrian dream and made his final effort by calling a conference in Amman in August 1947 to discuss his unity plan with ''regional governments of Syria''. Abdullah's invitation was rebuffed by Damascus and the Quwatli regime condemned this invitation as an imperialist plot aiming to destroy democratic and republican regime of Syria.[206]

Although the old-guards were Arab nationalists and they perceived their country within the broader Arab nation, the ruling Damascene faction continued its ''Syria-first policy'' reflected in the official statements of Quwatli and al-Azm against King

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[201] Sunayama, 14-15.

[202] Pipes, 76.

[203] Rathmell, 23.

[204] Pipes, 77.

[205] Seale, *The Struggle for Syria*, 13.

[206] Pipes, 77.

Abdullah's territorial aggression.[207] For this reason, the ruling Damascus faction, led by Quwatli and his entourage, opposed the Hashemite unity plans, pragmatically jumped on the anti-Hashemite coalition of the Saudi-Egyptian camp in order to protect their domestic interests against pro-unionist opposition and their country's sovereignty. The Quwatli faction of the old-guards allied with the Saudi-Egyptian camp and maintained a ''Syria-first'' policy by depending on the ''external patrons'' in line with the behavioral pattern of the ''politics of notables'' since the mandate period onwards. They were aware that a possible Iraqi-Syrian or Jordanian-Syrian unity would terminate their political power in the country.

3.2.2. The Birth of Israel and the First Arab-Israeli War of 1948: Repercussions of the Palestine Catastrophe in Syria

The second challenging regional determinant of Syrian foreign policy was the Palestine Question and the emergence of Israel. The creation of the state of Israel following the Second World War in the heartland of the Greater Syrian territories had profound impact on the newly independent Middle East states.[208] The process started with the Balfour Declaration (1917) and through various waves of immigration and the White Papers issued by the British government, culminated in the creation of Israel in 1948. This development was perceived as the ultimate betrayal to the Arab cause by the Western states and dominated political agenda of the Arab states for a long time. The Palestine Question played an important role in inter-Arab politics as it was perceived by the Hashemites and the Saudi-Egyptian bloc as an efficient tool to use in their ''struggle for Syria'' and to reinforce their influence in the Middle East.[209]

The Palestine Question was brought to the United Nations in February 1947 in order to find a final solution to the Palestine Problem, the General Assembly of the United Nations established the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP) and sent it to Palestine in June 1947 to investigate the situation in the country. After completing its job, UNSCOP prepared the partition plan proposing the

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[207] For a good analysis of the Syrian official discourse on collective identity of Syrian people, see Ebelhard Kienle, ''Arab Unity Schemes Revisited: Interest, Identity, and Policy in Syria and Egypt,'' *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, No. 1 (1995): 58-61.

[208] Hinnebusch, ''The Foreign Policy of Syria,''142.

[209] Eppel, ''Syrian-Iraqi Relations during the 1948 Palestine War,'' 74.

establishment of one Arab and one Jewish state in Palestine in addition to internationalized zone of Jerusalem.[210]

When the news of the approval of the UN Partition Plan reached Syria in 1947, vigorous anti-Western and anti-Zionist riots occurred in Damascus and Aleppo; angry mobs destroyed the US and Belgian Legation as well as Soviet cultural office in Damascus and destroyed Jewish homes in Aleppo. Mardam government was closely following the course of the Palestine Question; the parliament raised taxes and passed the law of compulsory military service to prepare the country for the war in Palestine.[211]

Without waiting for the result of the UN vote on the partition plan, Britain had declared in September that Palestine mandate would be terminated on 15 May 1948. After the approval of the plan in the General Assembly, British refusal for the assistance in the implementation of the plan and its lack of effort to maintain order in Palestine resulted in the outbreak of brutal inter-communal war between the Arabs and the Jews living in Palestine.[212] Many Arab volunteers penetrated into Palestinian territories in late 1947 to fight against the Zionist forces. The Arab League members and the Syrian government immediately got involved in the issue and smuggled arms to the Palestinian Arabs.[213] Damascus also became the headquarters of the Arab League's military committee to train irregular Arab forces and prevent the creation of Jewish state in Palestine. In early 1948, Syrian irregular armed groups, called as the Liberation Army under Syrian Fawzi al-Qawuqji, including Colonel Adib al-Shishakli, Akram al-Hawrani, Adnan al-Malki, Husni al-Zaim and Sami al-Hinnawi attacked Jewish settlements in northern and central Palestine.[214] The Syrian Prime Minister Mardam declared vigorously that ''the world will see the Arabs rise as one man. The people's army will soon be able to teach the treacherous Jews an unforgettable lesson.''[215] In February 1948, the Arab

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[210] Mark Tessler, *A History of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana Universtiy Press, 1994), 258-261; Arı, 218-223.

[211] Torrey, 103-104.

[212] Tessler, 261-262; Goldschmidt and Davison, 289.

[213] Ghada Hashem Telhami, *Syria and the Palestinians: The Clash of Nationalisms* (Florida: University Press of Florida, 2001), 26.

[214] Ibid., 27.

[215] Torrey, 104.

League concluded a military agreement for the unification of Arab policy and action for Palestine and Syria signed the Arab League's military agreement in the same month. Moreover, the Arab League states met in Damascus on 11 May 1948 for implementing quick plans for saving Palestine from the Jews, but they were too late.[216]

When the last British forces evacuated Palestine on 14 May 1948, the Jewish Agency Executive Committee under David Ben-Gurion proclaimed the independent state of Israel in Jewish-controlled lands of Palestine, which was granted recognition by the United States and the Soviet Union immediately. On 15 May 1948, the Arab League states of Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq declared a war on Israel and entered Palestine. The war was fought in three phases till December 1948; early quick Arab victory expectations and arrogant rhetoric of the Arab leaders came to naught and nascent state of Israel decisively defeated all Arab states and extended its territories further than the UN Partition Plan allowed. Among the Arab states, only Jordan controlled the West Bank and old city of Jerusalem at the expense of Palestinians, and Egypt seized the Gaza Strip. In early 1949, Israel and the Arab states started indirect armistice negotiations on the Rhodes Island to reach an agreement.[217]

When we look at the Syrian leaders' drive for the war in Palestine, it is obvious that they strongly believed that Palestine was a part of the Syrian homeland, Southern Syria.[218] Furthermore, domestic pressures of middle class radical parties and the old-guards' urgent need for strengthening their already weakened domestic legitimacy forced them to ''omni-balance'' domestic threats through adopting a unified anti-Zionist rhetoric in front of their societies. Their search for legitimacy was further complicated by inter-Arab politics as President Quwatli adhered to pan-Arab and anti-Zionist rhetoric of the Arab League to defend his country against Jordanian aggressions.[219] Thus, Syria became an ardent supporter of anti-Zionist measures of the Arab League to gain Egypt and Saudi backing in inter-Arab politics. Within this context, starting from the late 1947, Syria involved militarily in Palestine to check Jordanian expansionism in ''Southern Syria'' and Abdullah's possible seizure of the Liberation Army to topple the weak Syrian regime

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[216] Ibid., 105.

[217] Tessler, 263-264; Cleveland and Bunton, 267-270.

[218] Rathmell, 14.

[219] Eppel, ''Syrian-Iraqi Relations during the 1948 Palestine War,'' 76.

for his Greater Syria dream. These fears of Syrian ruling elite about Abdullah's ambitious plans over Syria escalated after the 1948 War when Abdullah annexed the West Bank into his kingdom and conducted secret negotiations for a peace agreement with Israel to institutionalize annexation of the West Bank into Jordan.[220] Hence, it can be said that domestic and regional factors affected old-guards' foreign policymaking in the first Arab-Israeli War, in which domestic concerns undeniable. On the one hand, the Palestine disaster and creation of Israel in historical Syria became the most determining factor of Syrian politicians' legitimacy in domestic politics in following decades. On the other, the creation of Israel added security dimension to Syrian foreign policy.[221]

The Syrian sense of isolation and insecurity against Jordan, Israel and Turkey (due to the Alexandretta issue) coupled with Egypt's isolation from the Middle East in the wake of the war and constant Syrian domestic factionalism and weakness of the central government. All of these factors gave rise to the unity trend with Iraq in Syrian politics and accelerated the rise of pro-Iraqi People's Party. This domestic environment forced Quwatli and some leading figures of the National Party to change their foreign policy and they began to pursue a limited rapprochement policy towards Iraq to balance domestic opposition and eliminate the sense of insecurity against external threats. They also sought to conclude a defense treaty with Britain against Israeli menace.[222]

Ironically, although Syrian ruling elite entered the war so as to bolster their domestic prestige and legitimacy, defeat of Syrian armies by Israeli state made opposite effect and further delegitimized the Damascene old-guards in the eyes of the Syrian population as well as the young army officers. When the hope of quick victory waned in Palestine, President Quwatli and Prime Minister Mardam were rebuked by the opposition parties as well as the newly strengthening nationalist middle-class radical parties due to their corruption, negligence and profiteering during their war preparations against Israel.[223]

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[220] Ibid., 76-78.

[221] Rathmell, 14.

[222] Eppel, ''Syrian-Iraqi Relations during the 1948 Palestine War,'' 78-81.

[223] Moshe Ma'oz, *Syria and Israel from War to Peacemaking* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 16-18.

The Baathist leaders Aflaq and Bitar, who had gone to front and actively participated in the war, severely criticized the Mardam government after returning to Damascus and distributed tracts denouncing the failure of the government in Palestine and demanding the holding of free elections. As a result, Aflaq was arrested in September 1948, which gave rise to political quarrels. Growing parliamentary and governmental crisis was accompanied by popular demonstrations and strikes all around the country because of the Palestine fiasco and economic slump. The Baath Party and Muslim Brotherhood organized student strikes in Damascus, which later spread to main towns and cities. The government could not cope with the domestic disorder and finally Mardam resigned on 1 December 1948 to prevent anarchy.[224] After a short political interregnum, Khalid al-Azm, a millionaire financier with a Western-education, established his government on 16 December 1948 and became one of the most influential figures in Syrian politics in the following years.

3.3. International Environment of Syrian Foreign Policy: The Core-Periphery Relations and the Emergence of the Cold War

Thirdly, economic and military dependence of the old-guards on core states, created by long-lasting core-periphery relations, affected Syrian foreign policy at the international environment. Similar to inter-Arab affairs, Syrian politicians maintained their behavioral pattern of pragmatic foreign policymaking in international environment and collaborated with external patrons to achieve their domestic interests. In the post-independence period, Syria as a peripheral state, similar to other Middle Eastern states, continued to be subordinated within a global hierarchy and depended on the core powers. The core states implemented and left behind the client elites in periphery during mandate period who shared certain economic interests with the developed core. [225] Consequently, the client elites (or the old-guards in Syrian case) and their weak states became dependent for their security and economic needs on the Western powers in the post-independence period, which directly put foreign policies of the periphery states in line with the West.[226]

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[224] Torrey, 108-110; Devlin, *The Ba'th Party*, 51.

[225] Hinnebusch, ''Introduction: Analytical Framework,'' 4; Hinnebusch, *The International Politics of the Middle East*, 3.

[226] Hinnebusch, ''Introduction: Analytical Framework,'' 2-3.

To illustrate, France continued to be the main arm supplier of the Syrian army during the short term of the old-guards.[227]

When al-Azm came to power, Syria was completely paralyzed in economic, political and social domains. During the early phase of his government, al-Azm's relations with the Western powers further aggravated the political tension in the country. Al-Azm was actually an exception in his approach to foreign policy. While the old-guards were mainly disinterest in the Cold War, al-Azm pursued close relations with the Western states. In February 1949, Khalid al-Azm concluded an agreement over monetary convention with France to tie Syrian pound to the franc. In the same month, he signed a treaty with America for opening the Syrian territories to American trans-Arabian Pipeline Company (Tapline) to construct a pipeline for Saudi oil passing through the territories of Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Syria. His radical departure in foreign policy came with his declaration in a press conference. Al-Azm said ''it is clear that our times no longer permit states to live isolated from the rest of the world. It is no less certain that the world is actually divided into two blocs. It is our national aim to join one of these two blocs.''[228]

Al-Azm's dependence on the core powers in monetary agreement and the Tapline issue as well as his intention to attend the Western bloc were severely criticized by the People's Party, the Baath, the Muslim Brotherhood as the revival of French imperialism as well as American one in Syria and popular demonstrations organized by the opposition groups broke out all around the country as a reaction to al-Azm's radical foreign policy drift. In March 1949, being aware of the strength of Israel, al-Azm government also declared its willingness to sign an armistice agreement with Israel and sent representatives to Rhodes, which the Syrian public called as ''the island of shame'', to conclude the agreement.[229] Then, Prime Minister al-Azm confessed that, ''Syria by herself and even with her sisters, will be unable to rescue Palestine. Moreover, Syria will even be unable to defend her own lands if the Zionist forces should attack her.''[230] Even though, Syria's dependence on the core powers continued and al-Azm wanted to attend the Western bloc, the old-guards were disinterested in the ideological and political

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[227] Rathmell, 19.

[228] Torrey, 113.

[229] Ibid., 113-114.

[230] Ma'oz, *Syria and Israel*, 24.

antagonisms of the Cold War and did not take the side of neither the Soviet Union nor the US. Therefore, the old-guards policy towards the Cold War between 1946 and 1949 can be described as ''passive neutralism''.[231]

In addition to the Palestine fiasco, the old-guards' concessions and dependence on the core Western powers further delegitimized them in the eyes of the Syrian society and escalated political unrest in the country. The immediate result of the failure of the ruling politicians and popular disillusionment with them was the rise of radical parties working through youthful nationalistic army officers (especially Hawrani) at the expense of the old-guards. Before the parliament ratification of monetary agreement with France and the Tapline agreement, the old-guards were ousted by the coup d'état of Chief of Staff Husni al-Zaim on 30 March 1949,[232] which opened the age of military coups not only in Syria but also in the Middle East.

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[231] Ginat, 40-41.

[232] Hinnebusch, ''The Foreign Policy of Syria,''145.

CHAPTER 4

SYRIAN FOREIGN POLICY DURING THE MILITARY DICTATORSHIP: 1949-1954

4.1. Domestic Environment of Syrian Foreign Policy: Political Instability and Struggle for Power among the Rival Factions

4.1.1. The First Coup d'état by Husni al-Zaim: Opening the Age of Military Interventions in Syrian Politics

After the Palestine catastrophe, the growing disorder in the country was coupled with charges and countercharges between politicians and the army due to humiliating defeat in the Palestine battlefield. Having lost their belief in politicians, young army officers saw incompetent and corrupt politicians as the chief responsible for the fiasco in the battlefield and began to assume themselves as the guardians of the state and the agents of social reform.[233] On 30 March 1949, the Chief of Staff Husni al-Zaim staged his bloodless coup d'état and ended the three year rule of the Damscene old-guards and on the same day, the army arrested President Quwatli, Prime Minister al-Azm, and a number of ministers and deputies.[234]

Husni al-Zaim was born into a business family of Kurdish origin in Aleppo in 1894. He had started his career in the Ottoman army and later joined the *Troupes Spéciales* during the French mandate. Being the Syrian army Chief of Staff, he was one of the honorable heroes in the Palestine War of 1948. It was obvious that the driving force behind the Zaim's successful coup was radical pressure groups and politicized younger nationalist army officers who were under the influence of radical activist Akram al-Hawrani. Although Hawrani did not himself mastermind the coup, his two close supporters in the army, Bahij al-Kallas and Adib al-Shishakli were close associates of Zaim in the move. Soon after the military takeover, Hawrani enthusiastically joined in the new regime and later he was appointed as legal adviser in the Ministry of Defense.[235]

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[233] Majid Khadduri, ''The Role of Military in Middle East Politics,'' *The American Political Science Review*, No. 2 (1953): 518-520.

[234] Torrey, 121-122.

[235] Seale, *The Struggle for Syria*, 44-45; Telhami, 38.

The Baath Party endorsed the new rule of Zaim and Aflaq praised the coup as the opening of a ''new age'' and immediately demanded ''holding free elections''. [236] In addition to radical parties of the SSNP and the Baath, interestingly traditional parties also declared their support for the new regime. Although the People's Party was hesitant to espouse Zaim's coup at the beginning, later the party openly sided with the new regime. Even Sabri al-Asali, one of the leading figures of the NP, stated that the party had decided to collaborate with Zaim.[237] This attitude of traditional politicians was an indication of their flexible policies towards the new power center in domestic politics.

Zaim's coup had nothing to do with ideology or class struggle, it was just a plan which aimed to clean the political scene from corruption of the old-guards and strengthen the Syrian state. However, the first coup had far-reaching impacts on the future developments in Syrian politics. To illustrate, the coup facilitated the newly leftist forces to realize the army as a political instrument. Besides, it was a deadly blow to the constitutional legitimacy of the old-guards and finally proved their weakness and disorganization. Hence, the first coup made a counter impact and contributed to further political instability rather than reform and reconstruction in Syria. After the coup, the monopoly of the old-guards over political participation was broken and Syrian lower classes began to participate in politics.[238]

In the wake of the coup, Zaim dissolved the parliament on 3 April 1949 and he announced the formation of a new cabinet consisted of independents with himself as prime minister, minister of interior and defense minister. Zaim immediately monopolized political authority in his hands and became the first military dictator in Syria and embodied a model for future military dictators.[239]

Zaim's main desire was to become the president of Syria to fully represent Syria among other sovereign leaders. His successful reform attempts increased his temperament for presidency and he declared the abolishment of the all political parties including the Baath Party in May 1949 till the June constitutional plebiscite. Furthermore, he suppressed fifty nine newspapers, and also students and civil officials were prohibited

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[236] Devlin, *The Ba'th Party*, 53.

[237] Torrey, 126-127.

[238] Kaylani, ''The Rise of the Syrian Ba'th, 1940-1958,'' 11-12.

[239] Seale, *The Struggle for Syria*, 58.

from having political activities.[240] On 25 June 1949, the constitutional plebiscite in conjunction with presidential election was held and Zaim, the only candidate for presidency, won overwhelming majority. On the other hand, his zeal for leadership and repressive measures alienated many of his early supporters from the new regime.

Soon after the coup, the new regime's foreign policy orientation became the most important concern of the Arab states. Once again, Syria was plunged into inter-Arab conflict and regional Arab states turned their attentions to Zaim to influence the new regime in favor of their ambitions. Zaim had different alliances in his mind when he came to power. At the beginning of his rule, Zaim's adopted a dual game strategy and pursued close relations with the Hashemites, especially with Iraq, rather than the Saudi-Egyptian camp to play them off against each other and benefit from their rivalries. In this respect, Zaim's first foreign policy orientation reflected growing pro-Iraqi trend in Syria and a radical change from the previous regime. There were several reasons behind this change of strategy in Syrian foreign policy: Egypt's humiliating defeat in the Palestine War by Israel, Zaim's aim to neutralize his domestic opponents and strengthen his political position by gaining support from the People's Party as well as radical pan-Arab groups, and finally ongoing armistice negotiations with Israel. To cope with domestic and external challenges, Zaim wanted to cultivate alliances to counterbalance all of these pressures.[241] Thus, Zaim raised the issue of unionism with Iraq to cope with his both domestic and external enemies, especially to counterbalance Israeli threat against Syrian security.[242] Being the only victorious Arab in the Arab-Israeli War and the new king of the West Bank, Abdullah was excited about the news of the coup and called for Zaim, who had been in touch with him earlier, for an immediate union between Jordan and Syria.[243]

However, Zaim wanted unity with Iraq not Jordan; two days after the coup, Zaim's foreign minister Amir Adil Arslan informed Iraqi ambassador that ''there is a desire among educated opinion in Syria for the unification of Syria and Iraq-without

[240] Torrey, 130-131.

[241] Telhami, 38.

[242] Dawn Ernst Dawn, ''The Syrian Foreign Policy,'' in *Diplomacy in the Middle East: The International Relations of Regional and Outside Powers*, ed. L. Carl Brown (London: I.B Tauris, 2001), 166.

[243] Pipes, 80.

Transjordan- on the basis of internal autonomy for each region.'' Zaim succeeded in his first aim and this unionist move was welcomed by the People's Party and the Baathists. On the other hand, Zaim's first unionist political maneuver cautiously was welcomed by Iraq which declared her acceptance in principle but stressed the importance of carrying out unionism in a legal constitutional channel. Iraq's declaration was a reflection of Iraqi distrust of Zaim's objectives.[244]

In spite of the fact that Zaim was pretending to be pro-unionist with Iraq; he was secretly negotiating with the Saudi-Egyptian camp owing to his dual game strategy. He became successful in his game and the Saudi-Egyptian camp fearing from Iraqi influence over Syria immediately offered Zaim diplomatic recognition and financial aid, providing that Zaim would continue the republican regime of Syria.[245] In the wake of Zaim's visit to Cairo on 21 April 1949, Syria returned back to her traditional allies, Egypt and Saudi Arabia in inter-Arab politics. It is obvious that Zaim inherited behavioral pattern of pragmatic policymaking which embedded in Syrian political culture. Zaim skillfully manipulated inter-Arab struggle for Syria and finally sided with the Saudi-Egyptian camp to maintain his domestic interests.

Having consolidated his relations with the Saudi-Egyptian bloc, Zaim adopted hostile attitudes towards the Hashemites as there was no need to this camp anymore.[246] He criticized publicly Hashemite Iraq and Jordan as follows:

> My journey to Cairo was an unpleasant surprise to Jordan. The Lords of Baghdad and Amman believed that I was about the offer them the crown of Syria on a silver platter, but they were disappointed. The Syrian Republic wants neither Greater Syria nor the Fertile Crescent… All persons entering into contact with the Government of Jordan or travelling to that country will be sentenced to death… As for Jordan, which is and remains a Syrian province, she will sooner or

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[244] Seale, *The Struggle for Syria*, 49.

[245] Simon, ''The Hashemite Conspiracy,'' 318-319.

[246] Pipes, 59.

later rejoin the mother country and become the 10th province of the Syrian republic.[247]

Zaim's abandonment of pan-Arabism and unionism with Iraq coincided with aforementioned authoritarian measures before the plebiscite resulted in the loss all of Zaim's earlier supporters: the PP and the Baath Party. Faydi al-Atasi, a PP member of his cabinet, resigned on 19 April 1949 owing to Zaim's anti-Iraqi stance and his pragmatist game. The Baath Party also was disgruntled at Zaim's repressive measures and published a memorandum on 24 May to warn Zaim against the mistakes of previous regimes by taking sides in inter-Arab disputes and requested the discussion of the constitutional questions and workers' rights. As a reaction, Zaim arrested Michel Aflaq as well as PP leaders, Rushdi al-Kikhia, Nazim al-Qudsi and Faydi al-Atasi.[248]

Zaim's tyrannical measures accompanied with his pragmatic foreign policy initiatives and antagonized not only his former allies including Hawrani and the Baath Party but also various sections of the Syrian people. It was rumored that Zaim was backed by the Western powers and he was a mere tool of them.[249] Four and a half months rule of Husni al-Zaim came to end short after his betrayal to Antun Saadeh. The Saadeh affair[250] was the fatal blow to Zaim and Colonel Sami al-Hinnawi by gaining the support of Zaim's former allies toppled him on 14 August 1949, which was the second intervention of the army in Syrian politics in 1949.

