History and Politics of the Middle East Final Essay

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Nationalism originates from having common aims, when a community living in a similar homeland comes together for a similar purpose. It happens when culture, traditions, political aims and economic objectives converge and people get together to achieve what suits their circumstances[[1]](#footnote-1). In the 19th century, nationalism arose to its modern sense; when people in Europe struggled to assert their unity and wanted independence from regimes that have been crushing their individual aims and objectives. With times changing, nationalism arose to include the concepts of liberty, fraternity and then gradually included the spirit which was then recognized as nationalism[[2]](#footnote-2). These conceptualizations of ideas paved the way for people in Europe to lead a life, free of despair, chaos and disorder. Similar to this, nationalism among Arabs, is an ideology that promotes the idea of Pan-Arabism. This ideology refers to taking pride in Arab nationalism.

The interesting aspect of nationalism among Arabs, is to witness how different leaders from countries like Egypt, Iraq, Palestine, Syria and Libya came together to carry on the message of nationalism[[3]](#footnote-3). The time nationalism in the Middle East started spreading, there were less political and strategic motives of the countries. For example, in Turkey, the primary goal was to re-orchestrate the country over different ideological grounds. It was related to Turkey itself, and therefore, was not intervened by any other country. This nationalist movement in Turkey then led to the creation of Turkey, which we know today. Similarly, Arab nationalism was aimed at the political unification of the country. There were negligible aspects that could be related to military or armed intentions. Arab nationalism from those times, originated for the fact, Arab leadership believed that changing global trends were, and still are, threatening Arab culture. There was another motive, other than building a political union of Arab countries.

Jewish nationalism, lastly, is referred to as the Jewish movement of the late 19th century. This wave of nationalism in the Arab continent is slightly different. For example, some believe that nationalism among Jews was based on the motive, retrieving their holy piece of land, Canaan. Another aspect of the Jewish nationalist wave was the anti-Semitism movement. They considered it a threat, which could not be deterred, except by uniting. Similarly, some take the perception of Jewish nationalism as an effort to take control of the land of Palestinians and later the area previously occupied by the Ottomans[[4]](#footnote-4). These nationalist movements by the Arabs were somewhat different from each other. A general political narrative is hard to find. Some were fighting for a cause purely political in nature, whereas some came together for religious purposes. Such differentiating notions of nationalism in the Arab’s land speaks for disunity, however, non-violent nature.

Arabs had been and are still considered different from Europeans. Not in history, at any time they had converged to fight any common delinquent. These separate notions in political agendas and strategic engagements, propose that nationalism in both regions was based on different agendas, which had not converged, not even for the slightest reason. Bearing in mind all such narratives, it is right to argue that nationalism in Europe played as a factor for the nationalism in the Arab continent. Many Arab leaders from that time believe that European nationalism could be a threat to Arabs, since there is not a single common factor between them. While some of the Arab scholars believe that Europeans always had an urge to acquire natural resources, so they could have benefitted, directly. Lastly, in view of nationalist narratives, both in Europe and the Middle-East, it is right to argue that nothing but ideological motives and politico-economic aims, lead nationalistic movements.

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1. Gilbert, Paul. *The philosophy of nationalism*. Routledge, 2018. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *The philosophy of nationalism*, 2018. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Choueiri, Youssef M. "Arab nationalism." *The Routledge Handbook of Muslim-Jewish Relations* (2016): 317. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. *The Routledge Handbook of Muslim-Jewish Relations* (2016): 317. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)