4.1.2. Sami al-Hinnawi's Counter Coup: A Short Rule of the Pro-Iraqi Faction

Colonel Sami al-Hinnawi was born in Aleppo in 1898 and had his early carrier in the Ottoman army and later attended *Troupes Spéciales* like Zaim. Hinnawi, the commander of the First Brigadier, executed a coup on 14 August 1949 and successfully

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[247] Seale, *The Struggle for Syria*, 56-57.

[248] Ibid., 59 .

[249] Torrey, 138.

[250] In May 1949, Antun Saadeh, the leader of SSNP, reached an agreement with Zaim to overthrow their common enemy Lebanese PM Riyad al-Sulh. Zaim promised to give unlimited support to Saadeh for revolution in Lebanon, but, he did not keep his promise and changed his position. Zaim betrayed Saadeh and handed over him to the Lebanese government. Immediately after his extradition, Saadeh was executed by the government on 8 July 1949. This event was a fatal blow to Zaim regime and he was overthrown one month after Saadeh's execution. Later, Saadeh was deified and the SSNP played a prominent role in Syrian politics over the next few years. For detailed information, see Rathmell, 44-50.

overthrew the Zaim regime. On the same day, President Zaim and Prime Minister Barazi were executed by the revolutionary regime. It is clear that the driving force behind the Hinnawi's move was Zaim's chief enemy Iraq, which had been plotting with a group of Syrian officers and politicians since the negotiations with Zaim failed.[251]

After the coup, Hinnawi published a number of communiqués blaming Zaim for destroying the internal order and wasting the country's wealth. Especially, the new regime condemned Zaim's foreign policy towards the neighboring Arab states and termed it ''unprincipled''. In particular, the army stressed that the second coup was the rectification of the Zaim's move and he was not condemned for staging the first coup but for betraying it.[252]

Hinnawi immediately lifted the ban on the political parties except for the radical leftist Syrian Communist Party and radical rightist Socialist Cooperative Party of Faysal al-Asali. He announced the army's retiring from politics and returning back to its barracks on 15 August 1949. On the same day, Hashim al-Atasi, one of the leading figures of the People's Party, formed a coalition government representing the growing influence of the PP and young radical forces in Syrian politics.[253] Only the National Party, traditional supporter of the Saudi-Egyptian camp, was marginalized and poorly represented in the government, which meant open support of the army for the union with Iraq. Even though Hinnawi handed over political power to civilians, Syrian people believed that the army controlled the Atasi government covertly. As the first job, Atasi government passed a new electoral law and arranged elections for the constituent assembly on 15 November 1949.[254]

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[251] Asad al-Tallas, Lieutenant Fadlallah Abu Mansur, Lieutenant-Colonel Alam al-Din Qawwas, Captain Muhammad Maruf of Army Intelligence and Isam Mraywad were comrades of Hinnawi, all of them had close relations with Iraq. Among the plotters, some of them were the members of the SSNP. Moreover, Akram al-Hawrani supported Zaim's downfall, because his close followers Adib al-Shishakli and Bahij al-Kallas were dismissed by Zaim from the army. See Seale, *The Struggle for Syria*, 73-74.

[252] Torrey, 144-145.

[253] Prime Minister, Hashim al-Atasi; Foreign Affairs, Nazim al-Qudsi (PP); Nat. Economy, Faydi al-Atasi (PP); Interior, Rushdi al-Kikhia (PP); Finance, Khalid al-Azm (Ind.); Justice, Sami Kabbara (Ind.); Agriculture, Akram al-Hawrani (non-party); Education, Michel Aflaq (Baath); Defence, Gen. Abdallah Atfi; Public Works, Majd al-Din al-Jabiri (Ind.); Minister of State, Adil al-Azmeh (NP) and Fath Allah Asyun (PP). See Seale, *The Struggle for Syria*, 76-77.

[254] Torrey, 146-147.

Until November 1949 elections, inter-Arab politics and the Iraqi-Syrian unity issue dominated Syrian foreign policy agenda. The PP, now in power after the coup, represented pro-Iraqi faction in Syrian politics and its foreign policy orientation immediately drifted Syrian foreign policy direction from the Saudi-Egyptian bloc towards Iraq. Hence, the Iraqi-Syrian rapprochement and unity project between two countries came to the fore.[255]

Although majority of the government favored union with Iraq, there was a heated debate over the form of union among its members. On the one hand, republicans insisted on keeping the republican form of government of Syria, royalists, on the other, demanded direct union under the kingdom of Iraq. In addition to these two factions, there was a strong anti-Iraqi faction led by Hawrani and Aflaq in the government. They denounced Iraqi-Syrian unity as an imperialist conspiracy since unity would reduce their growing political power in the country. Besides, Syrian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood's political party Islamic Socialist Front strongly opposed the unity scheme with Iraq and declared that republican form of the state must be saved.[256] Meanwhile, the army was also divided into pro-unionist and anti-unionist factions. Pro-unionist faction was led by Alam al-Din Qawwas and Muhammad Marouf, anti-unionist faction was headed by future dictator of Syria, Adib al-Shishakli.[257]

The elections were held on 15 November 1949 and the PP clearly won the elections, even though it could not achieve majority in the parliament. It is important to note that here Baath leaders, Aflaq and Bitar lost elections in Damascus and could not succeeded in entering the parliament. On 12 December, the new constituent assembly met and elected Rushdi al-Kikhia as president of the parliament and Hashim al-Atasi as temporary president of republic.[258]

Although it was hoped that the constituent assembly would settle the unity issue, the PP could not achieve majority in the assembly and it settled nothing. With the

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[255] Torrey, 153-154; Rathmell, 55.

[256] Torrey, 154-155.

[257] Telhami, 40.

[258] In the constituent assembly, People's Party won 43 seats, Independents close to the PP 20, Independents 22, Baath 1, National Party 13 (although the party boycotted the elections), SSNP 1; Muslim Brotherhood's official party Islamic Socialist Front 4 and Tribal Representatives 9. See Seale, *The Struggle for Syria*, 79.

opening of the new parliament, factionalism between the civilian politicians and army reached its zenith and paralyzed political life completely. In the parliament, pro-unionist PP was attacked by anti-unionist army spokesman Akram al-Hawrani and Islamic Socialist Front leader Mustafa al-Sibai who opposed a unity with the Hashemites due to ongoing British tutelage and the existence of monarchies in these countries.[259] While political unrest escalated in the country, the commander of the First Brigade Colonel Adib al-Shishakli, a close friend of Hawrani, carried out the third coup d'état on 19 December 1949 against both Hinnawi and pro-unionists and seized the power in Damascus.[260]

4.1.3. The Third Coup d'état by Adib al-Shishakli: The Army versus the PP

The coup of Adib al-Shishakli was the third and the last chain of the military interventions of 1949. The coup was carried out by a coalition of republican civilian and officer elements under Shishakli so as to hamper a future Iraqi-Syrian union and balance Hinnawi and unionist politicians in Syrian politics. On his communiqué, Shishakli stated that the move was the duty of the army to protect the structure of the state and republican regime against the plotting of Hinnawi, Talas and some political leaders with foreign powers.[261] After the coup, Shishakli and Hawrani, who were childhood friends in Hama and former SSNP members, emerged as two leading political personalities representing anti-Iraqi trend in Syrian politics.[262]

Shishakli was aware of Zaim's mistakes and did not assume whole political power immediately; he remained behind the scene being Deputy Chief of Staff and preferred to work through Hawrani. After Shishakli's first coup, the PP and the army emerged as two rival political power centers in Syrian politics. They entered into a fierce power struggle which resulted in the rise and fall of six cabinets within a year.[263] In the wake of the first coup, Shishakli chose to prepare himself for his future dictatorship,

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[259] Torrey, 155-157.

[260] Ibid., 161-163.

[261] Rathmell, 58.

[262] Seale, *The Struggle for Syria*, 86-87.

[263] Mufti, 54.

which he attained with a second coup on 29 November 1951 and made him the strongest dictator in Syria until he was ousted in February 1954.

Even though Shishakli balanced the PP and robbed it of military backing that Hinnawi provided through the coup, he could not destroy the party as it was the strongest political group in the assembly. Instead, he established the General Staff as a rival power against the PP which dominated constituent assembly. The first confrontation between the army and the PP broke out in the wake of the Shishakli's move; while President Atasi charged pro-Iraqi Nazim al-Qudsi with forming a government on 24 December, his cabinet was objected by the army and he was forced to withdraw on the following day. On 29 December, Khalid al-Azm succeeded in forming a coalition government acceptable to both the PP and the army. In al-Azm's government, Akram al-Hawrani, the leading figure of the coup, became defense minister.[264]

Similar to previous two coups, the impact of the third coup on Syrian foreign policy was felt quickly; it changed pro-Hashemite policy of the previous regime and brought Syria in line with her traditional place, the Saudi-Egyptian bloc. On 8 January 1950, Shishakli visited Cairo and then Riyadh to repair the damaged relations because of the Hinnawi interlude. He signed a trade agreement in Riyadh and accepted $6,000,000 loan from Saudi Arabia. Following Shishakli, Finance Minister Marouf al-Dawalibi went to Cairo to conclude a trade agreement and to take promise of £5,000,000 loan from Egypt. Moreover, Saudi Arabia managed to formalize the long-awaited Tapline Agreement between the Syrian government and the Trans-Arabian Pipeline Company to pipe oil from Saudi Arabia across Syria to the Mediterranean Sea. Naturally, Syria's returning back to the Saudi-Egyptian camp was a blow to Iraq's unionist ambitions.[265]

On 5 September 1950, notwithstanding the criticisms of the NP and the Socialist Cooperative Party, the new constitution was approved by the parliament and Hashim al-Atasi was elected as president of the republic and Nazim al-Qudsi formed a new government in which Fawzi Selu, representative of Shishakli was defense minister. On the other hand, political fragmentation reached its climax in the second half of 1950. Even though the PP formed the new government and still held the majority in the

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[264] Torrey, 163-164; Telhami, 40.

[265] Rathmell, 63; Sunayama, 21.

assembly, its power was gradually declining due to opposition by the army, by Hawrani, by the Islamic Socialist Front, by the Baath Party and by the NP.[266]

From September 1950 to November 1951, three governments established and fell successively: the Qudsi government, the al-Azm government and the al-Hakim government. Due to political instability and fierce factionalism forced Shishakli to carry out his second coup d'état in November 1951.

4.1.4. The Second Shishakli Coup: Consolidating Dictatorship in Syria,

Shishakli, whose patience with the PP had been waning owing to cabinet instability since December 1949, mounted his second coup d'état on 29 November 1951 and assumed whole political power in Syria. Following the coup, President Atasi resigned and the parliament was dissolved. On 3 December, Fawzi Selu was installed as Head of State, Prime Minister and Defense Minister.[267] The second Shishakli coup was the second blow to the old-guards' power in Syrian politics and it also facilitated the rise of radical political parties: Hawrani's Arab Socialist Party, the Baath Party and the SSNP.[268]

After the second coup, Shishakli began to give politically minded army officers a new role as he wanted to use the army to liquidate traditional political forces in Syrian politics. By relying on this duty, Shishakli established a military dictatorship. He began with launching a reform program for the army and promoting young officers, whom later played a significant role in his downfall. Shishakli's politicization of the army was accompanied by a program of Arabization of the officer corps as well as the rise of prominence of the military academies of Hama and Homs. Politicization of the army officers in the military academies was overlapped with the progressive ideology of Hawrani and the Baath Party. The coincidence of nationalist awakening among the army officers since the Palestine catastrophe accelerated their attendance to the Baath Party owing to the party's nationalist discourse[269] and created a symbiosis between the army and the party.

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[266] Seale, *The Struggle for Syria*, 97-99.

[267] Torrey, 198-200.

[268] Rathmell, 81.

[269] Perlmutter, ''From Obscurity to Rule: The Syrian Army and the Ba'th Party,'' 831, 835.

When we look at the impact of Shishakli's second coup on Syrian foreign policy, we see that it wiped out all hopes of Iraqi-Syrian rapprochement and unity projects. To legitimize the new regime, Shishakli and Selu toured Arab capitals of Jordan, Lebanon and Saudi Arabia except for Iraq to show their devotion to Arab fraternity in March and April 1952. Being a former member of the SSNP, Shishakli adopted a pan-Syrian stance with the impact of his party at the beginning and he referred himself as Palestinian, declared his interests in Jordan and claimed Alexandretta.[270] However, he later changed his pan-Syrian position and converted to pan-Arab nationalism to gain the rewards of his pan-Arabist rhetoric. Shishakli declared that ''Syria is a part of the Arab world and Syrian people constitute a part of the Arab nation…Syria would be the 'Prussia of the Arab states', the fortress of steel from which the spark of liberation would fly to the whole Arab world.''[271] On 11 December 1952, Shishakli also visited Cairo after the revolution of the Free Officers and congratulated their successful move against the corrupt monarchy and demanded Egyptian support against Iraqi ambitions.[272]

Although Shishakli stood behind the scene after the second coup, he gradually took the lead and established a dictatorial regime. In order to eliminate political instability and social frictions so as to create unified Syrian political entity, he put a general ban on all political parties except for the SSNP in April 1952. [273] To fill the political vacuum in Syrian politics, he inaugurated his army-dominated party Arab Liberation Movement (ALM) on 25 August 1952, whose organization owed much to the SSNP. On the other hand, Shishakli's dictatorial measures, especially dissolution of political parties, alienated both the army officers and radical political parties from the regime. Owing to their opposition to Shishakli regime, Akram al-Hawrani, Michel Aflaq and Salah al-Din Bitar fled to Lebanon so as to avoid arrest with the status of political refugee, where they merged their parties into the Arab Baath Socialist Party (the Baath Party) under the leadership of Hawrani in early 1953.[274]

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[270] Pipes, 97.

[271] Seale, *The Struggle for Syria*, 122-124.

[272] Ibid., 126.

[273] Jaber, 31; Telhami, 41.

[274] Devlin, *The Ba'th Party*, 60; Jaber, 32.

On 10 June 1953 referendum, the new constitution was approved and Shishakli was elected president of Syria. He established his regime on the constitutional basis and became both prime minister and president of the country on 15 June. On 9 October elections, even though the ALM gained majority in the assembly, the election was boycotted by all political parties and electorate attendance was poor. Before and during the elections, the Baath organized popular strikes and demonstrations against the Shishakli regime.[275]

In late 1953 and early 1954, the political unrest against the Shishakli dictatorship reached its peak. In the wake of the general amnesty, granted by Shishakli, Hawrani, Aflaq and Bitar returned to Syria. On 4 July 1953, with Hawrani's efforts, the NP, the PP, the Baath, the communists and a number of influential independents made a historical attempt by signing a National Pact in Homs, which suppressed all factionalisms and unified their powers to topple Shishakli's dictatorship.[276] The activities of the opposition, backed by Iraq and Israel, succeeded and Shishakli was finally overthrown by a military insurrection in February 1954. Shishakli resigned on 25 February 1954 and fled to exile in Saudi Arabia then France.[277]

Shishakli can be described as a military dictator and his legacy had profound impacts on Syrian domestic politics. Thanks to his modernization efforts, the young army officers accustomed to participate in political activities and became more reluctant to confine their interests to the barracks until the union with Egypt in 1958. Furthermore, the army's unpreventable penetration into political life started to reflect civilian factionalism in its own organization.[278] Shishakli also weakened the old-guards and prepared the ground for radical parties' ascendancy in domestic politics between 1954 and 1958. Even though he was a ruthless dictator, Shishakli made first serious attempts at state-building. He expanded the size of the army, created a Central Bank, required merchants to keep records to collect taxes more effectively and increased inheritance taxes etc.[279]

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[275] Rathmell, 81-82.

[276] Seale, *The Struggle for Syria*, 132-136.

[277] Rathmell, 87-89; Telhami, 42-43.

[278] Hopwood, 35.

[279] Mufti, 55.

4.2.   Regional Determinants of Syrian Foreign Policy: Inter-Arab Politics and Israel

Regional determinants of Syrian foreign policy during the military rule can be classified into two categories: inter-Arab politics and Israel. The first regional determinant was inter-Arab struggle for Syria which profoundly affected Syrian foreign policy owing to the weakness of Syrian state, political instability and competing rival factions. The second regional aspect of Syrian foreign policy was Israel which composed of security dimension and directly influenced Syria's alliance formation. It must be pointed out that, during the period of military dictatorship between 1949 and 1954, the ''Syria-first'' policy was maintained even when the pro-Iraqi politicians took the lead in domestic politics, which was clear indication of Syrian politicians' pragmatic alliances with regional states to bolster their domestic position rather than their Arab nationalist zeal for unification.

4.2.1. Inter-Arab Struggle for Syria during the Military Dictatorship

4.2.1.1. The Rule of Husni al-Zaim: Syria's Vacillation between the Hashemites and the Saudi Egyptian Camp

In the wake of the coup Husni al-Zaim pursued pro-Iraqi foreign policy as mentioned above. Zaim launched his unity initiative with Iraq not only with the impact of the rise of pro-Iraqi sentiments in the country but also the armistice negotiation with Israel on 12 April 1949. However, the issue of Iraqi-Syrian unity failed owing to Zaim's pragmatic foreign policy in inter-Arab politics and Iraq's hesitation about uniting with Syria.

Zaim had made a crucial attempt and declared his desire to conclude a joint military defense pact with Iraq immediately against a possible Israeli aggression on 9 April 1949. After Zaim's call for a unity, Iraqi government sent its team to Damascus so as to negotiate the issue on 12 April. Although Zaim was urging Iraq to declare a quick agreement between two states, Nuri al-Said was suspicious about Zaim's eagerness. Iraq, the ardent supporter of the Fertile Crescent Plan, was paralyzed when it was called for the immediate action. Nuri started to consider British factor before signing defense pact with Syria and explained that ''we have a clear foreign policy and we are linked by treaty to Britain. If we wanted to enter into any military pact, we should have to inform the British

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[279] Torrey, 212.

Government.''[280] Besides, Nuri started to calculate reactions of Egypt and Saudi Arabia against possible agreement and did not wish to arouse the hostility of these two countries. Above all, Nuri pursued the policy of ''wait and see'' until the clarification of the situation in Syria and did not wanted to sign any agreement until the returning of constitutional government in Syria. Finally, on 14 April he dismissed the idea of formal agreement with Zaim as well as joint public statement which Zaim wanted strongly to strengthen his position vis-à-vis Israel.[281]

As mentioned above, Zaim was secretly negotiating with the Saudi-Egyptian camp to benefit from the inter-Arab rivalry. After taking the support of the Saudi-Egyptian Camp, Zaim completely dismissed Iraq as a regional partner. On 16 April, Nuri al-Said visited Damascus to persuade Zaim entering into a Western-sponsored defense pact instead of a Syrian-Iraqi one, but having guaranteed backing of his new patrons the Saudi Arabia and Egypt, Zaim was not eager to participate in such an organization and warmly refused Nuri's proposal. On following day, Nuri returned to Baghdad with an empty hand on 17 April. Then, the Secretary-general of the Arab League, Azzam Pasha visited Damascus to consolidate Zaim's drift towards the Saudi-Egyptian camp and on 21 April, Zaim secretly visited King Faruq in Cairo. As a result of these diplomatic contacts, Zaim openly declared his devotion to principles and policies of Egypt-led Arab League. Few days after his visit, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Lebanon recognized Zaim's regime.[282]

Zaim not only broke his relations with Iraq but also strongly rejected Abdullah's Syrian-Jordan unity plan after allying with the Saudi-Egyptian bloc. Zaim declared that ''it must be understood that Transjordan is a small part of Syria and should she wish to yield to her motherland she will be welcome.''[283] On 26 April 1949, Transjordan's PM visited Baghdad, which Zaim perceived as the first step of Hashemite invasion; he reacted harshly and closed border with Jordan as well as send troops to Jordanian border to protect Syria against a possible Hashemite aggression.[284] During Zaim's rule in

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[280] Seale, *The Struggle For Syria*, 51.

[281] Mufti, 50-51.

[282] Simon, ''The Hashemite Conspiracy,'' 318-319.

[283] Rathmell, 28.

[284] Ibid., 28.

Damascus, Saudi Arabia and Egypt successfully took Zaim into their camp and maintained their impact on Syrian domestic politics.

4.2.1.2. Syria's Drift towards the Hashemite Camp under Sami al-Hinnawi

As mentioned above, Sami al-Hinnawi and the pro-Iraqi faction changed Syrian foreign policy orientation from the Saudi-Egyptian camp to the Hashemite camp. Secretary General of Foreign Affairs Asad al-Tallas and Foreign Minister Nazim al-Qudsi sought actively union with Iraq in the wake of the coup. Iraqi-Syrian unity was also supported by pro-Iraqi independent politicians such as Hasan al-Hakim and strangely by the National Party. On 29 September, the NP, traditional enemy of the Fertile Crescent Plan, issued a manifesto calling for union with Iraq, which reflected its pragmatic and flexible foreign policy vision. As a result of the ongoing unity negotiations between two sides and the positive environment in Syria, Iraqi Regent Abdul-Ilah visited Damascus on 5 October and met with Prime Minister Atasi, Hinnawi and the NP representatives-Faris al-Khuri and Sabri al-Asali. Although the Regent did not make any official statement about the unity issue, he obviously discussed possible unity schemes with Syrian leaders.[285]

While there were growing hopes for federation or unity with Iraq by Syrian politicians, Iraq was still hesitant about the unity issue which was complicated by mixed policies of Iraqi politicians due to their dependence on Britain. Even though Regent Abd al-Ilah and his associates wanted to utilize the unity opportunity to realize their ambitions over Syria, Nuri al-Said pursued a cautious policy and avoided precipitate actions. Nuri obviously continued traditional Iraqi objectives over Syria, but he looked for a union which would favor Iraqi dominance and hamper the Syrian instability from affecting Iraq and jeopardizing the regime.[286]

After the 1949 November elections, Syrian politics became the battleground of competing political factions. Although the PP appeared the most influential political power center in the elections, it could not succeed in unity with Iraq. When a decisive action was needed, vast majority of the PP members, who were not dedicated to union

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[285] Torrey, 153-154; Rathmell, 55.

[286] Michael Eppel, ''Syrian-Iraqi Relations: Iraq as a Factor in the Syrian Foreign Policy,'' in *Modern Syria: From Ottoman Rule to Pivotal Role in the Middle East*, ed. Moshe Ma'oz, Joseph Ginat and Onn Wincker (Brighton, Portland: Sussex Academic Press, 1999), 215.

with Iraq as many people saw them, hesitated to take such an action fearing that a possible union would extend British control to Syria automatically owing to the Iraqi-British agreement. They also did not want to sacrifice Syrian republic for a monarchy under Abdul-Ilah. The picture was also complicated by the resistance of the US, France, Israel, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, even Britain and Jordan against the Iraqi-Syrian union. Besides, since the second coup onwards, the Saudi-Egyptian camp had been providing a large-scale political bribery for both anti-unionist civilian politicians and army officers. Above all, the biggest obstacle in front of the union was the army, which was under heavy influence of France and Saudi Arabia against the unity plans. Although it was divided into two factions, anti-unionist camp was much stronger than pro-unionists.[287] The rule of the pro-Iraqi faction did not last long and Hinnawi was toppled by a coup under the auspices of the Saudi-Egyptian camp in December 1949.

4.2.1.3. The Shishakli Dictatorship: Returning Back to the Saudi-Egyptian Camp

During the period of Shishakli's dictatorship, similar to previous Syrian politicians he skillfully manipulated the struggle for Syria and unlike Hinnawi he sided with the Saudi Arabia and Egypt as external patrons for his domestic ascendancy. After the Hinnawi coup, proponents of Iraqi-Syrian union had claimed that union of two countries could be an effective stance against Israeli aggression. Egypt had opposed this idea by proposing a joint defense and economic agreement under the Arab League umbrella depending on sovereignty of all states. Following the Shishakli coup, Syrian drift towards the Saudi-Egyptian camp came with the sign of this Treaty of Joint Defense and Economic Cooperation on 17 April 1950, which was a clear solution to Syrian security problem. Even though the pact aimed to create collective security for Arab League states against a military aggression by establishing ministerial Joint Defense Council, no attempt was made to implement its provisions. Basically, the pact was designed as a tool of traditional Egyptian policy depending on sustaining Egyptian hegemony and status quo in the Middle East as well as protecting Syria against the Hashemite ambitions.[288]

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[287] Torrey, 161-163.

[288] Seale, *The Struggle for Syria*, 89-90.

In the wake of the first Shishakli coup, Syrian foreign policy was shaped by competing alliances of Syrian domestic factions towards the regional Arab states. Even though Shishakli pursued pro-Egyptian policies, the PP continued its pro-Iraqi stance. For instance, When Qudsi was prime minister in early 1951, he called the Arab League to examine the possibility of unity of the Arab states in a federation against Western demands, the fragile relations between the army and the Qudsi cabinet broke completely. Behind the façade of his anti-Western stance, Qudsi's unity project with Iraq was designed to ''omnibalance'' his domestic rival and raised the army's suspicions immediately about the PP's secret plans with the Hashemites to capture Syria and destroy the army's influence. The ongoing tension between the army and the PP resulted in Qudsi's resignation from premiership on 9 March 1951.[289]

Syria obviously followed pro-Egyptian policies especially after the Shishakli's second coup d'état. In this respect, the opposition against the Shishakli regime should not only be seen within the framework of Syrian domestic conditions, it must also be contextualized within inter-Arab politics. Shishakli's successful coup had ended vacillation of Syrian foreign policy between the Hashemite and the Saudi-Egyptian camp and put it in its traditional place as mentioned above. Therefore, Iraqi Regent Abdul-Ilah and his entourage, whose ambitions and interests were thwarted in Syrian politics, gave full support to the opposition to overthrow the Shishakli regime. The Iraqi involvement in Syria was also backed by Britain, which was also uneasy about Shishakli and his close relations with France. In January 1954, while anti-Shishakli trend in Syria was strengthening, Iraqi Prime Minister Fadhil al-Jamali proposed a federal Arab union plan to unite Syria, Iraq and Jordan together. However, this offer was rejected by a devoted anti-Hashemite Shishakli. Furthermore, Iraq granted political asylum for some pro-unionist officers[290] and helped them to form their Free Syrian Government Colonel Mustafa Safa in Baghdad in October 1953, which further disturbed the Shishakli regime. While Shishakli was under inside and outside pressures, Egypt under the Free Officers and Saudi Arabia strongly condemned Iraqi aggression over Syria as an imperialist design and gave full support to Shishakli. Moreover, Saudi Arabia distributed bribe money to

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[289] Torrey, 189-191.

[290] Colonel Mustafa Safa, Colonel Mustafa Dawalibi, Isam Mraywad and Asad al-Tallas named themselves General Command of the Free Syria Forces. See Rathmell, 83.

counter Safa movement and strengthen the regime in Syria.[291] However, the covert operations of the Hashemite camp succeeded and Shishakli was ousted by the opposition in February 1954.

4.2.2. Israeli-Syrian Relations during the Military Dictatorship: Peace Negotiations and Water Issue

4.2.2.1. Israeli-Syrian Relations under Husni al-Zaim: Towards A Compromise?

As mentioned above, the Palestine catastrophe was the most important factor that paved the way for the first coup d'état in Syrian history. On the way of the coup, Zaim had summoned the support of dissident army officers by blaming the old-guards' failure and corruption in the Palestine fiasco. Therefore, the Palestine problem and the relations with Israel dominated Zaim's foreign policy agenda during his rule. However, Zaim, who had close relations with Israeli intelligence service and the CIA before the coup,[292] pursued pragmatic foreign policy initiatives about the issue. This became the source of enormous disappointment among middle-class nationalist generation as well as in the army.

The armistice negotiations between Syria and Israel started on 12 April 1949. Syria had occupied three small areas along Palestine border during the first Arab-Israeli war, which was allocated to Israel according to the UN Partition plan of 1947. During the negotiations, Syria insisted on retaining certain areas near Lake Hula, which were still under the control of Syrian military forces. When the negotiations stalemated, mediator proposed that this area, together with some adjacent Israeli controlled areas, should be Demilitarized Zones (DMZ) under the supervision of Mixed Armistice Commission (MAC) headed by the chairman of United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO). Finally, the armistice agreement was signed on 20 July 1949 on the mutual understanding that it would facilitate the transition from the present truce to permanent peace in Palestine. On the other hand, sovereignty over demilitarized zones left undecided

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[291] Sunayama, 21-22.

[292] Shlaim, ''Husni Za'im and the Plan to Resettle Palestinian Refugees in Syria,'' 71-72.

and later became the source of fierce dispute between Syria and Israel in following years.[293]

Zaim made a bold offer during the armistice negotiations and suggested that Syria and Israel should sign a comprehensive peace treaty instead of an armistice agreement on the basis of open borders, exchange of ambassadors and military cooperation. Zaim also offered to settle 250,000-300,000 Palestine refugees in Syrian territories. In exchange for peace agreement, Zaim demanded a high-level meeting with Ben-Gurion and territorial concessions from Israel for three strategic areas, assigned to Israel according to the 1947 partition plan, in Lake Tiberias, the Hula Valley and al-Hamma, which would provide a permanent access for Syria to the waters of the Jordan River and Lake Tiberias on an equitable bases with Israel. Zaim was a pragmatist politician and he sincerely wanted to sign a peace treaty with Israel for the sake of his regime. Having seen Egypt's defeat in the battlefield, one of his aims was to neutralize Israeli threat against Syria's security by signing peace treaty and consolidate his domestic and regional position against Iraqi and Jordanian aggressions. Moreover, he was pretty sure to be on the Western front and wished to gain military and economic support of the US by recognizing Israel and resettling the Palestinian refugees in Syrian territories.[294] Although the US put pressure on Ben-Gurion to accept Zaim's offers, he rejected the Syrian peace initiative owing to Zaim's weak domestic power base, his unwillingness to make territorial and water-rights concessions even in exchange for a peace settlement, and his preference for use of force rather than diplomacy in resolving Arab-Israeli disputes. Ben-Gurion strongly insisted on armistice agreement first and then withdrawal of Syrian troops from the occupied Israeli areas during 1948 War.[295] This was a great shock to nationalist aspirations of radical younger nationalists who were the main power base of Zaim's move against the old-guards and accelerated Zaim's downfall.

4.2.2.2. Israeli-Syrian Relations during the Rule of Adib al- Shishakli

After the fall of Husni al-Zaim's peace offer to Israel, there was no important development in the relationship between two sides during the short rule of Sami al-

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[293] Ma'oz, *Syria and Israel*, 26-27.

[294] Jerome Slater, ''Lost Opportunities for Peace in the Arab-Israeli Conflict: Israel and Syria, 1948-2001,'' *International* Security, No. 1 (2002): 86.

[295] Shlaim, ''Husni Za'im and the Plan to Resettle Palestinian Refugees in Syria,'' 73-75.

Hinnawi. With Adib al-Shishakli's coming to power, the water issue and peace negotiations dominated the foreign policy agenda of two sides.

The first aspect of Syrian-Israeli relations was Israel's drainage works and the water issue. In early 1951, a new crisis broke out between Israel and Syria on Lake Hula. Israel started a great development project, the drainage of Lake Hula which was designed to reclaim 15,000 acres for cultivation and to destroy malaria from the area as well as settling thousands of immigrants in this strategic area. Although the Lake Hula was outside the DMZ, its first stage included work on some parts of Arab-owned land in the DMZ, for this reason, the project was reacted harshly by Syrian politicians, which caused border skirmishes between the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) and the Syrian army resulting in casualties from both sides. [296] During the Israeli-Syrian border clashes, the PP wanted to use anti-Israeli feelings of Syrian society for calling unity with Iraq against the Israeli menace. The PP's position was strengthened after the Arab League Summit in Damascus on 14 May 1951, when Iraq sent her troops and anti-aircraft batteries to Damascus to protect its brother against Israeli threat on 17 May in contrast to Egypt's silence. The PP utilized foreign policy issues to challenge his opponents in the parliament successfully, which created tension between the PP and Shishakli and accelerated the second Shishakli coup.[297]

The second aspect of Syrian-Israeli relations was peace negotiations. Shishakli, regardless of his anti-Israeli stance in front of the public, was a pragmatic dictator like Zaim. Having experienced the defeat of his forces as a deputy commander of the Liberation Army in the 1948 Arab-Israeli War against the Israeli forces, Shishakli was well aware of the weakness of the Syrian army. From the onset of his rule, in addition to creating a modern army, Shishakli wanted contain the Israeli threat against the country and his rule in Damascus. For this reason, he pragmatically offered a modified version of Zaim's peace offer to Israel and proposed the division of the DMZ between Israel and Syria along the Jordan River, and the eastern shores of Lakes Tiberias and Hula. Even Shishakli personally attended peace negotiations with the Israeli deputy chief of staff Mordechai Makleff in late March 1951. However, Israel rejected Shishakli's peace offer as it proposed leaving lands of western Israeli border which were very crucial for its national development and irrigation projects. In contact with the US, Shishakli made clear

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[296] Ma'oz, *Syria and Israel*, 28-29.

[297] Torrey, 191-193.

that within the non-belligerency agreement Syria was ready for absorbing half a million Palestinian refugees from Jordan, Gaza and Lebanon if the US provide Syria with $200 million for economic development. Shishakli-American and Shishakli-Israel compromise failed owing to his doctrinaire neutralists and anti-Western comrades, who strongly opposed to reach an agreement with both the US and Israel. Having failed to reach an agreement with Israel, Shishakli pragmatically adopted pro-Palestinian rhetoric to legitimize his regime and gain the support of other Arab states.[298] In July 1952, he declared in a public speech: ''Syria, always the leader of the Arab people, should impose her will and recover her rights by force in Palestine. The Middle East is not big enough to hold the Arabs and the Jews; either the Arabs would be fleeing back into the desert and the sea or the Jews would return to their homes in the various parts of the world.''[299]

4.3. International Aspect of Syrian Foreign Policy: The Core-Periphery Relations and the Cold War

4.3.1. Syrian Foreign Policy towards the Western Powers under Husni al-Zaim

From the onset, Zaim's new regime mainly developed pragmatic and friendly relations with the core powers similar to that of the Quwatli regime. Being afraid of a possible Syrian-Iraqi union which would strengthen British influence in the Levant, France approached to Husni Zaim. France's attempts at influencing Zaim gave fruit and Zaim, who had been trained by French army and had served with French forces for a long time, allied with France. Zaim publicly expressed his pro-French policy, ''France is our friend and we shall do anything to keep her friendship- a new era of understanding and collaboration will be opened between Paris and Damascus.''[300] Within this framework, he completed unfinished job of Khalid al-Azm and ratified monetary agreement on 16 April 1949. Besides, France trained Syrian officers and continued to be Syria's main arms supplier. Zaim's returning back to the Saudi-Egyptian bloc was completed by French military and technical assistance, which strengthen his hand in regional affairs and also contributed to his disenchantment with unionism project with Iraq.[301]

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[298] Ma'oz, *Syria and Israel*, 29-30.

[299] Ibid., 31.

[300] Torrey, 138.

[301] Rathmell, 35-36.

In addition to France, Zaim pursued close relations with the Anglo-Saxon camp of Britain and the US. He declared his government as anti-communist and wished to establish frank relations with Great Britain.[302] Although Zaim was afraid of Hashemite plot in conjunction with British backing, in exchange for arms and financial aid, he pragmatically negotiated with Britain for the Middle East Pipeline Ltd. (MEPL) agreement, which would safeguard oil interests of Britain in the Middle East. Finally both sides reached an agreement and Zaim ratified MEPL agreement on 20 June 1949.[303]

Since Syrian independence in 1946, the US had paid special attention to Syria in terms of growing domestic communist impact, the Tapline agreement, and Syrian relations with Turkey and Israel. Although the US-Syrian relations improved under Khalid al-Azm's short premiership, the level of relations between two countries was far from the US expectations during the old-guards' short term. Therefore, it was speculated that the US backed and masterminded Zaim's coup. This conspiracy theory seems to be true as Zaim solved all of problematic issues between the US and Syria and improved relations considerably between two countries. First of all, he ratified the Tapline agreement 16 May 1949, which had vital importance for the US to benefit from the Middle East oil.[304] Moreover, Zaim declared his willingness to receive economic and military aids from the US under the Marshall Plan and Point Four Aid, but his efforts came to naught.[305]

Secondly, Zaim did what the US wanted to do about the fate of communism in Syria. He followed much more ruthless policy towards the Syrian Communist Party (SCP) than the old-guards. He declared that ''I will unleash a war to the death against communism in Syria'' and kept his promise by following strict policy towards the communists. In line with his expression, he arrested about 400 members of the party and destructed their power base in Syria.[306]

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[302] Torrey, 136.

[303] Rathmell, 33-35.

[304] Avi Shlaim, ''Husni Za'im and the Plan to Resettle Palestinian Refugees in Syria,'' *Journal of Palestine Studies*, No. 4 (1986): 70-71.

[305] Torrey, 136.

[306] Rathmell, 38-39.

The third radical change in Zaim's foreign policy was about Turkey. Zaim's main aim was to improve relations with Turkey in conjunction with the US, but the tricky issue was the Alexandretta dispute. Under the old-guards, Syria had claimed her sovereignty rights over Alexandretta several times. Although the public opinion remained sensitive about the issue, Zaim ignored the problem and invited Turkish officers to reorganize the Syrian army, which created great anger among the Syrian population. Zaim even went further and declared his willingness to participate in a pro-Western military bloc with Turkey in exchange for military aid.[307] Zaim's betrayal to pan-Arab cause by abandoning unity projects with Iraq was followed by his unduly dependence on the core powers like the old-guards and further undermined his legitimacy and accelerated his downfall.

4.3.2. Syria and the Cold War in the Wake of the First Shishakli Coup: the Neutralist Camp versus the pro-Western Camp

During Sami al-Hinnawi's short rule there was no important development in the relationship between Syria and the Western powers as inter-Arab politics dominated Syrian foreign policy. After Adib al-Shishakli's first coup d'état, Syrian foreign policy was shaped by political factions and their competing allegiance towards the West. To illustrate, the al-Azm government between December 1949 and May 1950 was the first to officially adopted neutralism towards two superpowers. In early 1950, having changed his early pro-Western inclinations to secure administrative posts, al-Azm and his government pursued unbalanced ''anti-Western neutralism'' between the two blocs and aimed to strengthen Syria's ties with the Soviet Union by signing a non-aggression pact as well as taking military and economic aids against the Western bloc owing to long-lasting bitterness of the Arabs against the Western imperialism and impartial support for Israel. Anti-Western stance of the al-Azm government reflected in its rejection of British-controlled Hashemite unity attempts and its removal of French influence over Syria including breaking economic ties. Besides, Syria formally rejected the US Point IV aid,[308] condemned the US for its pro-Israeli attitude in the Arab-Israeli conflict and declared its willingness to improve relations with the Soviet Union by adopting neutralism.[309]

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[307] Seale, *The Struggle for Syria*, 62.

[308] Ibid., 106-107.

[309] Ginat, 41-42, 51-55.

So as to reverse the Soviet-Syrian rapprochement during the al-Azm government and repair the course of negative relationship between the West and the Arabs, and prevent the Soviet Union from threatening Western access to Middle Eastern oil and making political and military inroad into the region, the US, Britain and France made the Tripartite Declaration on 25 May 1950, which proposed that Middle Eastern states (Israel and the Arab states) were granted the right to purchase arms which were necessary for their internal security and self-defense in the region. Moreover, three powers stressed that they would intervene in hampering either sides from changing territorial status quo by use of force on Palestine frontier. The Tripartite Declaration was basically designed to prevent another Arab-Israeli war, reverse anti-Western sentiment among the Arab states and prevent the Soviet arms sale to the Arab states. On 21 June, Arab governments informed three powers about their acceptance of the declaration with some reservations, this move was coolly received by the Soviet Union.[310]

International tension between the US and the Soviet Union reached its climax in the wake of the outbreak of the Korean War in June 1951. The war in Korea urged the US President Truman to pay special attention to the Middle East to organize a Western-sponsored defense pact against a possible Soviet military intervention. Within the context of escalating tension between the superpowers, Anglo-American policy for the Middle East depended on two principles: first, constructing a regional military structure; second, preventing communist subversion by offering economic aid. The Western bloc proposed the formation of the Middle East Command (MEC) including the US, UK, France, Turkey and Egypt in autumn of 1951. In the Middle East Command, Egypt was the most significant country as it had a pivotal geographic, strategic and cultural role in the Middle East. For this reason, Western diplomats visited Arab capitals to reach an agreement with Arab leaders during the course of 1951, however, their attempts created a public euphoria among the Arab peoples who perceived the Middle East defense proposal another type of imperialism. Especially, Egyptians' reaction to Western defense designs in the Middle East opened the way for the Free Officers' coup d'état of July 1952, which successfully ousted corrupt monarchical regime.[311]

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[310] Salim Yaqub, *Containing Arab Nationalism: The Eisenhower Doctrine and the Middle East* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 25-26; Ginat, 55-56.

[311] Yaqub, 26.

Syria's attitude towards the Middle East defense proposals became the most important aspect of both the Western bloc-Syrian and the US-Syrian relations. Prime Minister Qudsi, who came to power after al-Azm in September 1950, pursued pro-Western policies since the outbreak of the Korean War and sought Western alliance against the Soviet Union. However, his pro-Western stance was bitterly opposed by the Syrian people and the neutralist radical parties. When British Middle East land forces Commander General Robertson and the US Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs Georges McGhee visited Damascus in February-March 1951 to reach an agreement with Qudsi for the Middle East defense organization, they were met by popular demonstrations organized by the Baath Party, Hawrani's Arab Socialist Party and the Islamic Socialist Front, all of which denounced economic and military blandishments of the Western bloc and called for a strict policy of neutralism towards the two world camps. The Syrian opposition leaders' policy of neutralism towards the Eastern and Western camps, however, was perceived as pro-communist policy by the Western politicians. The underlying motive for negative reactions against the Western camp was that collective memory of both Syrian people and radical parties was full of the bad memories of the Western imperialism and the creation of Israel in Palestine.[312]

In August 1951, the Prime Minister al-Hakim publicly supported the Western camp against communism for the sake of the Arabs and the Palestinians, declared his pro-Hashemite tendencies by calling an Arab unity plan with Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon. Moreover, al-Hakim stated that Syria should pursue close relations with Turkey through a defense pact. Al-Hakim's attempts at changing anti-Western sentiments in Syria was destined to be unsuccessful since Syrian foreign policy was influenced by neutralist Egypt and anti-Western sentiments of the Arab people all around the Middle East. The tension between pro-Western al-Hakim and neutralist forces reached its zenith when the US, Britain, France and Turkey submitted their famous MEC proposal to Egypt for joining a Middle East command as a founder member on equal basis and partnership on 13 October 1951. The proposal was immediately rejected by the neutralist government of Egypt. When four powers informed the PP member of neutralist Syrian Foreign Minister Faydi al-Atasi about the joint MEC proposal to Egypt, he strongly criticized the Western bloc for their defense plans in the Middle East by reminding Western injustice in Palestine and other issues in previous decades. Besides, popular demonstrations

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[312] Ginat, 59-62.

organized by Egypt-sponsored leftist forces and Hawrani broke out all around the country rejecting imperialist plot of common defense plans. Al-Hakim government divided on the issue; although Prime Minister al-Hakim supported cooperation and collaboration with the Western bloc through the MEC, Foreign Minister Faydi al-Atasi, backed by President Atasi, was a dedicated neutralist.[313]

4.3.3. Syria and the Cold War after the Second Shishakli Coup: A Rapprochement with the West?

From Shishakli's second coup in September 1951 to his ouster in February 1954, Syrian relations with the West had two faces. While French-Syrian relations improved considerably and French influence within the Syrian army increased, relations with the US and Britain continued to be at a low level despite Shishakli's eagerness. During this period, France became the chief Western ally of Shishakli and gained substantial influence in the army as it provided large shipments of arms for Syria and senior Syrian officers were trained by French military. During the period of absolute dictatorship of Shishakli, there was no improvement in Syria's relations with the Soviet bloc, which reflected his disinterested in ideological and political superpower rivalry. Therefore, Shishakli's foreign policy on international level can be categorized as ''passive neutralism.''[314]

While Shishakli was strengthening his regime during the course of 1953, the US concerns about the Middle East was on rise. Secretary General of State John Foster Dulles visited the region to include Arab states into Anglo-American sponsored and Egypt-led Middle East Defense Organization (MEDO) against the Soviet Union, however, he faced with a strong opposition from Free Officers as they saw Britain and Israel as a threat to Egyptian sovereignty rather than the Soviet Union. Dulles understood the impossibility of concluding an Egypt-based Middle East Defense Organization, dismissed the proposal and changed the Middle East strategy of the US by encouraging the region's ''Northern Tier'' nations-Turkey, Iran and Pakistan- to form an anti-Soviet defense pact in cooperation with NATO, which would be attended by Iraq and Syria later. Moreover, the US facilitated the negotiated withdrawal of British forces from the Egypt's Suez Canal zone in 1954 so as to ameliorate anti-Western grievances of the Arab peoples

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[313] Ibid., 65-70.

[314] Ibid., 72.

against British imperialism and Zionism and persuade Egypt to lead other Arab states to conclude a peace settlement with Israel.[315] Within the context of the US policy towards the Middle East, President Eisenhower encouraged reconciliation between Israel and Syria to stabilize the region. Shishakli pragmatically adopted pro-Western and pro-US policies to receive military equipment and financial aid from the US to strengthen his domestic and regional position against his enemies. In exchange for American assistance, Shishakli was ready for joining a military pact with the West vis-à-vis the Soviet Union and making a peace treaty with Israel in accordance with the American demand. Although the US welcomed Shishakli's initiative and was eager to provide certain types of arms to Syria, Shishakli was not able to sign any military or economic agreement with the US or a peace treaty with Israel owing to strong domestic opposition.[316]

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[315] Yaqub, 30.

[316] Ma'oz, *Syria and Israel*, 29-30.

CHAPTER 5

SYRIAN FOREIGN POLICY DURING THE PREATORIAN ERA: 1954-1963

The period between 1954 and 1963 was one of the most chaotic phases of Syrian history due to ongoing internal weakness of the state, fierce political factionalism, Israeli threat and inter-Arab interventions in conjunction with the advent of the Cold War in the Middle East. With the end of the period of military dictatorship, civilian politics was reestablished in 1954 until the formation of the United Arab Republic (UAR) in 1958, which lasted until the 1961 coup d'état. In 1961, the era of civilian politics reopened in the name of ''Secessionist Regime'' which ended with the Baathist coup of 1963. The most significant characteristic of this period was that even though the military dictatorship collapsed, the army still continued to be the real political power behind the political scene and intervened in politics, except for the period of the UAR, which made the political order praetorian between 1954 and 1963.

For this period, certain issues came to the fore and affected Syrian foreign policy at the domestic, regional and international environments. At the domestic level, the rise of radical leftists parties and their relentless struggle for power with the right-wing traditional parties of the old-guards (the NP and the PP) as well as their rivalry among themselves culminated in the ascendance of the leftist forces (the Baath, the communists, and Khalid al-Azm), which opened a new era in factionalist rivalry. Furthermore, this political fragmentation reflected in the army organization and it divided through the lines of radical political parties, which contributed to its stance behind the scene and balancing role against rival civilian factions in domestic politics.[317] The rise and ascendance of leftist parties as well as fragmentation among the army ranks highly influenced Syrian foreign policy between 1954 and 1963 as foreign policy was shaped by factional interests of rival domestic groups when they managed to accede to power.

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[317] For radical parties (the Baath and the SSNP), it was crucial to rely on the army's backing against the parties of the old-guards. There were various rival factions in the army. The first was the Baathist faction led by Mustafa Hamdun, Abd al-Ghani Qannut, Hasan Hiddeh, Jamal al-Sufi and also Baath sympathizer the chief of military intelligence Abd al-Hamid Sarraj. The second group was Liberation faction or Independent officers under the leadership of Amin al-Nafuri including Jado Izzeddine, Ahmad Abd al-Karim and Huseyin Hiddeh. This faction closely worked with independent Khalid al-Azm in the parliament. The third faction, vacillating between the Baathist and Liberation factions, was led by Tumeh Awdatallah and Ahmad al-Hunaydi. The forth faction was composed of conservative officers from Damascus led by Akram al-Dairi, Colonel Omar al-Qabbani and Lieutenant Colonel Hisham al-Azm. Finally, Afif al-Bizri was an independent but known for his sympathy to the left. See Seale, *The Struggle for Syria*, 245-246 and Mufti, 82.

In this state of domestic weakness, Syrian growing need for security since the mid-1950s onwards against the Western and Israeli threats overlapped with Syria's official attempt at redrawing boundaries of the Syrian people's collective identity and corresponding Arab unity projects. For this reason, all factions gave up the ''Syria-first'' policy of last decades owing to ''the Arab Cold War''[318], which forced Syrian leaders pragmatically identify themselves with pan-Arab regional system of Nasser or pro-Western Iraq. Both left and right wanted to ally with a higher authority or a patron either Iraq or Egypt for domestic bid for power between 1954 and 1963, similar to the previous periods.

At the regional level, Syria became more vulnerable to Israeli aggression and traditional inter-Arab struggle between the Hashemite camp and the Saudi-Egyptian bloc than previous years which intensified due to the direct penetration of the Cold-War in the Middle East in 1954. The advent of the Cold War in the region ushered in a new era in inter-Arab politics- ''the Arab Cold War'' in which Middle Eastern states polarized as pro-Western monarchies (Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Jordan) and anti-Western republics (Egypt and Syria). As in the previous decades, Syria was obviously the most strategic country to regional power struggle. The new form of inter-Arab struggle for Syria highly affected Syrian foreign policy at the regional level when it combined with domestic factionalism. Especially, Iraq's participation in the Baghdad Pact made it unsuitable ally for Syrian people and leftist-nationalist parties and forced them to ally with Nasser's Egypt, which ultimately culminated in the formation of the UAR.

In addition to the Arab Cold War, the emergence of Gamal Abd al-Nasser as a pan-Arab and neutralist hero may be evaluated as another significant regional determinant which had profound impacts on Syrian foreign policy. The rise of Nasser coincided with the rise of leftist-neutralist forces in Syrian politics and gave them a chance to balance their domestic rivals through pan-Arab unity plans with Nasser and overcome the Cold War crises. Needless to say, Israel formed the third important regional aspect of Syrian foreign policy, which added security dimension owing to Israeli retaliations between 1954 and 1963.

In addition to these factors, the Cold War can be considered as one of the most significant factors that affected Syrian foreign policy on international level. The

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[318] Malcolm Kerr, *The Arab Cold War 1958-1967, A Study of Ideology in Politics*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970).

worldwide rivalry between the US and the USSR directly penetrated into the Middle East in the post-1954 period. The US-sponsored defense initiatives for the Middle East and Syria accelerated after 1954. The efforts of the Western camp were countered by the Soviet Union, which changed Stalin's doctrinaire foreign policy since 1953 onwards and adopted flexible foreign policy towards the leftist-nationalist regime in Damascus. The Soviet Union provided Syria with large amount of arm sales against Western aggressions and became the chief ally Syria in the Cold War era. Thus, the Soviet Union contributed to Syria's liberation from the West and its independent foreign policy by breaking the core power's dominance in world politics. The Soviet-Syrian rapprochement in line with Egypt-Syrian alliance resulted in a set of domestic and regional troubles for Syrian foreign policy created by the Western camp: Western-Iraqi defense designs for the Middle East, Western-sponsored plots against the Syrian government during the course of 1956 and 1957; the Summer Crisis between Turkey and Syria in 1957 and the Eisenhower Doctrine of 1957.

5.1. Domestic Determinants in the Post-1954 Period: Political Instability, Factionalism, Divergent Coalitions and the Rise of Leftist Parties

5.1.1. The Short-Term Rule of the Pro-Iraqi Faction in the Wake of Shishakli's Ouster and the Issue of Iraqi-Syrian Union

Following the fall of the Shishakli dictatorship, constitutional order was restored, the era of civilian politics reopened and suppressed political fragmentation among different Syrian factions reemerged until the formation of the UAR in February 1958. In the wake of Shishakli's fall, former president Hashim al-Atasi came to Damascus on 1 March 1954 and pro-Iraqi Secretary General of the National Party Sabri al-Asali formed a coalition government composed of the NP, the PP and the independents. Expectedly, Iraq's role in the process of Shishakli's ouster brought unity issue to Syrian foreign policy agenda and increased hopes for the Fertile Crescent unity once again when al-Asali took the premiership and the PP was strongly represented in the government along with the parliament. Al-Asali began negotiations for a possible Iraqi-Syrian union and held secret meetings with Iraqi Prime Minister Fadhil al-Jamali in Lebanese town of Brummana for unification on 2 May and 8 June 1954 and accepted federal unification under Iraq's leadership. The underlying drive behind the unity scheme was not al-Asali's pan-Arab unification zeal toward an expansionist neighbor rather his pragmatic political concerns to balance his domestic pro-Saudi-Egyptian camp civilian and army officer rivals and take

institutional support, especially military one, from an expansionist partner against these rivals. The Baath and the communists, whose political power was on the rise since early 1950, immediately rebuked the Iraqi-Syrian unification plan and popular demonstrations broke out all around the country condemning union with a country enslaved by Britain. While the political unrest was escalating in the country, final blow to the al-Asali government came with the disclosure of an abortive coup led by Iraq-backed Colonel Safa in June 1954. After this event, the army, whose relations with the al-Asali government were uneasy from the onset, reminded its anti-Iraqi stance to the politicians once again and on the same day al-Asali resigned from premiership.[319]

In addition to the rising leftist-radical forces that represented modern middle class strata of the Syrian society, another significant reason for the failure of the Iraqi-Syrian unity was the immediate response of Egypt against the plan. Egypt's military attaché Lieutenant-Colonel Jamal Hammad contacted with anti-Iraqi Syrian officers and warned them against the danger of Iraqi domination over the Syrian army which would reduce their power in politics. Egypt's efforts gave consequence and it once again succeeded to prevent Iraqi ambitions over Syria.[320]

5.1.2. The Rise of Leftist-Neutralist Forces in Syrian Politics after the October 1954 Elections

After the failure of the Iraqi-Syrian unity scheme, the elections were held in two rounds on 24-25 September and on 4-5 October 1954. The elections were attended by the PP, the NP, the Baath, the SSNP, the Muslim Brethren, the ALM, the SCP, the Socialist Cooperative Party and the Independents who were landowners, businessmen, tribal and minority leaders, or the leaders of the largest and powerful families who represented traditionalism in Syrian society. After the elections, Independents won 64 seats, the People's Party 30, the Baath Party 22, the National Party 19, the SSNP 2, the Socialist Cooperative Party 2, the ALM 2 and the Communist Party 1 in the parliament.[321]

The most striking feature of the election was the change in the political trend from the traditional right-wing parties of the old-guards to the radical leftist parties and independents known for their anti-Western, nationalistic and leftist dispositions, which

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[319] Mufti, 68-69.

[320] Rathmell, 93.

[321] Hopwood, 37.

signified the triumph of neutralism in Syria. As a result of the elections, the Baath Party emerged as a strong power center in Syrian politics, Secretary-General of the Syrian Communist Party Khalid Bakdash became the first communist deputy in the Arab world and the PP's power declined considerably.[322] This picture was a clear indication of the death of the Fertile Crescent unity as the pro-Iraqi PP lost the majority in the parliament. Therefore, in the following year, Iraq altered its strategy and adopted an aggressive policy to regain the control of Syria.[323]

After the September 1954 elections, one of the older members of the NP old-guards, Faris al-Khuri managed to form a coalition government of the NP, the PP and some independents on 29 October 1954. However, leftist forces in the parliament, led by the Baath and Khalid al-Azm, refused to participate in the pro-Western Khuri government. The Baghdad Pact became the most challenging issue after the forming of the al-Khuri government.[324] Al-Khuri's mild attitude towards the pact owing to his pro-Iraqi dispositions during the Arab League summit in Cairo in January 1955 caused his downfall on 7 February 1955 under the pressure of public and internal opposition, backed by the Saudi-Egyptian camp and France. Especially, Saudi Arabia played a key role in al-Khuri's downfall by bribing money to ex-President Quwatli and some of the tribal deputies known for their anti-Iraqi stance.[325]

With the fall of the Khuri government, pro-Iraqi right lost the initiative in the parliament and the neutralist-leftist politicians took the lead. The Baath Party approached Nasser and the communists, who boosted their activities after the election of Bakdash, to fight against their rightist reactionary enemies in the parliament as well as against Western ambitions. These two attempts meant that Syria would pursue its anti-Baghdad Pact stance and play in line with Egypt and the Soviet Union in following years. The Baath and Khalid al-Azm[326], aware of their relative weakness in the parliament,

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[322] Seale, *The Struggle for Syria*, 182-184.

[323] Ibid., 184.

[324] Ibid., 215.

[325] Rathmell, 96-97.

[326] Khalid al-Azm was one of the good examples of Syrian opportunist politicians. He had no ideological orientation and jumped on the every political bandwagon for his political interests. He had pursued pro-Western policies with the impact of France after the independence. Later, he started to collaborate with the Baath Party and the communists to gain the support of both Nasser and the Soviet Union in his quest for domestic political ascendacy. Though he was representative of Syrian national

pragmatically united their forces and began to exploit internal factionalism of the NP, divided between pro-Iraqi Lutfi al-Haffar and anti-Iraqi Sabri al-Asali (being an opportunist politician he had recently shifted his alliance with Iraq towards Egypt owing to the rise of Nasser against irredentist Hashemite pan-Arabism after his fall in June 1954), to form a government.[327]

The pragmatic alliance of Sabri al-Asali, Khalid al-Azm and the Baath Party under Hawrani became the dominant power in the parliament and President Atasi reluctantly charged al-Asali to form a government. On 13 February 1955, he took up premiership with a leftist-dominated government, in which Khalid al-Azm was the most powerful figure holding the posts of Foreign and Defense Ministries as he was backed by the Baath, the SCP and wide group of independents. Formation of the al-Asali government was a victory for Nasser as he supported al-Azm and the Baath in every phase of their seizing the power to maintain anti-Baghdad Pact trend in Syria through the media activities of Major Salah Salim and diplomatic initiatives of Brigadier Mahmud Riyad. Thus, on 22 February 1955, two days before the sign of the Baghdad Pact, Prime Minister al-Asali condemned the conclusion of all military pacts and declared their support Egypt's foreign policy orientation wholeheartedly.[328] With the rise of the leftist factions in domestic politics, Syria once again returned to Egypt in inter-Arab politics and began to rely on the Soviet Union.

Another event which drove Syria further towards the Soviet Union and Egypt was the Malki affair. In the post-1954 period, the Baathist faction of the army included Mustafa Hamdun, Adnan al-Malki and Abd al-Hamid al-Sarraj.[329] Among them Colonel Adnan Malki, who was one of the strongest figures in the army, was assassinated by a member of the SSNP on 22 April 1955. The Malki affair was an indication of the struggle for power within the army between pro-Baath and pro-SSNP officers. The murder gave the Baath-communist alliance a chance to eliminate their old pan-Syrian, anti-communist and anti-Arab nationalist rival SSNP both from the army and domestic politics. This

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bourgeoisie, ironically, he was perceived as communist puppet by the Western bloc. When he failed in presidential elections in 1957, he ceased to collaborate with Nasser and tilted towards the Soviet Union. See Mufti, 73-75.

[327] Seale, *The Struggle for Syria*, 218-219.

[328] Ibid., 219-222.

[329] Perlmutter, ''From Obscurity to Rule: The Syrian Army and the Ba'th Party,'' 834.

murder was used by pro-leftist and pro-Nasserite forces to drive Syria further towards the Soviet Union and Egypt. After the Malki affair, the SSNP was outlawed and many members of the party fled to Lebanon and pursued subversive policies towards the Syrian leftist governments in the following years with the backing of the US and Iraq to change Syrian foreign policy orientation. [330]

5.1.3. Rival Factions' Domestic Bid for Power, Nasser's Growing Influence on Syrian Politics and the Soviet-Syrian Rapprochement

In domestic politics, during the al-Asali government, many political factions continued to jockey for positions against each other. The first group was dedicated anti-Hashemite former president Shukri al-Quwatli and his main ally was the Chief of Staff Shawkat Shuqayr against Khalid al-Azm. Quwatli regained his power in domestic politics by defeating al-Azm in presidential elections in August 1955 with the help of Saudi Arabia and Egypt. The second group was the Baath Party of Hawrani, Bitar and Aflaq, which saw Egypt as an ideal partner to counter the unionist ambitions of the Hashemites and began to propagate for unity with Nasser. The third group was led by opportunist Khalid al-Azm who called for unity with Egypt enthusiastically than the Baath Party for his presidency ambition.[331]

Nasser skillfully played Syrian politicians against each other by playing a balancing role in Syrian domestic politics. However, Syrian politicians quickly realized the dual play of Nasser and his threat for their internal autonomy. Pro-leftist al-Asali government collapsed on 6 September 1955 when the Baath Party withdrew its support from the government as a reaction to the election of Quwatli instead of Baath's candidate Khalid al-Azm. Quwatli and Shuqayr wanted to change Syrian pro-Nasserite foreign policy and tried their hands to balance the growing Egyptian influence in the country by charging non-party Said al-Ghazzi to form a government. He declared his right-wing ''National Union'' government mainly drawn from the PP members on 13 September 1955. However, Ghazzi was unable to change the pro-Egypt and pro-Soviet foreign policy of Syria due to the promulgation of Nasser's Czech arms deal, which directly swept Syria into a military alliance with Egypt within the framework of the Arab League

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[330] For detailed information about the Malki affair and its impact on Syrian politics, see Rathmell, 98-103.

[331] Mufti, 74.

on 20 October 1955. Syrian-Egyptian pact was followed by a mutual defense pact between Egypt and Saudi Arabia. [332] In addition to Syrian-Egyptian rapprochement, the Soviet-Syrian relations developed considerably, however, the growing Soviet impact in the country accelerated the end of honeymoon between the Baath Party and Bakdash-led communists and they began to see each other as a potential threat in domestic politics. [333]

5.1.4. The Baath Party's Entrance to the Government: The Challenge of Unity Issue

The Ghazzi government fell as a result of resignations and radical student demonstrations on 3 June 1956. Then, al-Asali established a National Union government by compromising Khalid al-Azm, the NP, the PP and the Baath Party on 14 June 1956. For the first time, the Baath Party took two important posts in the government, Salah al Din al-Bitar became Foreign Minister and Khalil Kallas Minister of Economics. Not only Quwatli but also the Baath alarmed at Nasser's excessive dominance in Syrian politics after entering the al-Asali government. For this reason, Hawrani and Bitar went to Baghdad and contacted with Fadhil al-Jamali to conclude a federation with Iraq to balance Egypt. However, facing with the strength of Nasser's nationalist campaign, the Baathist leaders' balancing game came to naught and they reluctantly came in line with Egypt once again and began to propagate for Egyptian-Syrian union to utilize their pro-Nasserite stance in domestic politics. [334]

Even though there was a strong opposition of pro-Iraqi politicians against the government policies, under the pressure of the Baath Party, al-Asali declared the establishment of a ministerial committee composed of himself, Bitar and the PP member Ahmad Qanbar to conduct unity negotiations with Egypt on 5 July 1956 as a result of several meetings with Nasser in Cairo. Moreover, with the impact of the Baath, the government passed a resolution for a federal union with Egypt on 5 July 1956. [335] The rightist forces countered Baath's move by forcing the Chief of Staff Shuqayr to resign on 7 July. Shuqayr had changed his pro-Iraqi stance and allied with leftist army officers,

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[332] Ibid., 74; Ginat, 149.

[333] Seale, *The Struggle for Syria*, 255-257.

[334] Mufti, 74.

[335] Kaylani, ''The Rise of the Syrian Ba'th, 1940-1958,'' 19; Jaber, 41.

especially with Sarraj to isolate new and right-wing Defense Minister Abd al-Hasib Raslan. With support of Nafuri's officers and rightist politicians, Raslan forced Shuqayr to resign and replaced him with pro-Western but weak Tawfiq Nizam al-Din. After Nizam al-Din, pro-communist Afif al-Bizri became the chief of the general staff and the left took the lead in the army once again.[336]

The power consolidation of the rightist forces in the army did not last long, in May 1957 by-elections, leftist forces won a victory and consolidated their domestic position and Quwatli's attempt to replace Sarraj and other leftist officers was prevented by Defense Minister al-Azm and Hawrani. On 4 May 1957 and in early July Foreign Minister Salah al-Din al-Bitar called for a federal union with Egypt. Despite Nasser's reluctance, under the Baath's intense call for unity, on 4 September 1957 Egypt and Syria reached an agreement to unify their economies. Having failed in his bid for presidency, Khalid al-Azm changed his pro-Nasserite policy and began to pursue a strategy of balancing Nasser with the Soviet Union in domestic politics.[337]

5.1.5. Syria's Way to the UAR: The Baath versus the Communists, Nasser versus the Soviet Union

As mentioned above, since the onset of the constitutional life in 1954, there was a complicated factionalism and divergent coalitions both within the army and politicians, which changed according to their pragmatic needs to counterbalance rival factions. In late 1957, Syrian politicians divided into three factions. In late 1957, the rivalry between the Baath and the al-Azm-communist faction intensified owing to rising communist strength in conjunction with the Soviet influence in the country after the crisis with Turkey in 1957. The Baath Party was frustrated with the growing strength of its former communist allies in domestic politics. Furthermore, the news of Khalid al-Azm's intention of establishing a new party against them and communists' rising power in the army through pro-communist Afif al-Bizri which would embrace Nafuri faction and totally isolate the Baath Party in domestic politics. The Baath faction was also worried about a pro-communist coup, which would trigger right-wing counter-measures and a Western military intervention under the Eisenhower Doctrine. For this reason, the Baath once

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[336] Rathmell, 117-118.

[337] Ibid., 136-137.

again played its cards pragmatically and began to propagate for the Syrian-Egyptian unity to balance its communist rivals rather than its pan-Arab zeal.[338]

According to Mufti, ''the Baath Party can be described as a functional vehicle for Aflaq, Hawrani and Bitar's political ambitions to counterbalance their domestic political rivals.'' Moreover, the opportunistic policies of the Baath's triumvirate was criticized by second-generation younger Baathists in the party's Regional Command, which further forced the triumvirate to rush the country into union with Egypt by dissolving the party when Nasser made that a condition for unity. When the Baath Party decided to boycott the November municipal elections, it showed its abandonment of both party and revolutionary politics and, similar to the old-guards, chose to rely on a foreign patron, i.e. Nasser.[339]

It is very interesting to note that here while the unity game gained momentum in Syria, Nasser secretly contacted with the Americans because of his disturbance about the rising Soviet influence in Syria and reached an agreement with them to undermine communist influence in the country.[340] The Baath's divorce with the communists coincided with Nasser-Soviet tension, which became a turning point and paved the way for the UAR.

Towards the end of 1957, the al-Asali government divided between the Baath and the communists and two different foreign policy outlooks emerged. On the one hand, Foreign Minister Bitar advocated Egyptian-Syrian unity with the support of his party; on the other hand, Defense Minister al-Azm, in alliance with the communists, was doing everything to brink Syria closer to the Soviet Union.[341] The Baath Party intensified its call for unity with Egypt to raise nationalist sentiments against al-Azm and his communist allies. On 18 November 1957, a joint session of the Syrian and Egyptian parliament was held in Damascus and called on both governments to begin federation talks. On 9 December, Aflaq announced the Baath's federal union plan with effective governments

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[338] Jaber, 44.

[339] Mufti, 89.

[340] Rathmell, 143-144.

[341] Ginat, 177-178.

and parliaments in each province. The Baath's move was countered by al-Azm's bluff of demanding not federation but full and integral unity and escalated the game of unity.[342]

While the unity game heightened among the radical elements of Syrian politics, the PP wing of the old-guards welcomed the union between Egypt and Syria. On a special session of the Syrian parliament to discuss the issue of unity on 5 February 1958, Rushdi al-Kikhia, leader of the PP, surprisingly voted for the unity proposal. Even though Kikhia was famous for pro-Iraqi and anti-Nasserite stance, he was persuaded by Mahmud Riyad as the unity would lead to army's retreat from politics, thus he pragmatically jumped on the Nasserite bandwagon for his domestic interests. The Muslim Brotherhood, the NP and other tribesmen shared this view and supported the Egyptian-Syrian unity owing to their fear of the army's dominance in politics.[343]

However, Nasser was lukewarm about concluding a total political unity between two countries due to turbulent domestic scene in Syria, which would destabilize Egypt also. Eventually, under the pressure of nationalistic public opinion, Nasser changed his mind and accepted the unity proposal on 14 January providing that it was on his three terms. Nasser demanded a total unity, dissolution of all Syrian political parties into a single new political organization-the National Union led by Nasser himself- and finally the Syrian army's withdrawal from politics and returning to its barracks. However, Nasser's stipulations were unacceptable and the Baath, al-Azm and his communist allies withdrew their call for total unity and demanded a federal union. Although Bitar took the Syrian version of federal unity plan to Cairo on 25 January, it was firmly refused by Nasser. When there was no way out, Syrian politicians and the army accepted Nasser's patronage and paid the price of their factionalist game by sacrificing Syria's sovereignty to Egypt.[344] The United Arab Republic (UAR) was proclaimed on 1 February 1958 and the struggle for Syria was won by Egypt.

5.1.6. The Impact of the United Arab Republic (UAR) on Syrian Factions and their Foreign Policy Vision

Even though Syria united with Egypt and there was left no independent Syrian foreign policy, Nasser's authoritarian policies had deep impacts on domestic factions and

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[342] Mufti, 89-90.

[343] Telhami, 52-53.

[344] Dawisha, *Arab Nationalism in the Twentieth Century*, 195-199.

their foreign policy vision. In the eyes of the Arab masses establishment of the UAR was realization of the long-awaited Arab unity dream than the pragmatic approach of both Nasser and the Baath Party. It was obvious that the factors which pushed Syrian politicians and the army towards Nasser and paved the way for the UAR were their domestic power struggle, regional and international encroachments since 1955 and the Soviet-Nasser bid for hegemony over Syria. Syrian factions' pan-Arab nationalist zeal was in fact the last factor that pushed Syria to Nasser. On 21 February 1958, a referendum was held both in Egypt and Syria, the unity was approved and Nasser was elected president with %99.9 of votes. The UAR was divided into two regions (north and south) with Cairo as capital city of the new state.[345]

After the formation of the UAR, many prominent Baathists actively participated in the administration of UAR; on 6 March 1958, Nasser allotted two of four vice-presidencies of the UAR to Sabri al-Asali and Akram Hawrani. For Syrian province of the UAR, Salah al-Din al-Bitar was appointed Minister of State, Abd al-Hamid Sarraj to Minister of Interior, Mustafa Hamdun Minister of Social Affairs and Khalil Kallas Minister of Economy and Commerce.[346] Even though the Baathist politicians were appointed to the central government, from the onset they misperceived the nature of Nasserite regime. Especially Aflaq thought that Nasser would give the Baath cadres a strong ideological and political role in Syria and the beyond, and naively believed that they would play a free and crucial role in the UAR. However, Nasser did not let the Baath to play a political role in Syria and organize the National Union as an extension of their party.[347]

The UAR was obviously a unity between two unequal powers; factionalist and leaderless Syrian politicians were subordinated to Nasser's charismatic pan-Arab leadership which dominated every aspect of the Middle East since the Suez Crisis. Being the most powerful shareholder, Nasser's first job was to secure his power base in Syria. Though, at the beginning, the political power was shared by Syrians and Egyptians in the National Assembly and the central cabinet, all political parties in both regions were banned and all effective decision-making authority was given to President Nasser by a

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[345] Hopwood, 40-41.

[346] Devlin, *The Ba'th Party*, 131-132; Roberts, 44.

[347] Kerr, 16-18.

series of centralization decrees issued on 13 March 1958 to expand Egypt's control in the administration of Syria.[348] After the dissolution of the Syrian Regional Command of the Baath Party, which later created great dispute among the party ranks, Michel Aflaq moved the party's National Command to Beirut so as to maintain his control over the party affairs as Secretary General of the National Command.[349]

5.1.6.1. Nasser's Early Centralization Measures Against the Faction-Ridden Army, the Communists, and the Old-Guards

After strengthening his unquestionable leadership, Nasser began to neutralize all power centers in Syrian politics to fill the political vacuum left by the dissolution of political parties. He started with the notorious faction-ridden army; 102 pro-communist Palestinian officers were dismissed and many Baathists officers were brought to Cairo to be kept under tight Egyptian control. Although pro-communist General Bizri, the overall commander of the UAR armed forces, renounced Nasser's measures in the army, he was forced to resign in March 1958. By the same token, in following months, Nasser transferred Liberationist officers Nafuri and Abd al-Karim to Cairo in October 1958 by taking their military responsibilities and appointing them as ministers of transport and municipal affairs in central cabinet. After controlling the army, Nasser launched his anti-communist campaign in the UAR. After the formation of the UAR, Khalid Bakdash had left Syria and the SCP had been dissolved in accordance with the dissolution of all political parties. Besides, Nasser arrested hundreds of communist party members in both Egypt and Syria in late December 1958 and in March 1959. Nasser's extermination of communist impact in the UAR was the intention of countering the ideological challenge of communism to his pan-Arab nationalism after Qasim coup in Iraq and taking the support of the US for his pan-Arab leadership as well as the Syrian old-guards.[350]

Nasser expanded his early political centralization policies in economic domain with the proclamation of the Agrarian Reform Law in September 1958 which had monumental impact on Syrian socio-political life and economic structures of Syria. Nasser's land reform for Syria depended on socialist measures which targeted liquidating the big-estates, on which the influence of the traditional land owner class rested since the

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[348] Mufti, 122.

[349] Roberts, 45-46.

[350] Mufti, 122-123.

Land Code of 1858, by distributing lands to the landless peasants by the state. According to the land law, nobody could have more than 80 hectares of irrigated land and 300 hectares of non-irrigated land and the lands that exceeded the fixed ownership was to be expropriated within five years. The law planned that the expropriated lands (8 hectares of irrigated and 30 hectares of non-irrigated lands) were to be distributed to the landless peasants.[351]

After the Land Reform, Nasser declared the dissolution of the two governments for each region and establishment of a single central government in Cairo. For this reason, Nasser brought Hawrani and Bitar to Egypt as a preserving their posts in the UAR government. Nasser's tightening grip on the Syrian affairs was disapproved by the Baath Party as an action of centralization.[352] Nasser's policies profoundly affected foreign policy orientation of Syrian domestic factions, especially created deep frictions within the Baath Party as to its stance towards the Nasser and pan-Arab unity.

5.1.6.2. Nasser versus the Baath: Liquidation of the Baath from Syrian Politics and Factionalism among the Party Ranks

Having suppressed the army and the communists as well as launched economic reform and changed the political system in Syria, Nasser now turned his eyes to the Baath Party. Although the Baath Party tried every way to collaborate and influence Nasser to gain political freedom which was a source of friction between them, it failed to achieve its aims and faced with Nasser's tyrannical measures against the party. Nasser first move was to play his traditional game among Syrian factions, for this reason he began to play them off against each other and strengthen the traditional parties of the old-guards, the NP and the PP, in order to counterbalance and finally get rid of the Baath Party from political arena. Having seen the danger coming from Nasser, the Baath Party under Aflaq struggled to bring Qasim's Iraq to the UAR after the July coup to balance Nasser's dictatorship. However, Nasser rejected any unity talks before his partisans came to power in Baghdad.[353]

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[351] Keilany, ''Socialism and Economic Change in Syria,'' 63.

[352] Jaber, 49.

[353] Mufti, 124.

The fatal blow to the Baath from Nasser came in the elections for the local committees of the National Union, the UAR's parliament on 8 July 1959. During the elections, Nasser returned his old-game of playing Syrian factions against each other and openly supported the old-guards and as a result out of 9,445 seats allotted to the Northern Region of the UAR, the Baath won only 250 seats, Aflaq lost the election but other leaders of the Baath entered the National Union. The real victorious of the election was the old-guards who won majority of seats in the National Union.[354] The result of the elections damaged the pan-Arab nature of the Baath and reputation of triumvirate of party's leadership for the way of their dissolution of the party. Hawrani, Aflaq and Bitar dissolved the party without consulting other members in the National Command or in the Syrian Regional Command. The party members were frustrated and the party organization collapsed in Syria, which was an irreparable blow to the prestige of the ruling triumvirate.[355]

In October 1959, owing to slow progress in industrial and agrarian reforms as well as restarted clandestine activities of the old parties, Nasser sent his the most loyal comrade Abd al-Hakim Amir to Syria with the authority of whole administration of Syria. However, there emerged tension between the Baath and Amir soon after his arrival and Baathist ministers Hawrani, Bitar, Mustafa Hamdun, Abd al-Ghani Qannut and Khalil Kallas resigned from the UAR government in December 1959 and no Baathists left in the UAR administration, which was the indication of real divorce between the Baath and Nasser. From this time onwards, Nasser disregarded the Baath and began to rely on a group of army officers and bureaucrats headed by Sarraj who was appointed as Chairman of the Syrian Provincial Council on 31 December 1960. Besides, Amir worked for agreement with the urban middle classes and a group of veteran politicians for gaining their support for governing Syrian affairs. As this policy failed and opposition continued, Nasser pursued policy of further integrating Syria into Egypt during the course of late 1960 and 1961.[356]

While Nasser was able to undermine the political impact of the Baath Party, he wanted to grasp the control of the party by neutralizing its leadership. Thus, Nasser

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[354] Perlmutter, ''From Obscurity to Rule: The Syrian Army and the Ba'th Party,'' 834; Kerr, 19.

[355] Devlin, ''The Baath Party: Rise and Metamorphosis,'' 1400.

[356] Rabinovich, *Syria under the Ba'th*, 17-18.

sowed the seeds of factionalism among the party ranks and backed Abdullah al-Rimawi, leader of the Baath's Jordanian Regional Command, to challenge the leadership of Aflaq in the Baath National Command placed in Beirut. In addition to Rimawi, Ali Fuad al-Rikabi, the leader of Baath's Iraq Regional Command, began to propagate that there was no need for separate Baath Party if there was Nasserite movement and he called for dissolution of the Baath Party and dedication to both the UAR and President Nasser. Both Rimawi and Rikabi were expelled from the party, which created split among the part ranks. [357] Unlike Rimawi and Rikabi, Hawrani adopted harsh policy towards the UAR and Nasser after his resignation from the government and demanded secession from union and establishment of the Baath's Syrian Regional Command. Aflaq-Bitar faction strongly rejected the idea of secession from the union and establishment of the Regional Command owing to possibility of Hawrani's overtaking of the command. While the Baath factions were getting more and more polarized, despite their reluctance, Aflaq and Bitar pragmatically saw their unequal and uneasy relations with Nasser as the easiest way to achieve their political goals and dominance in the party.[358]

5.1.6.3. The Emergence of the ''Second Generation'' in the Baath Party and its Challenge to the Traditional Leadership

While polarization among the party's high ranks reached its climax, another important power center was rising among the party's second rank members, which had great impact on party's fate in the future. ''The second rank'' Baathists were a group disillusioned with the UAR and its officials' attitudes towards them. They began to blame Baath's veteran leadership for the establishment of the UAR and dissolution of the party without consulting the party members. This group developed sense of inferiority and more leftist stance against party's high command owing to their non-integration in the party's high command during the 1950s as they were second rank Baathists.[359]

In addition to the Baath's civilian ''second rank'' members, disgruntled young military officers of the Baath, who were posted to Egypt since the formation of the UAR, were not happy with the UAR experiment and policies of their veteran Baath leaders. For this reason, these young military officers of the Baath mostly captains and majors coming

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[357] Mufti, 124; Jaber, 51-54.

[358] Mufti,125.

[359] Rabinovich, *Syria under the Ba'th*, 22-23.

from villages or rural towns and belonging to the heterodox sects of the compact minorities, established a clandestine society or the Military Committee (*al-Lajna al-Askariya*) in 1959, whose members later dominated the military wing of the Baath as well as the country. The committee was consisted of five officers; there were three Alawites Lieutenant Colonel Muhammad Umran, Major Salah Jadid, Captain Hafez al-Assad and two Ismailis Captain Abd al-Karim al-Jundi and Major Ahmad al-Mir. Later, the Military Committee expanded its members to fourteen officers including five Alawites, five Sunnis, two Druzes and two Ismailis.[360] Though the committee did not play any role during the UAR period, its members played significant role in the making of the coup d'état of 8 March 1963.

5.1.6.4. Nasser's Nationalization Measures of 1961: Fatal Blow to the UAR

During the course of 1961, Nasser's rule in Syria faced with deep crises. When disagreement occurred between Amir and Sarraj, Nasser supported the former and removed Sarraj from Damascus to Cairo as a Vice-President. As a reaction to Nasser's measure, Sarraj resigned from his post and returned back to Damascus one month later, which meant that Nasser lost his last and most strong power base in Syria. Even though Nasser pursued good relations with the old-guards in political domain, Nasser's Arab socialism was a source of tension between two sides. After the 1958 Agrarian Reform Law, the second terrible shock to the power of the old-guards and free market economy of Syria came with Nasser's series of nationalization decrees of July 1961, which included banks, insurance companies and large-scale commercial and industrial enterprises and gave pivotal role to the state in conducting the management of the economy.[361]

However, Nasser miscalculated the result of the nationalization decrees, which had been successfully applied in Egypt. Unlike Egypt, the old-guards, whose power was diminished considerably by rising radical political parties and the army during 1950s as well as Nasser's socialist measures and the land reform since 1958, were still an important political group and a power base in Syria as they were traditionally established

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[360] For a good evaluation of the Military Committee and the social origins of its members, see Hanna Batatu, *Syria's Peasantry, the Descendants of Its Lesser Rural Notables, and Their Politics* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1999), 144-155.

[361] Ahsan, ''Economic Policy and Class Structure in Syria: 1958-1980,'' 304-305; see also Keilany, ''Socialism and Economic Change in Syria,'' 65-66.

class and they still represented in the army. With the 1961 nationalization measure their disturbance from Nasser and his economic policies reached its climax and they were totally alienated from the regime, which paved the way for the secessionist coup of September 1961.[362]

Having suppressed all economic and political power groups in Syria -the army, the communists, the Baath and finally the old-guards- as a result of his economic and political centralization policies and ''divide and rule'' strategy, Nasser lost his legitimacy in Syria. Especially, his neutralization of the communists, the Baathists and the Liberationist factions in the army resulted in the strengthening of the Damascene faction of the conservative army officers who represented interests of the old-guards. Finally, the UAR was ended with a coup d'état staged on 28 September 1961 by the Damascene officers led by Lieutenant Colonel Abd-al Karim al-Nahlawi, backed by Saudi Arabia and Jordan.[363] New regime immediately announced Syria's secession from the union and reestablishment of Syria as an independent state. Despite his reluctance, Nasser accepted the breakup of the UAR reluctantly.[364]

The conspiring officers were not unified in terms of their interests and they divided into three different factions. The first faction composed of rightist officers such as Haidar al-Kuzbari and Faisal Sirri al-Husaini, who represented interests of the Syrian bourgeoisie. The second faction was headed by Nahlawi and his friends who participated in the coup owing to their personal grievances and ambitions. The third faction included Faiz ar-Rifai and Muhib al-Hindi who did not desire break from the UAR but sought to reform it by imposing certain conditions on Egyptians.[365]

5.1.7. The Secessionist Regime between 1961 and 1963: Political Turmoil and Domestic Factions' Dilemma of Reunification

When the UAR collapsed and Syria was declared as an independent state after the 28 September coup, the era of secessionism (*al-Fatrat al-Infisal*), which can be described as a period of horrible political turmoil and instability, opened and yet again Syrian

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[362] For a good analysis of the reasons for the Syrian secession from the UAR, see Kerr, 28-34.

[363] Rathmell, 159.

[364] Mufti, 134.

[365] Rabinovich, *Syria under the Ba'th*, 19-20.

politicians and the army succumbed to their fierce domestic factionalism and intrigues of the pre-UAR period. The leadership of the new secessionist regime was composed of a coalition between new leadership of the army (the Damascene officers) and a body of heterogeneous traditional civilian politicians or the old-guards. However, the secessionist regime's uneasy relationship with Nasser, conservative outlook and image of its leadership, and divisions between military and civilian camps of the regime as well as their factitiousness within each camps contributed to its downfall with the coup d'état of the Baath on 8 March 1963.[366]

Similar to the other coups in previous years, the secessionist 28 September coup definitely led to a change in Syrian foreign policy, which was shaped by anti-Nasserite and anti-unification motives as well as cultivation of regional alliances with other regional states (Iraq and Jordan) against domestic enemies so as to maintain rule in Damascus and balance Nasser's aggression over Syria. Thus, struggle for power in Syria and inter-Arab struggle for Syria revived and there occurred series of coups and abortive coup attempts during the eighteen months. More importantly, after the 28 September coup, the army once again became the source of political power and directly shaped Syrian politics.

After the UAR experience, the call for Arab unity schemes among the Syrian ruling elites turned out to be less enthusiastic, even though this was not the case among the Syrian population. This change of attitude among the Syrian leaders could be seen easily in their redefinition of Syrian population as a new community rather than a part of larger Arab nation, which directly reflected in their discourse about demanding federal union with other Arab states rather than a full merger in following years.[367] Therefore, it can be argued that Syrian politicians returned to ''Syria-first'' policy from 1961 to 1963. However, this change from pan-Arabism to Syrian identity could not be declared openly owing to strong pan-Arab nationalist and unity sentiments among the Syrian society, which caused an uncertainty over Syrians' desire for drawing line between their interests and neighboring countries as well as their vision of Syria's future and the Middle East.[368]

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[366] Ibid., 26.

[367] For a good analysis of the UAR and its impact on the Syrian unification policy, see Kienle, ''Arab Unity Schemes Revisited,'' 56-58.

[368] Martha Neff Kessler, Syria: Fragile Mosaic of Power (Honolulu, Hawaii: University Press of the Pacific, 2002), 47; Sinai and Pollack, 26.

Proponents of this dilemma were challenged by Nasser's policy of non-recognition of the new regime and his propaganda war for reunification. Hence, on the one hand, the UAR contributed to development of distinct Syrian identity, it, on the other, created another deep line of fragmentation in already factitious Syrian politics.[369]

During the eighteen months of the secessionist period, the most challenging trouble with which Syrian factions including the Baath faced was the dilemma of whether unite or not unite with Egypt. This question was not only the problem of the secessionist regime, which put it under the pressure of an awkward dilemma. This dilemma was about their dedication to Nasser and his symbolic pan-Arab personality on the one hand, and their support for a coup staged against Nasser and the first pan-Arab state, on the other. After the coup, the dilemma of reunification got worse owing to rising popular demand for reunification and Nasser's irresistible propaganda war against the secessionists who betrayed to the UAR. The main problem during the secessionist period was to resolve this dilemma of pan-Arab unification and will of separation which was the main concern of all political actors. The core cadets of the coup was composed of three factions that succeeded each other during the separatist period, all of which struggled to find a solution to dilemma of reunification or separation from the UAR and Nasser and to gain public support in Syria.[370]

5.1.7.1. Returning to the Hashemite Camp: the Short Rule of Pro-Jordanian Faction in the Wake of the Secessionist Coup

After the coup, one of the Damascene factions of the conspiring groups under the leadership of Haidar al-Kuzbari and Faisal Sirri al-Husseini acceded to power and Ma'mun Kuzbari, Haidar's relative and a prominent old-guard, formed a new government on 29 September 1961. The most significant characteristic of the new government was its pro-Jordanian stance; the leaders of the new regime searched for a new patron in Jordan and pursued a confederation with this country in order to balance Egyptian pressures and reverse mood of reunification with Nasser within Syria by showing their will on unification with another Arab country.[371] On the other hand, policies of the civilian government became a source of frustration for the leaders of the Syrian army who saw

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[369] Rabinovich, *Syria under the Ba'th*, 20.

[370] Mufti, 135.

[371] Ibid., 135.

themselves as the real owner of the country and the only source of political power which destined to shape the future of the country. For this reason, the army succeed to form a National Security Council dominated by the army officers and whose function was described as ''formulation of the broad lines of the state's policy.''[372] The army's strong drive for interfering in politics coupled with the new regime's weakness and its wrong pro-Hashemite foreign policy in the age of Nasser and pan-Arabism, which finally culminated in its ouster by a second coup carried out by Nahlawi on 21 November 1961. Ma'mun Kuzbari, Haidar Kuzbari and Sirri Husseini were arrested owing to taking bribe money from Jordan for their own interests and they were declared as the chief responsible for the breakup of the UAR and gave other factions of the coup a chance to legitimize their position in the eyes of Syrian people.[373]

Although the army intervened in politics once again and neutralized its civilian rivals, it was far from taking the direct control of politics owing to its lack of effective leadership and its factitiousness, which prevented them to exert effective pressures on civilian politicians and some of its members desire to exploit personal and social prestige of veteran politicians like Khalid al-Azm and Nazim al-Qudsi. For this reason, the army allowed the continuation of constitutional and civilian regime.[374]

5.1.7.2. The 1961 Elections and the Revival of Pro-Iraqi Old-Guards in Syrian Politics

General elections were held on 1 December 1961 and Aleppine old-guards won a decisive victory in the ballot boxes; they won 86 out of 155 seats in the parliament. Once again, the leaders of the People's Party became main political power and Nazim al-Qudsi was elected as president, Marouf al-Dawalibi became prime minister and Ma'mun Kuzbari the speaker of the parliament on 14 December 1961. The new regime of the old-guards was supported by the second faction of the Damascene officers led by Mufiq Assasa and Mustafa al-Dawalibi, who was Morouf's brother. Having taken the support of the one faction of the army, notwithstanding objections of the Baath and other radical groups, Qudsi and Dawalibi began to neutralize and reverse the impact of economic measures of Nasser including nationalizations and agrarian reform law by enacting series

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[372] Rabinovich, *Syria under the Ba'th*, 29.

[373] Mufti, 136.

[374] Rabinovich, *Syria under the Ba'th*, 30.

of conservative and liberal laws in early 1962. Although the old-guards won the elections, they felt that their position in Damascus was not secure owing to Nasser's propaganda war, power struggle among rival cliques in domestic politics and most importantly the new regime's weak support base in the army. For this reason, Qudsi began to replay his pragmatic inter-Arab game by reproaching Qasim's Iraq so as to balance his Nasserites, Baathists and other domestic rivals in the army. On 12 March 1961, Qudsi and Qasim met and declared their plans for close military and political cooperation including the stationing the Iraqi forces on Syria's border with Israel. The old-guards' reactionary economic measures against socialism and their policy of cultivating regional ally against the army were unacceptable to the army officers especially after the experience of the UAR. They moved once again under the leadership of Nahlawi and launched a ''corrective'' coup d'état on 28 March 1962; Qudsi was jailed and Dawalibi was ousted from his post.[375]

After Nahlawi's second coup, Nasser's ongoing propaganda war against the secessionist regime and growing pan-Arab sentiment at home forced the Damascene officers to change their stance towards Nasser and the UAR. Deputy Chief of Intelligence Sharaf Zabalawi openly declared the urgent need for changing Damascene officers' policy from anti-Nasserite to reunification so as to prevent their annihilation from politics. Likewise, Nahlawi, who was the head of secessionists one year ago, understood impossibility of pursuing anti-Nasserite foreign policy; he ironically and pragmatically converted to pro-Nasserite and pro-UAR stance after his second coup. Both Nahlawi and Zabalawi's attitude led to a break in the ranks of the Damascene officers who organized the secessionist coup to solve the dilemma of reunification.[376]

It is important to note that here as a result of the tension among the rival military factions substantial portions of the Damascene officers were dismissed from important military posts around Damascus and other important towns and instead of them officers from small Syrian districts and peasant origins, whom were scorned by the Damascenes earlier, were appointed. The power of the Damascene officers diminished substantially as out of 8 members of the army's commander cadets, only 1 officer was from Damascus. Ongoing rivalry and clean-up operations among the Sunni officers in the army's high

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[375] Mufti, 136-137.

[376] Ibid., 137.

rank weakened their position and officers from compact minority groups who did not wear themselves out with politics during 1950s began to be appointed to their high posts in the early years of 1960s as a result of liquidation among the Sunni officers.[377] They finally became the most dynamic and strong power group in Syrian politics after the 1963 Baath coup d'état.

5.1.7.3. From Reestablishment of Civilian Politics to the 1963 Coup: Pro-Iraqi Faction's Search for Unification Dilemma

In the wake of the Nahlawi's second coup, the Baathist and other factions of the army learned that in this chaotic environment neither of them could succeed to ascend to power completely and they understood that military control without civilian politicians was ineffectual and creating political vacuum.[378] For this reason, they allowed Nazim al-Qudsi to return to presidency and Qudsi immediately allied with moderate commander in chief Abd al-Karim Zahr al-Din. Dr. Bashir al-Azma, who was close to the Baath, formed a government on 16 April 1963 with the help of Qudsi and Zahr al-Din. Azma's primary task was to repair the relationship between Syria and Nasser even to form a federal union with Egypt as pro-Iraqi and pro-Jordan foreign policies of the previous governments failed after the secessionist coup. In order to mollify Nasser's aggression and strong pro-Nasserite sentiments, Azma made some gestures including the reversion of previous changes in the 1958 agrarian law and a call for an immediate union with the ''liberated'' Arab countries including Egypt and Iraq. On the other hand, Nasser strongly opposed reconciliation with a government in the era of secessionist regime. Having seen the impossibility to reach an agreement with Nasser, Qudsi and Zahr al-Din now changed their strategy once again and began to pursue hostile attitude towards Nasser. This change in policy reflected in a governmental change in Syria, which brought Khalid al-Azm who was an ardent opponent of both Nasser and the Baathists to power on 13 September 1962. Enemies of the secessionist regime galvanized into action and organized a coup under the leadership of Nahlawi against al-Azm, Qudsi and Zahr al-Din. However, the coup failed and Nahlawi fled to abroad. While Syrian secessionist regime was surviving, the

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[377] Van Dam, 30-31.

[378] Rabinovich, *Syria under the Ba'th*, 35.

Baathists and the Nasserites were gaining power in conjunction with growing pan-Arab sentiment within the country.[379]

The most significant development on the way of demise of the secessionist regime came with a coup d'état in Iraq 8 February 1963 carried out by a coalition of Baathists and independent officers against the Qasim regime, which led to the Iraqi branch of the Baath's accession to power. In order to legitimize the secessionist regime and appease the growing pan-Arab sentiment and their unionist rivals in domestic politics, Qudsi made a federation offer to the new Iraqi government. However, the secessionists were too late and having seen the example of Iraqi counterparts Syrian Baathists in conjunction with the well-organized secret Military Committee allied with the Nasserites and independent officers so as to overthrow the secessionist regime. They successfully staged a coup d'état exactly one month after the Iraqi coup d'état on 8 March 1963 against Qudsi, al-Azm and Zahr al-Din and the era of secessionist regime closed.[380]

The 8 March 1963 coup d'état of the Baath Party ushered in a new era for Syrian politics in which the socio-political power of the Sunni old-guards were totally crumbled and the military wing of the Baath Party under the control of the Military Committee, representing identity and interests of the rural heterodox minority groups especially the Alawites, became the dominant political power in Syrian politics, which profoundly transformed politics of modern Syria which is still on work today.

5.2. Regional Determinants of Syrian Foreign Policy during the Praetorian Era: The Arab Cold-War and Israel

5.2.1. The Arab Cold-War as a New Form of Inter-Arab Rivalry

5.2.1.1. The Emergence of Nasser as a Pan-Arab and Neutralist Hero in the Middle East

Nasser was one of the most important figures of the Middle East from 1954 to his death in 1970. After the overthrown of kingdom by the coup d'état of the Free Officers in Egypt in 1952, Nasser consolidated his domestic position and finally assumed power directly by ousting General Nagib in November 1954. Having discontented with the role of the Egypt-led Arab League in inter-Arab politics, he began to pursue more ambitious

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[379] Mufti, 138-139; Kerr, 51-52.

[380] Rabinovich, *Syria under the Ba'th*, 43-47.

foreign policy by making a bid for leadership in the Middle East via pan-Arab nationalism and neutralism against Western imperialism and Zionism. Nasser emphasized the Arab solidarity to rescue the Arab nation from imperialist tutelage and adopted pan-Arabism as the official policy to make a bid for regional hegemony by appealing Arab leaders to establish an Arab security pact under the Egyptian-led Arab League umbrella against the Western designs. Nasser's ambitious policy unsurprisingly was reacted by pro-Western Nuri al-Said and Regent Abdul-Ilah as a quest for Egyptian hegemony in the Middle East.[381]

Having a dedicated anti-imperialist and anti-Israeli personality, Nasser rejected any Western-led defense pact as a neo-imperialist plot in the region and adopted non-alignment as a guarantee of Arab independence. He thought that the Arabs should not take side in the East-West confrontation to shape their future with their will and they should be free to have trade relations, accept economic aid and purchase arms from the two blocs. Nasser's principle of ''positive neutralism'' was a pragmatic strategy, in which he welcomed any kind of equal cooperation between Egypt and the Eastern or the Western bloc, which reflected his good relations with both the US and the USSR.[382] Moreover, he skillfully utilized the Cold War bipolarity to construct his relatively autonomous and informal pan-Arab regional order against the Western encroachments in the region.[383] The rise of Nasser and his charismatic appeal for pan-Arab nationalism affected Syrian foreign policy profoundly as it overlapped with the rising leftist-nationalist forces in Syrian politics in the post-1954 period.

5.2.1.2. The Baghdad Pact and its Impact on Syrian Foreign Policy

The Western-sponsored defense plans for the Middle East since the onset of the Cold War had come to naught due to the Arab states' disinterest in the Western security concerns about the Soviet Union. Although there were pro-US regimes in Turkey, Iran and Pakistan or ''Northern-Tier'' countries to contain the Soviet threat, the Western defense plans could not be implemented in the Middle East since the collapse of the MEC

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[381] Devlin, *The Ba'th Party*, 82-83. For the rise of and fall of Nasser's Egypt-Centric Pan-Arab System from 1956 to 1970, see Hinnebusch, ''The Middle East Regional System,'' 35-40.

[382] Yaqub, 32.

[383] For a good analysis of the breakup of the core-periphery relations between the West and the Middle Eastern states in the Cold War era see, Hinnebusch, *The International Politics of the Middle East*, 21-30.

proposals in 1951. While the US strengthening its position through the Dulles's northern-tier alliance system in 1954, Britain was disturbed by new American initiatives as a step towards neo-imperialism, which would possibly reduce British role in the Middle East. With the signing of the Anglo-Egyptian agreement in October 1954, Britain again began to involve actively in the Middle East affairs. When pro-Western Nuri al-Said of Iraq proposed a collective security pact among the Arab states against international communism in September 1954, his initiative was enthusiastically welcomed by Britain, which regarded such a step as counterbalance the US organized northern-tier alliance. Through Iraqi-led security pact, the gravity of Western security would shift towards the Middle East and Britain would regain her previous position in the region via this organization as it had done in 1945 with the Arab League. The pact would contain the Soviet influence in the Middle East and facilitate Iraq's political influence over Syria in its traditional inter-Arab rivalry against the Saudi-Egyptian camp, which gave additional reasons to press for Syrian participation in the pact.[384] Within this context, on 13 January 1955 a joint Iraqi-Turkish communiqué was declared which proposed a defense agreement and finally the Iraqi-Turkish pact of mutual cooperation or the Baghdad Pact was signed by Turkish PM Adnan Menderes and Iraqi PM Nuri al Said on 24 February 1955.[385] The promulgation of the Baghdad Pact profoundly affected the regional order and Syrian foreign policy which will be explained below.

5.2.1.3. The ESS Pact and Syria's Tilt towards Nasser

The Baghdad Pact became the most challenging issue of Syrian foreign policy in the wake of the 1954 elections. With the help of the leftist-faction, Sabri al-Asali established a government and began to rely on Nasser as a reaction to pro-Iraqi policies of the previous government of al-Khuri.

Soon after the sign of the Baghdad Pact on 24 February, negotiations between Egypt and Syria started and the Syrian-Egyptian alliance agreement, proposed a joint military command and economic cooperation between the two sides, was signed on 2 March 1955. Four days later, the Syrian-Egyptian agreement was followed by the Egyptian-Syrian-Saudi (ESS) Pact, which proposed federal union with a joint military command to further counterbalance the Baghdad Pact, even though it failed to embrace

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[384] Seale, *The Struggle for Syria*, 188-191.

[385] Ibid., 192.

Lebanon and Jordan. Nasser's success to draw Syria from the Baghdad Pact and Britain's orbit caused Iraq and Turkey to position their troops on Syrian border to counter Egypt's influence.[386] In addition to his diplomatic initiatives, Nasser launched intense propaganda campaign against the Baghdad Pact and border activities of Turkey. Egypt's famous Radio Cairo blamed Turkish-Iraqi aggression and declared that ''if Turkey believes that force will settle the situation in Syria then Turkey must remember that she too has a neighbor who is stronger than she is…'' The Soviet Union also immediately intervened in the issue and on 23 March 1955 Soviet Foreign Minister Molotov informed Syrian envoy in Moscow, Dr. Farid al-Khani, that ''the USSR supports Syria's attitude and is willing to extend to it aid in any form whatsoever for the purpose of safeguarding Syria's independence and sovereignty.''[387] As a result of Turkish-Iraqi aggression over Syria, the Soviet Union and Egypt gradually began to take Syria under their control in early 1955.

Although the ESS Pact drove the Baath Party and Nasser together, it was not a real step towards the Arab unity as the ESS Pact gave no military or economic outcome and it was basically designed by the Saudi-Egyptian camp to thwart Iraqi and Western ambitions over Syria. The immediate impact of the two agreements on the US-led Western bloc was that they began to consider that they and their pro-Western allies Turkey and Iraq lost the battle for Syria and the al-Asali government became a tool in the hands of communists. Within this context, Britain joined the Baghdad Pact in April 1955 and engaged in the inter-Arab struggle for Syria.[388]

5.2.1.4. Bandung Conference, Czech-Arms Deal and Growing Egyptian-Syrian Relations

Nasser's regional successes against the imperialist powers increased with the Bandung Conference of April 1955 organized by non-aligned leaders including Marshal Tito of Yugoslavia, Prime Minister Nehru of India, Premier Chou en-Lai of China, President Sukarno of Indonesia, and President Nasser of Egypt. One of the most remarkable significances of the Bandung Conference was that with the emergence of a non-aligned worldwide movement, in the minds of the Arab people, Nasser proved that

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[386] Ginat, 136; Roberts, 40-41.

[387] Seale, *The Struggle for Syria*, 234.

[388] Ibid., 224-226.

an Arab leader can pursue policies independent of the West, which contributed to strengthen Nasser's hand in the Middle East affairs.[389]

Nasser's pan-Arab heroism reached its climax with the signing of Czech arms deal in September 1955. The initial Soviet penetration in the Middle East consolidated with the economic and military aids provided for Egypt and Syria by the Soviet-controlled Eastern bloc. Even though Syria was the first country to sign a small arms agreement (a small consignment of second-hand tanks) with the Czechoslovakia in 1954, Nasser's arms deal with Czechoslovakia in September 1955 against the Baghdad Pact and Western ambitions in the region was a real watershed in the Middle East. The Czech arms deal broke the Western monopoly of arms supplied to the regional states, increased Nasser's popularity and created great enthusiasm among the Arab people and Arab leaders including King Hussein of Jordan.[390]

By signing the arms deal and purchasing weapons from the Easter bloc, Nasser proved the usefulness of his pragmatic neutralist policy and his self-determination vis-à-vis the West. The Soviet direct involvement in the Middle East via Czech arms deal reflected in Syrian domestic politics as well and the Baath Party, which had opposed Nasser and communists earlier, accelerated its pragmatic collaboration with them. All of these developments prepared the ground for the Baathist leaders' propaganda campaign for a unity between Egypt and Syria as a first step toward Arab unity.[391]

The dramatic rise of Nasser's popularity in the Middle East after Bandung and Czech arms-deal directly reflected in Egyptian-Syrian relations immediately. Even though there was a pro-Iraqi government in Damascus under Said al-Ghazzi at that time. The Ghazzi government had to reconcile with pro-Egyptian trend in the region and he signed the Egyptian-Syrian military pact of October 1955, which established a supreme council, a war council and a joint command under the Egyptian General Abd al-Hakim Amir. Although, the alliance remained unapplied in military field, Syrian foreign policy was put in line with Egypt under the auspices of the Egyptian ambassador Brigadier Mahmud Riyad, who had close relations with the Baath leaders. Moreover, Egyptian

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[389] Dawisha, *Arab Nationalism in the Twentieth Century*, 166.

[390] Seale, ''Syria,'' 54, Dawisha, *Arab Nationalism in the Twentieth Century*, 168-170.

[391] Devlin, *The Ba'th Party*, 80-84.

influence over Syria was added by Saudi gold in the form of both official loan and bribe money in November 1955 to further draw Syria from pro-Western Iraq.[392]

5.2.1.5. The Suez Crisis and its Impact on Syrian Foreign Policy

Nasser's regional campaign against Western defense proposals and his alliance with the Soviet Union created problems between Nasser and the West. When Egypt officially recognized the People's Republic of China in May 1956, the US perceived Nasser's measures as an irreversible tilt towards the communist world and announced the abrupt withdrawal of her financial offers for the construction of the Aswan Dam on 19 July 1956. Meanwhile the US changed its strategy towards the Saudi Arabia and warned King Saud against Nasser's influence in the Middle East and the threat of leftist axis in Syria, which would weaken King Saud's impact on Syrian politics. King Saud immediately realized the threat and diverted from the neutralist camp to the American cause as the Saudis were worried about a future Syrian-Egyptian union owing to close relations between two sides under the al-Asali government. For this reason, Saudi Arabia began to make gestures to its old rival Iraq for collaboration in line with the American cause in the Middle East and automatically predestinated to lose the ''struggle for Syria''.[393]

The US decision was followed by Britain and the World Bank, which forced Nasser to make a bold reaction and he declared the nationalization of the Anglo-French owned Suez Canal Company on 26 July 1956 to finance the Aswan Dam Project, which created a public euphoria among the Arab people as a victory against the Western imperialism. Britain and France condemned Nasser's action as a theft and organized a joint military attack including Israel to topple Nasser for his irritating successes in the Middle East since his ascendance to power in 1954. The tripartite attack of Israel, Britain and France on Egypt was stopped by the US and the USSR as two super powers could not allow a military operation in the region without their consent. Therefore, Britain and France scornfully retreated from Egypt in December 1956 and recognized the new bosses of the Middle East. Ironically, Nasser's humiliating military defeat at the hands of Britain, France and Israel transformed into a political triumph and he became Egyptian

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[392] Seale, *The Struggle for Syria*, 252-254.

[393] Sunayama, 25.

and pan-Arab hero against Western imperialism in the Middle East by retaining the control of the Suez Canal.[394]

Nasser's victory in the Suez Crisis had deep impacts on domestic and foreign policy of Syria. With the impact of Nasser's Suez victory, pro-Nasserite and pro-leftist forces further consolidated their position in domestic politics. Moreover, the Soviet-Syrian relations were further consolidated during the Suez Crisis with President Quwatli's visit to Moscow on 30 November 1956 to secure Soviet military aid against a possible Western invasion and the Soviet arms reached Latakia during the months of November and December.[395] During the Suez Crisis, Syrian-Egyptian-Jordanian military agreement was signed on 23 October 1956. This agreement was followed by the ''Treaty of Arab Solidarity'' in January 1957 among Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Syria for ten years.[396] However, this agreement did not last long as Jordan and Saudi Arabia changed their pro-Nasserite stance by accepting the Eisenhower Doctrine in the same year.

Syria gave Egypt full support and as gesture to Egypt's war against Western imperialism Syria broke diplomatic relations with Britain and France on 2 November. On following day, the Iraq Petroleum Company pipeline transiting Syria was closed down owing to three explosions at pumping stations.[397] Therefore, it can be argued that Nasser's victory contributed to the rise the leftist forces in domestic politics and Syrian foreign policy drift towards Nasser and the Soviet Union. Hence Nasser's victory in Suez Crisis became a significant milestone on the way of Syrian-Egyptian unity in 1958.

5.2.1.6. The UAR and Its Impact on Arab Regional Order: Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Lebanon and Jordan

The promulgation of the Egyptian-Syrian union was a watershed in the history of the Middle East as two Arab countries amalgamated into a single state. The UAR was an important phase in the Arab Cold War as Nasser won struggle for Syria and took the lead in inter-Arab politics.

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[394] Yaqub, 51-55; Dawisha, *Arab Nationalism in the Twentieth Century*, 176-180.

[395] Laquer, 252.

[396] Dawisha, *Arab Nationalism in the Twentieth Century*, 181.

[397] Rathmell, 123-124.

Although the newly emerged pan-Arab state was open to all Arab states, it further polarized the Middle East politics. Even the UAR created antagonism among other Arab states, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq as it was a real treat to the existing balance of power in the Middle East.[398] In order to balance the UAR and its regional effect, with the support of Britain and the USA, the Hashemite Iraq and Jordan formed a federation (the Arab Union) on 14 February 1958, which aroused little public enthusiasm and interest. According to Mufti, the UAR and the Arab Federation were similar in terms of alliance formation. In two cases Syria and Jordan defensive partners who were weak shareholder of both unities and afraid of overtaking by rival groups in domestic politics. By uniting with expansionist Egypt and Iraq, they aimed to gain military, financial and intelligence resources from their partner. Moreover, both Syria and Jordan aimed to satisfy rising pan-Arab sentiments of their population.[399]

Not only Iraq and Jordan but also another regional power Saudi Arabia was disturbed by the proclamation of the UAR as it was a serious blow to Saudi Arabia's foreign policy of keeping good relations with Egypt and influencing Syrian domestic and foreign policy. The UAR might lead to Nasser's unquestionable regional dominance and surrender Saudi Arabia with a hostile regional milieu. During the period of the UAR, the relationship between two sides was tense. The UAR under Nasser backed the Saudi Arabian branch of the Baath Party; on the other hand, King Saud patronized opposition groups against the regime, especially the members of the Muslim Brotherhood from Egypt and Syria to criticize the secularization policies of the UAR and its closeness to the atheist Soviet Union. When the UAR was ended with coup d'état organized by the old-guards on 28 September 1961; Saudi Arabia gave its support to the conspiring group in the making of the coup by hoping that it would regain its influence on Syrian politics via personal ties and injections of cash.[400]

The proclamation of the UAR deeply affected the regional order and it became the main theme of inter-Arab politics. On 14 July 1958, pro-Western regime in Hashemite Kingdom of Iraq was overthrown with a bloody coup d'état mounted by the Iraqi Free Officers under General Abd al-Karim Qasim, in which all representatives of the Western

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[398] Sunayama, 27.

[399] Mufti, 116-117.

[400] Sunayama, 27-28.

imperialism King Faisal, Regent Abd al-Ilah and Nuri al-Said were killed by young revolutionaries. Conspiring army officers declared dissolution of the Hashemite kingdom and proclaimed Republic of Iraq and its secession from both the Baghdad Pact and the Arab Federation. In the new regime, the Iraqi Baath Party was represented by the Secretary of the Baath's Iraqi Regional Command Fuad al-Rikabi. The overthrown of reactionary kingdom and establishment of a progressive republican regime and the Baath's participation in the government raised hopes for Iraq's participation in the UAR. Although Qasim was inspired by Nasser at the beginning and pan-Arab nationalism, he changed his strategy after the coup and pursued policy of Iraqi nationalism bolstered by the Soviet supports, instead of unity with the UAR. Thus, Qasim rejected Nasser's invitation for joining the UAR and opposed Nasser's bid for regional hegemony in the Middle East, which made him open adversary of Nasser.[401]

The formation of the UAR and the July coup of Qasim shook the regional order and had profound impacts on inter-Arab relations. In Lebanon, there was popular unrest between a political group around President Chamoun (loyalists) and a group of political forces mainly composed of Muslims called as opposition since the Cabinet of Sami al-Sulh accepted the Eisenhower Doctrine on 16 March 1957. Tension between the two sides reached its climax when Chamoun demanded a constitutional amendment for his reelection in May 1958. Anarchical situation escalated with the outbreak of street clashes between loyalists and the opposition groups as the latter believed that he must not be reelected to presidency; other reasons may be counted as Muslim dissatisfaction with Christian dominance in the society, widespread corruption, personal disputes, and polarization of Arab politics between traditional and revolutionary states.[402] After the July coup in Iraq, Chamoun was worried about a pro-Nasserite takeover and demanded the US support against Nasserite subversion in Lebanon. The US responded immediately and sent 10.000 forces to Lebanon to save the regime from collapse. In addition to Lebanon, political turmoil escalated in Jordan after the formation of the UAR and especially after Qasim's coup in Iraq. Nasser and Syrian intelligence propagated for revolution in Jordan against the Hashemite monarchy similar to Iraq. By the same token, King Hussein demanded aid from Britain and the US against the UAR subversions one day after Chamoun did. British forces landed in Jordan in July 1958 to support their ally in the

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[401] Devlin, *The Ba'th Party*, 119-128.

[402] Ibid., 117-118.

Middle East against the UAR. Therefore, the Western camp managed to save Lebanon and Jordan from pan-Arab unionism.[403]

5.2.1.7. The Impact of Inter-Arab Politics on Syrian Foreign Policy after the Secessionist Coup: The Challenge of Unity

With the breakup of the UAR, the struggle for Syria revived once again and Syrian foreign policy was directly affected by the Arab Cold War on regional level as mentioned above. In the wake of the secessionist coup, competing alliances of Syrian factions facilitated regional intervention in domestic politics and foreign policy. From 28 September 1961 coup to the 8 March 1963 coup of the Baath Party, Syrian politics and foreign policy were shaped by power struggle between pro-unionist and anti-unionist civilian and military factions and once again inter-Arab struggle for Syria between Egypt and Iraq.

Despite some ups and downs, the successive governments during the secessionist period were agreed on one point, their hostility towards the reactionary regimes and Saudi Arabia so as to recover their damaged image after the breakup of the UAR. In this regard, although the secessionist regime was backed by Saudi Arabia in the making of the secessionist coup, the relationship between two countries got worse in the wake of the putsch owing to the regime's pragmatic search for legitimacy in front of growing revolutionary forces and pan-Arab euphoria and decrease in the power of pro-Saudi traditional politicians in domestic politics.[404]

Similar to previous periods, Syrian leaders during the secessionist regime wanted to utilize inter-Arab politics for their domestic bid for power. In this respect, competing factions allied with Jordan, Iraq and Egypt until the Baath coup of 1963. The issue of reunification with Nasser was the most challenging issue between 1961 and 1963 while Syrian factions considered themselves as pan-Arab nationalists during the secessionist era. This dilemma of reunification coupled with domestic instability and Syrian politicians suffered from Nasser's destructive propaganda campaign against the secessionist regime. In addition to his propaganda campaign against pro-Iraqi and pro-

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[403] Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1990), 73-74.

[404] Sunayama, 30-31.

Jordanian factions, Nasser patronized civilian and military factions in Syria,[405] which ultimately culminated in the ascendance of pro-Egyptian forces in Syria in 1963.

5.2.2. The Second Regional Aspect of Syrian Foreign Policy: Israel as a Threat for Syria's Security

In addition to the Arab Cold War, Israel formed second regional dimension of Syrian foreign policy. Since the overthrow of Shishakli in February in 1954, the Syrian-Israeli relations had rapidly deteriorated owing to the militant attitude of the rising radical leftist parties in Syrian politics towards Israel so as to legitimize themselves and gain popularity among the Syrian society. In addition to its hostile attitude, Syria had led the all-economic boycott against Israel, invaded some Israeli territories *de jure* under Israeli sovereignty in east of Lake Tiberias and the River Jordan in the DMZ by violating the armistice agreement and fired sometimes Israeli fishermen and police boats on the lake as well as Israeli farmers in near *kibbutzim*. It was not Syrian aggression that feared Israel but the rapprochement between Syria and Nasser as well as the Soviet Union, which heightened the sense of Israeli insecurity in the Middle East after the form of radical leftist-dominated al-Asali government in February 1955. Especially Nasser's bid for Arab leadership in conjunction with his anti-Israeli personality and his protection of Palestinian fedayeen *in* the Gaza Strip forced Israel to intimidate Nasser from attacking Israel. In opposition to dovish Foreign Minister Moshe Sharett's diplomacy, Ben-Gurion pursued power politics against the Arab states and the IDF launched a large scale armed attack on the Gaza Strip on 28 February 1955 to show the military weakness of Nasser. Israeli threat against Egypt's security facilitated Nasser's arms purchase from the Soviet Union and his bid for pan-Arab leadership to counter Iraqi ambition to embrace Syria and Jordan into the Baghdad Pact.[406]

During the course of 1955, there were small shootings between Syria and Israel in the DMZ of east Lake Tiberias owing to controversial fishing rights. On 11 December 1955, Israel launched a large scale armed attack on north-east of Lake Tiberias, killing 37 Syrian soldiers, 12 civilians and taking 30 prisoners, in retaliation to Syrian shooting incident of 10 December. The Israeli Kinneret or Tiberias raid was not only carried out to punish Syria, but also aimed to prove the weakness of the Egyptian-Syrian military

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[405] Rabinovich, *Syria under the Ba'th*, 30-32.

[406] Ma'oz, *Syria and Israel*, 42-48.

agreement signed in October 1955.[407] Besides, alarmed by the Nasser's growing influence upon Syria after the October military agreement, Britain and the US galvanized into action and encouraged Turkey to send troops and armor on Syria's frontier.[408] Turkish and Israeli aggressions made counter-impact and Syria tilted closer to Egypt and the Soviet Union to guarantee its security against external aggressions.

Israel was also deeply affected by the establishment of the UAR. The positive approach of the US towards the UAR and Nasser, and its arms embargo on Israel so as to develop good relations with the Arab states to hamper the expansion of communism in the Middle East created a feeling of insecurity among the Israeli statesmen. During the UAR period, having united with the strong Egyptian army, Syrian troops increased their attacks on Israeli villages along the border and fishing and police boats on Lake Tiberias. Moreover, Nasser and the Baath leaders Bitar and Hawrani publicly attacked Zionism and promised to exterminate Israel from the Middle East. Although Israeli foreign Minister Golda Meir and Prime Minister Ben Gurion called publicly for negotiating a peace agreement with Nasser and the Arab leaders in March and September 1959, their appeals were strongly rejected by Arab leaders who were against the existence of Israel in the lands of Palestine. Israel's attempt at accomplishing the Jordan-Negev Water project, in which the water of the Upper Jordan River was aimed to be diverted to Negev Desert region, 60 percent of Israel's uninhabited lands, accelerated during the UAR period and composed another dimension of tension between Israel and Syria since September 1953. Unlike Nasser's support for a technical solution to the water project of Israel, the Baath leaders adopted a radical rhetoric for the use of military force against Israel during the UAR period. [409] Border clashes, water issue and Israeli threat against Syrian security continued until the June War of 1967, which culminated in a decisive victory of Israel against the Arab states within six days.

5.3.   International Environment of Syrian Foreign Policy: Struggle for Syria between the Soviet Union and the USA

The international aspect of Syrian foreign policy between 1954 and 1963 was the Cold War. The early Western efforts to take Syria into the Western camp accelerated in

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[407] Ibid., 50-51.

[408] Seale, ''Syria,'' 53-54.

[409] Ma'oz, *Syria and Israel*, 70-73; Telhami, 53-55.

the post-1954 period, in this respect, the Cold War directly shaped Syrian foreign policy and influenced its domestic politics and regional policy. Unlike previous periods, the splintering of the core powers during the bipolarity of the Cold war for the first time gave the Arab states autonomy to pursue independent foreign policies against the Western economic domination and imperialism in international system. This was a historical chance for the Arab people and states to break the deeply rooted core-periphery relations, rescue from western political encroachments, overcome their economic dependency on the core powers by manipulating the super power rivalry and implement statist economic policies.[410] In the post-1954 period, it can be argued that Syrian politicians utilized the fragmentation of the core powers and followed their traditional pragmatic foreign policymaking within the context of autonomy provided by the super power rivalry. Unlike previous decades, Syria liberated from its economic and military dependence on the West with the penetration of the Soviet Union in the region as well as the rise of Nasser.

5.3.1. The Soviet Union's Penetration in the Middle East Politics and its Impact on Syria

The Soviet penetration in the Middle East affairs was a watershed in the region. Ongoing Western encroachments in the Middle East to create a sphere of influence to contain the international communism made a counter impact and compelled the Soviet Union, another superpower of the Cold War, to change its strategy towards the Middle Eastern countries in 1953. During the first decade following the end of the Second World War, the Soviet strategy under Joseph Stalin paid less attention to the Middle East as he saw the traditional politicians were incapable forerunners of national liberation and possible traitors who were far from representing independence of their countries.[411] In this regard, in the wake of Syrian independence, the Soviet Union pursued hostile policies towards the Syrian old-guards and military dictators as they were agents of the imperialist powers and repressed both their people and the Syrian Communist Party.[412] Furthermore, the Soviet Union had actively supported the Zionist movement against Britain in Palestine and immediately recognized the state of Israel in 1948 which gave rise to

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[410] Hinnebusch, *The International Politics of the Middle East*, 28-29.

[411] Walter Z. Laqueur, *The Soviet Union and the Middle East* (New York: Frederic A. Praeger Publishers, 1959), 136-139.

[412] Ibid., 152-153.

enormous hatred among the Arab states against the Soviet Union and further contributed to deterioration of relations between two sides.[413]

The fluctuating relations between the Soviet Union and the Arab states changed dramatically when Nikita Khrushchev came to power after the death of Stalin in March 1953. Khrushchev abandoned Stalin's rigid and doctrinaire policy towards the third world and adopted a flexible policy towards the regional countries. As a reaction to Western bloc's attempts at globalizing containment policy by embracing Middle Eastern states into a regional defense organization such as the MEC and MEDO proposals, Khrushchev also began to globalize the Soviet foreign policy against capitalist world by adopting a positive attitude towards the Arab states. Khrushchev aimed to benefit from the Arab states' resentment against Western support for Israel and Anglo-American efforts to establish a regional defense organization against the global war against the Western bloc. Unlike Stalin, he paid special attention to the Arab states and offered them political, economic and military assistance as they became representative of more progressive political and social forces with the rise of new leftist-oriented rulers of Egypt and Syria.[414]

During the course of 1954, Soviet-Syrian relations was developing due to the Soviet support for Syrian governments in international arena, such as Soviet support for Syria in the UN Security Council against Israel's encroachments over the River Jordan in 1954. During the course of 1954, commercial relations between two states flourished and cultural exchanges of scientists, agriculture experts and students increased. With the election of Khalid Bakdash and the advent of the SCP as political force in domestic politics, the Soviet-Syrian relations entered in a different phase.[415] The establishment of the Bagdad Pact in February 1955 accelerated the crystallization of the new Soviet

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[413] Adeed Dawisha, ''The Soviet Union in the Arab World: The Limits to Superpower Influence,'' in *The Soviet Union in the Middle East: Perspectives and Policies*, ed. Adeed Dawisha and Karen Dawisha (London: Heinemann for the Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1982): 8; Alvin Z. Rubinstein, ''The Middle East in Russia's Strategic Prism,'' in *Diplomacy in the Middle East: The International Relations of Regional and Outside Powers*, ed. L. Carl Brown (London: I.B Tauris, 2001): 81.

[414] Rubinstein, ''The Middle East in Russia's Strategic Prism,'' 82-83; Laqueur, 156.

[415] Laqueur, 195-199.

strategy under Khrushchev towards the Middle Eastern countries and opened the age of the Soviet-Arab rapprochement.[416]

The younger radical Arab nationalists, who replaced the old-ruling classes in Syria and Egypt, were dedicated neutralists and they were against the Western defense proposals in the region due to the Western capitalism, Western imperialist legacy in the Arab lands and Western support for both Israel and reactionary Arab regimes. Thus, Syria and Egypt used the fragmentation of the core powers and adopted positive neutralism to counterbalance Western designs in the region as well as wished the Soviet interference to play off the Eastern and the Western blocs against each other. The Soviet Union, worried about the Western threats by the Baghdad Pact against its security in a very strategic region, welcomed Arab neutralism, which was denounced by the Western powers as a communist policy, utilized anti-Western sentiments in the region and encouraged the collaboration between the nationalist and communist forces against Western imperialism. For this reason, even though the worldwide non-alignment movement rejected alliances with either the Soviet Union or the Unites States, Soviet Union unduly backed the movement against Western imperialism and welcomed the Bandung Conference of April 1955, organized by the non-aligned third world leaders.[417]

5.3.2. The Soviet-Syrian Rapprochement and Western Operations against Syria

In addition to Egyptian influence, the Soviet influence in Syrian politics increased during the leftist al-Asali government. Soviet Foreign Minister Dmitri Shepilov, architect of Czech arms deal, visited Damascus on 22 June 1956 to further develop the Soviet-Syrian rapprochement. During his visit, Syria signed some agreements with the Soviet Union on commercial relations, low-interest development loans, wide range cultural exchanges and most importantly arms purchase on easy terms. In the wake of Shepilov's visit, good Soviet-Syrian relations reflected in international arena and Syria recognized Communist China on 3 July 1956.[418] The Soviet Union and Syria signed a cultural agreement on 20 August 1956 including the exchange of delegations, the sending of Syrian students to study in Soviet Union, the appearance of Soviet artists in Damascus

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[416] Dawisha, ''The Soviet Union in the Arab World,'' 10-11.

[417] Laqueur, 189-194.

[418] Ginat, 153-158.

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and the showing of Soviet films.[419] Having no imperialist past in the Middle East and in Syria, the Soviet Union skillfully strengthened its political and economic ties with Syria.

The years of 1956 and 1957 were marked by the intensification of the struggle for Syria through the covert and overt operations of the US in conjunction with Turkey and Iraq as the US saw Syria as a target for the Soviet and Nasserite subversion.[420] During the course of 1956, it was quiet clear that the US and its allies were about to lost not only their struggle for Syria against Nasser and the Soviet Union but also they were about the lost the Middle East in their global war against international communism. Thus, the Western bloc and its regional friends urged to take action due to growing influence of the anti-Western and pro-Nasserite neutralist trend represented by the Baath Party in Syrian domestic politics and the Soviet Union's ''satellization'' of Syria.

In order to reverse the situation in Syria; Britain, Iraq and the US unified their forces to topple the pro-leftist al-Asali government and organized a plot, named as ''Operation Straggle'' between April and October 1956. The conspiracy was masterminded by Iraq, included the SSNP, former dictator Adib al-Shishakli, Syrian conservative politicians and officers including Adnan al-Atasi, Mikhail Ilyan, Munir al-Ajlani, Faydi al-Atasi, and backed by the CIA and the British intelligence Secret Intelligence Service (SIS). Iraq under PM Nuri al-Said, worried about the Syrian-Egyptian unity projects under the auspices of the Baath Party galvanized into action and contacted with opponents of the current pro-leftist and pro-Nasserite regime in Syria. However, the Chief of Syrian intelligence Deuxiéme Bureau Abd al-Hamid Sarraj, who had long been aware of the conspiracy since its beginning, announced the uncovering of the plot on 23 November 1956 and the coup attempt came to naught. The immediate impact of the coup on domestic politics was the strengthening of leftist forces and Syrian feeling of insecurity against covert operations of Western bloc. On 31 December 1956, al-Asali reshuffled his cabinet and excluded the conspirator PP and right-wing NP politicians from the new government, which further consolidated the power of the Baath Party in domestic politics. [421] The covert operations of the West accelerated Soviet-Syrian

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[419] Laquer, 251-252.

[420] William B. Quandt, ''America and the Middle East: A Fifty-Year Overview,'' in *Diplomacy in the Middle East: The International Relations of Regional and Outside Powers*, ed. L. Carl Brown (London: I.B Tauris, 2001), 63.

[421] For detailed information about the Iraqi-Western sponsored plot of 1956, see Rathmell, 111-124.

relations, thanks to Khalid al-Azm's efforts, the first Syrian oil refinery was awarded to Czechoslovak Techno-Oil Company in mid-March 1957. Besides, the Soviet economic aids, technical and military assistance continued to flow to Syria.[422]

5.3.3. The Eisenhower Doctrine and Syrian Foreign Policy

In addition to Western plots, the Suez crisis pushed Syria towards Egypt and the Soviet Union. In the wake of the Suez crisis, the Middle East directly became the battlefield of the US and the Soviet Union owing to power vacuum left by Britain and France. In addition to the great power ambitions in the region, Nasser also sought regional hegemony under his pan-Arab leadership by exploiting popular Arab nationalist revulsion all around the Arab world. Within this context, Syria continued to be the key for the regional and international power struggle.

In January 1957, President Eisenhower presented his own new policy for the Middle East to the Congress, so-called Eisenhower Doctrine. The doctrine aimed to fill the political vacuum left by Britain and protect any Middle Eastern countries against military aggression from any states controlled by international communism and offer military aid to anti-communist governments in the region. The Eisenhower doctrine was a clear expression of the growing fear of the US about Soviet influence both in Syria and Egypt and discrediting Nasser's radical Arab nationalism. While Western fear of communist takeover in Syria was growing, al-Asali government declared their rejection of vacuum theory and explained that imperialism and Zionism were main dangers for Syrian security not communism.[423] Syrian Foreign Minister Bitar also stressed that ''Syria did not wish to belong to any bloc so as not to be hampered in its foreign policy and was prepared to receive economic aid from any source, excepting only aid offered under the Eisenhower Doctrine.''[424]

The immediate result of the Eisenhower Doctrine and the American subversions was undeniably the intensification of the Soviet-Egyptian influence in conjunction with the rising power of Sarraj and his Baathist entourage in Syria. After the proclamation of

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[422] Seale, *The Struggle for Syria*, 290.

[423] For detailed information about the Eisenhower Doctrine and its impact on the Middle East, see Yaqub, 87-117.

[424] Ginat, 172.

the Eisenhower Doctrine, the anti-Western trend continued to prevail in Syrian politics and in addition to Nasser's growing influence, Syrian military and economic ties with the Soviet Union continued to improve. On 6 August 1957, the Syrian Defense Minister al-Azm signed a wide range economic and technical agreement with the Soviet Union in Moscow.[425]

The promulgation of the Eisenhower Doctrine escalated the polarization among the Middle Eastern countries. King Saud, who was one of the most devoted allies of Nasser in every controversial issue among the Arab states, such as the Baghdad Pact, the Czech arms deal and the Suez Crisis, had begun to consider radical pan-Arab Nasserite movement in the Middle East as a threat for his kingdom. King Saud's change in policy towards Nasser coincided with that of the US strategy, which aimed to stop Nasser's bid for pan-Arab leadership by creating another Arab leader in the region since early 1956 as mentioned above. In this regard, King Saud made a historical attempt and repaired his old feuds with pro-Western Hashemite Kingdoms of Iraq and Jordan and welcomed the Eisenhower Doctrine to oppose Nasser's policies in the Middle East in 1957.[426] Jordan and Saudi Arabia's acceptance of the Eisenhower Doctrine broke the former alliance of Syria-Egypt-Jordan-Saudi Arabia against the Baghdad Pact and isolated the Syrian-Egyptian bloc.[427]

5.3.4. Western Covert Operations for Changing Syria's Foreign Policy during the Course of 1957

Even though the US, by and large, accomplished to isolate Nasser through the Eisenhower Doctrine, Syria was still not penetrated by overt and covert attempts made by the Western bloc since 1955. In fact, soon after the promulgation of the Eisenhower Doctrine, it was rejected by Syria owing to absence of the communist threat to her security as the doctrine proposed and it was perceived as another attempt of the US to seize the control of the Middle East. Fears of the US about the communist influence in Syria after the 1957 April crisis in Jordan increased and forced the American politicians to galvanize into action to thwart the Soviet satellization of Syria. Hence, as in the year of 1956, the US organized series of coups to topple the leftist Syrian regime during the

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[425] Rathmell, 137.

[426] Dawisha, *Arab Nationalism in the Twentieth Century*, 188-190.

[427] Seale, *The Struggle for Syria*, 289.

course of 1957. The most significant US attempt to topple Syrian government came in summer 1957. CIA agent Howard Stone and his colleagues held clandestine meetings with the SSNP members and dissident Damascene army officers to organize a coup to overthrown the regime. The US wanted to utilize the fierce factionalism among the army officers and especially encouraged dissident army officers against anti-American Abd al-Hamid Sarraj and his colleagues. Americans also collaborated with Adib al-Shishakli and Colonel Ibrahim al-Husayni and helped them to visit secretly Damascus to meet with collaborators and take the leadership of the conspiracy. However, the plot was an ill-organized one and easily uncovered by Sarraj like other covert American operations. Sarraj announced the uncovering of the plot on 12 August 1957 and American diplomats were expelled from Damascus to organize a plot against the government.[428] In the wake of the announcement of the plot, the Chief of Staff Tawfiq Nizam al-Din was replaced by Afif al-Bizri, one of the leading pro-Soviet and anti-Western generals in the army on 17 August 1957, which further increased the Western concerns about the Soviet influence in Syria.[429]

On 21 August, President Eisenhower held a press conference and declared his concerns at current developments in the Middle East. During the conference, with the manipulations of Dulles, he refrained from expressing communist impact on Damascus government, which made his statement quite confusing for the audience. Two days later, the Syrian government responded Eisenhower's statements by holding a press conference in which the government's dedication to positive neutralism of Bandung, which preached the third group's disinterest in the 'paternalism of the so-called great powers'. Eisenhower administration still misunderstood the facts on which Syrian foreign policy depended, anti-Zionism and anti-imperialism instead of anti-communism.[430]

5.3.5. The Change in Western Strategy from Organizing Covert Operations to Encouraging Syria's Neighbors

The American perception of Syria's satellization caused a shift in the US policy strategy towards Syria from backing internal plots to encouraging Syria's neighbors, as

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[428] Rathmell, 138-140.

[429] Philip Anderson, ''Summer Madness: The Crisis in Syria, August-October 1957,'' *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, No.1/2 (1995): 25; Laqueur, 256.

[430] Philip Anderson, ''Summer Madness: The Crisis in Syria, August-October 1957,'' 25.

expressed by John Foster Dulles to British foreign minister Selwyn Lloyd, ''it seems us that there is now little hope of correction from within and that we must think in terms of the external assets reflected by deep concern of the Moslem States having common borders with Syria. We must perhaps be prepared to take some serious risks to avoid even greater risks and dangers later on.''[431]

The immediate result of the change in the US strategy was another crisis in the Middle East between Turkey and Syria from August to October 1957. On 24 August 1957, Eisenhower sent State Department specialist Mr. Loy W. Henderson as a special envoy to the Middle East. Henderson's duty was to consult with regional states about the tense situation in and around Syria. During his visit in Ankara at the beginning of September, Henderson held meetings with Turkish Prime Minister Adnan Menderes, King Faisal of Iraq and King Hussein of Jordan for discussing Syria. After Henderson's return to the US, Dulles gave green light to Turkey, which had long been concerned about containment by the Soviet Union from its southern border via the satellization of Syria. Turkey was eager for military steps than other Arab states and it positioned its troops on the Syrian border and launched large scale military maneuvers at the end of the first week of September. The American-sponsored Turkish aggression to mobilize a campaign of external pressure against Syria was accompanied with Eisenhower administration's armament of Jordan and Iraq's eagerness for military intervention in Syria. Turkish aggression over friendly Syria was severely criticized by the Soviet Union as an ''American policy of conspiracy''. On 21 September, two Soviet warships Zhadov and an escorting destroyer reached Latakia harbor to show the Soviet-Arab solidarity. On 25 September, King Saud made series of attempts to alleviate the crisis between Syria and Turkey both to repair his damaged pro-US image in the Middle East and gain the pan-Arab leadership by isolating Nasser in regional affairs. In order to counterbalance both King Saud's initiative and the Soviet influence in Syria, Nasser landed Egyptian troops in Latakia on 13 October to show his support for sister Syria. Nasser once again became the hero of pan-Arab nationalism and proved that any settlement without him impossible in the Middle East. The immediate result of the Nasser's intervention in the crisis was the increase in hopes for the Syrian-Egyptian unity which had been discussed for a long time. The crisis ended in mid-October when the US saw the reverse impact of the Turkish aggression in the Middle East and urged Turkey to back down and encouraged King Saud

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[431] Mufti, 85-86.

to arbitrate between Ankara and Damascus. [432] Moreover, the US began to see Nasser's pan-Arab bid for regional leadership as a useful instrument to counter communism generally in the Middle East and specifically in Syria.[433]

About the Summer Crisis between Turkey and Syria, William Hale makes a different interpretation. According to Hale, the crisis between the two countries broke out since Turkey was alarmed by the influx of the arms of the Soviet Union and Egypt into Syria. Hale expresses that the US did not sponsor the Turkish aggression; rather it was Turkey's obsession with its security on the Syrian border that caused the crisis with Syria. Furthermore, Hale states that the US and Britain were disturbed by the aggressive attitude of Turkey, which would cause a war between the US and the Soviet Union.[434]

In addition to domestic bid for power between the Baath and the communists, the Syrian sense of vulnerability to external threats of the US, Israel, Iraq and Turkey were main factors leading to the union with Egypt in 1958.[435]

5.3.6. The UAR and the Super Powers of the Cold War

As mentioned above, the Baath-communist and Nasser-Soviet rivalry was two important factors on the way of the formation of the UAR. Thus, the relationship between the Soviet Union and the UAR was overshadowed by this tension. Expectedly, neutralization of the communists in Syrian politics created tension between Nasser and the Khrushchev administration, which at the beginning had welcomed the union as an opening of the new era for strengthening of the Arab unity and expressed her best wishes that the UAR would serve consolidation of peace and security in the Middle East.[436] With the liquidation of the communists, the Soviet Union lost its power base in Syrian politics. Another source of tension between Nasser and the Soviet Union was the Soviet-Qasim and Qasim-communist rapprochement in the wake of the coup in Iraq. The Soviet Union

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[432] Philip Anderson, ''Summer Madness: The Crisis in Syria, August-October 1957,'' 26-37. For detailed information about the Turkish-Syrian Crisis of 1957, see also Yaqub, 147-180.

[433] Andrej Kreutz, *Russia in the Middle East: Friend or Foe?* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2007), 14.

[434] William Hale, *Turkish Foreign Policy, 1774-2000* (London: Frank Cass, 2002), 128-129.

[435] Ma'oz, *Syria and Israel*, 55.

[436] Kreutz, 14.

gave its full support to both Qasim and Iraqi communists, who emerged as a strong anti-UAR power group in Iraqi politics after Qasim's putsch, which further aggravated the relationship between Khrushchev and Nasser. Owing to the growing tension between Nasser and the Soviet Union, Nasser changed its strategy and began to repair bridges with the Western bloc to balance the Soviets in line with his pragmatic ''positive neutralism.''[437]

While the UAR-Soviet relations were tense between 1958 and 1961, relations between the UAR and the West were calm. As a first move, Nasser intended to repair relations with his old enemies France and Britain since the Suez Crisis onwards. On 22 August 1958, a settlement was reached between France and Nasser. This agreement was followed by the UAR-Britain agreement on 20 January 1959 and subsequent financial agreement. At the end of the year, diplomatic relations between Britain and the UAR were reestablished. Even though the US had been surprised with the proclamation of the UAR at the beginning, it later began to see the UAR as a tool of Nasser's regional hegemony and Arab nationalist obstacle to the expansion of communism in the Middle East.[438] Nasser also approached to the US and demanded wheat, although he had promised earlier ''never again do so.'' By the end of the 1959, Nasser got $140 million financial aid from the US and accepted a loan for the development of the Suez Canal from the International Bank.[439]

5.3.7. The Secessionist Coup and Passive Neutralism

The Soviet Union became the first superpower that recognized the new regime and the reestablished Syrian state nine days later after the coup. The Soviet Union welcomed the breakup of the UAR and declared the secession as a ''historic victory won by the Syrian people.''[440] However, during the secessionist era, the main foreign policy issue was inter-Arab politics and Syrian politicians were disinterested in the superpower

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[437] Ginat, 201-208; Walt, 74-78.

[438] Ma'oz, *Syria and Israel*, 69.

[439] Ginat, 208.

[440] Kreutz, 14.

rivalry as in the years between 1946 and 1949. Hence, Syrian foreign policy from 1961 to 1963 towards the inter-bloc rivalry can be described as ''passive neutralism.''[441]

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[441] Ginat, 224.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

This thesis has tried to analyze Syrian foreign policy from independence in 1946 to the Baathist coup of March 1963. The period was important in order to understand pre-Baath Syrian politics and foreign policy. This study aimed to fulfill two main objectives. The first objective was to explore the main characteristics of the Syrian foreign policy by examining the domestic, regional and international environments. The second objective was to analyze the relationship between the coup d'états and foreign policy and explain whether coups changed Syrian foreign policy or not.

This thesis found out that Syrian foreign policy between 1946 and 1963 is shaped by three interlinked and interacting environments: the domestic, regional and international and Syrian politicians responded to the opportunities and the challenges coming from these three environments in a pragmatic manner. Moreover, it argued that successive coup d'états during the period examined in this thesis definitely changed Syrian foreign policy orientation.

In the introduction part, this thesis showed the pragmatism of the Syrian politicians in a historical perspective. For this reason, the class formation of Sunni urban elites, who were the main actors in the socio-economic life and bearers of pragmatism in Syrian politics, has been paid special attention. In order to understand urban elites and their dominance in Syria, transformation in the land tenure system from *timar* to *malikane* system has been analyzed. Besides, the Land Code of 1858 and its significance on the transformation of the urban elites have been examined. Besides, it has been argued that the class formation of urban elites accompanied with the development of the Syrian political culture originating from the politics of notables, which can be described as a mutual interest-based collaboration between the Ottoman Empire and urban provincial notables since the 18th century. It has been explained that urban elites' collaboration with the state created a political culture in which interest calculations, shifting alliances and external patronage had special importance. This thesis argued that Syrian political culture, originating from the attitudes and habits of the urban elites, was directly adopted by other political actors as useful policymaking patterns regardless of their party, ideology and class in the mandate and post-independence periods and profoundly affected Syrian foreign policy.

In addition to the development of Syrian political culture and class formation of urban Sunni elites, this thesis has focused on the core-periphery relations. The peripherization of the Middle East into the world-capitalist system since 19ᵗʰ century onwards culminated in the economic dependency of the region to the core powers and started a process which resulted in the emergence of Arab nationalism and the partition of Middle East and Greater Syrian territories. Throughout the thesis, it has been pointed out that the core-periphery relations had deep impacts on the domestic, regional and international environments of Syrian foreign policy. The core-periphery relations not only constituted the international aspect of Syrian foreign policy in the wake of independence but also affected domestic and regional environments. Due to the core-periphery relations in the form of French imperialism, Syria emerged as a weak state after independence and its lack of state formation became one of the most important determinants of Syrian foreign policy at the domestic level. At the regional level, partition of the Middle East among the Western states also prepared the ground for inter-Arab struggle for Syria. Moreover, the implementation of Israel in the lands of Palestine was also a direct outcome of the core-periphery relations. Except for its impact on domestic and regional determinants of Syrian foreign policy, the core-periphery relations provided many challenges and opportunities to Syrian politicians in the wake of the independence.

Following the introduction chapter, the thesis analyzed Syrian foreign policy between 1946 and 1963 by looking at the domestic, regional and international environments. In the third chapter, Syrian foreign policy during the short rule of Damascene urban landowner elites between 1946 and 1949 was analyzed. At the domestic level, Syria's low-level of state building and political instability are described two of the most significant factors that shaped Syrian foreign policy. Factionalism and division of the urban elites into Damascene camp (the National Party) and Aleppine camp (the People's Party) contributed to Syria's domestic weakness and put Syrian foreign policy in line with the factional interests of domestic groups. The rivalry among Syrian politicians for domestic bid for power combined with their search for an external patron to balance domestic rivals and contributed to regional Arab states' interference in domestic politics. Thus, competing allegiances of rival factions towards the Hashemite camp or the Saudi-Egyptian bloc amalgamated domestic and regional environments. During this period, urban Sunni elites continued their behavioral patter of pragmatic policymaking and allied with external powers which promised them domestic ascendancy against the rival factions. Thus it can be argued that Syrian foreign policy between 1946

and 1949 was shaped by ''factional interests'' of Syrian politicians instead of ''state interests''.

In addition to the weak state formation and factionalism, the rise of the radical middle-class parties also affected Syrian foreign policy at the domestic level. Flexible and unprincipled nationalist discourse of traditional politicians was challenged by the SSNP, the Arab Socialist Party and the Baath Party, all of which were more doctrinaire than the traditional parties of the old-guards. Their nationalist and radical discourse forced the Damascene old-guards to act radically in foreign policy issues as in the case of the Palestine Question. The radical parties affected the army officers and the lower and middle strata of Syrian society, which finally culminated in the first coup d'état in Syrian history in March 1949.

After the short rule of the Damascene old-guards, the second period examined in the forth chapter was the military dictatorship between 1949-1954. During this period, Husni al-Zaim, Sami al-Hinnawi and Adib al-Shishakli ruled Syria successively. At the domestic level, weakness of the state, factionalism among the political groups, the rise of the radical middle class parties continued to shape Syrian foreign policy. Besides, rival factions in line with their regional patrons discovered coup d'états to balance domestic rivals, which brought fluctuating foreign policy initiatives between 1949 and 1954.

After the Palestine fiasco, there was a rise in the pro-Iraqi trend in Syrian politics, and Zaim utilized this environment and allied with the pro-Iraqi civilian and military factions to topple the Damascene old-guards. Even though Zaim adopted unionist discourse and promised union with Iraq, he was a pragmatic leader similar to the old-guards. He was not keen to unify his country with Iraq as expected by pro-Iraqi unionist officers and just wanted to play the Hashemite camp and the Saudi-Egyptian bloc against each other and benefit from their rivalries. When Zaim dismissed the idea of unity with Iraq and sided with the Saudi-Egyptian bloc, he was ousted by pro-Iraqi military and civilian faction, which was his former ally, in the same year. When Sami al-Hinnawi came to power in August 1949, the pro-Iraqi People's Party took the lead and actively sought unity with Iraq. However, their unity attempts failed owing to Iraq's hesitation about the unity. It is interesting to note that when the People's Party and al-Hinnawi took the lead in August 1949, the National Party, a passionate pro-Egyptian party, changed its pro-Egyptian stance and advocated unity with Iraq to jump on the pro-Iraqi bandwagon in domestic politics.

Sami al-Hinnawi was ousted by a coup, organized by the Saudi-Egyptian camp and its military allies in the Syrian army, in December 1949. Adib al-Shishakli was the leader of the coup and he immediately changed Syrian foreign policy in line with the Saudi-Egyptian camp against Iraq and the People's Party. However, Shishakli did not assume the power directly in the wake of his coup owing to the power of the pro-Iraqi politicians in the parliament. He preferred to establish the general staff as a balancing organization against the PP and its foreign policy initiatives. As a result of the political instability and tension between the domestic factions Shishakli carried out his second coup in November and assumed whole political power in the country. After the coup, Shishakli maintained his pragmatic foreign policy and continued to side with the Saudi-Egyptian camp. Shishakli successfully established his unquestionable dictatorship after his second move, but alienated his formal allies including the Baath Party and Arab Socialist Party of Hawrani. He was ousted by a military insurrection, organized by the opposition and backed by Iraq, in February 1954.

At the domestic level, the third period examined in this thesis was the praetorian era between 1954 and 1963, in which the army stood behind the scene and shaped Syrian politics and foreign policy. In the wake of Shishakli's downfall the political factionalism among Syrian politicians reemerged. In addition to factionalism, political instability and the state's weakness continued to shape the domestic environment of Syrian foreign policy. The most significant characteristic of the post-1954 period was the ascendance of the leftist parties (the Baath Party and the Syrian Communist Party) in domestic politics against the traditional parties of the old-guards. However, the early alliance between the Baath Party and the Syrian Communist Party did not last long and they began to see each other as enemies and rely on an external patron for domestic ascendancy. The Baath allied with Nasser and the communists took support from the Soviet Union. When domestic factionalism reached its climax, Syrian politicians including the Baath Party and Khalid al-Azm played pan-Arab unity game for their domestic ambitions rather than their pan-Arab nationalism. When they changed their ''Syria-first'' policy and advocated ''pan-Arab'' unity with Egypt after the Suez Crisis, they did so owing to their domestic power struggle against their rivals. The rivalry among the Syrian factions finally culminated in the formation of the United Arab Republic in 1958.

It is interesting to see how the PP changed its stance towards Egypt before the formation of the UAR. Even though the PP struggled against pro-Egyptian civilian and

army factions for a long time, in order to liquidate the army's impact on politics, the PP leaders pragmatically shifted its pro-Iraqi alliance and advocated unity with Nasser's Egypt to neutralize the army in domestic politics.

Similar to old-guards and military dictators, the Baath Party and its veteran leaders also pursued pragmatic policies in domestic and foreign affairs. To illustrate, even though the Baath adopted ''ideological neutralism'' as a party principle in early phases of its formation, it later changed its radical stance as ''positive neutralism'' which proposed pragmatic collaboration with the superpowers in mid-1950s. Even though the Baath described itself as progressive revolutionary party, it showed any hesitation to ally with the PP, the NP and the communists as well as Iraq against the Shishakli dictatorship in 1953. Even though the Baath Party advocated unity with Nasser, whom it opposed earlier, to neutralize its communist rivals in the aftermath of the Suez crisis, it sometimes sought alliance with Iraq to prevent Nasser's interference in domestic politics. The Baath maintained its pragmatic inter-Arab game during the UAR against Nasser and tried to bring Abd al-Karim Qasim to the UAR as a counterbalance to Nasser's repressive policies. Pragmatism of the Baath's first ideologues (Aflaq and Bitar) in domestic and foreign affairs caused frustration among the party's radical and more doctrinaire low-rank military and civilian members and contributed to their downfall in the post-1963 period.

During the period of United Arab Republic, Syrian factions were disappointed with pan-Arab unity experience owing to Nasser's centralization measures, and turned to ''Syria-first'' policy once again. When the UAR ended with the secessionist coup 1961, at the domestic level, factionalism and political instability once again began to shape Syrian foreign policy. Within the framework of the political turmoil the army easily interfered in politics and balanced domestic rival factions and their foreign policy initiatives. During this period, especially unity initiatives of pro-Iraqi People's Party with Iraq were prevented by the army. The dilemma of unification ended with the Baathist coup of 1963.

At the regional environment, inter-Arab struggle for Syria and the creation of Israel in Palestine were defined as two significant determinants that shaped Syrian foreign policy between 1946 and 1963. Since the last years of the mandate, artificially drawn borders of the Middle East and Greater Syrian territories created tension between the identity of the Arab nation and the borders of the Middle East states and brought unity issue to the foreign policy agendas. The tension between identity and sovereignty resulted

in irredentist pan-Arab and pan-Syrian foreign policies of Iraq and Jordan towards Syria, pan-Arab zeal of the Arab public for political unification, and rival sub-state identities of Syrian politicians as in the case of the Aleppo bourgeoisie of the People's Party towards the Hashemite Iraq. The Hashemite ambitions over Syria to assume hegemony in the Middle East were counterbalanced by the Saudi-Egyptian camp. Syrian factions pragmatically recognized one of the Hashemite camp or the Saudi-Egyptian bloc as a patron in line with ''the politics of notables'' and collaborated with either of them to attain domestic ascendancy. During their short rule, the Damascene old-guards pursued pro-Saudi-Egyptian camp foreign policy to counterbalance their domestic rivals. Despite public euphoria for pan-Arab unification, Damascene politicians pursued pragmatic ''Syria-first'' policy between 1946 and 1949 instead of pan-Arab unity. The establishment of Israel was another factor that shaped Syrian foreign policy at the regional level. Syrian defeat against Israel in the First Arab-Israeli War of 1948 delegitimized the Damascene old-guards in the eyes of the nationalist public opinion and accelerated their downfall. The establishment of Israel was a threat for Syria's security and this accelerated Syrian politician's search for external patron in the inter-Arab politics.

At the regional environment, the inter-Arab struggle for Syria continued to be the first significant determinant of Syrian foreign policy during the period military dictatorship between 1949 and 1954. The rivalry between the Hashemites and the Saudi-Egyptian camp for regional bid for hegemony directly affected Syrian foreign policy as it amalgamated with factionalism of Syrian politicians. The Hashemites and the Saudi-Egyptian camp supported their domestic allies and organized military coups to topple opponent regime in Damascus. During the period of Zaim, Syrian foreign policy was in line with the Saudi-Egyptian camp despite the rise of the pro-Iraqi People's Party in domestic politics. During Hinnawi's short term, pro-Iraqi politicians took the lead and sought union with Iraq actively. This trend was reversed when Shishakli came to power in December 1949 and he put Syrian foreign policy in line with the Saudi-Egyptian camp once again. By siding with the Saudi-Egyptian camp, Shishakli prevented unity initiatives of the People's Party and pursued ''Syria-first'' policy. Even though Iraq seemed to be a pro-unity country within the framework of the ''Fertile Crescent'' unity plan, it did not want political pan-Arab unity sincerely as it was paralyzed when pro-unity forces came to power in the wake of Sami al-Hinnawi coup.

The second regional aspect of Syrian foreign policy during the military dictatorship was Israel. Even though the Palestine Question was the most important factor in the rise of the military dictators, Husni al-Zaim pragmatically wanted to sign a peace agreement with Israel by settling thousands of Palestinian refugees in Syrian territories and alliance with the USA so as to strengthen his dictatorship against domestic enemies by bolstering his regional security. Zaim, who was in contact with the CIA before the coup, launched a peace initiative with Israel caused his downfall in the same year. During Sami al-Hinnawi's period, there was no significant development in Syrian-Israeli relations as the unity issue dominated Syrian foreign policy. When Adib al-Shishakli came to power, there was a tension between two sides owing to controversial areas of the DMZ. However, similar to Zaim, being a pragmatic politician Shishakli made a bold attempt and wanted to sign a peace treaty with Israel. Even though Shishakli pretended to be a pan-Arab nationalist in front of the public he showed his pragmatism by pursuing a peace agreement with Israel.

At the regional environment, in the post-1954 period, the struggle for Syria between the Hashemite camp and the Saudi-Egyptian bloc took the form of the Arab Cold War, in which regional Arab states polarized as pro-Western traditional monarchies of Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Iraq and anti-Western neutralist republics of Egypt and Syria. The struggle for Syria continued in this period due to regional states' patronage over the rival domestic factions. Pro-Western Iraq wanted to embrace Syria through the Baghdad Pact; however, Gamal Abd al-Nasser responded Iraq's initiative by offering protection against the Hashemite aggression. Nasser emerged as the second regional aspect of Syrian foreign policy in the post-1954 period. His neutralist and pan-Arab personality attracted leftist-neutralist forces of Syrian politics and Syrian-Egyptian relations entered into a new age. Nasser's protection over Syria against the regional and international encroachments finally culminated in the formation of the UAR, which signified the triumph of Nasser in the struggle for Syria. However, Nasser's brutal policies towards the Syrian factions became a source of frustration and the UAR ended in 1961. In the wake of the secessionist coup, the struggle for Syria revived and Nasser launched a relentless campaign against the secessionist regime in Damascus. Syrian politicians' dilemma of reunification with Nasser brought fluctuating foreign policy initiatives towards Nasser and Iraq between 1961 and 1963.

The second regional determinant of Syrian foreign policy between 1954 and 1963 was Israel. After the fall of Adib al-Shishakli, the peace initiatives between two sides died and both sides confronted due to controversial fishing rights in the DMZ and Israel's water projects in the post-1954 period. Israel's threat against Syria's security contributed to Syria's dependence on Nasser and Soviet Union.

At the international level, Syria's dependence on the core powers especially France continued in the post-independence period and forced Syrian politicians to ally pragmatically with the Western powers albeit public disapproval between 1946-1949. The Damascene old-guards' dependence on the West further delegitimized them in the eyes of the Syrian people. Even though the Cold-War began to shape the world politics, Syrian politicians generally were disinterested in the Cold-War rivalry. Among them Khalid al-Azm was an exception, he openly proposed to ally with the Western camp against the Soviet Union.

During the period of military dictatorship, at the international environment, Syrian foreign policy was shaped by the core-periphery relations and the Cold War. Syria's dependence on the core powers continued and the Cold War began to affect Syrian foreign policy during this period. In the wake of the coup, Zaim adopted a positive discourse towards the Western camp and wanted to ally with the US within the framework of the Cold War. During the period of Zaim, Syria developed friendly relations not only with the US but also Britain, France and Turkey. However, Zaim's pragmatic dependence on the core powers resulted in the alienation of his radical comrades and his downfall. During the rule of Sami al-Hinnawi, there was no important development at the international environment owing to the regional unity issue.

With Adib al-Shishakli's coming to power in December 1949, there emerged two power groups in domestic politics: pro-Iraqi and pro-Western politicians versus the leftist-neutralist camp. From the first coup to the second, Syria's position towards the Cold War was shaped by the rivalry between two groups. It can be argued that leftist-neutralist forces under the leadership Khalid al-Azm and their rapprochement with the Soviet Union dominated Syrian foreign policy and Syria rejected the MEC proposals of the West. Khalid al-Azm, who was a pragmatic politician, had proposed joining the Western camp against the Soviet Union during his premiership from 1948 to early 1949. However, realizing the rise of neutralist-nationalist forces in domestic politics, he pragmatically collaborated with the Baath Party, the Soviet Union and Nasser to achieve

his domestic ambitions and represented ''anti-Western neutralism'' in Syria for a long time. After Adib al-Shishakli's second coup, French-Syrian relations continued to develop, however, the US-Syrian rapprochement came to naught due to domestic opposition.

At the international environment, the Cold War was the most significant aspect of Syrian foreign policy during the praetorian era between 1954 and 1963. The Soviet penetration into the Middle East affairs after the death of Stalin gave the Syrian politicians a historical chance to break the core-periphery relations and their dependence on the Western powers, especially France. The Soviet-Syrian relations increased considerably as the Soviet Union provided Syria with arms and international protection against the Western encroachments in the Middle East. The rise of the leftist-neutralist forces combined with the flow of the Soviet aids to Syria, which worried the US about the satellization of Syria. For this reason, the US organized a series of coups and backed regional states to topple leftist government in Damascus during the course of 1956 and 1957. However, the covert operations of the US came to naught and the Soviet-Syrian relations continued to develop. The Soviet-Syrian rapprochement ended when the Soviet Union began to back Syrian communists, which created frustration among the old-guards and the Baath Party. Therefore, they shifted their alliance once again and pragmatically tilted towards Nasser as a new patron to balance their communist rivals, which culminated in the formation of the UAR in 1958. During the period of the UAR, the Soviet-UAR relations were tense due to Nasser's policy of rapprochement with the Western camp. With the end of the UAR, Syrian politicians adopted passive neutralism towards the Cold War as political turmoil and unity issue completely paralyzed Syrian foreign policy between 1961 and 1963.

The main arguments, conclusions and findings of the thesis can also be applied to other regional Arab countries. The domestic, regional and international determinants that shaped Syrian foreign policy can be seen within the general Arab context. To illustrate, at the international environment, the core-periphery relations not only affected Syria but also Iraq and Jordan as the externally and artificially imposed borders of these countries had deep impacts on their foreign policy visions. In addition to these countries, Egypt suffered from the long-lasting core-periphery relations and Western imperialism. Egypt's anti-Western foreign policy orientation under Nasser emerged against the core-periphery relations and Western imperialism. Needless to say, the Cold War profoundly affected

foreign policies of the Middle Eastern states at the international environment. Similar to Syria, the establishment of Israel became an important determinant of foreign policies of Egypt, Iraq, Jordan and Saudi Arabia at the regional environment. These countries waged war against the newly-created Israel in 1948 and considered this country as a significant threat against their security in the post-1948 period. The inter-Arab politics and regional bid for hegemony between the Saudi-Egyptian camp and the Hashemite Kingdoms of Iraq and Jordan constituted the second regional dimension of foreign policies of these countries. Even though the regional determinants (the inter-Arab politics and Israel) and the international determinants (the core-periphery relations and the Cold-War) shaped the foreign policies of the regional Arab countries, the difference of Syria was its domestic weakness. Syria's lack of state formation and political instability differentiated this country from Egypt, Iraq, Jordan and Saudi Arabia. Syria emerged as the weakest Arab state in the Middle East in the wake of the independence, which put Syria in a different position both in the regional and international environment in comparison to other Arab countries.

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